

## [Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / Gary Lineker, BBC in crisis, and small boats

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Welcome to an emergency podcast.

Rory, do you know what that music is?

Yes, because the good news that we can announce exclusively is that you and I are now presenting Match of the Day.

Well, let's start with, I know they're not in the Premier League, but let's start with Burnley at Wigan today.

Burnley, who will be in the Premier League very, very soon.

Rory, what do you think has been the difference between Vincent Company and Sean Dyche as managers at Burnley?

Well, I think it's to do with the focus on youth development.

I think that's the thing that we really need to talk about.

Oh, well, Jack Cork, our central midfielder in his mid-30s, is that sort of youth development that we're talking about?

Well, I want to take it out to a broader conversation, really, about the politics behind this.

Now, Alistair, apart from the fact that it's an amazing promotion for you and me, and I can see myself taking Gary's role and you taking Ian Wright's role in this, just give us a bit of context for anybody who is outside the United Kingdom, just for a second on where we're coming from, and then we'll get straight into the details of Gary Lineker and his suspension.

Okay.

Well, you say for people outside the United Kingdom, but if my phone yesterday was anything to go by, this is a story that is playing around the world, because you have to remember about the BBC as a global brand, and Gary Lineker, obviously best known in England, where he was an international and has been a TV presenter on Match of the Day since 1999, but he's a famous name anywhere where there's football.

So this story is playing out all over the world.

I think it's hugely damaging for the BBC, and it started, I guess the context, it started with Cibella Braverman's illegal migrants bill.

Gary Lineker tweeted on, he did a quote tweet on her film, she did a little video, which was pretty horrible, I think, pressing all the sort of populist, in my view, extremist right wing anti asylum, anti refugee buttons, using some pretty horrible language.

And he basically said that he thought this was an immeasurably cruel policy.

He thought that the language being used around this was Redland of the 30s in Germany.

And he made the factual statement, which is a correct statement, that the UK takes far fewer refugees than most of the European countries.

And I checked all that, we are 18th, we are 18th in the list of refugees.

Well, this is something that we've spoken about.

And before we get on to the details of this thing, firstly, to put on the record for anyone listening that the both of us are friends of Gary Lineker, and indeed Gary Lineker's company owns this podcast.

So people welcome to take this for the pinch of salt.

But to step back for a moment, I think one of the things that we've talked about a lot is that the UK is not balancing its policy towards people coming in boats with a generally generous policy.

That's what Soela Bravman was trying to suggest.

She keeps making speeches saying they've been generous towards Ukrainians, they've been generous towards people from Hong Kong, they've been generous towards people from Afghanistan.

Now, it's true that many Ukrainians have come to Britain, but in fact, it's been almost impossible for most of the Afghans that I work with to come to the United Kingdom.

And overall, the only way I think of thinking about migration is about thinking about countries sharing burdens.

And that is about recognizing that there are currently about 100 million displaced people in the world and over 20 million refugees.

And the burden of these refugees falls very, very randomly, much of the burden being carried of course by countries in Africa, Pakistan and Iran carrying large burdens, but also of course, because of the nature of Europe, a lot of the burden falling on the southern edges of Europe.

Although the two European countries that are taking the most, the Germany and Sweden. Absolutely.

And that's partly because I think they understand, and I think this is something we've discussed, that we need a global coalition on refugees, which actually existed in the 1970s in relation to the Vietnam boat people, where countries like the United States, Canada, France and other stepped forward to share the burden.

And we've discussed whether it would be possible to agree a global number.

Let's say you take 0.05% of your population annually in refugees, which would be similar to taking maybe one family for a town of 10,000 people.

If every major nation, including Britain committed to that, you could have a much, much more thoughtful rational system.

Now let's come back to the whole refugee question.

In fact, Gary is somebody who I think has a refugee, if not refugees plural in his house.

We've had a Ukrainian in our home for the last eight months.

And I think to be fair, the system has been okay for us being able to have a Ukrainian refugee with us.

What sort of support do you get?

What's your concept?

It was very good at the start when we were able to get her registered and able to work very, very quickly and all the biometric stuff.

That side of things worked very, very well.

She got a job.

Just tell us a little bit more.

How did you hear about it?

Did you, did someone get in touch with you?

Did you get in touch with the government?

How did the system work for you taking someone in?

Fiona did it through one of the charitable organisations that was right at the start was helping Ukrainians to come here.

And then you just have to go through quite a lot of bureaucracy.

But that side of things worked reasonably well.

And sorry, I know this is irritating, but did you get a choice?

Did you get to interview?

Is it a sort of matching process where they like you, you like them, or do you just take first come, first served, or how does it work?

I think we could have said no.

And we did have a sort of conversations online, which were with the person who I think was based in Cambridge, who was linking us up.

And then, but that all went reasonably smoothly.

But there was one night where we went out, we're out for dinner.

And at the next table was a guy who turned up with a couple of young black men.

And he spotted me and started talking to me.

And I said, oh, we're just, you know, so and so has just arrived from Ukraine.

And I could see he was this guy was rather bristling.

And the reason he was bristling is because the two young men that he was with, one was from Eritrea, and was one was from, I think it was Syria.

And he said that he was taking them out for dinner.

He'd met them.

He was a widower.

He lost his wife a couple of years ago.

He was kind of, you know, he's what the Daily Mail would call a do gooder north London, Islington, do gooder.

And he was taking these guys out for dinner, sort of several nights a week, because they were, they were getting by on eight pounds a week.

And they had no right to work.

So as our young woman from Ukraine, she got a reasonably good job.

She was making money reasonably quickly.

So that side of things work.

Now, Rory, I reckon most of our listeners by now a screw, will you please talk about the BBC and Gary Liddica?

Yeah, go on then.

Go on.

Let's talk about the BBC for a bit.

So, well, I honestly do think this, I did a lot of interviews yesterday, and, you know, I think some, I got a few, I think a lot of people agree with what I was saying, but some people say, look, you're taking this too seriously, you're getting too fired up.

And Alice, sorry, this is my last interruption, because I'm interrupting.

I bet it's not.

I bet it's not.

Just in case there's somebody listening who isn't paying full attention, what's happened is that Gary Liddica having sent out that tweet.

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The BBC has ruled that he seems to have decided that he may be in breach of their impartiality guidelines on his use of social media.

And although they suggested initially that he'd voluntarily set back from yesterday, it now becomes apparent that they've essentially suspended him from presenting.

And in response, Ian Wright, who's his leading co-presenter, decided he wasn't going to come on.

Oh, Rory Stewart has just offended Alan Shearer there.

Alan Shearer might have argued.

I think even Alex Scott might have arguments.

Have they also stepped back?

Is there nobody doing it?

They've also stepped back.

And then since then, overnight, Alex Scott, who also presents Football Focus, which is a very popular Saturday lunchtime program, she's announced she's not doing that today.

So we're recording this just after 11 o'clock on Saturday morning within an hour or two.

We'll see how the BBC are going to handle that.

And tonight, I mean, with much of the day tonight, it's what they're going to do, play sort of martial music instead, because all the commentators have pulled out as well.

So maybe they can take foreign commentators.

And then some of the players are saying that they don't want to do after-match interviews.

Some of the managers might do that.

And that, of course, gets them into difficulty with their contract with the Premier League.

The contracts with all these interviews, it's not the BBC, it's with the Premier League.

And then here's another one for you, Rory, which I think is quite interesting.

This week, as I'm sure you're aware, is the quarterfinals of the FA Cup.

Now, the FA is different to the Premier League, it's a wholly different organisation.

The BBC is the main presenter of the FA Cup.

There are two live games, which are scheduled for the BBC, one of which is Manchester City against Burnley, if I may mention them again.

And guess who is currently scheduled, if you pick up your Radio Times, who's currently scheduled to present those, Gary Lineker, Alan Shearer, Ian Wright.

So let's just see what the FA thinks of this.

And I suspect, if people want to look at it, a couple of things I'll send people towards so that they don't have to listen to me say it all here.

I've written a piece for the New European, which they posted this morning online, about why I think this is actually really serious for democracy, and we'll come onto some of the arguments about that.

And I've also done a short thread for Twitter about my rules of crisis management.

And the first rule of crisis management, this is where the BBC should be right now with towels around heads.

First of all, is it a crisis?

And my definition of a crisis is an event or situation which threatens to overwhelm the organisation if the right decisions are not taken.

So is this a crisis?

Yes, it is.

That's exactly the position that the BBC is in.

This could overwhelm them if they're not careful.

Therefore, you go into crisis management mode.

What is the key principle of crisis management mode?

It is to work out where this is going to end in a position that best protects the organisation and on principles which you can consistently defend.

And if you decide that, I think this is where this goes.

Richard Sharp.

So before we get Richard Sharp, so where this is going to end and principles that you can consistently defend.

Presumably, before we get on to Sharp, you are saying that almost whatever else we think about it, putting the rights and wrongs of their impartiality guidelines aside, the BBC have magnificently mishandled this crisis because there's no way that they can find themselves defining where it's going to end and how they can find an ending which is consistent with their principles.

Correct.

And so, for example, they've been saying, when they say that they think Gary Innick's tweet was outside the guidelines, well, what about Alan Sugar when at the last election he said, vote Tory?

What about Alan Sugar when he posted a photo montage of Jeremy Corbyn wearing a Nazi uniform in a car with that old Hitler?

Way worse than anything Innick has done.

So my point about crisis management, once you've decided that and you decided you're going to base decisions on the principles on which arguments will be won, I argue that what that means is that Richard Sharp, the conservative donor, friend of Sunak, loner ranger for Johnson, he's going to have to go.

He has to leave.

Otherwise, their integrity is shot.

I think Robbie Gibb has to leave.

Robbie Gibb is the guy who used to run BBC Millbank, ran the Westminster Coverage, was why he was there.

I got an amazing text from a BBC journalist this morning and I'll try and find it.

I'll read it out to you.

He said, this fucker, he said, he was all over the BBC for Brexit.

And then when he left at number 10, he was all over bullying the BBC about Brexit and about the Tories.

So Robbie Gibb's got to go.

He's on the board.

He shouldn't be anywhere near the board.

And then I think the next thing that has to happen is that Tim Davy, I think Tim Davy, he's probably the full guy and may end up as the full guy in this.

And I think if he came out and said, the truth is, we have been put under intolerable political pressure, I regret to say that we caved into that pressure.

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It was a mistake.

We have to learn from that.

We have to stand up for the values of the BBC, which are painted on the statue of George Orwell outside.

And therefore, I hope that Gary Lineker, Alan Shearer, Ian Wright, Alex Scott, Mark Chapman, all the others, I hope they will come back.

They will be welcome back.

In slower time, we will develop clearer guidelines, which will apply to all BBC presenters.

Okay.

So I think that seems really...

I'm sorry.

The final point I'd make, Rory, is that they propose to government that in future government has no role in the appointment of the BBC Chairman.

Good.

Okay.

So that all seems clear.

Let's just take it back to two things.

One is the question of how the BBC gets this impartiality right.

Presumably, when you were working for Tony Blair, there were times when you felt the BBC was not being impartial.

I mean, famously, the career-defining moment was aroused with the BBC over its coverage of weapons and mass destruction, the Iraq war and all that kind of stuff.

What was your conclusion when you were in Downing Street about what the BBC should do to get the balance right?

So it's publicly funded.

Like Fox News, it's something that's supposed to exist to provide a balanced impartial opinion to the British public.

So what was your rule of thumb for deciding when you were in Downing Street, when you thought the BBC was doing its job well by challenging you, and when you thought they overstepped the mark?

I mean, I don't like being presented as a sort of anti-BBC person because I really am genuinely not.

I think the BBC is incredibly important to the country.

You and I have talked a lot about, I mean, if I'm in the car on my own, I listen to the BBC World Service.

I think it's a fantastic service and the cuts to it have been awful.

I think that the BBC has really struggled on the sports agenda because of Sky.

And I defend the BBC.

I do defend the BBC.

The row that I had with the BBC was about a specific report where Andrew Gilligan, friend of Boris Johnson, lied about something that David Kelly had said to him about the weapons and mass destruction issue.

The BBC then went into the sort of BBC right or wrong defence mode and it led to the tragedy that we all know about, David Kelly taking his own life.

And because we would not let it go, and because we were basing our arguments at that point on principles, it led to, you know, the resignation of the chairman and the director-general. I don't want to get into the rights and wrongs of Gilligan and Iraq because we're going to do an Iraq thing later.

But did you come out of it with a sense out of that crisis of how the BBC is supposed to get the balance right?

I came out with a sense of how they got that one wrong by feeling that because they were being attacked by Downey Street, by the government, by me, that they had to defend themselves right or wrong.

And what's happened with this one, and I thought Nicola Sturgeon made a very interesting comment yesterday, she said this was an outrageous decision.

The BBC often upsets politicians and often upsets governments, but why is it that it always seems to be pressure from the right that they cave into?

And that, I'm afraid, I think is the problem.

Now on BBC reporting and impartiality, I know I've got this reputation, the sort of Malcolm Tucker thing, endlessly shouting at the BBC and so forth.

It is honestly a mythology.

I think if you talk to people like Robin Oakley, John Cole, Dennis Murray in Ireland, John Sopal, all of the lots and dozens of BBC reporters that I've worked with, my sense of impartiality is that they try to cover the political debate in a rounded, mature way in which in particular Labour and the Tories are given broadly equal sense of the ability to input into that debate and where the political reporters, in particular, give no indication of their own personal views. And most of the time that happens.

There is an issue, though, isn't there, I mean, for the BBC, which is that they are in a more and more difficult space every decade that passes there.

And I mean, I'm a completely unashamed lover of the BBC, and one of the things that really alienated me and angered me from some of my more right-wing colleagues in Parliament to the people who are on the defund the BBC, get the BBC side.

I love the BBC.

In fact, BBC is sort of its rory, centre-thinking jewel.

But they are in a tough spot because the development of social media has got everybody accustomed to much more extreme, exaggerated statements.

We've talked about this in the past, that the algorithms of Twitter and Facebook feed the extremes.

You know, we've talked about the way in which it almost trains our brain, that if I send out a little tweet saying, interesting details of civil service implementation of education policy in the Northeast, I'm not going to get any response.

If I send out a tweet saying, such and such a politician should be hung, drawn and quartered, I can immediately get 15,000 likes and retweets.

And they're also competing in a world in which there are more and more voices out there who are not constrained.

I mean, one of the successes, probably, of our podcast is that we wouldn't be allowed to speak the way that we do in the BBC, we can be much, much more accidentally.

So they're really struggling to keep viewers, keep listeners, keep relevance in a much more

informal, outspoken world.

And I think that this is one of the things that these impartiality guidelines, which after all, were always very, very difficult.

If you read their impartiality guidelines, I'm sure you have, and we'll share them with listeners.

But I went through their guidelines, trying to see if they would give a clear definition of impartiality.

And basically, all the guidelines do is try to tell you what impartiality is not, but they don't really tell you what impartiality is.

But I think this is where the overall branding and the reputation, reputation is a really interesting concept.

But reputation, I have a concept called a reputational bank, and you put currency into the reputational bank.

The BBC has got enormous reputational currency in the bank.

Now, when they go through these crises, like whether it was the Gibraltar killings with Mughal Satcha, whether it was us in Iraq, whether it was this going on now, then maybe a bit goes out.

And then when you have, and somebody posted today, I'd forgotten about it, an interesting Dominic Cummings several years ago writing how important it was for the right in this country.

They were going to have to really undermine the BBC and sort of trash the funding model. And that's been a campaign on the right.

So while that's going on, the BBC should be thinking all the time, how do we keep and keep replenishing the reputational bank now?

And they do it in loads of ways.

Look at the success of Brian Cox, the scientist as a presenter, his programs go global.

Look at line of duty on the kind of on the drama side.

Look at David Attenborough stuff.

So that is how the the BBC and so and look at match of the day, by the way, match of the day.

You can watch virtually any football match in the world on your screen somewhere.

I can find virtually any match I want to watch.

If you've got enough TV channels and you know how to do it, you can watch.

And yet very large numbers of people, given the sort of program it is at the time it is on a Saturday night, tune into a program like match of the day.

Why?

In part because they built the brand Gary has been presenting that program since 1999.

There's only five people who have ever presented it.

Here's the question, Rory, who was the match of the day presenter before Gary Linnaker?

I don't know.

Who was it?

Des Lylem.

Des Lylem.

I actually I have heard of Des Lylem.



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There you go.

So I'm going to just give give again listeners a little bit of an update on the underlying question around the the small boats movements that led to this new policy, which we'll talk about a little bit more next week.

And to which Gary Linnaker is responding.

So there has been an incredible change in, I don't know how one wants to describe it, people crossing British borders without permission since 2018.

And if you look at the graphs, you go from most people crossing land borders, tiny number on boats to a sudden explosion on the use of boats and these boats mostly leave the French coast.

And the composition of the people on the on the boats is extraordinary.

There's been a lot of government publications trying to define who are on those boats.

So first six months of 2022, it was 18% Albanian, 18% Afghan.

But in May, September 2022, the next period, it shot up to 42% Albanians.

And guess what percentage of them were male?

Since you maybe guess about Des Lylem.

85.

95% male.

Wow.

95% male.

And the truth is that male Albanians are almost impossible for them to be able to make it through the asylum process.

It's very...

Some have, by the way.

Some have, but male Albanians very, very difficult for them to prove persecution indeed.

We interviewed the Prime Minister of Albania and talked a little bit about situation Albania and why that that's a difficult thing for them to do.

Voters, one of the tragedies of this is that the BBC has ended up in the worst situation possible.

Gary Lineker, I think, has come out of it very, very strong.

He's now a great hero.

And in fact, his name recognition is extraordinary.

Even the fact that the Daily Mail ran its front page for three days with his name and headlines.

Not to mention the fact that there's huge support from everywhere, but also the government probably hasn't suffered.

So some of the polling by JL partners suggests that all this is meant for the government is that it's put more and more attention on an issue where the majority of voters, two to one, 52% for 25% against their current understanding of the government policies.

And it's 83% support amongst the core 2019 conservative voters for their policy to try to stop the boats coming up.

That's why they're doing it.

But just two things to push back on that.

The first is that what those instant polls on major policy announcements do, they kind of give you an instant reaction.

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And then what happens is that this is why I'm not convinced that actually this has helped the government.

Then what happens is that the policy gets analyzed and studied and worked through.

And then over time, people see whether it works or not.

Now I actually think a bit like Rwanda, this is a policy more designed to make noise than actually to address the problem.

Because Rishi Sunak has put stopping the boats as one of these big five promises to the country, this is one where they're going to have to make it work.

And the second one, you mentioned the front page of the Daily Mail there.

As you probably know, Rory, I often get triggered if anybody mentioned the name evil of the Daily Mail.

Let me just throw this back out into the general debate here.

Again, I got a text from somebody in that world who said, two things happened this week.

One was trivial and one was very serious.

The trivial one was a tweet by a former footballer.

The serious one was the revelation that Boris Johnson, Paul Daker's peerage having been turned down by the Appointments Commission, is trying to get him through on his resignation honours list, partly because Paul Daker is leading the charge in trying to help Boris Johnson through the whole party gate thing.

And this guy said, which of those two is the more corrupt about our media and our politics?

And 100% Boris Johnson.

And it's also true that we barely remember because the things that Boris Johnson does are so peculiar and come so quickly that it's only four days ago that the news came out that Boris Johnson was intending to make his father a knight, having made his brother a member of the House of Lords.

This is really extraordinary.

I mean, there's not since Tudor Kings have we had people trying to behave like this and handing out title services yet.

My point is that that story about Daker, you haven't heard about that on the BBC.

You haven't heard about very little about Sir Stanley Johnson in the Daily Mail.

That is corruption.

That is where our media is politically corrupt.

And I think that's the other thing that Gary Linnaker is, you know, this is about a lot more than Gary Linnaker, but he's shone a light on the way that this, this stuff happens.

And I'll tell you, I think it's really interesting about this, I've been trying to think of the last story that's related to sport that, for example, when Fiona and I went for our swim this morning, and there were the usual sort of, I don't know, a couple of dozen people in the queue at 7am.

Every single person was talking about this story, every single one.

I can't remember the last sports story where that happened, where that's happened.

Maybe Marcus Rashford.

No, I don't think so.

No, I don't think so because that wasn't a controversy.

This is a, because this is a controversy that goes to the heart of what's happening to

our politics and to our country.

And I was on Sky News yesterday and I followed Anna Subri.

So I was waiting with my, sitting at my laptop, waiting for Anna Subri to finish.

And she, you know, she's like you, a Tory MP who was kicked out by Johnson.

And she made the point, and I think she's absolutely right, that this is, this is profoundly dangerous to democracy.

Because when you add it up with what they're doing on voter ID, what they're doing about curbing protests, what they're doing about curbing the powers of the electoral commission so as they can, you know, break more laws and get more Russian oligarchs in their campaigns, what they're doing into the sort of fabric of our democracy, all the time, like with the refugees, we're being, we're being nice, we're being welcoming, et cetera.

And on this, you know, we're strengthening our democracy, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

And I think this is sort of getting to a growing, gnawing fear that these people who shout about how much they love free speech, actually are trying to curb free speech, if it involves dissent and criticism of themselves, but back to public opinion and asylum.

So you guys also were in a lot of trouble in 2002 for your statements around asylum.

David Blunkett came out proposing to ban asylum seekers children going to school.

You had Oxfam coming out against you, you had Save the Children Against You, the BMA, you had your own MPs rebelling, and then Blunkett came out again in September saying that asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Kosovo should get back home and rebuild their countries, that he had no sympathy whatsoever for young people in their 20s coming over, set a target of removing 30,000 asylum seekers, which then got dropped.

So there's something there that is happening with these governments, doesn't seem to matter whether it's a new labor government or a conservative government, everyone gets their knickers and a twist and starts making popular statements about asylum seekers.

Can you take us back to why that was?

I think that, I mean, when, I'm trying to remember what year it was, and I think it might have been in the run up to the 2001 election, I remember Margaret McDonough who was General Secretary of the Labor Party, and I remember her folding me up and saying, like, you've got to get on top of this asylum immigration stuff.

It's coming through so much in the stuff, you know, when people are knocking on doors at the weekend, and I remember her saying, you know, particularly down in Kent, it's a real problem.

And we did actually, we actually, in that election campaign, we had a kind of specific policy program that was targeted at that region.

And I do think, I love David Blunkett to bits, I think he was a great guy, and I really, he's one of my favorite people in politics.

But one of his, the one thing I sometimes fall out with him a bit is he did have a propensity to want the approval of the Daily Mail at times.

And I think they were, I don't know where those statements were made or, but I suspect that was, that was where it was.

And you know, so I think it was a case that we were trying to manage the politics of it.

But I do, where I agree with Gary on the difference between what we were trying to do there and what this government is doing, I do think, when he says, immeasurably cruel, I think

it is, because I don't believe this is about helping these people to stop them crossing the channel.

I believe it's exploiting the issue so that people, many of whom are never likely to meet a refugee, are going to feel better about thinking the Tories are on their side.

And I'll tell you, I think that, you know, Braverman's taken a lot of the heat on this, but I don't know if you were able to watch Prime Minister's questions this week.

But Sunak, who's meant to be the grown-up in the room, you know, cares just a typical lefty lawyer.

This lefty lawyer thing is about basically saying, if you take on progressive cases or on the left of politics, you shouldn't really be seen as a proper lawyer, and likewise.

And also, he said, he said, across the dispatch box and the floor of the House of Commons, you know, you believe in uncontrolled immigration, you want them all to come in.

It's just untrue.

But this is also, it's interesting, isn't it?

Because this is also a long, long history.

So, and this goes back, I guess, to Brexit and the new labor record on immigration.

So in the years up to 97, there was an average of 50,000 people coming to Britain a year.

And under new labor, you deliberately loosened immigration policy across the board.

So it got up to 200,000 people a year between 97 and 2010.

And one of the consequences of that is that the, to use the pompous polling word, the saliency of that issue completely transformed when you came in in 97, immigration mattered to about 2% or 3% of the population.

Yeah, it was very low.

By the time you'd finished, it was an issue up in sort of 42% and was a big, big driver of the Brexit vote.

For sure.

But I go back to the point I made about, you know, coming saying we need to sort of target things like the BBC, you know, something like Nigel Farage, who, whether people like him or hate him is a very, very, very effective communicator and campaigner, you know, part of the salience of the issue came from people like him and people on the right of the Tory party being able to push it, having newspapers like the sun, like the express, like the mail, like the telegraph.

I mean, occasionally on social media, you see those, see people who put up those, those pictures of thousands of daily express front pages about asylum seekers and about immigrants.

And, you know, this is where Gary Linnaker, I think, is right.

You know, I've studied for the book that I've just finished, I've studied 1930s propaganda in Germany and in Italy.

And it's the same stuff.

They're coming over here.

They're taking our jobs.

They're threatening our women.

It's an invasion.

It's a swarm.

I mean, Braverman, you know, and Sunak sat behind her nodding and smiling when she talked

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about 100 million people and they're coming here.

And then the next day, she talked about billions, billions of people.

Well, even I, even I would think that billions would be quite a lot to people of people that fit into our little island.

Right.

So the answer to come back to the policy answer, I believe has to be if it's the Labour government that comes in, if it's a Conservative government that stays demonstrating that it wants to be part of a proper movement across the world to make sure that the most vulnerable people, you know, refugees of people who are genuinely fleeing in fear of their life are able to find safe haven.

And I think it's, and I think one of the ways in which I don't like the way the government's handling this is that you ought to be able to say that this process of people crossing in boats is not sensible.

It's dangerous.

They are safe in France.

Right.

They're not in danger in France.

And there are many, many, many people in real danger of their lives and millions of people in real danger of their lives who need to be looked after and given asylum, female judges in Afghanistan.

I first, she was just in Rwanda last week and I saw an extraordinary Afghan girl's school which relocated to Rwanda and talked to their head teacher for a long time, incredibly moving stories about the danger those girls were in, the threats they received from the Taliban, the threats that she's been under, the ways in which she's had to protect them because their families are still in Afghanistan, a real reminder of need.

And actually in that case, for all that we say about the Rwanda government, the Rwanda government being incredibly, I mean, they met them off that airplane in a way that doesn't happen in Britain.

There was no immigration officials.

There were only trauma counselors and health workers.

They got all the girls to a safe place and then two days later, the immigration officials turned up very, very tactfully, registered them all, gave them all residency permits.

And the world needs to crack this problem because at the moment, the way that Europe is dealing with refugees from Syria or Afghanistan is effectively bribing Turkey, not to allow them to get on boats across the Mediterranean.

There are billions of euros being handed over to Turkey, so none of this is sensible.

And we need a...

This is what I want Keir Starmer to come forward with, if he can, which is to say, and he clearly seems to agree with the government on the boats.

We haven't seen him, all he's saying is he doesn't agree with the practicalities, right?

So Keir Starmer clearly agrees, I think, with me that this is not what should be happening.

This is not a sensible way of proceeding.

No, absolutely.

No, I think everybody accepts this as a problem.

## [Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / Gary Lineker, BBC in crisis, and small boats

Everybody accepts, it's an agreed rough figure that there are 100 million people on the move in the world.

But what's absurd about the way the government is handling it is to sort of, just as they, in the Brexit referendum, whipped up the idea that all the Turks are going to come to us, these 100 million people, up to billions in the Daily Mail, they're all coming here.

And I've just...

While you were talking, Roy, I've just looked up...

You've been Googling.

You're always telling me off for Googling.

No, I haven't been Googling, but I don't want to plug it, it's in my new European column.

But I listed the top 10 countries.

This is the top 10 takers of refugees.

Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Germany, Uganda, Bangladesh, Greece, Canada, Pakistan, United States of America, Sweden.

We're nowhere near.

No, amazing.

We're nowhere near.

Uganda is incredible.

So I was in Uganda recently, and they have millions, literally, of refugees.

Here I am in Jordan, where we have a million Syrian refugees.

And in Uganda, it's extraordinary.

Every refugee who comes in a lot or every, but most refugees who've come into Northern Uganda over the last few years have been given a plot of land, they're not put in refugee camps.

They're given their own land to farm, and they are really given some of the support and resources to try to create a life in Uganda.

And Uganda is a very, very poor country.

Absolutely.

The other point, by the way, on the boats, that has, of course, been totally written out of the debate, and because the Labour aren't calling the government out on Brexit by them as well, there's lots of reasons to do with organised crime and all sorts of things. But one of the reasons for that soaring rise in figures on the boats is because, post-Brexit, we don't have the returns agreement with other countries.

That's why Sunak had to go to see Macron and try to work something out.

And just think about it.

And am I right that he's agreed £550 million, something staggering over a number of years, to hand to another wealthy country to get their assistance?

This must be what they meant by the Brexit dividend, is the Brexit dividend for the French.

The French are getting half a billion to build detention centres, okay?

I mean, it is an utter absurdity.

And to put a few more policemen on the beaches to stop people getting on the boats.

Exactly.

So we've had to pay half a billion to France to help us clear up some of the mess created

by Brexit.

Madness.

I was in Greece at the height of the migrant crisis, 2015, 2016, talking to Afghans who were living in tents in the old Olympic Stadium and the old Hockey Stadium.

And it's really interesting.

I speak Sundari and I knew many of the places they came from.

And what struck me with the Afghans and even the Iraqis I was talking to is how localised it was.

People tended in Iraq to come from a very particular sub-district of Kurdistan.

People in Afghanistan tended to come either from the Bamiyan Valley or Kabul.

I talked to them about, particularly the young men, about how much emotional stress they were under.

Their families had raised often €10,000 in order to pay a people smuggler to bring them across in the hope that they could then send that money back.

And these young men, 17, 18-year-old men, feeling under incredible pressure to deliver for their families, to get to Germany, that's where most of them wanted to get at that stage, or for some reason for many of them to get to Britain.

And this is another thing I don't understand.

Why is it that France being a safe place, so many people have got it in their head that Britain is the place they want to go?

I think there's lots of reasons.

Often it's family connections, but I think the other thing is that the French have an identity card.

I do think those countries have an identity card.

It becomes much harder, whereas I think people who come here, they do feel they can weave their way into the kind of, I don't know if you can still say black market, but you know what I mean, the sort of off-the-book kind of work.

Is this not something that we should be leading a campaign on, which is to get identity cards going in Britain, that it was a foolish mistake to turn away from identity cards?

Well, but for some reason, although we don't seem to mind sort of giving all our data away, dozens of times a day on our telephones, there's this sort of inbuilt thing, and again, a lot of it on the right of the Conservative Party and the left of the Labour Party, that is sort of against this idea that it should be an identity card.

But you know, Tony Blair and William Hague had a joint piece in the Times, I think it was recently, of this idea of a kind of digital identity card.

So I think that's one of the reasons, I think the other reason is that, you know, look, Britain is, despite 12 years of Conservatives, still a great country, and it's got a lot going for it.

And, you know, I think Britain does still have that pull, but I do think that is a big part of it.

In France, they, you know, if you're wandering around and you're trying to get a job and you don't have an identity card, it's kind of quite difficult.

OK, well, Alistair, thank you, and thank you for, you know, recommending me to the BBC for Match Today.

## [Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / Gary Lineker, BBC in crisis, and small boats

And I think, you know, if I do a bit of Googling, I should be able to get the knowledge together to sound credible when I go on.

Let's just try a bit now.

Give me the top two clubs in the Premier League at the moment.

Yeah, I don't really know that, but I didn't think that should get in the way of my qualifications to present Match Today.

Of course, we could have that with the graphic.

To be honest, Alistair, don't repeat this off the podcast.

The truth is, it's very difficult for them to get anyone to present the show today.

Yeah.

Anybody who knows about football doesn't want to do it, so I think this could be my big, big opportunity.

OK, but will you be able to get from Amman to Manchester where they record it by 10 o'clock tonight?

Well, I think, you know, with any luck, Richard Sharp will be able to send over a private helicopter and I'll be there.

And I think I'll be, I'll be good for the credibility of Match Today.

I'll be good for the credibility of the BBC and I'll do myself a lot of favours because I think anyone listening to me talk about Match Today will be full of admiration of my knowledge.

OK.

Where are Gary's team Leicester City playing today, do you know?

No.

Where are they playing?

I think they're at home, I think they're at home to Chelsea.

Can I, can I, can I make one other, because of course, as well as your well-known passion for football, you're also utterly obsessed with music.

Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah.

The other terrible, terrible, terrible thing that has happened at the BBC this week, which has been completely overshadowed by all this, is that they're, they're sacking the BBC singers.

Ah, no, that, can I just quickly on that, because you are the musical one on this podcast, but I was at dinner here in Amman in Jordan, and Karim Said, who's an incredibly talented Jordanian pianist, the cousin of Edward Said, the first thing he said to me was, what on earth is Britain doing?

The BBC singers is the best thing about music in Britain.

That was from Amman in Jordan.

Yeah.

What are they doing?

They're sacking them.

They've been going for almost a hundred years, they're an important part of our culture.

And this is the other thing.

I went back to Gary Linnicka in the 30s, and, you know, it's these small things.



## [Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / Gary Lineker, BBC in crisis, and small boats

You know, there was a lot of an attack on arts and culture.

Oh, it doesn't matter.

If you're going to make cuts, take out the music, okay?

And so you've got the BBC singers going, they're cutting back on orchestras, the BBC orchestras. And this stuff matters.

Who would I rather have the BBC singers going around the world doing some of the best choral ensembles that anybody in the world will ever see, like your friend in Jordan, or, you know, some of the people taking vast salaries inside the BBC management.

It's absolutely unbelievable.

And BBC World Service, which obviously matters enormously.

They are ending production of radio output in 10 languages, including Chinese, Hindi, and Arabic.

I mean, so here where I am in Amman, the Arabic service is something that has really mattered to a lot of people.

And it's completely catastrophic, because at the same time, China's investing in expanding, France is investing in expanding its overseas radio, the Voice of America is expanding, and Britain that likes to talk about soft power for the sake of saving tiny sums of money.

Tiny?

Ministers?

I think it's 28 million pounds.

Now, that sounds like a lot of money.

But they had to...

Well, I mean, let's try and find out and put in the newsletter what the BBC singers budget is, but it will not be large.

And Rory, I actually have decided watching you today, I think Match of the Day is not the fit for you.

I really don't think it's going to work.

No.

But I've got the fit that I think will work.

Okay.

I think you and I should present sports personality of the year.

Okay.

And we should sort of get a campaign going for it to be Gary Lanica, our boss, the Gaffer.

Very good.

Very good.

Gaffer spotty.

Let's get Gary spotty.

Let's campaign for our boss.

I'm with it.

Well, Alistair, thank you very much, that was a good emergency podcast button that you press there and look forward to seeing you in a few days.

Okay.

All the best.

I'll see you in the next one.