

Thanks for listening to The Rest is Politics. Sign up to The Rest is Politics Plus to enjoy ad-free listening, receive a weekly newsletter, join our members' chat room and gain early access to live show tickets. Just go to [therestispolitics.com](https://therestispolitics.com). That's [therestispolitics.com](https://therestispolitics.com).

Welcome to The Rest is Politics with me, Rory Stewart.

And me, Alistair Campbell.

And great to see you, Alistair. I'm in Washington, D.C.

Lovely.

I'm on my way to New York.

And you're on your way to New York to take part in the proceedings in the court or not?

Well, I am actually arriving in New York at exactly the same time as ex-president Donald Trump, but I'm not on my way down to the Manhattan court. Things are, it's certainly here in D.C. The sense is that it's challenging for President Biden because it's sucking all the air out of all the domestic agendas. And Donald Trump has very much decided to play this indictment for all the media that he can get. As I think you mentioned in a podcast a couple of weeks ago, he actually wants mugshots. He wants fingerprints. He's led all the press to know when he's arriving from Florida, when he's leaving again. He's seen a massive surge against DeSantis and his poll ratings.

He's also with everything like this. He uses it for fundraising as well, doesn't he? He uses it to sort of say, I'm the victim. They're all against me. Stand with me. And there's enough people there who will do that. I think it was on Channel 4 News the other day on the day the news first broke that he was definitely being indicted. And they sent a reporter to somewhere in the middle of Virginia. And it was quite incredible. I mean, I'm assuming they tried to find somebody who said, you know, this is the right thing to do. And there was one person who had this badge, wearing a badge that said, Jesus is my Lord, Trump is my president. I mean, you're talking about a cult, a level of cultism around this guy that is pretty horrific.

It is amazing, isn't it? It's a combination of sort of three things seem to be going on in the current Trump persona. One of them obviously is the charismatic bully. One of them is him cloaking himself in a sort of particularly strange version of a patriotic flag. And the final thing is portraying himself as the defender of Christian values.

When he is not somebody, I mean, it'd be interesting to know just how many of the 10 commandments

he's actually offended at some point in his life. This one, of course, this whole case starts because of alleged affair with a porn star. Although the hush money that he paid to Stormy Daniels, they always have great names, these people in these sorts of cases. The hush money paid to Stormy Daniels, that is not a crime where the potential crime is coming from relates to how it was then accounted for and whether he tried to cover up that reality. And I've just been reading an interesting piece by a guy called Jeffrey Bellin on the conversation, which I know you sometimes look at as well. And he's a professor of law at William and Mary Law School, and he's also a former prosecutor. And he's written a very interesting piece on how difficult it might be to make something stick. But then again, pointing out that if it does stick, then the chances are that the floodgates could open not just against Trump, but then against other politicians.

Yeah. So just to whine the clock back for a second, because we've gone right into the

middle of it, Tuesday, Donald Trump will say that's the 4th of April, will turn up in Manhattan. And for the first time, the details of this indictment against him will be revealed.

And we should make clear, we're talking on Monday evening.

We're talking the day before. And so there's a lot of well-informed commentary from the New York Times and many, many other publications on what the indictments against President Trump are going to be. It's historic to follow up the impeachment with the indictment. And one of the key cases seems to be around Stormy Daniels. And let's just take a second on Stormy Daniels, because I'm not sure how many people have concentrated on it enough. The New York Times is predictably very, very bad at writing about Stormy Daniels. I think their particular editorial policy finds it very difficult for them to do it. In fact, it's something that the British press would probably find easier to do. But she's, well, I mean, her story is unbelievable. So she took the name Stormy because the daughter of one of the singers on Motley Crue had a daughter called Storm. And the name Daniels because she loves Jack Daniels whiskey. She started her career as a 17-year-old stripper in Baton Rouge. She's made 275 films, including, she's very famous for Revenge of the Dildos and the Vagina Code.

Was that any good?

I haven't actually watched any of these. I think one of the problems on researching Stormy Daniels is I think if I start clicking on some of these links, I might end up with a very weird thing going on in my Google history. So I haven't even, I haven't even seen her most famous ones, which I think are Bikini Kitchen and SexQuestrian. So part of the point, I mean, I don't know much about the porn industry, but clearly part of the point about Stormy Daniels is there's a strong tongue in cheek element. A lot of these films have got punning titles. Obviously, that's key part of the porn industry. She did this big tour called Make America Horny Again, obviously taken off Make America Great Again. She ran for the Senate as a Republican.

I love the way you feel. You have to explain that.

So the running American as a Republican was wonderful because she said that she'd been a Democrat, but she'd been so delighted to see that the Republican party had spent money hiring a lesbian bondage club for one of their meetings. She decided that they shared her values. So she was going to run to be a Republican senator under the under the strap line. You know, these great three word slogans are meant to be hers was screwing people honestly. That's good. That's good. Yeah. Well, listen, when you see some of the people who are in Congress now, I don't see why she should rule out running for office at all. And I've got to say, I did like her. She said she was asked by an American journalist whether she was scared about taking on Trump in a courtroom. And she said, when you've seen him naked, you've got no reason to fear him with clothes with clothes on, which I think he and Trump is incredibly vain about his sexual prowess. He famously, I think the New York Post, when he was still married to Ivanka, ran a story front page saying, you know, Donald Trump's amazing in bed. And the editor said, whether it's true or not, the one thing we know is Donald Trump will not sue us for that headline.

He also used to make sort of, he used to cast aspersions to some of when he was bullying all the other candidates who were running for the presidential Republican nomination for the presidency. And he would sort of make cracks about Viagra and the size of their

organs and all that sort of stuff. So I think I think you're right. Anyway, Stormy clearly has something to say about that. But the other, you know, what I think will be really interesting when this, obviously, we don't know how far this is going to go at the time that we're speaking, we don't know what the charges are, we don't know how serious they are. But I think it is interesting for a British, particularly from our perspective, this system of the grand jury where the case is laid out by what we would define as, I guess, a judge. But they're also very, they're quite political. And this guy Bragg, who's in charge of this case, is a known Democrat. And they then have a grand jury who make the decision as to whether there is a case to answer. And this article I mentioned by this law professor in the States, he's making the point that it is going to be incredibly difficult if it gets to a full judicial process to find a jury. Because the point of jury selection is that you have to establish that people don't have strong views about the defendant or even knowledge of the defendant. Well, it's very hard to find people who don't have knowledge of or add strong views about Donald Trump. You mentioned when you were talking about this article, that one of the questions is around the use of law against politicians. And you've seen Joe Manchin and Bill Cassidy on both sides of the house, who these were senators who voted to impeach Donald Trump, but are both very worried about this indictment. And I guess they're worried because they feel that in a very polarized society that often feels that it's on the edge of a political civil war, that there will be more and more use of the law to try to go after politicians, which of course is completely endemic in Latin America. I mean, we've seen this again and again, presidents no sooner stepped down than they put on trial. We've seen the same in Israel.

Well, we've seen it. We've seen it this week in India. Rahul Gandhi has been sentenced to two years in jail for comparing Modi to a bunch of criminals.

Exactly. And the mayor of Istanbul has been also basically disbarred from standing against Erdogan in Turkey because of legal case. So part of the fear, I guess, is that, and this is, I guess, what Joe Manchin would say, is that the Democrats, by doing this to Trump as setting a precedent where a populist Trump presidency would feel very, very empowered to start doing this against Democrats.

Well, especially when you think that he ran his entire campaign against Hillary Clinton with a constant soundtrack of Locker Up. I did feel a bit queasy about this for two reasons. One is Biden will get the blame for this, even though I'd be very surprised if he's remotely involved. It has fired up Trump's base. It has drowned out the oxygen. I had a message from somebody last night who used to work for Bill Clinton. And we were talking about something else, but she said that, you know, it's just horrible in America at the moment because Trump is just all that the media are talking about. And, you know, I think the world would be a much better place if we never heard of him again and we never heard of Johnson. But, you know, I think we've said before that it's easier to expel an individual populist than it is to expel populism. And what we're seeing is somebody who is using what for most people would be a pretty shameful episode in their life, is using it or seizing it as an opportunity to keep on breaking and bending the rules.

I also think it's a sign of how society has changed that even in the United States, which is a much more religious, puritanical society than Britain, the world has changed an enormous amount since the 80s where sex scandals brought down politicians. I think it's a big mistake

to focus on what I think even Stormy Daniels claims as a one-night consensual stand because it makes it look as though the whole thing is about whether or not he slept with a porn star. And the much more interesting questions are around his relationship with Michael Cohen, campaign financing or regularity, lying in the Senate about Trump towers in Moscow. And that whole, I mean, Michael Cohen, just to set back for a second, who was Trump's lawyer from 2006 to 2018 and is critical to this case because he was sentenced and imprisoned for three years and has essentially turned against Trump and claims to have seen the light and said that this man is corrupt and he wants to expose his dirty deeds. But Cohen was at the heart of a loss of this. And it does feel a little bit like a sort of some of this stuff around Michael Cohen is slightly reminiscent of reading about Kennedy and his affairs with women who were having an affairs with Chicago gangsters because Cohen clearly seems to have presented himself when he worked for Trump as a kind of conciliatory figure, seemed playing up the kind of Godfather look in his long overcoats and threatening journalists and saying, I'm going to do disgusting things to you and calling himself Trump's pit bull. And it is a strange story. I mean, if people want to read into Michael Cohen, Trump, I mean, Cohen, the lawyer also had a business with the king of New York taxicabs called Simon Garber, who's an Odessian with links to Russian politicians. And now Giuliani and Trump have been claiming that Cohen's father-in-law has links to organized crime. So it's that part of the world I think would be much better to focus on than the question of Stormy Daniels.

Yeah, but the particular focus on this has come from a particular law enforcement official who's decided to go for this case. A lot of these other cases are being examined, but it's a sort of, it's a patchwork system, isn't it? I mean, it depends on which state these offenses allegedly take place and whether they decide to, they have the political capital to take them. I mean, it does feel very, very, when you see the American legal system operating, it is very, very different to ours.

Although the, I suppose the only parallel, maybe this is our chance to transition over to the UK and David, but it is of course an enormously distorted echo in a way of the way that Boris Johnson's supporters responded to the parliamentary inquiry into Boris Johnson that one of the problems we're taking on populist figures like Boris Johnson and Donald Trump is that when you try to hold them accountable through a parliamentary committee or through a law court, their supporters are very liable to say this is politically motivated and try to trivialize the offense. So obviously in the case of Boris Johnson, his supporters say, don't be ridiculous. This is about a birthday party and a cake. Why are we talking about this so solemnly or in the case of Donald Trump's supporters? This is about Stormy Daniels. And there is a question of actually whether this is the right way to approach these people and whether in fact, given that these people are Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, our celebrities who've made their reputation of outrageous behavior chaos, there's nothing you can tell their supporters, which is going to shock them about it. In fact, going after them this way may just inflame things.

Yeah, absolutely. Now, you said you said less sort of segue then to populism and polarization in the UK. We've had two very interesting examples of populist polarizing post truthary in recent days, because you've got this situation down at Dover, where lots of coaches in particular, lots of them packed with school children, pupils going on school trips to France, Germany,

Switzerland, wherever it might be, and finding that they were having to queue for up somewhere between 12 and 18 hours to get their passports checked and stamped according to the new rules that would agree between the UK and the European Union when we left the EU after the referendum.

Yesterday, coincidentally, Suella Braverman, Home Secretary, was the one who was entrusted with doing the media rounds in the morning. She was there to try to promote another populist polarizing post truth initiative, which she and the Prime Minister have launched today, relating to grooming gangs and focusing in particular on Pakistani men.

Can I quickly just, sorry, just again for listeners outside the UK. Since the 1970s, in Telford, in Rotherham, in Rochdale, literally thousands of young children have been groomed, brainwashed, sexually assaulted. The number of the issue is around the fact that the Inquiry Chairman, Krala, has said that there was a reluctance to investigate it because many of the leading participants in it were Asian Pakistani men and that there had been fears in the inquiry about looking into it too closely. And certainly, it is unbelievable.

I mean, 50 years of innocent lives completely wrecked and a total failure of the local authorities and the police to actually do anything about it, whatever the problem was.

And that is the focus that Sir Willow-Raveman and Rishi Sunak today have been absolutely determined to keep all the attention on, despite the fact that the Home Office's own analysis points out that the vast majority of grooming offenders are white men. And so that is the point that has been made. In fact, I saw an interview that Sunak was doing, I think it was in Rochdale today, with, I think, a local interviewer who just kept coming back to that point. Why are you trying to make this all about one ethnic group when your own advisors have said that it's dangerous to do so? And the answer to that, of course, is populism polarization and trying to divide rather than bring us together. And the second point, the thing about Dover is that while she was out doing her rounds on the media yesterday, Sir Willow-Raveman adamant, absolutely adamant that what was happening in Dover was not as a consequence of Brexit. Now, where do you even begin with that? Where do you begin with that?

David Gork had, I think, the neatest response to this, which is David simply said, before Brexit, it wasn't necessary for French officials to check each individual passport. Since Brexit, it has become necessary. And that's what's triggering the delays. Now, I also like Lisa Nandy's point on this, who's the Labour spokesperson on this. She said that Brexit aside, it is a total failure to prepare, because we've known for six years that passports would have to be checked at that border. And this is a time of year which is traditionally very busy. It's when schoolchildren are going to France and the continent for their holidays. Although John Redwood has made a very, very good point, Rory. He said, why do they need to go abroad when there are so many nice places in Britain, like on these rivers that we can swim in and get sort of horrible poisoning?

Exactly. Lovely poisoners. Certainly, I think many schools will be thinking twice about doing this again next year. I mean, children have been sitting on these buses 12, 14 hours. And some of those buses have just turned around and gone ahead.

Lots have come back. And the other Tory MP worth mentioning, because this is a guy who clearly has decided, he's a serving MP, unlike David Gork, who's left. Tobias Elwood clearly got no interest ever in getting a front bench job, because he's actually done a tweet that

is about this issue and it's factually accurate, which is not a good thing in the current government. He says, of course, it's connected to Brexit. Our current Brexit model resulted in an end to travel freedoms. But as they weren't replaced with new ones, processing takes longer, hence the delays. And then he makes a very important point, Rory, to compound matters in November. Fingerprint scans begin. And these are things that the British government have demanded. They're not actually implying them necessarily coming this way. But when you say there was lack of preparation, if they had admitted, how much preparation would have been necessary to avoid this, that would have meant admitting that there might have been downsides to the agreement that they reached.

So there is also something very strange about these passport queues. I mean, above and beyond the Brexit issue, the number of times, I mean, obviously, I travel a lot and I was landed in D.C. last night. And the line was unbelievable. And I find it in many, many countries around the world. Britain can be particularly bad. I mean, I think people have horrendous times off and landing in Heathrow. But I would like one of our listeners who understands and maybe has worked in Border Force to explain why so often when you arrive at an airport, you find that you're stuck in a line of an hour and a half, two hours in many, many countries. Is it simply that you're not bringing enough people on at the different desks? Is there a problem on shifts? I mean, what is the logistical problem that means that you get stuck? Well, the last time I came through Heathrow, I actually had a chat with the guy who, you know, the guy, you come through the bit where you put your passport in, there's a guy who was sitting watching everybody and he spotted me and asked me over for a chat. We were having a chat and he was explaining why they were going on strike because he said that their conditions were terrible, that they weren't effectively having a pay cut, etc, etc, etc. But the other thing he said when we got talking about it, I said, and there were some pretty big queues that day. And I said, you see these queues, as you know, when you're sitting working here, do you kind of, do you feel, is it not incredibly stressful to be surrounded by this stress all the time? And he said, you know, you've just got to reach a point where you don't, you don't even notice it. He says, as the only way you could deal with it is not to feel the stress of the people there. So I think he gets, you get to sort of normalised state where you think, actually, well, this is the norm. This is what travelling is like. And you mentioned Washington and most international American airports are a bit of a nightmare. Let's be honest. I should give a shout out for Manchester. I flew from Singapore to Manchester the other day. I was, I was, of course, Rory, I only had hand baggage. And I was off the plane and through the airport and into a car in eight minutes.

That's very good. So well done. Well done, manager. I have good experiences with Edinburgh. I'm always trying to promote Edinburgh. I think it's a good thing to do. Now, on that note, maybe let's take a quick break. Yeah.

Welcome back to the second part of this episode of Rest is Politics with me, Alistair Campbell and with me, Rory Stewart. And Rory, somebody was reminding me in the break that, isn't it right talking to Stormy Daniels that if you put the name of your first pet, followed by the name of the street where you grew up in, you get your porn star name?

Yep.

So I am Bisto Laurel.

Bisto Laurel is good. That's very good. I think that's better than me. I'm Morag South.

Oh, no. Morag, that's awful. I mean, nobody's going to turn on to watch.

Morag. Hot humping with Morag South. It's just not going to work, is it? No, no, no.

No, listen, we should give a little plug to Happily. This time we were able to do it together because we were in the playdium that day and we brought in David Padil, who's our latest guest on leading, which I think we both enjoyed. I didn't realise until I listened back to it just how fast he speaks. He speaks so quickly, doesn't he?

It's absolutely extraordinary, isn't it? And we have one listener who said they normally listened to us at 1.25 to be efficient, but they had to take it down to 1.

Yeah.

I'm interested in listeners who listen at 1.25 because it makes our voices go squeaky and it's a real sign of extreme efficiency.

I think I told Fiona Hill that I listened to her at two times the normal because I was rushing to get through the book before we met her. I must say, by the way, Roy, the God Desire, David's book, and I was sent this book this week. My soundbites are now so well known that people write books about them. So it's called We Don't Do God and it's by a chap called Trevor Waldock and it's basically sort of taking, what did I mean by that? He is a God person. But Roy, I have to tell you, he's obviously a listener to our podcast because he quotes in full, if you can see on page 18, the exchange we had about God last Christmas.

Goodness gracious me.

And if you remember, you said that you did do God and I think at one point, not today, but I think at some point, you and I should have a proper discussion about God and politics.

And we also remember have to interview the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We're going to do that. Don't worry. Don't worry. We've got a few. We've got Brian Cox coming up. We've got David Miliband coming up.

Brian Cox. Brian Cox is a succession actor. We're also, I hope, going to do the other Brian Cox who we're both a great fan of.

Absolutely.

The astrophysicist.

Now listen, shall we talk about your good friend, Der König, Der König, Charles?

Yes. So the king, I mean, I'd love your sense of this. So from my point of view, the king's visit to Germany, which is the first state visit that he's made as monarch, and it'll be the one that he does before the coronation, has been an extraordinary success. He was going to do France and Germany, France got canceled because of all the uncertainty and troubles in France. But he gave a speech to the Bundestag, which was a really, I thought, funny, well-judged speech, half-delivered in German.

Did you help writer?

I did not help writer, but huge congratulations to whoever did because I think some of the references, for example, to the German band Kraftwerk, and maybe beyond his Majesty's cultural reference frame, say.

He also met, I think in Hamburg, he met the German winner who will be taking part in the Eurovision Song Contest, who is called something like Losses of the Lord, or Lord of the Losses or something. But he seemed to know about them as well. I spoke to a couple of people who were involved in, one on the German side, one on the British side, who were involved

in the organisation. They were apparently a little bit worried about whether they would get crowds. And in Hamburg in particular, they got huge crowds, huge.

And much, much larger than you would have got for a Prime Minister's visit. I mean, it's something I remember in Cumbria. I remember bringing David Cameron up to visit one of my constituency towns, and I think probably 15, 20 people came out on the streets. Prince Charles came up, and there were 2,500 people in a town of about 2,000 standing in the driving rain for us. And it's interesting that it's not just in Britain. And also, if you think about the difference, I think, of what would happen if you took an elected politician to Germany, whoever they were, it would be much more controversial left against right. I mean, if you think about a visit by Macron or a visit by Biden, if we had an elected president in that way. Whereas there was such sort of warmth, it was in a sense very uncomplicated to the German reaction. They were happy to celebrate, I guess, the cultural relationship to Britain. And I thought, you talked about Hamburg, I think the other thing that he does very well, the King does very well, is being able to get the balance on talking about very difficult historical events, and in this case, the bombing of Hamburg, and the way that as well as visiting the statue on the Kindertransport and remembering the Holocaust, he also laid a wreath to the victims of the Allied bombing in Hamburg.

One of the people who was involved in planning the visit, apparently, was a child of a Kindertransported

child. Now, I thought it was the German media coverage, as you know, I've tracked the German media quite closely. And it was huge, it was really huge. And I wonder whether that also affected the way that it was covered in the UK as well. That I think a lot of our, you know, we mentioned doing Brian Cox on leading. And one of the things that I talked to Brian about was the fact that he was always convinced that when the Queen went, the monarchy would collapse, and that they wouldn't be able to kind of replace her as it were. And yet, you know, you'd have to say, despite the hiccup of the French trip getting cancelled, that first of all, the Germans really pushed the boat out. Apparently, that was the first time ever that a foreign leader has been given the reception, the honours that he was given at the Brandenburg Gate that's never been done before. And I was also, I was genuinely surprised that he speaks German. I didn't know he spoke German. I mean, I have to say, I'm sorry, I'm going to be a little bit of a stickler. His accent, you know, I'm a bit of a work, I feel like the design accent, but it was pretty brave to do it. And he did it in the, there was a wonderful cutaway in the Bundestag. And you've got a standing evasion in the Bundestag. You don't see many of them. But there was a cutaway, no, it was at the banquet, at the state banquet, there was a cutaway to Angela Merkel. And I think she was utterly stunned to see a British head of state standing there, making jokes in German. It was, no, you can argue, I know there'll be lots of our Republican listeners going, well, you know, they're basically Germans anyway. And he had, of course, the other thing he said, he'd been to Germany 40 times. That's a lot.

It is a lot. He also, of course, made a lot of effort to learn Welsh for his big speech when he took over as a young man as Prince of Wales. I think also, in a way, his concerns, the things that really motivate him and that he cares about, which are things like the environment really matter and are really central to the German political debate. And I think he got the balance right on people admiring him for his environmental stances, representing



a part of Britain that jumps from different parts of political spectrum can be comfortable with. And also, I think he got it right on Ukraine. I think one of the reasons he got the standing ovation of the Bundestag is he found the right tone to be genuinely appreciative and supportive of German position on Ukraine.

Just briefly, you mentioned the Welsh, him learning Welsh when he was Prince of Wales. And I don't know whether William will do the same. But when Fiona and I were in Wales recently, Fiona was at an event with the Welsh education minister, a very, very smart guy called Jeremy Miles. And really interesting this, they have a plan to increase the proportion of children in Welsh schools doing what is called Welsh medium education. So based around the Welsh language, it's currently at 16%. They plan to raise it by 30% by 2031 and by 2050, 40%. So there is a real kind of growth in the Welsh language. And whether that's politically to kind of stave off nationalism, or whether it's just because they're feeling a sense of their own pride in their culture more, I think that's part of it.

An interesting contrast with Scotland. In 2012, I think there were more people in Scotland who spoke Polish than spoke Scottish Gallic.

It's about 60,000 now, I think.

Your father spoke Scottish Gallic, is that right?

Yeah, that was easy. He didn't learn English till he went to school, yeah.

My goodness. So he grew up in a Scottish Gallic speaking environment, but that had begun to fade by the time he got into his teens? I mean, what was your experience through your family and of those islands and the linguistic inheritance there?

We used to go there most summers. And so when he was with, for example, my uncle Hector, his brother, they would speak Gallic. We still had relatives there who they wouldn't necessarily speak. I think their assumption is that most people that they bump into won't be native Gallic, natural Gallic speakers, but the ones that know that they are, they will still speak Gallic, but it's gone from the thousands to the hundreds. The population has fallen.

The proportion of Gallic speakers in the population has fallen. But no, my dad was, English was very much his second language.

Do you regret not having spent more time on your Gallic?

No, not really. Because I think it, I think the interesting Gallic was in part what fueled my interest in other languages. And I did learn, as a kid, I did learn that, you know, my dad taught me the bagpipes, Andy taught us Andy taught me Gallic, but the bagpipes I've kind of kept at the Gallic I've, I've, I've lost. And the other really interesting thing in that was happening in Wales, which I don't think is happening anywhere in Scotland is that you have English speaking Welsh parents who are sending their children to Welsh medium schools because they feel that for some reason they feel that's better for, for those kids. And I think there's an element of it being a bit of a middle class thing at the moment. Interestingly the only private Welsh medium school is in London, but the numbers are really, really growing. And as you say, it's very different in Scotland, where despite BBC Albert and all the rest of it, there's, you know, Gallic is still very much a minority language. Well, the culture in the House of Commons is fascinating. I remember walking into the cloakroom of the House of Commons, this sort of funny members only thing on your way into the chamber where people tradition was supposed to hang up their swords. And I remember walking in one day and hearing six colleagues speaking Welsh to each other. And that sudden sort

of being taken aback, it took me a moment to work out what language they were speaking and then realising how deeply informed they were about Welsh literature, how interested they were in the fact that I represented a Cumbrian constituency because of Ihenogled, which is the old north, the old Welsh north and the Gododin that they were able to recite huge verses from all of this coming from my Welsh colleagues.

There were two concerns raised when we were down there. One was from a head teacher who was the head teacher of an English language school who said that she worried that in small rural communities, those schools would get would eventually have to shut down because the kids were being bussed free of charge to Welsh language schools. And the second thing was whether it dilutes the interest in learning other languages, such as French, Spanish, Chinese, etc.

And language language always at the heart of all national projects all the way. I mean, right in the 19th century, most of these movements for nationalism in what's now the Czech Republic and Estonia, all these things revolved around reviving local languages. And it's very, very raw, these questions in Asia, in Africa, many, many countries in Africa, Malawi, for example, Uganda have insisted that everybody in school has to study in English, not in their local language. And that has been very problematic because the teachers don't necessarily themselves speak good English, the students certainly don't speak English. And it's been holding people back in literacy and numeracy. But at Tanzania, I think it's another example where they insist on English media education. But it's part of the aspirations, the dreams, the political leadership that you can create an English speaking culture in Africa at the same time as you say, well, this is going the other direction, Russia, Russia, sorry, we're talking too much about Welsh language, Russia.

Well, I think Welsh language is quite interesting. But yeah, Russia is. So Russia has just taken over the rotating presidents of the United Nations Security Council and around the world, including Zelensky in Ukraine and lots of other people saying this is utterly absurd that a time that Russia is waging war has invaded another sovereign nation that they should be the Lavrov of all people Sergey Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, should be the guy who will hold the chair if there's a meeting of ministers at the United Nations Security Council.

And the US mission also, the spokesman for the US mission said that a country that's invaded a smaller neighbor has no place on the UN Security Council. I disagree with this very passionately. The UN was set up in order to include all the major powers. I cannot believe that a spokesperson for the US mission could be stupid enough to say there should be no place for Russia. The whole point about the UN is to keep all the enemies and adversaries around a single table. If you start excluding the major global powers who are causing the problems from the UN Security Council, you're going to end up in a mad world. I can see why the Ukrainians are pushing for it. But for the US to endorse that is misses the whole point about the UN. The Russians didn't agree with the US and the UN right the way through the 60s, 70s and 80s either, but it mattered that they were there.

Their own charter says that the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 members and each member has one vote. Under the charter of the United Nations, all member states are obligated to comply with council decisions. By the way, people seem to have forgotten Russia the last time. Do you know

the last time that Russia was in the chair? No. It was the month that they invaded. It is not exactly... It rotates monthly, doesn't it, between the different members and the permanent members and non-permanent members? Exactly. There are five permanent members, United States, United Kingdom, France, China and Russia. Then there are 10 who rotate. They're related, I think, for two-year periods. They are related. If there is a sort of pariah state, you're unlikely to get there, although quite often they do. At the moment, the non-permanent members are Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland and the UAE. You get a kind of fair mix.

This is not a new problem. I remember when Libya was chairing the Human Rights Council just at the moment when Gaddafi was crashing into Benghazi. This is a perpetual issue. In fact, often it's a sort of joke at the UN. But its purpose, though, was always to make sure that people like Castro or Gaddafi were included. It would make no sense at all, if you said the only people who can participate are people who share a Western worldview or agree on Western interests.

Also, we talked a lot about Iraq a few weeks ago. Just as there are people at the moment who think that Russia has no place there, there were people who made similar points about the US and the UK and Denmark and Australia when we were engaged in the Iraq war. I think sometimes there's just this complete misunderstanding of what the United Nations is. I think people somehow see it as a sort of supranational power that sits above all else. But it doesn't. It's just a reflection of the politics of the world. It tries to make peace where there is war. It tries to deal with humanitarian crisis where there is humanitarian crisis. It's becoming more and more difficult. But I agree with you. If populism infects countries so much that they say, right, because we don't agree with what the Russians are doing at this moment, that means that they have no place at the top table, then you've got to get rid of the United Nations. You've got to completely change it and get rid of the structures that it's got.

And this is part of the polarization. It sort of relates back to the beginning of this pub where we were talking about... Well, I suppose this is at the heart of a populist age, is that both sides in the debate begin to think that their beliefs and their mission are more important than the constitutional structures, the traditional structures that existed and really want to divide the world between people who agree with them and enemies who are to be cast off into the darkness with whom any action is legitimate. And I think it's incredibly important if we are to preserve what matters about politics, that we preserve this idea of decent disagreement and not treating people who disagree with you as though they are such villains that anything is justified in getting rid of them. And I think that's also why, although we've said on the pod before that expanding the Security Council to include South Africa, Brazil, India...

European?

Yeah. But particularly those first three would not necessarily lead to a more moderate global order because under Modi, India is not necessarily getting that direction. Of course, when Brazil was under Bolsonaro, you also would have had the same feeling. But that isn't a reason not to do it. In fact, in a sense, one of the things that's going wrong in the way that we think about China is we're struggling to articulate how to cooperate with and compromise for the strategic adversary as well as challenge them.

Well, I mentioned last week being in Singapore and some of the things that were being said there. And there's a guy who used to be foreign minister called Kay Shanmigan, who's now the Minister for Law, I think.

He's amazing, isn't he? Should we try to interview him? I met him, I think, last year. I think he's... Maybe get him on leading.

Well, I think that would be interesting. He's one of those politicians that I really find quite impressive. But he made a speech about Russia, about Ukraine and about China. And he said that he was making the point that Singapore had been one of the very, very small number of countries in that part of the world that put sanctions on Russia very, very clearly, in its views that the invasion was wrong. And also, as I indicated last week, a little concerned about their own security interests, if something like Ukraine was successful. But he also said this, and I've just looked it up while we've been talking. The truth is that in the 1990s and 2000s, Russia was treated as a has-been. It was not seriously consulted in major issues, and it was not treated with a great deal of respect. The neocons in the United States saw the US as the hyperpower in a unipolar world. Russia had nukes, but it was seen as weak. America could do pretty much what it wanted, invade or interfere in countries when it felt threatened or serve its own interests, and the others just had to accept. So that is... Now, I'm not saying that is his view, but he's saying that is a strongly held opinion by a lot of people. So those sorts of people will be looking at this debate about whether Russia should be allowed to sit on the United Nations Security Council when its turn comes up in the rotating presidency and thinking, what planet are you people on?

Good. Well, and I think that brings us, I think, to Finland. So we talked a lot about Sanamon, who's been this very, I suppose, globally celebrated figure, almost a sort of, I suppose, another Jacinta Radan, very young, extraordinary charismatic communicator. We talked about this ridiculous scandal about photographs of her dancing in a nightclub outpolling her party, but in the Finnish elections, in fact, she came in third. And she's almost certainly lost Finland to a right-wing party, which make many of our listeners wince.

Although not as right-wing as the party that came second.

No, exactly. Not an extreme right-wing party. But the right-wing party that won a sort of centre-right party has run effectively on an austerity ticket. They run for reducing the deficit, reducing debt, curbing public spending. And it's going to be interesting as we go into the debate in Britain, whether Labour is going to run against Rishi Sunak challenging the Conservative attitude to deficit or debt, or whether there is a movement in Europe, which I think we've seen in right-wing victories in European elections, of more interest from publics in cutting spending, reducing deficits and debt, even in the case of Macron, of course, making these very difficult petrol reforms.

Well, it's certainly the case that Petri Orpo is the leader of the National Coalition Party, which I guess is the one closest to certainly the Conservatives of a few years ago. I actually wonder whether today's Conservatives is closer to the Finns party. I think Suella Braverman would be very happy in the politics of the Finns party. That's the other thing that's happened, of course, because we had it in Sweden, where the Sweden Democrats, which is their hard-right party, they got 20%. The Finns party and this one have got 20%.

Georgia Maloney in Italy.

Yeah. The only interesting thing about Santa Marin's party, the Social Democrats, they actually increased their share of the vote. I think they were down at 17 when she became Prime Minister.

And they've increased to 19, haven't they?

I think they'd round about 20, and they'd do above 20. But the three parties that have run each other pretty close. And it was interesting how she did sort of, she conceded very, very quickly and very, very gracefully and congratulated the other parties and said, what a great campaign

it had been. And so forth. It's often the case that these leaders who are celebrated abroad are not necessarily as loved at home. But also, I think you're right that the really interesting thing here is a party fighting on and winning. I wouldn't say it was on austerity, but it was on proper economic management. And I have to say, Rory, I think that the current conservators, the debt and deficit figures are so bad that they'd be very, very hard pressed to defend their record on that.

But I think that Labour has to be thoughtful about that, too. I mean, I think to keep, if they're going to win over centre-voters, Labour has to reassure those voters that they're going to be very thoughtful about debt and deficit. And I think you can sense that's why Keir Starmer and the Labour Front bench are very reluctant to endorse the strikes, very reluctant to suggest that they're going to sign up to more generous paydeals because they're very conscious that they have to present themselves as the party of fiscal responsibility. And we had more strikes announced today. Teachers strike 98% of those who voted on a 66% turnout. It's quite a big turnout.

Yeah. But again, I think we'll find Labour will not endorse their pay demands for the same reason. And you get this interesting thing where you'll get teachers and doctors increasingly angry with Labour because they're expecting them to say, of course, if we come and we'll give you what you're asking for.

And they can't. Are you suggesting that it's possible that because the Conservatives do seem and soon it does seem to be rather in the grip of this populist wing, particularly the Bravermans of this world, that you can see him going into election promising lots more because he seems to be promising new things all the time and Labour going in with a much more economically rigorous approach. Can you see that happening?

Yeah, it's an interesting thing, isn't it? I mean, I think, I'm going to make no secret of the fact, I think Rishi Sunak is a huge improvement on this trust and Boris Johnson. I think he's a much more sensible, thoughtful politician. I'm very struck by friends of mine who are in the cabinet, how much more they prefer working with him than his predecessors. But I think there are two things driving these moves to the right. One of them is the internal pressure from right wing factions in the parliamentary party. Suwala Bravan being a big example. He has had a bit of a temporary victory there over the Windsor framework where the ERG, which was a big faction, has been reduced to this rump of 10, leaving Boris Johnson and this trust looking like a sort of bitter minority. But the bigger challenge is their polling and they really don't have a path to victory. But their fantasy, their very, very narrow path to victory is all about trying to mobilise a very particular social conservative voter base. And Labour is going to have to make a strong decision to work

out what it wants to do about that. And my instinct is, if I were Labour, I would be confident that they can take back many of those traditional Labour seats in the Red Wall up in the northeast of England without having to ape this kind of social conservative rhetoric that those seats are not going to vote Conservative. So you don't need to compete for their seats. Well, I hope so. I hope you're right. It was interesting to hear Keir Starmer pretty unequivocal that Brexit was part of the reason, it was a big part of the reason for these queues at Dover. Now, it might seem obvious, but actually both of the main parties of up till now not really want to talk much about the consequences of Brexit. I didn't read the interview, but just from the headlines I saw, I sensed that he was trying to get the trans debate into a less toxic place in an interview in the Sunday Times yesterday. So I think he is trying to sort of diffuse some of the grenades, but what you're absolutely right about is the Conservatives. That guy, Leigh Anderson, the vice chairman, he did let the cat out of the bag when he said, last time we had Boris, Brexit and Corbyn, we've got none of them, so we've got to get some new culture wars on trans. And I see today his big attack today, Leigh Anderson, this great mastermind of the Tory election strategy, is to be picking on the British entry for the Eurovision Song Contest because she said that she really hated Boris Johnson and wishes he hadn't got a bed when he went into intensive care. So that's the sort of debate we're going to be getting from Leigh.

I think it's going to be interesting because my suspicion is that it'll be pretty frustrating for Rishi Sunak. Well, will it? Well, I don't know how he's going to deal with it because it reminds me of when I was running to be Mayor of London, so much, much smaller stage. But I remember, you know, I really wanted to talk about planting 400 million more trees. I wanted to talk about cleaning up the air. And of course, my polling people would come to me and say, Rory, 41% of people say their major problem is knife crime and the failure of city crime about knife crime. Will you stop effing tweeting about trees? Will you please get into the fight about knife crime? And I don't know how different politicians respond to this, but maybe we can finish on this. I mean, was that something that you experienced? I remember feeling it very difficult because emotionally, intuitively, I wanted to talk about a positive future vision. For London, I wanted to talk about transforming the Thames, talk about environmental issues, and they would say 2% of your voters care about these issues. You've got to talk about the things they care about, which is knife crime.

I think you've also got to be authentic, though. And I think that these are things that I think you can talk about. You can make them salient. I would think the right position is somewhere between where you were and where they were. I hate politicians who just basically say, this is what the public tell us that what they want to hear. Therefore, let's tell them that politics ought to be about leadership. So what you were trying to do is actually to say, if we are going to save the planet, if we are going to make London a better place to live, we're going to have to plant more trees. And I think that was the right thing to do. But you also have to talk about the other stuff. I don't know about Sunak. For example, I mentioned in the interviews he was doing today about this grooming stuff. He has clearly decided, I mean, the stop the boats thing, for example, the sort of politician that you're describing Sunak to be, wouldn't be so rigorous about sort of relentlessly hitting that message. Probably does know that, you know, of all the big problems facing the country, it's not the biggest. But politically, he's been advised that's the best one to

hit that drum to keep these votes in the north of England. And likewise today, you know, there's rather bizarre big photo call for these local election launch was him with three big blokes, looking at this sort of huge pothole in Darlington, and then sort of doing a great big thing about potholes. So when you say he's he'll be frustrated by that, I'm not sure because I think he is going to fight pretty popular campaign. And I think the one thing he would be frustrated by is if Boris Johnson decided he was going to become his ally and decided, you know what, Rishi, I think you're not a great campaign, but I can campaign alongside you and let me do stuff as well. And I think then that could be utter chaos for soon that because Johnson wouldn't be able to resist sort of doing something of a of a Trump. And it is interesting, maybe this is the way to to close as we started on Trump. Johnson does not have that that cut through appeal that endures with people. I meet very, very few people these days who think Johnson's got any real future in politics where you whereas you see and read so much in the American debate about how, you know, Trump is probably finished as president, but you wouldn't always write him off. Whereas I think Johnson actually you can write him off now.

Very good. Good to meet finish on. Thank you very much. See you soon.

Bye.