

[Transcript] Leading / 20: Jonathan Powell: How to negotiate with terrorists

Welcome to The Rest Is Politics Leading with me, Rory Stewart.

Me, Janis De Campbell.

And welcome, Jonathan Powell, to the episode.

Alisa, how did you first meet Jonathan?

Tell us a bit about Jonathan Powell.

I have...

No, I vividly remember Jonathan because you had been in Washington as a diplomat.

You'd met Tony when he was out.

I think you introduced him to the Clinton campaign for the first time.

I ran into him and Gordon Brands together to meet all the Clinton people in the beginning of 1993.

And then once Tony Blair had become leader, you were kind of on his radar.

And I think you first of all said no.

No, no, no, that's not true.

No, he called me after he became leader during the summer, late summer I think it was, and said would I come over and talk to him and be interviewed for the job of chief of staff?

So I said yes, okay.

And I flew over and then I had to fly back.

But I was going to host Gordon Brown when I got back.

And when I got to Heathrow, I discovered Ed Balls and Gordon Brown waiting for the plane.

I couldn't run into them because then I'd have to tell them I'd be meeting Tony Blair.

So I hid and then got on the plane at the last moment.

So your whole life has been since then dictated by...

...of what you're Gordon Brown means.

But anyway, I can remember when you accepted the job.

And the thing about Jonathan Rory is incredibly efficient.

And incredibly straight.

And I think his very, very first words were something like, you're Alastair.

And Tony tells me you're very important to him and we should sit down and have proper chat.

And that was the first conversation.

And I was saying to Rory earlier, I don't recall ever having a crossword with you.

No, I don't recall you ever having a crossword with me.

But then I never gave you any reason to, so...

But I might have given you reason.

Oh, you've got a crossword from me.

No, that's not my thing.

I don't do that.

Jonathan, that's a bit of a sense for you.

So you...

Well, give a sense of your childhood and how you grew up and how you describe your social background

and how you got into the foreign office and...

I was a very conventional middle-class kid.

My dad was in the Air Force.

I grew up on Air Force bases in Singapore and around the world.

And then back in the UK, I went to boarding school,
was hoping to go to LSE and do economics, but instead went to Oxford and did history.
And then I went into journalism briefly when I left...
Well, first I went to a scholarship to America, went to Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania.
And then I got a job working for Radio 4, and then I went to work for Grenada
with the days of Teni Wilson and got to meet the Sex Pistols and all those other things.
Was that as big in your life as at us the meeting Brittany?
It was much more important than meeting Brittany
because I was much younger and much more impressionable.
And Teni Wilson was God at that stage, in charge of Manchester and the whole Manchester music
scene.
But my parents didn't think that was a proper job.
It didn't have a pension.
And so I applied to join the foreign office and got a job in the foreign office.
And so you then served in the foreign office from the late 1970s
and had found yourself in the embassy in Washington when you first came across Tony Black.
Was that your first time you met him?
Yes, no, I joined the foreign office in 1979.
And then I was posted to Washington in 1991.
And actually, the interesting thing about going to Washington in 1991
was my job was to follow the opposition candidates around in the election campaign.
There's been a job doing that since the Second World War.
And when I came in, George Bush was at 75 percent.
George Bush the senior after Gulf War.
Everyone assumed he was going to win.
There was no chance of Democrats.
The candidates running were called the Seven Doors
because everyone was waiting for Mario Cuomo to come in on the Democrat side.
And I had to choose who I was going to follow.
And I decided to follow Bill Clinton because he'd been at my college at Oxford.
And this later led to me having a reputation for being a brilliant political prognostic case.
So I could never accuse you of.
No, exactly.
But I was able to predict his future.
But it's simply because he was the easiest person to get on the campaign bus with.
And so I went on his first campaign visit to New Hampshire in 1991.
And many bus people went around.
He kept stopping at McDonald's and then stayed with him campaigning basically for a year.
And the very odd thing about all this is when you were serving in the foreign office
during the 1980s, your brother Charles was Mrs. Natchez, foreign policy advisor.
Yep. No, Charles went to work for Mrs. Natchez in number 10 in 1983.
Was there the whole way through and then stayed with the first year of major when he took over
from Natchez.
So there you are as a permanent civil servant, increasingly drawn to the Labour Party,

and your brother is absolutely the power behind the throne sitting in 10 Downing Street under conservative prime ministers.

He was, but he was a civil servant.

He was a diplomat.

He never became political.

So, but he was very, very close to Natchez.

And I don't think he probably could have stayed in government after Natchez left, well, not very long anyway.

And he left soon after that.

But it wasn't an issue.

I remember going for an interview for a job with Douglas Heard to be his private secretary.

And he interviewed me and said, I don't think we can do this.

It's the Powell-Poll problem because my brother called himself Charles Poll.

He couldn't have the idea.

Why did he call himself Poll?

He called himself Poll because actually that's nearer to the correct Welsh pronunciation.

It's a Welsh name, which is Ap-Hual.

And what did your father call himself?

He called himself Powell because he wanted to get it spelled properly, a sensible way to do it.

And then another brother, Chris, was probably involved in Labour Party before you.

Oh, long before me.

No, he was in the advertising game.

He did the shadow agency for Neil Kinnock all the way through.

Yes, no, he'd always been my role model.

That's why I wanted to go to LSE and do economics because Chris was there.

And he was probably the most political of the family, would you say?

Yeah, probably, yep.

Because you're not the most political person in the world, are you?

Well, it depends what you're measuring it by, Alistair, by your standard.

No, I'm sort of a pretty weak sort of liquor.

But I'm definitely not a Tory.

And Jonathan, something that Tony Blair spotted in you brought you in to be Chief of Staff and you remained all the way through.

I think you're probably the only Chief of Staff who's done a full 10-year prime ministerial term, I guess.

But you're quite different to the rest of them.

I mean, I obviously spent a lot of time with Alistair.

Spent quite a lot of time with David Miliband.

See a little bit of Tony Blair.

They're all sort of slightly sort of overly smooth extroverts.

You don't come across like that.

You seem to be a slightly different personality type, is that right?

Oh, I'm definitely different.

That's actually why number 10 under us worked and why it doesn't work under quite a lot of other

people,
is that we were very complementary people.
I didn't want to do Alistair's job.
Alistair had no interest in my job.
No one, neither of us, wanted to do Angie's job.
So we were very different sorts of personalities, actually.
And that's why I think it worked.
And how would you define your own personality?
Well, I think what Tony said about me was that I would he liked about me was that I was provincial.
I wasn't a Londoner.
I was someone who came from the provinces like him.
And so I didn't have a Londoner's natural sort of feeling they should be governing.
And then he called me Essence of New Labour, which I think is probably about right.
Because Alistair is much more old Labour.
That's why you could do something like work with Gordon Brown afterwards.
Whereas I was all New Labour.
And that's the first reference.
It won't be the last.
So give us a just to develop that, because...
Can I just say that I think, Jonathan's...
Yeah, go on.
I do find this very, very strange of sitting here telling you what I think about your skills.
I think Jonathan has incredible calm and has a level personality.
And I also think you don't take things personally, either for yourself or for other people.
So when things were going badly for any of us,
but especially if it was for Tony,
you always managed to keep kind of very, very level about it.
So within the operation, there was very little panic.
Don't used to think I actually relished when I had the latest crisis you see.
You could see me coming down the corridor about to tell him
some ghastly thing that happened.
Peter Mandelson was going to have to resign or whatever it was.
And he says there's always a grin on my face.
And he believed that I actually enjoyed having these crises.
Maybe there's something to that.
Is that true?
You're someone who quite like you run towards places?
I quite like the adrenaline rush of having at least five or six things
going on at once.
So, yes, I think that's probably a personality type.
So instead of stressing you out, you quite sort of relish the whole thing.
As long as it stays about five or six,
the first thing that happens to your mind actually doing that job.
I think I have the world record of being chief of staff in a democracy

because going through from when I started for Tony till the end,
certainly by comparison with the United States,
where they really never last over four years and rarely over two years.
And that is that your mind grows so you can deal with five or six really big things at once.
And what you lose is the forward and backward bit.
So you lose your memory before that.
It's like stretching your muscles in a particular way.
And I think that's what happened to me.
Give me a concrete example of five or six crises and losing the back memory.
For example, coming over here to Northern Ireland and trying to negotiate
while knowing what's going on in Iraq,
trying to get back before the war starts when the plane being late
and I'm not going to get in on time,
trying at the same time to do with a minister resigning somewhere else.
So you've got all these things going on at once.
And give us an example of losing the back bit.
I can't ever remember anyone's name when I meet them,
even though I've met them 15 times.
So you sort of you lose that sort of memory.
So I used to have a diary because anyway,
I could actually remember anything as I wrote it down.
Partly because you're so much in the present moment of the crisis.
You don't actually have the reflection time to to ponder memories.
Think about. Yeah, I think that's actually also a danger.
You correctly point that out.
There's always a danger that if you if you don't have time
to really consider things,
if you're operating on five or six things at once,
I always remember I have an ancestor of a tenuously connected ancestor
who was one of the four knights who murdered Thomas Beckett.
And I was sort of my job is don't do that.
If Tony says, go and execute the archbishop of Canterbury.
Think twice before you do it.
He never did that.
He never mentioned that.
And sort of went down in family history.
That was a bad move.
Not to be right pieces.
He died in Jerusalem and was buried on the Arkham Oscars.
Yeah, yeah.
No, this is very bad.
Now, I just can bring in answer.
But my last last question is it does sound pretty horrifying
doing 10 years of that degree of crisis management.

Did you ever feel yourself getting close to break down,
getting close to collapse and in retrospect, looking back?
No, I don't think it was 13 years.
You count the opposition too, because it's all the way through.
In fact, another friend of mine,
I had a friend who had been chief of staff to back up Havel.
He said, what you need to do as I approached the end of this period
knowing I was going in 2017, you need to go and see a psychiatrist
because the down from this is going to be terrible.
You're going to crash and you're going to be in awful shape.
And I didn't go to a psychiatrist.
And it didn't happen like that at all.
I woke up the next morning to the news
that someone had tried to bomb central London.
I thought, why is no one called me?
And I thought, I don't have to worry.
It's not my problem.
And it was a blessed relief rather than the other side.
I didn't have a crash and I didn't have a crash afterwards.
So I was very lucky from that point of view.
I think you were the only one of us who stayed the whole way through to the end.
I think Kate Garvey was the whole way through.
Liz, Lloyd.
She didn't last the whole way through, I don't think.
So and when you just are always talking about crisis,
but actually we didn't things were steady a lot of the time.
We didn't have that many full blown crises.
What's your sense of what Tony brought as a leader to the team that he built
and what his principles for building that team were?
Well, again, I think it's complementarity.
What Tony had was a remarkable vision
and people sort of play down the vision thing.
But actually, it's crucially important for a politician,
as George Bush Senior revealed in the end,
not having the vision thing was his downfall.
And he didn't try and do the rest.
In other words, he had this vision,
but he didn't try and be the day to day tactician.
People like Peter would be the strategist.
Gordon Brown, I always thought was the sort of day to day tactician
and you were the brilliant communicator.
So he had a team of people who complemented his skills
rather than trying to do everything.
And you quite often find with prime ministers,

a nice prime minister like John Major tried to do everything and that doesn't work.
You've got to actually work out what your role is as leader and what the role of others is.
So you and I had this ridiculous brow that precedes into Downey Street because the Queen had to pass some ordering council that gave us the right to instruct civil servants.
Do you think that actually made any practical difference at all?
And secondly, what was your assessment looking back of your and our relationship with the civil service?
How that worked, where it worked well, where it didn't work well?
Ron Butler has subsequently admitted, who was the cabinet secretary at the time, that this was a mistake.
They never needed to have this ordering council.
He blamed it on his civil servants in the ethics part that they'd been too tidy-minded about it.
There was no need.
And I always pointed out to them there was no need because previous political appointees in John Major's office Sarah Hogg, for example, had civil servants in a team and managed them and told them what to do.
There was no reason, nothing had changed.
But it made it into a symbol, which was a real problem, I think, because it then led to this notion there were millions of special advisors knocking around number 10.
But if you think about it now, we had a tiny number of special advisors by comparison with the number in government at the moment.
So it's quite different from that point of view.
I think when we started in government, we had a problem integrating into the civil service properly.
I remember Tony complaining to me that the government machine felt like a Rolls-Royce park just outside Downing Street and he was never allowed to have the keys.
And there was some element to that.
And I certainly managed to rub up the wrong way with Richard Wilson, the second cabinet secretary after Robin left.
And we had trouble integrating the government machine properly.
But I think after about six months or a year, we finally worked out how to do that.

And on the whole, the civil servants enjoyed that.
They certainly managed the transition.
I think what Roy and Butler was very keen to do
was to stay on and be the person
after that long period of Tory rule
to manage transition to a labour government.
And he did it very well
and so did the civil service as a whole.
They were keen to have people who were going to be activists
coming in, a new fresh broom, fresh ideas.
And they liked that.
Give us a sense of Richard Wilson.
Richard was Robin's choice.
I can't remember the process we went through
to point him now.
He was very keen to help.
But he had a vision in his mind
of what the cabinet secretary should be.
He'd been working in Mrs. Thatcher's number 10.
He'd booked in the cabinet office
in the domestic secretariat.
And he had a vision that she would pass all the problems
over to the cabinet office and they'd sort them out.
Tony Blair had this vision
that he was going to be managing the civil service.
What he wanted, you remember the scars on my back,
was his particular dig at the civil service,
the same as Cameron's dig later and others.
So that's very surprising
because of course the sort of general memory,
sort of folk memory of Mrs. Thatcher
is somebody who was relentlessly working till 3 in the morning
all over the details, very bossy, telling people what to do.
But you're actually saying that her management style
from Richard Wilson's point of view
was quite different to that of Tony Blair.
That was his vision of it from his time in the cabinet office.
It's not the vision I got from my brother
working on foreign policy who nearly all of the work
was done inside Downing Street.
That was the problem, was the division between
what they were doing in Downing Street,
what's happening in the foreign office, for example.
There was no articulation between it.

So I'm not sure who was right about her management style, but that was his vision.

So Richard Wilson's vision is that she would sort of set a rough policy strategy, and then it would be left entirely to the civil service to work out the detail of implementation.

Yeah, she would say, here's a problem we need to deal with, I mean, not the poll tax, but something like that, and then pass it over to the cabinet office and they would work on it.

They would produce options, and then she would choose an option or something.

I mean, it's funny, I remember.

Just handle it, but I mean, I agree with you.

She was a great detail merchant, so it's hard to believe that really ever happened, but that was the vision of how this should work.

I do slightly remember this, though, as a minister saying to civil servants,

I want you to do this.

I remember saying, you know,

I want you to spend 40 million pounds doing an analysis of the history of British development programs in Malawi, and five weeks later, they would come back with, here are four options, minister.

You know, number one, do nothing,

number two, spend 10 million.

And I think what part of I want you to do this, don't you get?

So I think there is a very strong sense in the civil service that their job is to come up with the policy proposals and give the options to ministers, rather than listen to a minister telling them what to do.

Yeah, they would see their job as pointing out the elephant traps to a minister.

They've seen all these problems a million times before, and the minister's proposing something that's completely daft and didn't work last time.

So let's give him a chance of talking himself out of the decision he's just made.

Now, the trouble is, it then is seen by ministers

as people who are not prepared to implement anything,
and ministers want things who can get things done.
That's why they increasingly depend on political appointees,
because they think they'll get things done,
even as a civil servant's done.

How do you think we handled the relations with the cabinet
and other departments?

And you were always quite critical of Gordon Brown,
that's fair enough.

No, I was not very close to Gordon.

We fell out almost as soon as I took over
as Tony's chief of staff.

So do you think that's because you took over
because it was Tony that he didn't like, as opposed to you?

Well, actually, what happened was there was no money
in Tony's office when I came in.

I had to go and raise the money to pay the salaries.

Leader of the opposition's office.

And when I raised the money,

Gordon summoned me over to his office
and said there was an agreement.

He would take half of everything I raised,
and I burst into laughter.

And after that, he, for some reason,
didn't seem to think I was his best friend.

So the Tony Gordon thing was, at his best, I think,
good and positive, and lots got done,
at its worst, a nightmare for all of us.

But what generally do you think we did right and wrong
in terms of managing the whole system
and the whole structure of government?

Well, there's a myth of cabinet government
that people like Robin Acheron, Butler or Richard Wilson had,
which was that Britain is governed by a premise into Paris
and that the Prime Minister is just one cabinet minister.

First amongst equals for the non-Latin listeners.

Exactly.

And the Prime Minister shouldn't be able to just
have his will and have his will implemented.

He should sit and discuss these policies
issues at length with the Cabinet.

The only trouble with this thing
is it's not something that's ever happened.

It certainly didn't happen under Mrs. Thatcher.

It sometimes happened in the 1970s.
Labour governments in the early 1970s,
because they were so split, did have all-day meetings.
Can I challenge you a little bit on this?
Because I remember talking to Ken Clark about this
and him saying how very, very different it was,
having been in Mrs. Thatcher's cabinet
and John Major's cabinet compared to David Cameron's.
He said cabinet meetings used to be long, leisurely affairs.
They'd spend two, three hours.
Everybody got to talk.
It was a full discussion.
And somehow when he came back again in 2010,
after you lot had been in,
cabinet meetings had become quite short, quite cursory.
They were out pretty quickly.
The Prime Minister basically decided what to do.
And certainly from Ken Clark's point of view,
he really remembers the 80s and early 90s
as a very different period where cabinet meetings
were much longer, much more conversational.
Well, two or three hours is not a very long cabinet meeting
under Labour in the early 1970s.
It could last two days,
because they were so divided on issues.
Our cabinet meetings would certainly last two or three hours.
Sometimes they'd be shorter than that,
but it wasn't that kind of peremptory exercise.
I mean, the one I remember best was about the dome,
the Millennium Dome,
where we had a long discussion of the Millennium Dome.
And I have to say, pretty much no one in the cabinet
was in favour of the Millennium Dome.
But Tony had decided we were going to do it.
Maybe John Reed was.
I think John Reed was.
We had this discussion.
And then Tony had to leave.
There was some event he couldn't get out of,
had to leave before the end of the discussion.
So he left and John Prescott took over as Deputy Prime Minister.
He said, look, we all disagree with this,
but Tony wants to do it.
So that's what we're going to do.

And that was the conclusion of the cabinet.
So that wasn't ideal cabinet government, I admit.
But I also think a bunch of people
who don't know what they're talking about,
discussing some issue,
they don't really have much to say on.
It's not the right way to make policy.
You'd be much better off having experts in the room
who can talk to you about how this could work
and how this couldn't work.
You need to have the ministers too.
But your Scottish Secretary isn't necessarily going to help you
if you're considering what to do
with some particular aspect of foreign policy.
It's quite a fundamental problem that a bunch of people
who don't know much what they're talking about,
talking about things.
I mean, MPs generally don't know much
about what they're talking about.
And I felt this very, very deeply
in the National Security Council.
We'd sit around the table
and with the best will in the world,
compared to the US equivalents,
my cabinet colleagues were not deep into experts.
I mean, I remember people asking some pretty basic questions
about the difference between Sunni and Shia,
and you can imagine.
So there is a fundamental problem
at the heart of our whole governmental system,
which is our cabinet ministers are often not there for very long.
They often don't have a professional background
in what they're doing.
And our system's amateur at the core, isn't it?
Yeah, that is exactly the problem.
It's sort of left over from Imperial times, if you like,
that it's the great amateurs.
It's a Kipling type approach to government.
And it doesn't really work in the modern world.
It's not to say that you need to have a bunch of technocrats
or experts.
But if you're going to have a discussion
about something that is quite technical,
it would be good at least to have in the room

those people who understand the technicalities of it,
rather than leave it to a bunch of people
who really are not that interested in the subject.
And if they have something to say,
it's been written for them by civil servants
from their department who probably don't know much about it.
So yes, there are real problems.
And I think that applies to National Security Council
as well as the cabinet.
What did you least enjoy about working in number 10?
Well, to start with, there was a problem of no food.
If you remember, we came in, there was no cafe.
There was nowhere to get anything to eat at all,
which is why I lived on a diet of Mars bars
for the first year of working there.
What was really good about number 10
was the staff, the permanent staff,
the people who had been there their whole lives,
who opened the doors, made the tea, cleaned the rooms,
looked after things, they were fantastic.
It didn't make food.
It didn't make food.
They made tea.
They wouldn't make coffee either.
We bought a coffee machine and brought it in,
but they refused to make that modern,
new, fangled coffee, so we had to stick to tea.
But it was, yeah, they were great.
The place is a completely inappropriate place
to run a government from.
It's absolutely ridiculous.
You had John Burt working out of a broom cupboard
on the third floor and sort of massively overcrowded.
We had a terrible problem that the electric risers
were overheating the whole time
because there were too many people
and the whole building was going to burst into flames.
But when we tried to close it down and repair it,
this was quite late on in the time in Downing Street,
Gordon Brown wouldn't have it
because he thought we were simply trying
to keep him out of Downing Street.
So we carried on working with the dangers continuing.
So if anyone was sensible,

they would move government out of Downing Street,
somewhere like the QE2 Center,
work in an open plan office,
and actually have the experts around them
so they could call on them.

QE2 Center, what a glamorous idea.

I don't think it matters what it's called.

Just somewhere where you could work in a modern office
would be sensible if you were in a modern government.

Again, for listeners who are not London locals,

QE2 Center is a horrifying building on the edge of it.

Of course, they all know what the QE2 Center is, Roy.

No.

Alistair believes everybody's got a universal knowledge.

QE2 Center is a horrifying sort of...

Is that again, it's the 1970s conference center
on the Ancient Parliament Square?

Much less than that.

I remember it being built now.

It's the 1980s, early 1990s, I think,

and it's on the corner of Parliament Square.

But what it has is great big open plan offices.

We've been talking here in Northern Ireland
about castle buildings and how awful that was when we negotiated.

That was the 1960s building and that was awful.

But QE2 Center would be Queen Elizabeth II's
conference center on the corner of Parliament Square.

It would be absolutely ideal for a government office.

You wouldn't go as far as to take it out of London.

No, because then...

Again, this myth that people have been chasing
since the time of Harold Wilson,
that we're going to move government.

All that happens is people move the back office stuff
up to East Kilbride or whatever it is.

They're never going to move because ministers don't want to move.

Ministers refuse to move.

So then all the staff congregate around the minister.

Well, such as ministers refuse to move.

Ministers have to vote.

I mean, how on earth are we supposed to move?

We've got to get into Parliament to vote.

I don't mind moving Parliament as well.

I'm not suggesting it should happen.

I always think it's, again, a false idea
that somehow you could move government somewhere else
because all the interesting bits are going to stay in London
and all people want to work on the interesting bits.
A lot of the crises that we had,
what would you say were the worst?
Well, the first was, I find, fairly scarring,
which you remember was the Ecclestone thing,
which was just as my first daughter had been born.
I was on my paternity leave with which I had a day and a half.
And halfway through the second day, the Ecclestone thing broke.
And again, you can remind us this.
So Bernie Ecclestone had given a million pounds to the party.
Impressario, who had given, in opposition,
had given us a substantial amount, maybe a million pounds.
A lot of money.
And then he wanted, had come to see Tony
and talked about changing the rules for tobacco advertising.
And we got ourselves completely in a twist about it.
And actually, a classic example of what you need to do
in those circumstances is get all of the stuff out
as soon as you can before you hang on to it.
For disclosure, as recommended by me in a note on day one,
which Tony agreed to and was then dissuaded at Canary Wharf by your friend Gordon
as he was having lunch with Jack Shirek.
And let's just get into this.
There's a good way to get both of you into the conversation.
Well, Gordon Brown isn't here.
So, but Play Devil's Advocate, what was Gordon Brown's view?
Why did he think it was a bad idea?
What was he hoping to do by not getting all the story out in a shape?
I think he thought it would go away.
And these things tend not to go away.
And also, because it was, there was lots of other stuff going on
that he thought it would crowd it out.
And I think he just had a view that it wouldn't be one of those scandals
that took off.
But I think once he was talking about a million pounds and a policy change,
and to be fair to Frank Dobson, I think I'm right in saying Frank Dobson wasn't aware.
When he was devising the policy on tobacco sponsorship about the donation,
because the donations weren't necessarily all open by that time.
And then, but it's interesting you start with that,
because I always think foot and mouth and the fuel protests
as well as the big international ones.

You always think bigger than me, but no, it's that first one.
Not least because I said I bought this infant daughter into Downing Street
and no spare nappies because I thought I was going in for half an hour.
And sort of 24 hours later, I left with a very smelly baby.
And that stayed in my mind.
No, obviously the fuel crisis really stays in my mind a lot.
Just on the baby.
Who was looking after the baby for 24 hours?
Well, I wasn't feeding her.
I can't remember how Sarah, my wife, must have been feeding her.
Maybe I think Sarah came in too, but we couldn't leave
because I was the only one who had a car or something.
I can't remember what the answer was now.
But it was memorable that we ended up stuck there.
The fuel crisis was a very memorable one because
we really didn't believe it was going to happen.
It's a good example of how these things can get out of hand very, very quickly.
So this protest started.
And the protest was that the price of fuel was going up.
Yeah, there was a small number of hauliers at the start.
Small number of hauliers trying to blockade the fuel depots
because the price of fuel had gone up because we had put tax up on fuel.
It's part of environmental measures and tax raising measures and what have you.
And we thought that the police would easily get this under control
because you wouldn't have thought a few hauliers would just be able to
shut down all of the fuel terminals across the country.
And Tony went off on a regional tour and he said,
if I have to come back for this, I'm going to really sack you.
Just manage this and get rid of it.
And so I thought, that's not going to be too hard.
And we talked to the police and we talked to the people around the fuel depots.
And as the clock ticked away, we had the John Prescott there.
And as the clock ticked away, things got worse and worse.
And the police weren't able to open up the fuel terminals.
And people started running out of fuel.
We were actually at the end of it within hours of having to invoke emergency powers act
because there was no money in the cash points.
Hospitals were running out of fuel and didn't have generators to back up.
And we really thought we were in trouble.
And then we managed to finally break it at the last moment.
I remember Jeremy Haywood, who was our principal private secretary at the time,
and I holed up in a little room in the cabinet office.
And we got in all the number two from all the oil companies.
And we're all there just working the phones until we got this thing moving.

How did you break it?

In the end, I think it was the Exxon fuel terminal in Essex that finally the management managed to get some trucks out.

And once that started, it fell.

I'll tell you the other thing that happened though was that the media which had been turning into particularly the wretched Daily Mail, promoting panic buying and rather than sort of explaining there was no need for it. And I remember Alan Milburn coming over, who was the health secretary, and saying that if this carried on like this, they wouldn't be able to run the health service.

And once that fact was out there, the mood sort of turned.

Because the oil companies up to that point had been absolutely useless.

They had.

But the police had also been very strange about it.

They could actually have easily opened up these terminals as they wanted to.

And they chose not to.

And it was one time that we fell behind the Tories and the opinion polls.

It happened very, very quickly.

And the one thing people expect is the government can run things properly.

And if you start not being able to do that.

But police is a very interesting thing, isn't it?

Because obviously police are vital to so much, so broadly connected to the public.

And a real challenge about how much political control there should be of the police, or shouldn't be.

And of course, we're talking here in Belfast,

where the question of how much control the politicians had over the conservatory here was a very, very raw part of the troubles through the 60s, 70s, 80s and onwards.

What was your sense of the way that politicians relate to the police?

How easy would it be to reform?

Let's say that people felt there were some fundamental problems in the Metropolitan Police.

Corruption, discrimination, sexism.

How would you set about fixing that with the way our government works?

It's not easy because of this theory of independence as a police that we have, which is not true in all countries.

But we want to have the police independent because we don't want them to act as instruments of government.

And yet, as you say, here in Northern Ireland, they did act as instruments of government by keeping trying to maintain the security situation.

So working very closely with the army, although the police were always in charge, always the first on a patrol, etc.

So I think there's a reason that the police have not been reformed, because it's really difficult to do.

Firstly, the power of the Fed is very, very strong.

Their power to resist change is very, very strong.

And secondly, government is the police union, which is a very strong trade union indeed. And most politicians don't want to take on the police in those terms. So that makes it very difficult to go about reform. But then actually coming up with the right answer, now people are talking about breaking up the Met, but then you may end up with a really difficult problem. You have lots of different sorts of policing going on in different parts of London. And of course, in Scotland, they went in the opposite direction. They created a single police force. They've taken away all the regional police forces. And many senior police officers will tell you, actually, it's ridiculous having the very small police services all over the UK. You should really amalgamate them all into one. So I don't think this is a very easy answer. If you look at the United States and other countries, but they have different problems with the police, but very serious problems as well. So fuel protests, foot and mouth, similarly awful. But then on the international front, I guess 9-11, well, actually there was Kosovo. That was the proper crisis. 9-11 and then Iraq. So... Well, even before Kosovo, we had the first Iraq war. If you remember, Robert Clinton... That wasn't a crisis that... Well, it was a crisis. It was because he chucked the inspectors out. And Clinton wanted to bomb Iraq. We were concerned because it was the time of Monica Lewinsky. Concerned exactly what the motivation was for this bombing. But we went along with it, which is why people, when they question whether we believed he had weapons of mass destruction or not, the reason we bombed him the first time in 1998, along with Bill Clinton, was we believed he had weapons of mass destruction. He was hiding them by kicking out the inspectors. No, the reason why I would say that was not necessarily a crisis in the way that Iraq became a crisis subsequently, because actually that was... You know, it didn't convulse the government in a way that subsequently... His definition of a crisis is something that's going to overwhelm the whole. So it's a political crisis rather than an international crisis. It's certainly an international crisis.

And it was questioned at the time by people in the UK.

It was not exactly seen as...

No, but nothing.

I mean, there's the scale of questioning
and the scale of controversy surrounding what subsequently became...

No, it wasn't that kind of controversy.

Nor was Kosovo.

Kosovo also was questioned when the bombing campaign took off
and it didn't succeed.

You know, it managed to hit the Chinese embassy
and a bus full of refugees and so on.

That was a real problem.

And then Tony was pushing really hard for ground troops.

And eventually persuaded Clinton.

So really extraordinary conversation he had with Clinton.

Well, Clinton was on Air Force One and speaking to him on the phone
with Sandy Berger, the National Security Advisor,
patched in and I think the Secretary of State was also patched in.

And he was really part of the debate about whether he should have ground troops in Kosovo
and he managed to win the arguments and get them in.

Although then, of course, Clinton was furious
when he saw the New York Times article,
which he assumed you Alistair had briefed,
saying that he was a wimp and Tony had to force him to be a real man
and send ground troops in Kosovo.

No, you didn't, of course he didn't,
but he didn't believe that at the time
and he was quite on the angry side when he pulled up.

How did the New York Times get that story?

I don't know.

I don't know.

I guess somebody has blown to him.

I don't know.

So somebody in your team had tipped him off?

No, I've probably been someone in Washington.

I've almost certainly someone in Washington
who I've talked to and said, yeah.

Now, Alistair raised the question of Iraq.

And obviously I've interviewed Alistair about Iraq
and I've interviewed Tony Blair about Iraq.

And both of them are pretty clear that their views
haven't dramatically changed.

Although Alistair's maybe a little bit more nuanced over time then.

Are you like them?

You're very much still in the same position
you were in in 2003?
I'm not in the same position I was in in 2003, no.
But I am still wrestling with the idea.
I'm actually reading through my diaries at the moment about it
because I want to try and write a book about it.
Because what I do think is people who've drawn the lessons from it
have drawn the wrong lessons from Iraq.
I think Iraq was pretty clearly a big problem.
We went in, there weren't any weapons of mass destruction.
It wasn't that we were lying, there just weren't any.
And that was a real problem.
And what's happened in Iraq afterwards because of the
failure to install security after we got in there
was a really big problem.
And then the failure and then the pulling out
before we sorted out the problem between the Sunni and the Shia
leaving a civil war between the two effectively.
It was also a big problem.
So I think there are big problems about Iraq
but the lesson we seem to have learned is in Libya
that we should only intervene from the air.
We're going to bomb but then we're not going to go on the ground.
And I went in as David Cameron's envoy after the war.
Everyone in Libya said to me,
why on earth did you help us by bombing from the air?
But you didn't actually come and help us build institutions.
We never had institutions.
Why didn't you come in and do some state building here?
And then in Syria the lesson we drew was let's not intervene at all.
Let's let this horrific thing happen.
So in Syria somehow better than Iraq
after what's happened in Syria all this time.
That wasn't the right answer either.
So as I said, I'm wrestling what the right answer is on Iraq.
Clearly what happened in Iraq is not good.
The outcome is not one that one would want.
But I think that people focus on the wrong issues
trying to find some sort of hidden secret agenda
that proves malfeasance rather than actually what the real lessons are.
I'm not on the hidden secret agenda.
Where I suspect I do find a big disagreement with supporters
and I've very much changed my mind on Iraq
is as somebody working on the ground,

I think people are very naive in their belief
that they could have done it properly.
So one of the great things I hear from defenders,
particularly in the U.S., is the problem wasn't the invasion.
The problem was we didn't do the post-invasion right.
If only we'd built the state properly,
if only we'd stayed long enough to sort out the Sunni Shia.
And I guess I would say that, certainly from my perspective,
work on the ground in Iraq, it seems completely implausible to me
that we ever had the knowledge, the legitimacy,
the power to resolve Sunni Shia conflict and build the state.
What's the old strategy of the policy as pursued by, as at the time?
Not to intervene.
No, that's not a policy.
Anywhere.
So you wouldn't intervene.
That's not a policy, that's a decision not to do anything.
Well, I'm a strong supporter of the intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo,
and I'm an opponent of the intervention in Iraq.
So what's your policy?
But what do you do to deal with the problems that we were...
Containment.
That wasn't working.
That's the trouble we're containing.
It was actually split at the time.
We don't want to get drawn down that.
But I think had we longer, I would strongly strongly...
Why was it okay to intervene in Bosnia and okay to intervene in Kosovo,
not okay to intervene in Iraq?
And why didn't we intervene in Rwanda?
Okay, so let me push back.
Because you're unable to distinguish the prudential from the ideological.
Autimplyes can.
You do not have a moral obligation to do what you cannot do.
The stupidity of your position is that you think it's enough
to make a moral argument in Rwanda or Iraq,
and say that the question is, what difference is there in moral terms
between Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq?
The fundamental difference is you couldn't do it in Iraq.
And doing something that you can't do causes untold misery.
And you were not focused enough on the practical.
You believed provided you were righteous,
you could say stupid things like containment was fracturing,
when it is entirely to me apparent

that containment would have been infinitely preferable to what happened.
Saddam Hussein did not pose an existential threat to global security.
You did not need to intervene in 2003.
And the world would have been better off had you not done it.
I'm not making a moral difference.
I'm saying how would you know in advance
that you were going to be able to sort out Kosovo,
that you were going to be able to get rid of Milosevic,
that you actually haven't really sorted out Bosnia.
Even now, Bosnia is still a complete mess, as you know.
So I'm not making the moral difference.
In fact, one of the five tests that we drew up at the time of Kosovo
in the help of Laurie Friedman was exactly that.
Is it practical? Can you make it work?
The question then is, how do you know that until you've actually tried it?
Because you don't know whether you can help rebuild something.
Should we not have gone into Afghanistan for the same reason?
Well, I think the first thing I would say is
that that was a wonderful example of how calm you are.
So I was getting cross and you responded in an extremely calm and measured way
and you didn't get wound up at all.
So I can see why you are.
That's why I spent my time talking to the terrorists.
Very good. Very good negotiator.
That was very, very impressive.
I think you're also right that it is extremely difficult
in advance to know whether things are going to work or not.
And because we don't know very much about these countries
and so much uncertainty happens after we intervene.
Nonetheless, I think there are things that might lead you to believe
that you are less likely to face an insurgency in Bosnia or Kosovo
compared to Iraq or Afghanistan.
There are things that might lead you to believe
that a slightly smaller country might be easier than a larger country.
There might be reasons to believe that the light footprint in Afghanistan
was preferable to the latest state-building project
and that probably Brahimi and in a different way Rumsfeld
will write about Afghanistan and Ashraf Ghani
and the people who supported the search were wrong.
But in the end, that's, I think, what political judgment is about.
It's about deep, deep knowledge of those countries.
And we ought to have been able to get to understanding
that Iraqis would be grateful that we'd got rid of Saddam Hussein,
but very, very rapidly would have perceived our presence as a legitimate

because they would have felt they were fighting for Iraq and Islam against a foreign military occupation.
I'm not sure about the size of countries.
I think about Libya, for example.
We failed comprehensively in Libya and it's still in a state of absolute crisis after the intervention.
And that's quite a small country.
We're a very small population.
What I think is the case is there's a sort of cycle in this stuff.
What happens is we don't intervene.
So after Vietnam, the U.S. didn't intervene anywhere.
That's why it didn't intervene in Rwanda, for example, not the practicalities because the lesson they drew from Vietnam is never intervene.
And then they geared themselves up eventually to Bosnia, rather late in the day to intervening, and when a lot of the damage had already been done.
So and then what happens is you then overreach.
So we had the success in Kosovo.
We'd had the success bombing Iraq.
We'd had the success in Syria.
We had what appeared to be a success in Afghanistan.
Then we came to Iraq.
So you get in the cycle and then you don't intervene anywhere, like in Syria, and you end up with even worse disaster.
So that's the problem.
I think we need to learn, it's like Goldilocks.
You want to have the porridge, which is not too cold, not too hot.
You've got to get it just right.
Right. Back in a second.
Just going to a quick break.
I want to talk about what you do now.
Yeah.
Which is your charity, Intermediate.
So you had a lot of that based on what we did here in Northern Ireland, and in particular, you sort of becoming chief negotiator.
And as you say, negotiating quite a lot of the time with terrorists, and you're now doing that in different parts of the world.
So what have you taken from what happened in Northern Ireland to some of the stuff that you're doing now, and tell us a little bit about what sort of parts of the world you're working in?
Well, for me, Northern Ireland actually changed my life.
As I described, a pretty conventional sort of middle class diplomat, and going into government, the thing that I did that I felt proudest of after the event,

because at the time it was extremely painful,
was flying over here once a week or once every other week
to meet with Adams and McGinnis in safe houses,
and then meet with Trimble or meet with Paisley.
So when I left government, that's what I wanted to do,
to see if I could take some of the lessons we'd learned from Northern Ireland
and apply them somewhere else.
Now, Northern Ireland is completely different from these other conflicts.
It really is. And the solution is very different.
But it's interesting what parallels there are to how you approach these negotiations.
We're talking today, for example, here in Northern Ireland about
the reason the Good Friday Agreement worked
was because there were inclusive negotiations.
All the previous times we tried to exclude the extremes,
not just in fame, but the loyalists on the other side.
That's why Sunningdale failed in 1973.
Anglo-Irish agreement, just the two governments,
likewise Downing Street Declaration.
So what I wanted to do is try and apply those lessons.
And sometimes it works.
So I worked in Columbia for eight years with President Santos,
and you came out very kindly to help with that when we had a referendum,
which we managed to lose, thanks to your help.
But it was very, very satisfying to try and share the lessons.
Santos was very interested in Northern Ireland.
He'd been the representative of the coffee trade in London for eight years.
He'd been blown to the ground by an IRA bomb along with his ambassador outside in an out club
on Piccadilly. So he wanted to know about Northern Ireland.
And then we helped him to draw up a strategy at the beginning of the process,
learning lessons from Northern Ireland,
lessons from previous negotiations, failed negotiations in Columbia with the FARC.
Likewise in Mozambique with Arunamo.
So that's what I do. And I love doing it, although as I get older,
it's more and more painful to get on more and more overnight flights.
Yes. Jonathan, and one of the things that seems to be happening in the world of peace building
is a movement against the idea of outsiders coming in.
This increasing, certainly rhetoric in the UN system around grassroots movements,
civil society. And I just spent two quite painful years on a commission
on principles of inclusive peace and very interesting in the whole two-year period
talking about peace building. People no longer really talk about, at the moment,
about peace negotiators and external actors. The entire focus now is on grassroots society actors.
How would you get the balance on that? How do you think about that?
It's a very interesting question, how you actually get the balance right between
up-down approach negotiations and the down-up approach. So in Columbia at the moment,

for example, under the new president Petro, who's come in, he's trying to do both things at once. He's trying to use civil society to negotiate with the criminal gangs in Columbia at the same time, negotiate top-down with the ELN, the Marxist guerrillas. So trying to combine these two things is something that hasn't really been tried before. It probably should have been tried properly in Afghanistan, where you should have tried to build from the bottom up as well as trying to negotiate from the top. And it's also true that the role of UN as a mediator has basically died off. The UN isn't really able to work as a mediator anywhere now, apart from in completely failed states where they can go in. So I think it's not about mediators. What we do is we try and help the different sides. So we'll go in and help a president or help a guerrilla leader to try and make the negotiation work. So we try not to appear. We try to be below the radar. So you feel the UN has been marginalized. Why has the UN been marginalized? Why are they not central? It's interesting because the UN didn't have a role during the Cold War in many of these cases because it was a zero-sum game. Either the Soviet Union was going to win or the United States was going to win. It briefly got a role when the Cold War came to an end. So it played that role in Angola, in Namibia, in El Salvador, for example. The UN went in Guatemala, was the mediator. Now governments don't tolerate the UN trying to work on internal conflicts, external conflicts between countries, maybe, although actually almost never there either. But in internal conflicts, they're not going to. So unless it's a failed state, someone like Zeiss Sudan was, for example, you're not going to get that kind of external media.

Just before I go down, it strikes me that Northern Ireland is interesting from that point of view because the British government was comfortable with the U.S. getting quite involved in what Britain might have thought was an internal issue.

Not to start with. We were incredibly resistant to any international interference in Northern Ireland for 40-odd years. Well, actually, you can take it back to the Treaty of Versailles, where Lloyd George got very worried that Woodrow Wilson was going to insist on self-determination of Ireland and wanted to avoid that at all costs. But we absolutely ruled out any, there were lots of attempts at international mediation right through to the John Major period. Then we finally very carefully introduced an Australian mediator, St. Union Stephen, who had been a governor

general. That didn't work out so well, and then they brought in George Mitchell. Bringing George Mitchell was not that simple. At first, he was not accepted by the Unionists as he even handed.

It took real effort to persuade them that he was. And because of his nature and because of who he was, he was able to do that. And as he was seen as a media, as we had made clear under the Tory government before, under John Major, that we did not have a selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland, we didn't mind as long as both parties could agree. So having someone from outside who was accepted as a fair referee was fine with us.

When George Mitchell left and we had to then spend the next nine years getting the agreement implemented, that required us to be inside a mediator. So I and the Irish government spent those nine years desperately trying to work to get the Good Friday implemented, which we finally did in 2007, when the Chuckle brothers took over.

Now, Jonathan, I want to ask you why your very first decision as Chief of Staff, the newly elected Prime Minister, I know what this question is going to be, was to commission a special box embossed Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister. Why did you do that?

Entirely so. You and Ten, you could mock me everywhere I went with it. So I tried it. I was actually Alex Allen, who was our Principal Private Secretary to start with, who'd worked for John Major. And he said, you're not going to be Principal Private Secretary. And I had my little box with Principal Private Secretary. You should have one saying Chief of Staff. So I got this made and I took it on a first trip at Alistair and Ten, you cheesed me mercilessly. And so I had to give it.

Beautiful sort of red box.

It wasn't a red box. It wasn't a red box because I wasn't the Minister. So it was a black box with lovely gold lettering saying Chief of Staff.

And a lead line to sort of big heavy things.

It was quite heavy. It wasn't a lead line, but it was.

It obviously cost the tax payer that little vanity.

No idea because it was never used. It was stuck under my desk and probably still there somewhere.

Give us a sense of the difference between politicians and the Chief of Staff.

What is it that makes, because obviously our show is called The Rest of Politics, what is it that makes a great politician? What's the skill that differentiates a great politician from a great civil servant?

A great politician needs to have a vision of what they're trying to do.

They need to be like a great general. They need to know where they're trying to get to, but not expect to be able to do it all themselves.

If you have a politician that doesn't have a vision is simply managerial.

It's not going to work. They're not going to get elected.

They're not going to get re-elected and they won't be able to govern very effectively.

They also need ideally not to be able to try to micromanage.

So the problem with Jimmy Carter, for example, when he was president was he tried to micromanage everything, including the booking of the tennis court at the White House.

And that doesn't work. So you need someone who can do that and then who can rely on someone else to make things happen.

And the reason I invented the job of Chief of Staff here was exactly I saw this gap when my brother was in Downing Street.

There was no one who brought together the political side, the media side, the foreign policy side altogether. So the Prime Minister had to keep intervening.

John Major had to keep intervening.

There was a competition between people on a Friday evening to get the last memo in the box for the Prime Minister to read, to be the one on top.

So people would stay very late on a Friday evening.

By having the job of Chief of Staff, we were able to make sure that didn't happen, that the Prime Minister got one lot of advice that was averaged out between what people wanted within the building.

But your personality was incredibly important to that because you didn't ever feel, it seemed to me, that yours had to be the thing on the top of the pile.

It had to be you were working out what was going to suit his interest best as in terms of the flow of paper. And I do think, I mean, I honestly do think it's

one of the achievements of the Blair government is that you had some very, very powerful characters in there, lots of us, but very, very little of the sort of ego stuff that you read about and hear about with this lot the whole time.

Yeah, there was no Marcia Falkender or anything of that from the Harold Wilson time.

And I do think it's because people were complementary in terms of actually doing very different sort of things. And I do notice that no one's abolished the job of Chief of Staff since, and they're never going to.

You know, Mr. Satcher tried to introduce it right at the beginning in 79, he had Lord Wilson come in to be a Chief of Staff. The civil service assigned him a room on the third floor in the front. And he wasn't allowed to read any confidential papers. And he gave up after three months, very sensibly. Because I had been in the civil service, I saw that coming. And I think it was quite awkward for Robin Butler, but I have to say, he played very fairly in the way that he handled it. He did think I wanted to be the principal private secretary, I never wanted to be. But now the Chief of Staff will always be there. And it will vary from Prime Minister to Prime Minister, because Prime Ministers have different skills, different needs. But they'll always be a Chief of Staff.

Yeah, well, Jonathan, thank you for giving me so much time. Thank you for putting up with, I think that's the first time I've seen Roy almost lose his temper.

I was very impressed by how calm it was.

Oh, yeah, that was all that.

It was just a test. It's one of those interrogator things.

It's been a pleasure talking to you. It was a pleasure working with you for all these years.

I'm sorry that I lost you the referendum in Columbia. I'm not going to take that and not sleep tonight because of that veiled slight. But thanks for all your time.

I thought it was wonderful. And also, I'm going to take a real lesson for how calm you were there. It was beautiful. It totally disarms me. I've never had anybody respond to an angry outburst with such extraordinary calm.

First interview I did after a left government, because I never did any interviews in government, was with, first interview I did was with Jeremy Paxman. And he suddenly was going to really get me. So he started with a long, really tough, angry question about Iraq and saying, aren't you ashamed? And I said, no. And he didn't have a follow-up question. He was completely sure he was going to move on to another subject. So I thought it was going...

But I think part of the trick won't just be the word. It would have been the tone of voice you said it in. Yeah, exactly. You're just great, calmly. No.

Very good. Thank you.

Thanks a lot.

My pleasure.

Now, Rory, I think you... What's our motto for this podcast?

We disagree agreeably.

And I think you were getting perilously close to crossing into disagreeability there.

As you said to me at breakfast this morning, I was out of order.

But you said it three times at breakfast. You clearly felt it very strongly.

I just think it was... Something got right under your skin.

It's called the Iraq War. It gets under a lot of people's skins.

It gets under a lot of skin. You didn't react like that when we did our two-hour deep dive. Yeah. Well, I know you much better. So I give you more of the benefit that out. You don't need me to tell you that if you're looking for a triggering moment, the Iraq War, for many of us, is the moment that drives us over the edge. Yeah. I've got to say, I think Jonathan is one of the most impressive people I've ever worked with. And I've worked with a lot of impressive people. And you saw some of it actually. I said right at the start, his utter unflappability and his ability always to stay focused. And I think what he was doing is a technique I sometimes try to use in television interviews with limited success at times. It's where... But this is what I tell other people to do when they're doing interviews. If somebody's getting angry or rude, don't listen to the tone, listen to the words. And that's what he was doing with you. So when he came straight back at you, he basically answered the point that you were making. And it's like the point you made about Jeremy Paxman, when Jeremy Paxman asked if he was ashamed, he said, no. He had a lovely, lovely answer and I agree, his super power is that it pretty natural comes. But if you actually heard what he said to me, he said, it's fine, Rory. I'm used to dealing with terrorists. I thought it was a great answer. And he is used to dealing with terrorists. We didn't really get into that too much. I mean, he just spent an awful lot of time now traveling the world, talking to some pretty dangerous people. Well, I think one of the things that I would have liked to get in more is the sense of the strangeness of that small group of you. So we've interviewed David Meliband, we've interviewed Tony Blair. Obviously, you're on the show all the time. And Jonathan Powell is one of the missing elements in that small group of you. The others were Angie Hunter, Sally Morgan at various points. Andrew Donis was the head of policy. Peter Mandelson. I guess we have to interview, right? We should do, definitely. But some stage, Rory, you're going to start putting in some guests rather than leaving it all to me. Yeah, that's right. Well, particularly since it's a bit sensitive, interview your friends, particularly when I get cross for them. Well, I think if you could tell me who's your closest friend in politics, get them in and I'll take them apart. Mind, I've got to say, if you talk about disagreeing agreeably, I had the most extraordinarily disagreeable disagreement with whatever your former colleagues last night, Mr. Steve Baker. Yeah, well, that was the other thing I got at breakfast. I got told off about Jonathan Powell, and then I got this extraordinary account of your argument with Steve Baker last night. Okay, well, onwards and upwards. And just don't be so disagreeably disagreeing the next time, Rory. Thank you, Aniston.