

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Is Rishi "rearranging the deckchairs" on the Titanic?

This is a Global Player Original Podcast.

Britain has a new Defence Secretary, Grant Shaps.

And just to keep you up to date with what a busy chap Mr Shaps is, in the past year, he has been Secretary of State for Transport in the final days of the Johnson Government, Home Secretary during the final six days of the Trust Premiership, Secretary of State for Business from October 22 to February 23, Secretary of State for Energy, Security and from 2023 until the present day, and now Defence Secretary.

That's five cabinet jobs in one year. Oh, what expertise he must have gathered.

We will be discussing that, but we're also going to be talking to Leah Williamson, the England women's football captain who had to miss out on the whole of the World Cup because of an ACL injury. And she talks about what it felt like having to watch it all.

But she also talks about what has happened with the Spanish team since and the head of the Spanish FA, Luis Rubiales. Yeah, it's disgusting. It's a result of a sexist and misogynistic environment leading to treating people away and which is just not appropriate.

It really is a compelling interview. That's still to come. Welcome to the news agents.

The News Agents. It's John at News Agents HQ all by myself. Well, sort of all by myself, but we'll come to that in a moment. Later in the podcast, Something Unmissable,

an interview with Leah Williamson, the England women's football captain who obviously couldn't play a part in the World Cup because of an ACL injury that ruled her out. But she is fascinating on the women's game, on Spain, on sexism and misogyny, really an interview not to miss.

And as if that wasn't enough on this bumper episode to mark the start of our second year of podcasting, we've also got the former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull,

who in turn is fascinating about the royal family, Donald Trump, and what he calls Australia's worst ever export, Rupert Murdoch. That is still to come. But I'm not entirely by myself

in the News Agents HQ studio because Laura Spirit is here from the Times. And Laura, we have had a reshuffle today. Ben Wallace has stood down, which was anticipated,

and he has been replaced by Grant Shaps, who if our calculations are correct is on his fifth cabinet post in the past year. Yeah, in a year. He held the post of

Home Secretary, I think, for a week, not even that, almost a week. And actually, people miss that when he was in the wilderness, he was sent to the back benches, of course,

by Liz Truss, who said there was no room in the inn for him. He was also elected. I remembered this morning at Bleary-eyed at 5am when writing this email that he'd briefly,

for about half a day, been the chair of the Ukraine APPG too. So that's another one of his jobs to add to that as well. He's been a very busy man over the past year.

Does it matter that we keep getting these reshuffles of ministers? Now,

obviously, Ben Wallace had been there for a considerable period of time. But the fact that five minutes ago, Rishi Sunak is putting out a press release saying

Grant Shaps is going to be responsible for delivering net zero and energy security. And

five minutes later, well, that doesn't matter because we've put him in as Defense Secretary.

Yeah, it's an important question. Of course, Grant Shaps oversaw in part that transition in February broke up the department, obviously giving him that new role in so-called DESNES,

that newly formed department. Obviously, this isn't the last reshuffle that we're even going to see probably before the next election because Rishi Sunak will want to do a proper reorganization of his top team ahead of the next election. It was once not long ago expected that would happen

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before the party conference season that we've got coming up in a short period of time. Actually, today was deemed the kind of so-called mini reshuffle. So we've only seen a couple of changes. It's been a relatively self-contained shuffle of his team, seeing as we've seen, of course, the new Defense Secretary, but also moved into Grant Shaps's role, Claire Catino, that 2019 Tory MP, and another 2019 Tory MP moved into her role. And that's it. So we shouldn't be seeing more of that relatively mini reshuffle. But there will be another change indeed ahead. And of course, Claire Catino is an interesting illustration of what you said, because just last week we had the kind of so-called child care education week. Of course, she was a minister in the education department. She was on the broadcast tour announcing changes to try and allow child miners to be able to work from home. She's been deemed a really capable minister in that department too. So I think that's an example of where that team is being, of course, shuffled around. And there is, of course, changes with policy briefs that means that people have less time in these circumstances to get used to them. This is a friend of the podcast, Emily Thornbury, with her reaction to Rishi Sunak's reshuffle. I think that it doesn't matter how often they reshuffle the jobs or Rishi Sunak finds another mate to help and to give a new job to. The fact is they are just reshuffling the deck chairs. The ship is going down. They don't have any new ideas. There are so many challenges for our country and they have no plans. And we need to have a big change in this country. What we need is a Labour government. That was Emily Thornbury speaking on Sky News. I'm just trying to think how many times I have heard reshuffling the deck chairs on the deck of the Titanic as an answer from politicians. Too many. I suppose, why grant shaps for defence? That would be my question. I know there were a lot of other people who were quietly jockeying for position and hoping that they might get the nod. There was. And John Glenn, obviously a Sunak ally, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, was seen as a possible favourite in that role. But in the last few days, we've seen many other names added to that roster as well. I think, of course, this is a reshuffle, but it is one that was precipitated by Ben Wallace standing down. It's not that Rishi Sunak has gone about this of his complete own volition. It's driven by one of his most senior ministers wanting to leave that post. But grant shaps, interestingly, I think when you speak to people around Rishi Sunak, they obviously want to have the party in the best position ahead of the next election strategically. And grant shaps, of course, doesn't have the defence experience, like you say, as some of the others that were mentioned in that role. But he is deemed both a very effective communicator on broadcast. He's deemed a really effective weaponiser of conservative messaging. They want him out there. They want him out there fighting on the conservative message in the next election. But he is also crucially deemed a very good backroom strategist. So he was, of course, at the forefront of Boris Johnson's successful bid. Yeah. And he was at the forefront of bringing Liz Truss down. Well, exactly. And people will remember at Conservative Conference last year, he was proudly displaying this massive new phone that had his spreadsheet on. And he did that for the newsagents. Well, he's well known for that. And actually, in that kind of brief spell in the wilderness, he was said to have read the Robert Carroll books on Lyndon Johnson, those kind of mass tomes in which numbers are supposed to be kind of at the heart of that American president. And indeed, is kind of deemed in the Conservative Party to be fantastic at working out where people are and what the potential attack lines might be. And there is this kind of great, it might be myth, it might be true, but the story that MPs tell about that Grant Shaps had sort of held a piece of

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paper over to Boris Johnson before one of those MP rounds in the Conservative Leadership Contest to kind of suggest how many MPs might have gone for him. And it was exactly bang on. So he is understood to be very good at numbers. Of course, he's also just a very good messenger, a very good marketer. And whether or not that has contributed to what we know about him and this kind of myth that's been created around his political acumen, I'm not so sure.

I agree with all of that. The thing that I would reflect on is that Ben Wallace has sort of stood above party politics in many ways in this very tricky time as defense secretary, where you are, you know, you're four square behind Ukraine, you are trying to persuade America to be more vocal in support, and you're trying to keep the Europeans on board. And so he kind of seemed to sort of be above politics. And yet Grant Shaps, as you've just described it, and I totally get the reasoning, wants to be the political attack dog and wants to be doing that when there is a huge job of work to be done at the MOD at the moment. That's true. They are both politically flexible, I would say. So Grant Shaps, of course, had a spell as Home Secretary under Liz Truss. He has successfully... Yeah, but Blink can be missed. True, true. But Ben Wallace, okay, he stands above politics, but he did back Liz Truss eventually. And he said that she was authentic, which is in his backing of her, which is an ever so potentially slightly coded way of saying that the running mate of Liz Truss at that time was perhaps inauthentic, but I don't know if that is what he meant. It might not be. But he was, of course, loyal to Boris Johnson. He's been very, very firm on support of Ukraine. And Grant Shaps, while he doesn't have defense experience, potentially, he has been a very vocal supporter of Ukraine. It suggests that there won't be any significant change to the party and government's policy on that. Of course, his family took in a Ukrainian refugee family in Hartfordshire at the beginning of Russia's invasion. He has spoken very loudly about wanting to support Ukraine in this respect. Of course, his successful, albeit short-lived bid for the Ukraine APPG leadership, protests in part to that. So it's not that he's disinterested in difference. APPG, you've spent too long in Westminster. I'm sorry, yes. All party parliamentary group. People will think it's a weapons system. We're giving the Ukraine the new APPG too. And what about Klerkotino? So she, I was trying to think about this. I was speaking to a former Labour cabinet minister about this earlier, which MPs have moved into cabinet positions faster upon their initial election than Klerkotino. And we could only think of Harold Wilson, the former Labour Prime Minister, and Pitt the Younger, who in 1781, I think it was, became Chancellor within a year of being first elected. So for her to move. This is Lewis Goodall style content here we're getting now. For her to move. She was elected in 2019. She was, of course, a special adviser in the Treasury before that period. For her to move within the space of a few years to the cabinet is really extraordinary. And you remember Rishi Sunak had a, what we would

consider a meteoric rise up the cabinet. But Klerkotino has done it faster. And so she becomes the first Tory MP election 2019 to be in the cabinet. She is an ultra-loyalist. She was frequently during the election campaigns to be seen beside Rishi Sunak. She's seen as a very trusted adviser to him and has, as I've just said, been seen as somebody who in her brief in the education department as children's minister has been very successful. She's good on broadcast. She understands the issue and I think it makes sense as an appointment and she had for a long time been touted as one of the so-called rising stars who would be promoted come reshuffle. And do we know when the bigger reshuffle, the more interesting reshuffle comes, which will be the last moment presumably before the general election?

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Yes. So until about a week or so ago, you would still speak to people involved in organising party conferences who were reluctant to fully compile their guest list for events at conferences, lest the respective minister be moved out of position or changed or reshuffled. It's now going to be, we expect after the party conferences, which some people are unhappy about, because of course they will Steve Barkley potentially enter as coffee, the health minister and environment minister, among them probably cast quite an awkward figure at conferences,

seeing as they'll be giving these set piece speeches at events, but they are understood to be vulnerable in their positions. Come a reshuffle. Now after the conference season, I was expected to do a big shake up of his team sometime in the winter, though we don't know exactly when, and that will compile the final team that he will seek to go to the electorate with. And that, as you say, will be the more interesting moment than what we've seen today.

OK, Lara Spirit, thank you very much indeed. We're going to be moving the deck chairs around on the Good Ship. Newsagents will be back without Lara Spirit, but with Leah Williamson.

This is The Newsagents.

Welcome back. Although we're trying to learn after yesterday's podcast, not to say welcome back, but hello again or something like that. Anyway, welcome back.

Leah Williamson is the England women's football team captain. And last year, when she lifted the Euro Championship that England had won, she became the first captain to lift a major trophy since Bobby Moore in 1966. She then got an ACL injury, which meant that she has missed the World Cup and is still not yet playing for her team, Arsenal, and hopes to be back in the new year. But in her spare time, she's also written a book. What, you're just not busy enough? I just felt like after the Euros, the opportunity came about, and I thought maybe this is actually a really good idea. We've opened all these doors for all these young girls, and now maybe I give them little nuggets or insight into my journey for them to then actually believe that they belong in those spaces. It's easy to say, oh, look at us now and we're doing it, but they need to believe that, and they've been taught otherwise, I believe. So the conceit is that you've found a time machine, you go back 100 years, and women's football is banned? Yes, pretty much, actually. There's a big theme amongst my team, especially England, that we honour where we've come from, and we honour those that came before us. I think it's really important to know where you come from and why we are where we are today. So I wanted to

go all the way back, and the Dick Kerr ladies, which is loosely based off of, were just so successful, and also got told no, but continued anyway. Just not, they just weren't recognised for it. So it's a nice way to recognise what they did and get people talking about that, instead of just talking about the fact that we were banned, and we weren't allowed to play, because people did play, it was just rebellious. And Liam, how different do you think the atmosphere is today, for young girls wanting to play football, than it was for, say, you when you were six or seven or eight years old? Yeah, I just think I was met with hostility. It was always less than the positivity, but there was just people that just didn't either believe that I belonged there, or kind of wait for it to just phase out, you know, oh, this is just a thing that she'll do for now, and then she'll move on. So I think it's nowadays, if a girl says she wants to play football, you know, for a start, she can say I want to be a footballer when I grow up, and that's actually a thing that wasn't, there was footballers, but not professional, not in this country, not here.

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So I couldn't even say that to my school teachers, you know, and also like, that we would never be as good as boys, or it was always a constant comparison, because our game wasn't established enough on its own. So nowadays, you've got little girls growing up that aren't pretending to be men in the garden, they're pretending to be women, because they know of us and they see us on the telly. Look, you obviously had, after the Euros, a bad ACL injury. What's your reflections on ACL injuries? Because there's a lot of talk that it's a lot more prevalent in the women's game than it is the men's game. And is it something to do with the human physiology of a woman compared to a man, or is it something to do with the way, you know, football boots are designed wrong for women than compared

to men? I just wonder what your reflections are. I think the main cause is that, and there are, there are loads of things, you know, the way that we are physically compared to a man. Naturally, our resources aren't great. So there's a lot of things to play in that as well. Women's football doesn't have carpets of pitches that the men play on every week. It's very different for us still, because we're growing. What does that mean? It's like these pitches of old, where it's kind of more of a mud bath? Yeah, but we know, we still have however many games called off a year because of rain or bad weather, whereas that would never happen in the Premier League, because they have state-of-the-art pitches and grass, you know? So if you just even look at that, and how far behind in terms of facilities and structure our game is, it smiles off. So naturally, that'll contribute. But I just think that one day I was training twice a week, or three times a week, as an academy player, and then the next I was a professional footballer training every day, going to tournaments, playing however many more games a year. And I just think the way boys are bred for it in their academies is physically they're bred over years to be able to deal with the load. And I just don't think that women have ever had that opportunity. So our base and our foundation is just not as strong as it could be and should be. And I hope that changes.

And of course, the ACL injury meant that you couldn't play in the World Cup, which was fantastic. But I just wonder how agonising it was to have to sit it out.

I'd say it's probably one of the hardest times of my life. Just because I felt so conflicted in myself, I wanted them to win. And I genuinely would have done anything for them to do that. And I was totally on board with it. But you have to have a bit of you as an athlete that wants to be on the pitch. Otherwise, we wouldn't get to the level that we get to. You know, I'm almost conflicted because I'm like, why am I okay with them doing well? Why do I want them to do so well when actually, I should really want to be in that team and I should want to be involved.

But I think that's testament to the environment they've created as a team.

It made it a lot easier to.

And what was your emotion when they came out on the pitch for the final?

Yeah, I had some tears, I think more for me at the start that there was a stage there and I hadn't quite made it. And, you know, that's my goal to be on those stages playing in those games.

And then at the end of the game, I had more tears. But for them, I'm looking in my friend's eyes and I'm seeing how devastated they are. It's hard.

And I wonder what your feelings are towards the Spanish team, that here they have, they've achieved it. They've achieved this amazing thing. And yet that victory is overshadowed by the head of the Spanish FA who decides it's okay to kiss on the lips, Jenny Hermosa.

Yeah, I put myself in Jenny's shoes first and foremost. I think how how sad that must be for her. Great is the sport and achievement of her life and completely overshadowed and will be forever

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by this awful ordeal that she's now involved in. I think it's it's annoying that even now we've seen the footage, we've seen everything that there's still a discussion going on. I think it's conditioned behavior to kind of laugh that stuff off by women. And actually, when Jenny sat down and sat with it, she's been brave enough to report it and move forward so that this doesn't happen to anybody else, which I think is really, really brave.

But I think it's, yeah, it's disgusting. It's a result of a sexist and misogynistic environment leading to treating people away and which is just not appropriate.

He's got to go, but it seems to me extraordinary that he still carries on and that he's getting support. And this is what I mean. And this is where I find it difficult that we've seen the footage, we've seen what happened and we've heard her say what she said. So why do we struggle to believe her? Or why is there any anything in that? And I, you know, one of my teammates said it, this isn't something that's just going to go away by saying sorry, but he hasn't even done that.

So it's, you know, when you look at it in that sense, it's like I say, this is the inevitable result of that type of environment. One other controversy I just want to put to you, which is there was criticism that neither Rishi Sunak nor Prince William went to Sydney for the World Cup final. And there was a kind of feeling, I certainly felt it, and I'm a football fan, that if it had been England's men team in a World Cup final, the president of the FA and the prime minister would want to be associated with it. Should the women have felt slightly miffed that he wasn't there?

I think it was the biggest stage that we've been on and the biggest level of support we've received. And I know the girls and, you know, Prince William, he's visited us countless times to show his support and really get to know the girls and actually have conversations. So I know they feel supported by him. I don't think they would have been at all. I mean, they would have been focused on the game. I think it was us that were talking about it outside of the camp, but I don't think that they felt ignored or searched by him.

Do you think for your teammates in the England team, it will be difficult to pick yourself back up after what must have been a crushing disappointment that you've got to the final you are so close to touching the prize and yet it doesn't happen?

Yeah, it's always interesting to see how you fare up after it. It's also the same if you think about the Euros and winning it and then having to upkeep that level of performance. So to miss out on it can sometimes be easier to follow on with because you're still chasing that dream. But yeah, they were devastated and so they should be. They've worked so hard for something that they're so close to and it just hasn't happened.

Can I ask you something else about, you know, this is my reflections on watching the women's game and watching the men's game. I should declare an interest. I'm a Tottenham season ticket holder. So is my dad, you're all right.

Oh, is that right? Oh, good for you dad. So he has to cheer Arsenal.

He's never ever said the word Arsenal. I only ever come on Reds.

That's a very elegant way of doing it. I was struck by the men's game. You still got the racist chance. There is not a single Premier League footballer playing today who is openly gay. And you just look at the statistics of that and you think, well, that's impossible.

There must be some gay players that are on the pitch every Saturday and no one is out there. In the women's game, it's a non-issue. Why is it?

I think the environment that we've created in women's football is you've got to imagine we've had kind of this fighting spirit, even the fans that used to come to the games and how it started

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out were there for the love of the game and the appreciation of the players. And I'm not saying that that's not the case in the men's game, but to ask a man to be openly gay in that environment, and it is hostile, you know, you hear the things chanted from the stands, you know, he'd have to be the bravest person alive, I believe, because he would receive constant hate,

especially with the start of social media. And I just think the women's game is always the reason that it's a non-issue is because when it started, there was a respect for the players and a respect that these human beings trying to do their best, because everybody felt that they were on a journey together. But now I think the women's game, and if you look at the lionesses and what we stand for and what we've spoken out on in the past, it's in the game. There's no women's footballer that wouldn't have an opinion on certain things or be unapologetically herself. So I just think it's a culture shift. Like I say, we've come from having 500 fans in stadiums where they're getting to know people and they're respecting them as humans, whereas we often see Premier League footballers as some sort of aliens.

Yeah, I wonder whether the patronising attitude has been, this is what the women's game needs to learn from the men's.

I sometimes think it's the other way round.

100%. There's loads of things where we have things about a game that we really like, and you know, it's not about comparing us. It's two different environments. It's the same sport, but it's definitely different. You can't group them, and I do think that we have things that we would want to protect at all costs because they're better than in men's football.

I want to read you from my family's WhatsApp group, because I wrote to them this morning, I said I was interviewing Leah Williamson. My son wrote, so is Mary up signing for Arsenal? Good question. My daughter said, oh my god, tell her I love her.

That's lovely. Thank you so much.

And I said, you can't love somebody who plays for Arsenal, but if she wants to.

And then my daughter-in-law, who's an Australian, Kate said, why did you spoil the dream of the Matilda's?

Do you know what? That was probably the hardest thing about the World Cup, because we've seen what it did for us last year. I wanted them to do really well.

I've got Australian teammates, so my condolences.

It's been an absolute joy speaking to you. Thank you so much.

No, thanks for having me.

Welcome back. Now, Australia has a history of getting through prime ministers quite quickly.

I mean, obviously, the UK has overtaken it over the past year with all that has gone on.

But one of the most interesting of recent years is Malcolm Turnbull,

who was a lawyer, educated partly in the UK, but a formidable politician and intellect.

He was prime minister for the Liberal Party, which is broadly the same as the Conservative Party in this country. But he's got some very interesting views on the monarchy,

on the future of the Commonwealth, on Donald Trump, and some pretty excoriating views on the impact on public life that Rupert Murdoch has had,

who he calls the worst export that's ever come out of Australia.

Malcolm Turnbull, you have got a new podcast where it seems to be saying what it does on the tin with a title Defending Democracy.

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How much need is democracy in need of defence?

Well, I think it's under attack. And if we cherish it, John, we really do need to defend it.

I think the internal threats are the greatest. Populism, authoritarianism, the division and anger in society, with the most frightening example, I suppose, in the January 6 assault on the US capital. We can't take our traditional democratic institutions for granted, I'm afraid.

Do you think that was a high watermark? And people have pulled back from that now?

No, I think in the US in particular, the levels of anger and division are as great as they ever were. And you have a one half of the House, I suppose, you know, the Republican Party has been taken over

by Donald Trump and his supporters. And it is difficult to see that they support democracy in the form that we have grown up to understand it. That is to say, a democracy that is governed by the rule of law. I think you've got one of your podcast episodes is called America's Coming Civil War. Do you really think it's as precarious as that?

Well, there are plenty of people that think it could come to that. We're in an environment where a large part of the media, be it social or mainstream, and in the mainstream category, Fox News is by far the most influential example of this, has a business model that is premised on making people angry. And so instead of seeking defined accommodations in the centre, it is about riling people up, portraying your political opponents, not as, you know, well meaning people with whom you differ on political solutions or philosophies, but rather enemies of the state, Satanists, pedophiles, you know, pick your ghastly epithet. You get a business model that's based on that. And then you've got the divisions that we're seeing. I mean, American politics used to be known for the collaboration across the aisle. I mean, certainly from the UK or Australia, where our parliamentary politics has always been a bit like a game of football or... A bit more rough and tumble.

Well, well, you've had two teams, haven't you? You know, and you've had party discipline has been fairly strong. In the US, traditionally, people from our jurisdictions used to remark on the fact that there was a lot of compromise in the centre and most people thought that was a good thing. Polarisation has gone off the charts. And, you know, once you start regarding your political opponents as, you know, enemies of the state, then, you know, then you're heading down into very dangerous territory. So, let me give you another example. I mean, which European leader do many American self-styled conservatives and many members of the Republican Party and Fox News most highly regard? Victor Orban, probably.

Victor Orban. Yeah. I mean, this is a guy who has trampled over the tradition. He's basically taken over what his friends take over all the media.

You know, he runs conspiracy theories. The wildest is against George Soros. And, you know, he's a hero. Let me read you a headline from the Sydney Morning Herald. The headline, and it's quoting an interview that you did, saying, Rupert's our deadliest export, Trump's an egomaniac bully, says Turnbull. So, I mean, there you've got two things colliding. The power of Rupert Murdoch and the continuing power of Donald Trump.

Yeah, for sure. Murdoch has created, or Fox, which is Rupert's creation, I suppose, has created this environment. I think he's done more damage to the United States than any other individual alive today. That's quite a statement.

Well, it's a considered statement. And I'm open to debate it. When I talk about this with people in the US, most people, you know, on reflection agree with me. You know, some would say, well,



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Trump's actually done more damage. They definitely be winner and runner up. But what Murdoch did with Fox was he demonstrated that you could monetize a media formula which was

based on dividing the country and making people angry and fearful and distrustful of each other. I mean, the best political systems encourage compromise. And what you've now got in the United States is a media ecosystem which is encouraging the reverse and it's tearing the country apart. How worried are you about the possibility that Trump wins again in 2024 when he's up against somebody who will be 82 who looks every bit of his 82 years? What's the choice? The fact that Trump was able to persuade so many Americans and certainly an overwhelming majority

of Republicans that he, Donald Trump had in fact won the 2020 election is incredible. Now, when you think about the United States, John, and you reflect on the fact that its foundation story is armed insurrection against illegitimate government, you know, no taxation without representation, throw the bales of tea into Boston Harbor, etc. That's what Americans are brought up to believe is how their country is founded. So you go out there and you persuade lying and persuading a majority of American Republican voters that their president is illegitimate and the election was stolen. And you are surprised that you get an assault on the Capitol. It follows as night follows day. I mean, this is a country that is armed to the teeth. You know, there are many more guns than there are people in the United States. And you've got a side of politics out there that is basically and media making the case that the government is illegitimate. The elections can't be trusted. You know, there's fraud everywhere. It's dynamite, literally.

I want to ask you a kind of more personal question, which is what was Donald Trump like to deal with? I had not ever dealt with Trump before I was PM and he was president. But we had a lot of friends in common and business associates in common. He was a familiar type of personality to me. I'd worked with a lot of big, larger than life, you know, egocentric billionaires, you know, as a long, long list. So I'd seen that type before. And the one thing that I knew was that if you if you suck up to characters like that, they just want more sucking up. So it was fortunate that our first substantive exchange was one where by force of circumstance stood up to him and with the conversation started off with him saying, no way, Jose effectively and ended up saying, yes, but I hate you. So anyway, we got to the right outcome. That certainly one is respect. And after that, the relationship worked quite well. But I found him an intelligent

counter party. He is an intelligent man and he's got incredible communication skills. But that doesn't mean he's a good man. You know, just because somebody is clever doesn't mean they're good or intelligent doesn't mean they're good. And he is a he, you know, what what he has done, what he sought to do was essentially overthrow the constitution of his own country. I mean, that's what he's been charged with. But you know, that whole business with January 6

was mind blowing. Trump is a major destabilizing force and he's a destabilizing force in two ways. Firstly, he's destabilizing in the United States. He wins by dividing the country against itself. America is the sheet anchor of the democratic world. If America is divided, then all of us, you know, are disadvantaged. But the second thing, of course, is that he prefers dictators. I mean, I've seen him with Putin. He loved Putin. It was like a bromance. You know, he loves Erdogan. He wanted to be best friends with Xi Jinping. But he prefers

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authoritarians. And of course, you know, he threatened to pull out of NATO. A lot of people think if he comes back, he will. Does anyone imagine that he won't cut a deal with Putin at Ukraine's expense if he becomes president? Does anyone imagine that Putin isn't hanging in there just to wait to see if Trump gets back? These are incredibly high stakes at the moment. But it's real. He could win. So what about China? You just mentioned Xi Jinping there. And you have talked recently about the kind of grain influence. We've got the British foreign secretary in China at the moment for talks. And you get a sense that maybe the British government feels the pendulum swung too far back in a kind of hostile China skeptic, synophobic way. And they now want to redress that. Are there dangers there? When you're dealing with the Communist Party, it is a Leninist system. Its mission, its focus is to preserve absolute power. That's what it's all about. So they respect strength, they respect power, they respect resolve. If they seek to bully you, you have to stand up to them. In some circumstances, people and countries are unable to do that. But the reason you are seeing Xi Jinping on what is effectively a charm offensive at the moment is because several years of wolf warrior diplomacy and bullying and attempted coercion, including of my country, Australia, has failed. There's one other area of democracy I want to talk to you about. That's the British royal family. Should it continue to have a place in Australian public life? Is the days of Australia as a republic long overdue? Oh, they're absolutely long overdue. I agree with that. I have a high regard for Charles and Camilla, in fact. And like everyone, I had very high regard for the Queen. But Australia's head of state should be an Australian citizen. And we came close to amending our constitution to do that in 1999. I expect there'll be another referendum in the next few years on the republic. I mean, if you look at it this way, John, when the Australian colonies became the Commonwealth of Australia, the Federation, the Queen, Victoria, referred to in our constitution repeatedly, was effectively the British government. The Governor General was appointed by the British government. Discretions that were vested in the Queen were vested in the British government. Australia was not in 1901 an independent country, nor did it seek to be. Australians saw themselves as, for the most part, as being as British as anyone in the British Isles. And even when Australia had become politically independent, say by mid-century, many Australians still saw themselves as British. I mean, Menzies in 1953 said, the crown is the symbol that wherever we are in the world, we are one people, one British people. So stick your neck out. When does Australia become a republic within your lifetime? Well, I hope so. Look, I would think the next referendum will come up within three to five years. And if you vote to become a republic, as you hope, is there any future for the Commonwealth? It's a microcosm, but no one wants to host the Commonwealth Games anymore. It's like the idea of it itself seems to have become a bit more anachronistic and kind of dated in historical terms, and no one's interested in it today. Right. Well, the first thing is most countries in the Commonwealth are republics now, including the biggest ones, and indeed by far the biggest one, India. So there's no problem with being a republic and being in the Commonwealth. That isn't remotely an issue. How effective is the Commonwealth from a diplomatic point of view? Well, views differ, but countries have joined the Commonwealth. I mean, Rwanda, for example, had no history of being part of the British Empire and chose to join the Commonwealth. People might question how much good it does, but I don't think it does any harm. There was quite a strong discussion, a genuine substantive discussion between Commonwealth countries

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back in 2018 at the last chogum I attended, which was in London, as to whether Prince Charles, as he then was, should be formally recognised as the next head of the Commonwealth after the Queen.

The decision was that he should be, but it was made very clear this was not because he was the son of Elizabeth, but rather because of his personal qualities. So whether the next generation of British royals will be head of the Commonwealth, I would say is an open question, because there are a lot of Commonwealth countries that have, for very, very good reason, at best mixed views and very often extremely negative views about their association with Great Britain. I mean, all of the countries that were colonised and plundered and looted and had their citizens taken in slave ships and worked to death on sugar plantations, it's not, well, you saw the reaction to the current Prince of Wales and Catherine in the Caribbean. But it was hostile. Well, yeah, and I mean, you don't have to be dripping with empathy to understand why the British connection is not perhaps as compelling as it might once have been. And just a final thought. I mean, is it in the Australian Constitution that you need to have kangaroo wallpaper behind you? No, it is not. It is not. A lot of people have said it should be. But what we are trying to do is to avoid the division and anger attainment in other countries. And we're concerned that a move to have kangaroo wallpaper made constitutional requirement for former prime ministers and other distinguished retired politicians could provoke an outbreak of hostilities with emus, let alone a kidnase. It could become a very prickly business indeed. Malcolm Temple, I'm grateful to you. Thank you. Good on you. Thanks a lot. See you, John. And that's it from us for today. Lewis will be here tomorrow. And the young Tyro will be hearing from the old Tyro, David Dimbleby. This has been a global player, original podcast and a Persephoneka production.