ANDREW MARR:
And now, as promised, I’m joined here in Glasgow by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. Good morning.

NICK CLEGGE: 
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR: 
We’re meeting, as we’ve said again and again this morning, in the shadow, the dark shadow of the killing of Alan Henning, and we’ve just heard General Richards say that politicians really should put more into the armed forces; that we’re not taking, putting, taking quite seriously enough this great generational struggle against a particularly evil and difficult enemy.

NICK CLEGGE: 
I think we need to take it extremely seriously. I think it is a challenge and a threat, a very serious threat to our way of life that will last for a very long period of time. How you respond to it, I think, is not quite as straightforward as David Richards, much though I respect him, suggests. I don’t think it’s a question of simply ramping up
conventional armed forces again as if we were fighting state to state conflicts. I think what we’re dealing with – and in many ways the vote in the House of Commons in my view is a harbinger of votes that I suspect will happen several times in the coming years and decades – because increasingly what you’re having is states cooperating together in a sort of jigsaw operation where different countries bring to the effort different capabilities against stateless mobile groups, and that’s what you’re seeing here. And in many ways the way in which we’ve assembled this coalition – very carefully with Arab nations in the front, but with us providing a supporting role, not pretending we can do everything everywhere but that we play a role in that wider effort – I think is the nature of the collaboration, the coalitions if you like, which will need to be mobilised by countries of a similar mind as we deal with these new very, very violent, extreme and vile threats.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes. After the recent beheading and with a huge amount of fighting going on in the northern border of Syria at the moment, do you think it’s time for the House of Commons to come back and think again and vote again about moving this into Syria as well?

NICK CLEGG:
No, I don’t think we should rush to the House of Commons to do so because, as many people rightly pointed out in the House of Commons, there’s no point entering into an effort from the air unless you have a clear strategy what’s happening on the ground.

ANDREW MARR:
Which we don’t.

NICK CLEGG:
Well in Iraq, we do. We are giving support to the Peshmerga, support to the Iraqi Army, and they are clearly, in that phrase, the boots on the ground if you like which are leading the ground effort. In Syria the situation on the ground is altogether more complex. Now the Americans have recently announced that they are going to provide a significant new package of training and equipment and support for the Syrian Free Army, and my own view is that is where our efforts should really be focused on in
Syria because that is what in the long run will make the biggest difference. You can’t solve this from the air. No-one is pretending that you can. We haven’t done. What we do need to make sure in Syria is that we have the building blocks for a ground effort which is stronger and more coherent and more effective against ISIL than it presently is right now.

ANDREW MARR:
So at the moment you would vote against extending the air campaign into Syria?

NICK CLEGG:
I wouldn’t advocate that we extend the air campaign into Syria. That’s why we didn’t do it last week.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) If it came to a vote, if it came to a vote because David Cameron is said to want to do this but is held back by you and by the Labour Party.

NICK CLEGG:
No well it won’t come to a vote unless the government proposes it, and what I’m saying is the government is not proposing it right now and I’m explaining the reasons why we didn’t last week. And the reasons for that I think are important. We need to persuade the British people, indeed parliament as well, that every time we put servicemen and servicewomen in harm’s way, we do so with a clear strategy in mind. And I think the combination of air strikes and ground forces needs to be properly thought through. That was obvious in Iraq. It’s a little bit more complicated in Syria.

ANDREW MARR:
Forgive me, Deputy Prime Minister, but we seem to be going in a slight circle here. I’m suggesting that the government won’t propose this because David Cameron knows he’d lose the vote and he’d lose the vote because you wouldn’t support him, and you wouldn’t support him because … and you’re saying so therefore he’s not going to propose it. But it does come back to the fact that you would not support air strikes in Syria, doesn’t it?
NICK CLEGG:
I think it’s much more straightforward than that. If the government felt that there was a case for doing so now, we would have done it. We haven’t done so because, as I say, as we explained very openly in the House of Commons, the differences between Iraq and Syria are considerable *(Marr over/not audible)* and the point I’m making is if we want to do something, as we must, with other countries to beat this vile threat ISIL – and they are a vile organisation, we must squeeze them out of existence – you’ve got to play your part from the air, as we are, but you also have to have a coherent approach on the ground. And that is something which I think we need to do in Syria much as we are seeking to do in the Kurdish region of Iraq and Iraq more widely.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s turn to the Liberal Democrats. You’re around 6, 7 per cent in national polls at the moment and people keep saying well actually you won’t lose that many seats because you’re dug in, incumbency factor, all over the country where you’ve got seats. But at that level of support incumbency doesn’t matter. You’re going to lose a lot of seats at the election, aren’t you?

NICK CLEGG:
No, I don’t think that is the case. I think, to be blunt, these national poll ratings don’t tell you very much anymore because the country has become so varied.

ANDREW MARR:
They tell us that you’re very, very unpopular as a party.

NICK CLEGG:
Well let me explain. Where we get our message across, where we get our message across, actually the evidence is – and of course that isn’t everywhere in the country, I accept that, we’re not fighting as forcefully in some parts of the country as others – but where we are able to get our message across … By the way, a message which I think has become much amplified, if you like, by the last two weeks. I mean we’ve seen a Labour Party leader unable to bring himself to talk about the economy and a Conservative chancellor saying, with relish, that what he wants to do in future is
savage unprotected public services and only make the poor pay for the continued deficit reduction. I think there are many people …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I want to come to both of those things …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) If I can just … it’s very important this.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … right away actually because …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) Well it’s very important because what they are presenting the British people with is a dismal choice between a broken economy in the hands of Labour and a divided society in the hands of the Conservatives. And we have been saying for ages – and I’ve said it on this programme several times before …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And you’re going to keep saying it – you want …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … you don’t need to make that … It’s very, very important. I think there are millions of people out there who want us to do the difficult job of creating a strong economy, want us to do it more fairly because that’s the only ingredient if you like by which you can provide opportunity to everyone in society. That’s our core message. Where we get it out to people on the ground, it does have resonance.

ANDREW MARR:
So let me pick up on exactly those two things you said.

NICK CLEGG:
Sure.
ANDREW MARR:
You talked about … You mocked Ed Miliband - very reasonably many people will think – for not mentioning the deficit last night, and you did mention the deficit in your speech. You didn’t give us a single syllable, jot or word about how you would get the deficit down. All your stuff was about how you’re going to spend more money on this, more money on education, more money on school meals, more money on lots of good things. You didn’t give us a single word about how you were going to cut the deficit. If you’re going to cut the deficit whilst spending more, that means you must be raising taxes. Are you going to do that?

NICK CLEGG:
Yes of course, we must raise taxes. And this …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Beyond the mansion tax? Because the mansion tax doesn’t give you nearly enough to do what you want to do.

NICK CLEGG:
Danny Alexander yesterday was setting out in considerable detail how we will make changes to the tax relief on pensions for the wealthiest, how we’ll make changes in the tax system for dividends, how we will scrap George Osborne’s ludicrously wasteful “shares for rights” tax wheeze. Those are tax changes which we are setting aside in order to meet our commitments. And, look, what you have at the moment – it’s really important this – of course we can … I mean we will …

ANDREW MARR:
It still seems to me I mean if you are absolutely against the welfare cuts that you attacked George Osborne for and you want extra spending and you want to spend properly on the NHS, you have to have a really substantial tax rise to pay for that; and for some reason no politicians, including yourself, are honest enough to come to the ………… and say actually …

NICK CLEGG:
But I’ve just given you … Hang on, I’ve just given you …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … a series of quite small tax increases.

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … No hang on … No, no, it’s not true. Those are actually quite considerable. They raise hundreds of millions of pounds. In addition, as you know, we have this approach – the so-called mansion tax which is extending council tax bands to higher value properties – which we would …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And it’s earmarked for the NHS.

NICK CLEGG:
No it’s not, it is not. It is earmarked for deficit reduction. Be very clear, we think that will raise around £1.5 billion and that would go towards filling the black hole in the public finances. And this is really … it’s interesting that – dare I say it – you got it wrong. It’s really important the choices we have now. We have a Labour Party that doesn’t want to acknowledge that there is a deficit to be filled. We have a Conservative Party – and it’s important to dwell on the extremism of, and it is economically extreme …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So how much money does the mansion tax raise?

NICK CLEGG:
We think it’ll raise about £1.5 billion. You asked me for one tax rise, which we would set aside for deficit reduction. I’ve given you one considerable one. I’ve given you other examples of tax changes …

ANDREW MARR:
The deficit is nearly £100 billion …

NICK CLEGG:
Yes of course and …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … and that’s 1.5 out of 100.

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … yes … no, no. But, Andrew, this is … you’ve got …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I don’t think I’ve got it wrong. I think …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) Let me explain.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … I think your numbers are very, very modest.

NICK CLEGG:
Let me explain. No-one anywhere in the reasonable world thinks that you can fill the black hole in public finances either through spending reductions on their own – though George Osborne and the Conservatives do now – or by taxes on their own. The received wisdom in the IMF, the OECD and others is that you should roughly have … (Marr over/inaudible) roughly about 20 per cent of tax increases versus 80 per cent of spending reductions. That is the mix, broadly speaking, we’ve aspired to in this government. What happened last week - which is very significant, will have a dramatic effect on the debate in British politics – is the Conservatives said, with almost undisguised relish, that they were not going to ask the wealthiest in society to pay a single penny towards completing the deficit reduction effort. Secondly, they were only going to ask the working age poor to make further sacrifices, and that they would savage unprotected budgets – whether it’s the police, whether it’s social services, whether it’s schools and so on. And what we are saying, what we are saying – and we’ve started sketching out some of the details already, I’ve already given you several details – is that those choices – either sticking your head in the sand or beating up on the poor – are not the choices the British people want. They want balance, they want balance between a stronger economy and a fairer society, and that is what we’re
offering.

ANDREW MARR:
So why stay in government with them for the next few months? You can’t stand what they’re doing. You disagree with them fundamentally. You despise them on economic policy. You despise them on what they’re doing on human rights. Why are you staying in government with them?

NICK CLEGG:
Look we have restrained the Conservatives from doing what they want on penalising the poor, on ignoring the environment, on trashing our civil liberties and human rights, and we – and it’s very important to …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And they’re completely on the other side from you on all these issues right now.

NICK CLEGG:
(over) Well no, they have said that’s what they want to do if they’re in government on their own. Now, look, I am not going to disguise the fact that I despair at the idea of a Britain run either by the Labour Party on their own because they would bankrupt the economy or the Conservatives on their own who would divide and rule society. And I think the fact that we show …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You’d like to be in government?

NICK CLEGG:
Well no it’s not just like to be in government. I think we’ve shown … In fact in many ways the increasingly shrill way with which the Conservative Party are talking about the things they would do if they got a majority on their own shows that we have successfully restrained them and anchored this government in the centre ground. When I first went into coalition with David Cameron, in May 2010, he said, the Conservatives said they cared about the environment - they self-evidently don’t; that
they’re not going to bang on about Europe – they only bang on about Europe these days; that they’re going to protect civil liberties and human rights – they now want to trash them; and most importantly they said they were compassionate Conservatives, but George Osborne confirmed last week that they’re now burying compassionate conservatism. They can do what they want with their party. They can rush rightwards. We are going to remain anchored in the liberal centre ground and that’s …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So okay …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … where we’ve anchored the government and I think we’ve done so in a way which has benefited many millions of people in this country.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So let’s be very, very clear. You would - if you were in government with them again, if you were in bed with them again – you would not let them cut the cap on household welfare from 26,000 to 23,000, for instance?

NICK CLEGG:
Look in the same way that if we were ever in coalition with Labour, we would not let Labour get away with this economically illiterate approach to the deficit …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) We’ll get onto Labour in a moment, but …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … I’m just telling you. … in the same way we would say to the Conservatives you cannot and we would certainly not allow them to only make the working age poor pay the burden of ongoing deficit reduction. Of course you need to introduce new savings and cuts, of course you do, but how you do it and whether you do it fairly and whether you try and make sure that the broadest shoulders pay their contribution, I think is a very important statement of values and priorities.
ANDREW MARR
Okay, I asked you just a very specific question: would you stop them cutting the cap from 26,000 to 23,000?

NICK CLEGG:
Oh I don’t think the case has been made for ratcheting down the cap in the way that …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So you wouldn’t stop them?

NICK CLEGG:
I would, I would …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And is that a promise?

NICK CLEGG:
(over) No I’m very happy to look at things like that, but I do not believe ratcheting down the welfare cap is the answer and it’s certainly not something we are advocating. But it’s part of a much broader …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) What … Sorry, I mean this is a kind of very important symbolic thing. That was probably the most controversial thing that George Osborne said in his speech and it’s had a huge amount of coverage and I’m just asking you: if the Liberal Democrats are in government with the Conservatives – now, next week, next year, in 10 years’ time – would you stop that happening, yes or no?

NICK CLEGG:
Well you ask in 10 years’ time. Of course you can …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Well alright, 2 years’ time.
NICK CLEGG:
(over) … you can look at a different figure in 10 years’ time. Right now I am not persuaded that you should bring that cap down. But actually I don’t think it was the most interesting or controversial thing that George Osborne said. The thing he said which was much more controversial – and actually, as I say, really very unorthodox to put it politely amongst you know economists – is to say that you don’t have any tax contribution to filling the black hole in the public finances and that you start at the bottom and work up rather than start at the top and work down when you ask yourself who in society pays for the mistakes of the past.

ANDREW MARR:
So is that a red line? You will not go into government with anybody who doesn’t raise taxes on the people at the top to help pay off the deficit?

NICK CLEGG:
Of course the Liberal Democrats are not going to enter into government with an economic agenda which the Conservatives have announced is their priority, which would only penalise the working age poor. It is anathema to everything we believe in. We believe yes you need to do the difficult things to deal with the economy, which the Labour Party refused to confront, but you have to do it as fairly as possible. Of course there will continue to be difficult decisions which need to be made, controversial decisions, dare I say it even unpopular decisions as we deal with the …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So swingeing cuts on the working age poor are fine as long as you bash the rich as well?

NICK CLEGG:
No – no, no, no. Of course you will need to make further reductions in public spending, but how you distribute and how you offset that with some tax increases and how you spread it in a way that is fair is absolutely crucial. And you know the Conservative Party have now said they’re only going to ask one section of population – the working age poor – and only gouge out further savings through the welfare budget alone. I, for instance, have advocated for a long time that we should be asking
multi-millionaire people who are retired to give up their TV licences and their winter fuel payments. It’s not actually a huge amount of money …

ANDREW MARR:
No it’s not.

NICK CLEGG:
… but it’s symbolically incredibly important. I don’t think you should dismiss it lightly. Why is it that George Osborne thinks it is okay to ask a working age family who are striving, aspiring, working hard but finding it difficult to pay their bills, to pay more, and not to ask very wealthy people who are retired to give up their TV licence or their winter fuel payment.

ANDREW MARR:
You had a ferocious row with Theresa May over the Communications Data Bill, the so-called Snooper Charter. She’s attacked you very personally and very aggressively. Again I say to you, what is the point of you staying in government with people who clearly despise what you’re doing, with whom you have no agreement at all, and who are now starting to use very strong language about you – words we cannot use on a Sunday morning that you know came from her special advisers? What do you feel about that?

NICK CLEGG:
Look rudeness from sort of you know silly, juvenile Conservative special advisers doesn’t bother me at all. The substance of it is incredibly serious and I think it needs to be dealt with in a grown-up way and it is simply this: how do we make sure that we improve the armoury of defences we need against these vile organisations like ISIL who want to do us damage, but do so in a way which nonetheless safeguards the liberties and the civil liberties that we treasure in this country? Now I, I …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It was briefed, it was said that you were against this for technical reasons only, about IP addresses and exactly where they could be located. I’m wondering is there a
principled case against this as well?

NICK CLEGG:
(over) There was a prin… Without getting to the … There’s quite a lot of technical
detail, but there’s two things here. One is do we or do we not allow the security
services, the police and others the power to keep a record of every single website you,
Andrew, and everybody watching this programme has visited over a year? I judged
then and I judge now that was not only necessary to keep us safe, but was
disproportionate. There was a separate issue, which was a measure which we actually
agreed on in the Queen’s speech in 2013 we should act upon. The Home Office have
not done so, which is to match so-called IP addresses …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And you don’t waver in your opposition to this proposal?

NICK CLEGG:
The first one, I do not waver in my opposition. The second one, I have actually
advocated it. So my frustration is that when people then seek to claim that somehow
that decision …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You’re endangering children and so forth …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … has jeopardised children, of course I feel I have the right to say well hang on
a minute, the reason children are being jeopardised in this way – and the statistics
from the National Crime Agency show this – is because we have not acted on what
we said we would do on this other matter, which I support.

ANDREW MARR:
Right. Sorry …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) And by the way, do remember this summer we legislated - in some controversy
– we legislated to make sure the security service …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) We have limited time.

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … services maintain information which they need to keep us safe.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah. We have limited time. I just want to ask you about one other big, big issue at
the moment, which is leaving the European Court of European Rights, the whole
human rights structure. Would a Liberal Democrat tinged or influenced government
have anything to do with that …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) No.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … or would that be an absolute red line?

NICK CLEGG:
(over) Absolutely not. I remember …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It’s not going to happen?

NICK CLEGG:
(over) … I remember very, very well that literally the last thing that David Cameron
and I negotiated in the fine detail of the coalition agreement and I remember
absolutely insisting saying yes let’s look at how we can reform the Strasbourg Court,
but the rights that British citizens have have to build on that body of rights in the
European Convention of Human Rights, which after all was developed actually by
British lawyers to protect our rights. I think trashing human rights basically in order to
cater for or to go after UKIP votes is a legally illiterate thing to do and is not in
keeping with fine British tradition.
ANDREW MARR:
Okay. So trashing human rights, getting rid of the deficit on the backs of the poor, economically illiterate special advisers and all the rest of it – I say to you, you have very little road left to go with the Conservatives. There’s almost nothing long-term you agree with them about going forward?

NICK CLEGG:
Andrew, it should be no surprise to anyone watching this programme that I vehemently disagree with what a Labour only government wants to do or a Conservative only government.

ANDREW MARR:
No, but I’m asking you particularly about the Conservatives because you’ve been in power with them and you have had all these arguments and you know …

NICK CLEGG:
(over) And I’ve won all those arguments. That’s the point. I’ve restrained them from doing these illiberal things, from doing these socially unjust things. That’s the point of coalition. It’s not do we necessarily see eye to eye. It’s how do I play …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I just don’t see how you and David Cameron could put together a new legislative programme at the moment. There’s nothing you agree on at all. You’ve got to agree on something.

NICK CLEGG:
Well, look, I stand where I stand. My party has stood in the reasonable decent liberal centre ground of British politics for many, many years despite all the brickbats from right, left and the centre. The Conservative Party are haring off to the right. The Labour Party are haring off to the left. All I’m saying is we are the guarantee that you can do both: have a strong economy and a fair society. You don’t have to make a choice in the way that the Labour and the Conservative parties appear to suggest we have to make.
ANDREW MARR:
Alright, we’ll come back in just a moment. For now, Nick Clegg, thank you very much.

END OF MAIN INTERVIEW/THEN TO EXTRA QUESTION/S:
ANDREW MARR:
The Deputy Prime Minister’s still with me. A couple more things to talk about very, very quickly. English votes for English lords, English devolution. You have a very, very different view from the Conservatives about this. Can we get a resolution, do you think, between the main parties through a convention or whatever to actually give to the people of England the kind of home rule the people of Scotland are now going to enjoy?

NICK CLEGGE:
Sure, I think we need a wider constitutional convention involving the public. I think we need to radically decentralise power in England away from Whitehall on the very specific but heated issue of how you vote in the House of Commons on English or English and Welsh matters only. My view, my party’s view is it’s got to be fair votes for English voters, not Tory votes for English voters. I think the Conservatives think that given they only got, what, 38/39 per cent of the vote in England …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Yeah, okay.

NICK CLEGGE:
(over) … somehow they can run the show. We say let’s create a body of English and Welsh MPs, but they’ve got to reflect the proportion of votes fairly won at the last election.

ANDREW MARR:
Indeed, I understand. Okay and final question. Television debates. You did very well last time, of course. They’re going to happen, yes? They must include Nigel Farage this time, yes?
NICK CLEGG:
I’m pretty relaxed about the format. The broadcasters I think need to really sort of determine what they want. I just think … you know I just think they were a precedent that people enjoyed. I think they enliven the General Election and I think all this foot dragging from the other parties is a great shame. I think we should get on with it, agree it and then enjoy it.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, they agree with Nick. Thank you very much indeed for that.

INTERVIEW ENDS

INTERVIEW ENDS