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Welcome to the Restless Politics Question Time with me, Rory Stewart.

And me, Alistair Campbell. And I want to start, Rory, with a question that shows the unbelievable prescience of some of our listeners. This is a question that we got last October, the 3rd of October, from somebody called George Rose. How scared should we be about current Credit Suisse CDS levels? Did the global financial system learn anything from 2008?

Well, I mean, so... Why did we not answer that, Alistair?

Exactly. So, first thing for listeners, CDS is Credit Default Swaps. And that is what six days ago really began, the collapse of Credit Suisse. But obviously, George Rose was onto it in October.

And is this related to the Silicon Valley Bank problems?

Yes.

Is this a domino thing?

Yes, absolutely. Basically, people were so panicked by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank that they began looking around for other banks to be panicked by. And people began withdrawing money from one of the weaker of the major banks, the world, which is Credit Suisse, and essentially started a bank run. And the result was the Saudi state fund refused to keep funding them. And in the end, the other great Swiss bank, UBS, has had to step in and buy out Credit Suisse. And they've bought it for a fraction of its theoretical book value. I mean, they've bought it for a few billion.

So, does that mean if you have money now with Credit Suisse, that your money is now worth less or not?

If you had certain kinds of instruments, more fancy instruments, not a normal depositor, a normal depositor should be insured by the Swiss central bank. But yes, people with fancy instruments may be in real trouble. And this is about people buying high-risk, high-return instruments, but assuming that they're safe, finding out that they're not safe.

And part of the reason, as I understand it with the Silicon Valley Bank, is that you and I might have our money in a bank, and we think that's where the money stays. But in fact, that bank, we're putting it into other banks that may be less reliable.

The whole series of things, you're completely right. So, there's the issue of the credit default swap, which is a mechanism where a bank tries to insure itself by getting another type of instrument which insures itself against credit default, insures itself against losing money on an optical instrument. And these things get more and more complicated. And this was one of the problems in the 2008 financial crisis. But in this particular case, part of the problem is the way that we've regulated since 2008, and in particular, pushing people to put more and more, pushing banks to put more and more of their money into government bonds. And the reason why they did that is that government bonds hold their value. So, in 10 years' time, you can cash in your government bond, and the US Treasury is not going to default on the government bond. But in the short term, if you are forced to sell because there's been a bank run, your government bond, you can be selling it for much less than it's worth. And this has also been affected by the fact that as interest rates have gone up, the value of the bonds have gone down. This is a weird mechanism, it's not that weird.

But effectively, the price of the bonds is inversely related to the rise in interest rates. So, two things. The way in which these banks were regulated after 2008, and the second thing, which is the rise in interest rates, has created this real weakness at the heart of the system. And banks that were less well-managed, Silicon Valley Bank seems to be one example, but credit suites even more dramatically. They've been through three CEOs in three years. They've had a series of catastrophic scandals. They've lost a lot of money. So, clearly, George Rose, who asked that question, was one of the people who, by October last year, was already... At his point, have they learnt anything from 2008? What you're saying would suggest no. Unfortunately, the regulators would say they learnt something from 2008, but what they did then created a whole series of different types of problem. But, yes, George is right, that one of the problems is the complexity of these things. And I was talking to a banker yesterday about the balance sheet of credit suites, and he said, one thing that nobody ever explains to you is that these banks are so big, so complicated that nobody understands them. Literally nobody. You can read the balance sheet of these banks, and it makes zero sense. Because at one point, credit suites had over a trillion dollars of assets under management, and they are every type of instrument. And it doesn't matter how big your brain is or almost how big your computer system is, nobody has any idea whether credit suites is worth minus a hundred billion or whether it's worth plus a hundred billion.

We could say the same for a lot of the banks that are not currently in a mess.

100% because they are, so long as nobody's withdrawing their assets, there's not a bank run happening. There's a semblance of security.

Yeah, nobody needs to really get into the question of what these things are actually worth. But, yes, again, we are being forced to confront the potential unraveling of our financial system.

So, Bernie Sanders is right. It's okay to be angry about capitalism.

And it's going to get, I think, even worse because since 2008, more and more and more of what's happening in these banks is, of course, automated, done by incredibly complicated computer systems now reinforced by AI algorithms so that almost nobody has any idea what's actually happening within these mechanisms.

Yeah.

Okay. My favorite question to read, Roy, Andrew Hoffman. Roy is the only person I know who says things like goodness and mercy me. Does he ever swear? You swore on the Iraq podcast.

I did.

I did.

How did you feel about that after you did that? Did your mother listen?

She did. She didn't tell me off for that, but you're right. I don't normally swear.

No. I swear a lot. I swear far too much.

You swear too much. Yeah. I don't normally swear, but that is you did wire me up. Yeah.

The only other thing I swear about is we have a mutual friend that you keep raising and whenever you mention him, I tend to swear. But otherwise, otherwise, I don't swear.

Do you want to out the person?

No, no, no. No, thank you very much. No, thank you very much. I'll tell you though.

Thanks. You're very discreet. You're very good at keeping my relationships alive by not passing on horrible, malicious gossip to stir up enmity between people.

I actually hate malicious gossip. I really do.

Could you please not contact our mutual friend and tell him that I swear whenever he's on the internet?

Oh, it's him. I thought you meant the her.

Right. Go on. Here's a question for you. Junior doctor strikes. Ben Evans, I was wondering to hear more of your thoughts on the junior doctor strikes. I feel like both the conservatives and labor are really underestimating that goodwill has almost run out and the solidarity among doctors has never been stronger. The point here being that Kiyosama and the labor government, understandably, because they're worried about how they're going to balance the budget, are not saying that they're going to offer the pay rises that the junior doctors are asking for. So the junior doctors are angry with both conservatives and labor. Do you think that both conservatives and labor are underestimating the goodwill has run out and do you think labor is making a mistake?

Well, I think on labor, I saw West Streeting did a very, very good interview where I think it was with Sky News and Sky were trying to get him essentially to say, well, that's all very well, but how would you pay for this? How would you pay for that? And Wes's line was, look, I'm very, very happy to tell you how we will fund the promises that we are currently making. What I'm not going to do is tell you how the government should be funding what they are promising when they know they can't fund it.

But Ben Evans, I'm a junior doctor.

No, no, I get that.

No, wait, no, wait. This is the next question. I feel the press recently has been very anti-doctor, especially West Streeting, who among doctors sounds like he has no idea what he's talking about. E.g., self-referring to specialist is the worst health policy I've heard in years.

I've been a proud labor supporter all my life, but in the next election, I think I will have to change things. So there's you saying positive stuff, but West Street, this doctor is furious. Okay, well, I do think that. I've got friends who are doctors, both junior doctors and consultants, and I think there was a real, whoa, hold on a minute, with that self-referral thing, because I think it's such a complicated idea. And I wonder whether that will survive the test of time. What I do think about junior doctors, I think the phrase junior doctors is so weird, because you think of a junior, you think of somebody who's young, you think of somebody who's very low down the pecking order. Junior doctors are the people that we in the main rely on when we go into hospital, and their people are incredibly well trained, not very well paid. I've had contact from junior doctors, I know, one of whom is a sister of another mutual friend, by the way, who say that what they feel really angry and frustrated about, and I actually think the BMA has played into this, is that the whole issue is being made about pay. Whereas what they say, the reason they are protesting is because they feel currently unable to deliver safe, basic, decent health care. Now, that completely chants have got Labour are saying. Now, I get why Labour don't want to say, we're going to fund this, this and this. I get that. But I do think on the politics of this, the public, I think, are, they were certainly behind the nurses. I think it's very interesting how the media are barely covering the junior doctors' strikes and protests. That march was extraordinary. It was a huge thing. I mean, very rarely you see a march as big as that in London, on a weekday in particular, and yet it barely got any coverage. So I think that that's where the public are,

they want these people to get a fair deal. So I hope that Labour will sort of maybe push this self-referral thing to one side, and that might make Ben Evans come back to Labour. But I do think on the politics of this, what the Labour are trying to do is to get caught in the same slipstream, and that question says to me that they're not necessarily doing the right thing on it. Maybe that you've sensed that the public actually want higher taxes and higher spending. Which Labour don't want to promise them. Well, they want the higher spending, but they don't necessarily want to talk about higher taxes. Or the other thing I think that's happened recently, which relates to this. We've had a few questions about childcare. Lorraine Pengili massively spends in the UK holding women back, want to know your thoughts on what the government could do to help parents and childcare costs. So the government announced something in the budget. And now it's quite a big thing. Quite a big package for very small children, yet again with this government, not clear how it's going to work, etc, etc. But I think that the reason they did that was because Labour, particularly through Bridget Phillips and the Education Secretary, has made clear that childcare is going to be a huge part of the Labour programme. So the government is trying to say, well, we're doing it first. I think Labour held back on the detail. That was a trick that you always did when you were in Labour government. Every time the Tories in opposition came up with a policy, it's one of the great things governments can do. You nick a policy that's good. You implement it straight away. What policies did we nick from the Conservative? What policies did we nick? Certainly from the point of view of the Conservatives, they felt, and the oppositions always feel that. Yeah, you hold back. You hold back. If the opposition produces a bad idea, the government shoots it down. If the opposition produces a good idea, the government simply adopts it, holds it. And the opposition stands there saying, well, it was our idea of first and only cares. Yeah. Totally get that. So that's, I think, this goes back to our continuing discussion about the Ming Vars strategy or the big bold strategy. Part of the Ming Vars is to say, well, we are going to do something big in this area, but we're not going to say what it is until we get very close to the election. But the government has sensed quite rightly that when we've talked a lot about this, many, many questions on childcare, it is an incredible burden on people's lives. And the government has now announced that up to, I think, 100,000 pounds, children over one, when this policy is implemented, will then get 30 hours of free childcare a week, which will make a huge difference to people. But the problem, of course, when you read the small print is that I think it's, I hope I'm getting this right, it's children, I think, who are born after December of this year. So one of the tricks in a lot of these budgets from all these governments is to push things forward, change their fiscal rules, push things into the future. But I definitely think it's a policy that will be hugely popular and very, very welcome. But I think that if childcare becomes one of the defining big debates at the election, I think that will end up being to Labour's advantage, I suspect. Here's a good one for you, Roy, which you can answer better than I can, although I do know the answer. Why do MPs stand up in dire? I've always wondered why between an MP asking a question, the Prime Minister being called to answer, other MPs stand up. They seem to be asking for a chance to respond to the question. But of course, it will only be the Prime Minister who gets to answer. So why do they do it? So in order to get to speak in the House of Commons, the speech,

You have to catch the speaker's eye.

Exactly. The speaker's got to call you. And the speaker's only prepared to call you if you're on your feet, which means that you bob up and down endlessly. So every time anyone else stands, you have to stand. And in a long, in a long debate, when I was trying to get called, so I mean, I got so infuriated by the stuff. I was one of the only MPs who'd spent serious time in Syria. And I was trying to get called in the Syria debate. And I was there for three hours, and I'd written a really strong 10 minute speech on the screen.

You had to watch Peter Bode being called.

And I would stand up and sit down, stand up and sit down, stand up and sit down, stand up and sit down, stand up and sit down. And John Birker never called me. And at the end of the three hours, I went up to him, I said, John, I am basically the only person in this chamber who spent serious time in Syria. I'm a member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Why did you not go, well, well, Rory, you know, sometimes, you know, customers say, it's completely infuriating. And the other thing they do,

Can I let you in a little super, by the way?

Yeah, go on.

You know, our motto, disagree, agreeable. Do you know who I got that for?

Oh, no, please.

Oh, no, please.

John Birker.

If it's not Alex Salmond.

John Birker.

I mean, I'm just talking to him. And he said, we've lost the art of disagreeing agreeably. And I thought, what a great line. Is that a terrible thing to say? Don, my producer, has got his head in his hands.

Oh, dear me, dear me.

So thanks, John. And the other thing that they do, which I don't know whether the public watching understands is that as the debate goes on, the speaker keeps reducing the amount of time you get to speak. So on big issues that I really cared about, Raq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria that I'd put huge energy into, I went to Libya the day after Gaddafi fell.

You're popping up and down. It starts unlimited. Then it becomes a 10 minute limit. And then a nine minute limit. By the time they call me, it's a three minute limit.

I've already had a lawyer love of this call, you know.

Order.

Order.

And when you say that, when you say to that, say to your colleagues, I cannot, or maybe it was before.

The honorable gentleman will sit down.

I cannot, you know, within four minutes, make all the points that need to be made about what's going on in Libya.

When I've just come back from visiting Libya, everyone says, oh, no, no, no, no. Any member of parliament worth their soul should be able to make their points in four minutes. And one of the objections I had to the European Parliament is they had a 90 second limit on speeches.

And the idea that you can say anything serious in 90 seconds.

If you can do it, they'll tweet, Roy. Right. We've got loads of questions to try and get through this week, Roy. So let's have a quick break.

Welcome back to the rest of the politics question time with me, Roy Stewart and me, Ernest Campbell.

Now, here's a question from Rachel Pepeat.

Yeah.

I would like to know what each of you likes and dislikes about the other. Let's go on the dislikes. The dynamic between you both is what makes the rest of politics such a success and I love it. So Katar, were you, Roy? What do you not like about Alistair Campbell?

Okay.

So I,

I'm sure you asked this the whole time.

No. So the thing that winds me up most about Alistair Campbell is the fact that the only conservative MPs he seems to like are real horrors like Alan Clarke. Paradoxically, you're only comfortable with conservative MPs. You never talk about people I really admire like David Gork.

I like David Gork.

You like

I got David Gork to go and speak with the people so I rallied and I was very nice to me.

He brought his dad and I liked his dad.

People you talk about are the rogues. You only like conservative MPs when they're rogues like Alan Clarke trying to hand over their Rolls Royce to us. That's my complaint about you.

Okay. What do I not like about Roy? I really, it's not a not like. I find it disturbing that he knows literally nothing about sport. I find that really disturbing and it makes me feel sorry for him and I don't like to feel sympathetic to somebody that I'm meant to be, meant to be sparring with. And I think the other thing you're going about, so I think could

Can I just come on there?

Yeah.

I sort of feel that the hours that you spend watching sport, how many hours a week you spend watching sport?

It's 24 times seven.

No, not many.

It's the time when I can be, you know, reading books, developing knowledge.

I really brought it up.

There's only that many hours in the day, right?

Yeah, that's true.

Yeah, okay.

You've probably spent now, I would think, in your life, one and a half solid years of your entire life watching sport.

Yeah, but, you know, we spent almost a third of our life sleeping. So, you know, so, no,

I take, I'd say something. I think that you're a very decent bloke for a Tory. Okay. No doubt about that.

So that blows your theory about me completely in a hole. I wouldn't be doing this podcast with you, though you're a Tory, if I didn't think there was some sort of decency there.

But you'd really prefer to be doing it with Alan Clark, wouldn't you?

Well, I'd rather it was alive than dead because I thought he added a lot of gay attitude to the nation.

But I think you are, I've noticed, for example, that the two people you most despise, I think. One is Johnson.

Yeah.

And I think the other city can't. And let me finish.

And I think what they have in common is that you wanted the job they then wanted to get.

So I think there's more of a kind of steely determination, a killer instinct, you remind me of my Fiona, right? In this regard, right? When we go out and about, people see me and Fiona together and I'm like the big bastard and she's just the saint, right? And I think with you people that, you know, Alice to cover this horrible, hard bastard and Rory's the nice guy. And I don't think you're as nice as you may have. Can I just put on the record?

I think Sadiq Khan is a much better person than Boris Johnson.

Cut there. Cut there. You don't say but.

Very good. Okay. Okay. Here's a question for you. Jacques Malarbe. What tip did you receive as a young journalist that you still think is relevant and important? How would you say that in French?

Quel qu'on sait?

Yes.

Vous avez reçu?

Yes.

As a young journalist, that you still think is relevant and important.

Qui reste toujours relevant. Relevant. I think. Was that okay?

Very good. Yes.

Why is it in French? At least of course.

You think he's French?

Jacques Malarbe.

Jacques Malarbe. He could be from Wigan. I mean, you just so hate the North of England.

What tip did you receive that you think is no longer applicable in a much changed media landscape?

No. I'll tell you the tip that I received from my very good friend and mentor, Sid Young, sadly no longer with us. I remember him once saying to me, and I absolutely believe there's a story in everybody.

Okay.

So that's still relevant. What tip, he says, his second question, do you think is no longer applicable in a much changed media landscape?

I was going to say, I wonder whether you really need a 150-minute shorthand, given that, funny if these students, I was with yesterday.

Do you have a 150-minute shorthand?

I did. I don't know.

Yeah, I still do shorthand, but I don't have a 150-minute. But I've noticed with all these students yesterday, none of them were taking notes. They're just tapping on the keyboard. So maybe that, maybe that. I still think shorthand is useful to have, but I don't think it's as important as it was.

You couldn't qualify as a journalist without shorthand back in the day.

Yeah.

Right. I have one for you.

Okay.

Well, I have one for you. Guy at it. UK soft power. Just over a week ago, incidentally, we both agreed with every word of what I'm about to read, but I'm going to give you an opportunity to respond.

To agree with it.

The UK's only full-time professional choir, the BBC singers, was axed suddenly after nearly a hundred years of extraordinary service. This has prompted calls from music fans and professionals to propose a boycott for the BBC proms. In the last year, we've seen huge cuts to the English natural opera, Gleinborn tour, the Britain symphony, WNO, and many other vital musical and art institutions. What can be done to stop this wanton destruction of our rich cultural landscape and heritage? How do we protect and promote the UK's position as a global leader in culture when the current government seems to be ideologically opposed to a diverse high-quality music and arts scene? That is going, and the rest of politics manifested to challenge the Labour government to reinstate when they come in.

Fun enough, particularly at a time when everything else feels so SHIT, that there's always a danger that arts and culture gets hit first, when actually arts and culture are fundamental to all the things that make life special. I thought one of my favourite of many really moving bits of the leading interview with Rahima Mahmood from the Stop the Weaker Genocide campaign was when she said that she's a musician, she's a very talented musician, and she said that she saw her music as an act of defiance against the regime because they're trying to erase their culture, erase all joy. And I'll tell you how crazy this, Louis Shackleton, who's David Miliband's wife and she's a musician, she's a violinist, and she's been sending me stuff all week, which is so wound up about this. And she says to this, what on earth is happening with the BBC? The BBC had a headline, Dorset Farmer to conduct music at King's Coronation. This Dorset Farmer happens to be Sir John Elliot Gardner, who's one of the greatest conductors there has ever been. And then there's an American composer by John Adams, American composer and conductor. He has come out and said, I just do not understand this is happening in Britain.

I mean, that is unbelievable, isn't it?

So listen, we are, I've been tweeting away madly for the BBC singers. And of course, when you do, you get all these Lee Anderson types saying, oh, Metropolitan, they love your singing and all the rest of it. They want to portray all this art stuff as only being for kind of, you know, a wealthy elite, like, you know, kids in working class areas don't like to, you know, do arts and culture. So I'm with you on this one. And I really do think, look, it's such an easy thing for Labour just to say, you know, obviously it's not their budget.

Yeah, it's the BBC.

But if Labour has started a campaign now for the BBC singers, I think they'd win it.

I do think the John Elliot Gardner thing is absolutely insane.

What the Dorset Farmer?

Completely insane. So this guy for listeners, because we'll put a clip onto, I don't know, English Baroque or the Monteverdi, but this man is an international superstar of music. Yeah.

And the one thing he's not...

There's nothing wrong with Dorset Farmer, by the way.

One thing he's not known around the world for is his agricultural practices.

So there we are. Listen, if the BBC wanted to come back and say that was a fake tweet and a spoof or whatever, fair enough, but it was pretty ridiculous. Right, Max Ferrera. I've recently been watching The Simpsons and I came across the episode that Tony Blair featured in. I was shocked that Tony Blair actually voiced himself on the show. Could I ask Alasdair how that arrangement came to happen and what part did you play?

Yeah, go on then, tell us about that.

Would you like to be in The Simpsons? Would you look...

Yeah, yeah, I would quite like to be in The Simpsons. Weirdly, the president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, was exactly identical to Homer Simpson's boss. It really, really weird. Anyway, yes, go on, tell us about Tony Blair.

Well, the reason why that question leaped out to me is because I do remember it. I can't remember how it got arranged. The Simpsons basically just asked if Tony Blair would be in it and I don't think I've ever seen him quite as excited as he was. But no, I think Tony's three most culturally exciting moments, there was recording The Simpsons and then being on The Simpsons, he liked that, meeting Barbara Streisand. He was genuinely a bit starstruck with Barbara Streisand and the other one, he met David Bowie at the Brits.

And that was a big deal.

And I remember we got in the car on the way to the Brits.

Would you be more excited about meeting David Bowie or Mick Jagger?

Well, I met Mick Jagger.

I see.

And I met David Bowie.

Which was more exciting for you?

I think David Bowie, I think David Bowie is a bigger historical... I don't know, I think they're both really impressive.

Pretty impressive.

I think when you get to that level. The other time was Tony was hosting a meeting of regional political editors in the cabinet room. And there was a knock on the door and Fiona, my Fiona, who was with Cherie at the time, said, is this important? And I sort of, regional journalist, sort of, you know, so we've got a guest. And Cherie brought Paul McCartney in.

So that was quite cool.

That was pretty cool. Now, here's an interesting question from Colin Moody. Another podcast I listened to recently suggested that Tony Blair considered sending the SAS into Zimbabwe

to take out Mugabe. How much of any truth is there in this? And I want to, just on that, talk a little bit about somebody that we both knew quite well, Charles Guthrie, chief of the defence staff. So he was my neighbour when I was growing up in London.

OK.

Two doors down, I used to play with his sons. And I knew him, I guess, when he was first a young colonel. And very sadly lost his wife recently. And he, I think, is sometimes remembered as having got into conversations with you and Tony Blair about the feasibility of intervening in Zimbabwe. Talk a little bit about that. Is that something that you've been open about? I don't remember the specifics of Zimbabwe and Mugabe. I don't think we would have done an assassination on Mugabe.

The story at the time, though, is that almost actually in the lead up to the Iraq war, there was huge anxiety about what was happening in Mugabe. And remember, Gaby Genfilis has taken over and in 1983 had led this horrifying massacre of his political opponents, Kudugur Khundi. He had then presided over rising inflation, expropriation of farms. And there was increasing pressure, wasn't there, on the black government to do something through the late 1970s, early 2000s?

Yeah. And Charles Guthrie, by the way, was definitely part of that discussion that led to the intervention that we did in Sierra Leone. I remember him specifically coming over and explaining why he felt this was so important. And as you were saying in the discussion about Iraq, you know, the military have their own views. They won't do anything without political oversight. But I have no memory at all of a discussion about taking out Mugabe.

I will say about Charles Guthrie. And you said on the Iraq podcast that you thought I was a bit too sort of respectful and differential to these military bots, in my view. But I've found him an absolutely fascinating character. As you know, I've got this thing about people who wear the pinkie rings. But I didn't mind Charles's pinkie ring.

You didn't mind that.

And one of my proudest moments was when I was over at the M.O.D. and he introduced me to some, I think it was an American guy, wandering around the place. And Charles said, this is Arashteya Campbell. He's the Eshe Eshe of Spin.

Very good.

Which I was, you know, very, very proud.

It's a good compliment from Charles.

So here's one for you. Pakistan. Edmund Rose. I think I know what you're going to answer this as well. Is Emran Khan pluckily fighting a government which intent on staying in power and therefore trying to prevent him from campaigning and being elected? Or is he a populist who is no better for his country when in power than the various other recent Pakistan prime ministers?

Well, Emran Khan is definitely whatever you think about. I mean, you know, somebody who was very, very well known in Britain, probably the most famous Pakistani leader I think it's ever been in Britain because he was an incredibly famous cricket star. Married to Jamiah McCann, Jamiah Goldsmith. He undoubtedly has a lot of populist tendencies in the way he does politics. He's created a whole change in Pakistani political culture. I used to go campaigning with Pakistani politicians in the early 2000s. I remember driving around with one of the

members of these Pakistani elite families as she was campaigning in rural Punjab and she would, we drove in the back of a car. The car would drive up to some men sitting on a string bed outside a collection of mud houses. The driver would put down the window and he would say, in the back of this car is Lady So and So, the daughter of Mr. So and So and the daughter of Lady So and So. What do you vote for in the next election? And the men, it's a very feudal system would basically stand off their string beds, pull their forelock and say Jihar and then the car would drive on and that was political campaigning. So in those days, Pakistani politics was dominated by these feudal landlords who often went back to the British Raj, who were descended from famous saints from the Middle Ages. And what's happened is Imran Khan has created a whole new coalition based on new urban money and youth. He was brought in with the backing of the military, tried to fight against the military, the military essentially threw him out. And there is absolutely no doubt really that if an election was held today, he seems to have an overwhelming support, which would bring him in again. But the current government, which is being run by the brother of the previous Prime Minister, is technocratic, focused on detail, efficient, and there is a culture war going on, very classic culture war between somebody who's a sort of Rishi Sunak figure, in a very thoughtful, serious, technocratic detail against Imran Khan, who absolutely represents public opinion and can deploy huge crowds into the streets. And in the middle of all this is the Pakistan military that still effectively runs Pakistan.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, let's take this one. There's both the main podcast and the Q&A been quite gloomy. Let's try and inject a bit of hope. Alex, me, is there anything about the current political situation that gives you hope? Should I dare to feel hopeful about the future? Or are we just on a giant island-shaped Titanic slowly sinking further and further?

Okay, let me try first to go back to you. The thing that gives me hope is that we often talk about an age of populism, but actually there have been some very positive developments. We've talked about the fact that Biden defeated Trump, did well again in the midterms, we've talked about successes in Slovenia and Czech Republic, people fighting against populists, the Teal independence in Australia, Bolsonaro gone, Boris Johnson gone, Liz Truss gone. So I think populism is still a very, very powerful force in a world of social media, but it isn't always going to win. And perhaps the most optimistic of all is Macron defeating the pen. Back to you.

I do get hopeful when I do events like it did with the King's College guys yesterday who were engaged, interested in, okay, they're political students, but I think there are a lot of people who are really interested in politics at the moment, but just worried about it. At Manchester City against Burnley on Saturday, I went with my son, Callum, and arrived in the way, and the guy next to me was...

You talk about this match a lot, was it?

Well, it was because we played so well.

Yes, you played so well.

We played so well.

Very, very good.

As everybody said, as I think Pep Guardiola said, and these have to imagine, they were lucky to get 6-0. So the first guy who came sat next to me was a guy called Mark, who I'd never met before, and we got chatting about this, that, and the other, and eventually

started talking a little bit about politics. And he said, don't be cross with me, but I've actually...

He was in his 40s, I'd say. He says, don't be cross with me, but I've never, ever voted in my life. I've just never bothered. But I'm going to vote this time, because we've got to get rid of these people. That gave me hope.

Put it this way, if this government does hang on for another term, I really would feel hopeless about the future.

You'd get depressed. You'd move off to France or something.

And I do, honestly, I'm sure you get the same. I think it's hopeful that we've... I know you've seen it when you just back in London the last couple of days. And a number of people who have come up to say, really like your podcast, I think that is hopeful because I think it says that people are engaged, want to be engaged, but don't quite know how to be engaged, which is why Alistair Campbell's book, but what can I do? May 11th Penguin Random House is so timely, Rory.

Yeah, Alistair Campbell's book, May 11th Penguin Random House. You heard about it first here. Right, thank you all very much.

Thank you.

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