

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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SAJID JAVID

AM: Sajid Javid, first of all your reaction to what Amber Rudd's just said.

SJ: I was very saddened by the news yesterday evening that Amber had decided to leave government. She's a good person. She is my friend, not just my colleague. But I've listened to her just now on your programme and I have to say whilst I respect her deeply I don't agree with her on what I thought was her central point in her letter, which was she said that the government wasn't taking seriously the issue of getting a deal with the EU. But it was good to hear from her today that she did actually say that the prime minister is doing this seriously.

AM: There is a very widespread suspicion, not just from Amber Rudd but many other people, that really the government is not trying hard for a deal. You hear all these voices from Brussels saying, 'we see no new proposals, we see nothing coming forward. The two sides are diverging not converging.' To put that to rest, can you tell me now, give me one shred of a suspicion, of a whisper of what the government's position actually is on that deal. What is the deal?

SJ: Well, first off, that view, it couldn't be further from the truth.

AM: Great, well tell us –

SJ: From day one, from the point this new administration was formed the central focus of the government has been to make sure that we leave the EU on October 31st, and that is we want to have a deal, we absolutely want to have a deal.

AM: So what is my point, Amber Rudd said there's no evidence the government's trying to get a deal. Give me some evidence.

SJ: Well, the evidence is that-

AM: Give the people watching some evidence.

SJ: - the prime minister on day one, he set up a group of his most senior ministers, most senior advisers that have been meeting two to three times a week working almost exclusively on getting a deal. There's been numerous meetings in Brussels-

AM: They have taken nothing to Brussels.

SJ: -there's been numerous bilateral meetings with EU member states. I've had a number of meetings and discussions. The prime minister, for example, is going to Dublin tomorrow. There's more meetings in Brussels next week. And there has been progress.

What has stalled the progress is –

AM: Meetings, meetings meetings –

SJ: - what happened in parliament last week.

AM: - talk, talk, talk. Not a shred of a new idea from the British government. Nothing.

SJ: There actually are new ideas –

AM: So what?

SJ: -there are many new ideas-

AM: Tell me.

SJ: -and anyone who understands how negotiation works, you would not discuss those in public and put those in the public domain. But I am absolutely clear that we are working wholeheartedly, straining every sinew to get a deal, and the prime minister is personally putting in all the significant effort you would expect from a leader to get this deal done. And is absolutely focused on that.

AM: There's no evidence from the other side that anything is coming through at all. Amber Rudd's just said that the Cabinet is not involved in any of this. So can I put to you, even as Chancellor of the Exchequer, would you know what the contours of the British deal were?

SJ: Absolutely. Because as I said -

AM: So you know that there is a proposal, but you won't tell us about it.

SJ: Yes. I do know there's a proposal and that it would be madness to start talking about that in public. What I do know, as-

AM: I don't think it would be madness, I think it would be good to know.

SJ: -being one of the senior ministers on this negotiation – by the way, the reason why the prime minister's rightly set up this way, we're learning from the mistakes of the past . And one of those, by the way, also is that you need to have an alternative, and that's why we are properly preparing for no deal.

AM: That I understand.

SJ: But the prime minister's set up a small group so we can move at pace and move quickly as the EU adjusts its position. And there are a number of discussions going on and I am absolutely convinced that if we continue down this course of having these discussions, preparing for no deal, we can still get a deal. But this Bill, this Benn Bill from this week has not helped. That is an attempt to kneecap the government in its negotiations and we won't let that work. We will continue to work towards a deal.

AM: The people on the other side of the table in Brussels or indeed in Dublin, are saying again and again, 'there are no British proposals, there's no deal being offered to us. We must prepare and brace for no deal.' Because, actually, they suggest, you're not really negotiating in good faith.

SJ: Well, look, they would say that. Anyone that has been involved in any kind of serious negotiation, they know that you have this to and fro. What matters most is what is happening in those private discussions. And I'll tell you what's been making the most difference to concentrate their minds is our preparation for no deal. We don't want no deal, but if we have to we will leave on October 31st with no deal. But it is that very issue, the fact that the EU Commission, of our Irish friends, in wanting to see a deal.

AM: With the greatest of respect, this is completely abstract promises and words, when one side of the negotiation says there's nothing coming back at all. What about an all-Ireland backstop, for instance?

SJ: We will not support a backstop of any kind. The backstop is anti-democratic. And we don't need an all-Ireland backstop. We've been very clear that you can have alternative arrangements. We've been actually making some progress in our discussions about some of the things that will be the features of a alternative, such as a trusted trader scheme, perhaps exemptions for small businesses, looking at the agricultural – all-Ireland agricultural economy that already exists. So we've been very constructive on this. And you know what, let me just say this, what's also helped to focus on Ireland finding an alternative to a backstop is the knowledge that if you did have no deal, since both sides are committed to no change on the border, no infrastructure, that in itself is an alternative. Isn't it better, isn't it better –

AM: Oh, so no deal is their answer now?

SJ: -no, isn't it better to negotiate a deal and take time to set up an alternative than to suddenly find yourselves in one in 53 days' time? It's much better for all sides that we negotiate this.

AM: Alright. One of the possibilities, looking ahead, is an election. You've said that you hate the Benn Bill. I can understand you dislike the Benn Bill. Can I ask you, is it at all credible for the prime minister not to obey the rule of law? If the Benn Bill becomes law then surely the prime minister has to do what it says. No ifs, no buts.

SJ: This government, of course it will obey the law. The prime minister's been very clear about that in parliament last week. and he was very clear. So we will obey all laws.

AM: If the law says – if the law says the prime minister must ask for an extension beyond October 31st from Brussels, the prime minister will do that because that's what the law says?

SJ: Well, I'll tell you what the prime minister's going to do, because this is very important for all your listeners to hear, this being the big issue this week. We are going to continue to work towards exit on October 31st. We will leave on October 31st. We will work for a deal, we will keep putting all our effort in that, and preparations for no deal just in case that's the only way we can leave. The prime minister will go to the October Council meeting on October 17th and 18th, and he will try to strike a deal. He absolutely will not ask for an extension in that meeting.

AM: But that's the problem. If the law says that he must ask for an extension, what are his options?

SJ: Well, the law talks about October 19th. In case there is no deal agreed in that Council meeting, should we get to that position, we will look at our options. Of course we'll obey the law, but we will look at our options and we will not ask –

AM: October 19th, after that Council the prime minister would ask for an extension, because that is the law.

SJ: No, we will not – we will not change our policy. Our policy is clear.

AM: How does this work? It's completely baffling, because the law says one thing and you're saying the government's going to obey the law but we're not going to do that one thing. It's very hard to see how you get out of that.

SJ: The government will not change its policy, and we will be consistent with obeying the law but also sticking to our policy and you'll have to wait and see what happens. There's a lot of days between now and October 19th and we will be working full on right until October 31st actually, to either leave with a deal or to leave with no deal.

AM: So the government's position is that we will obey the law but we won't do what the law tells us to do.

SJ: Those are your words-

AM: No those are your words.

SJ: -those are not my words. No, absolutely not. We are clear-

AM: Explain what's wrong about that. Explain what's wrong about what I just said.

SJ: Well, first of all we will go – the prime minister will go to the Council meeting on the 17th and 18th. He'll be trying to strike a deal. He absolutely will not be asking for an extension in that meeting. Should we – the Bill talks about the 19th being an important date, at that point we will consider our options. But our policy is clear, it is unchanged. We will be leaving on October 31st.

AM: So what that means is at that Council, if you don't get a deal and the 19th comes round, as dates tend to do, you at that point will obey the law or not?

SJ: We will obey all laws, because all governments should obey laws. Absolutely. But you'll have to wait and see what happens then. But we are clear, we must – let me just (talking together)

AM: Let's just move on, we're going round and round in circles here.

SJ: -before we do that, can I just say that this issue has divided our country for far too long. I am in a government that wants to heal society, to bring people together, and this issue of the EU, remain and leave, we can't let it continue. It's been three years since we had that referendum, and I talk to people all the time, like I did this weekend, people whether they voted leave, whether they voted remain, they want this over. They want us to exit. They see no reason for another pointless delay.

AM: Right, I understand all of that. I still don't understand how you get out of the corner you have painted yourselves into. One way might be that the prime minister at that point says, 'well, I'm just not going to do this,' and resigns as prime minister. Is that a possibility?

SJ: The prime minister will not be resigning. He will be keeping his promise, this government's promise, to leave on the 31st.

AM: Something about this can't be true. It can't be true that you're going to obey the law but you're not going to do what the law says, and the prime minister is not going to resign. I just don't see how you get out of this. I really don't. Just tell us a little bit. If you've got a cunning plan or if Dominic Cummings has got a cunning plan, this is the moment to tell us. Because I don't believe you have.

SJ: We have a plan, which is to stick to what we've been doing day in and day out since the six weeks ago that we came into office, which is to plan properly for no deal in case it happens, but to put a tremendous amount of effort, all the effort we can, in getting a deal. And I am very clear in my position, sitting there as Chancellor, you're able to look across government. I can see all the work that's going into that and I couldn't be more clear about the effort that we're putting in to try and get a deal.

AM: Is Amber Rudd a Conservative?

SJ: Yes.

AM: Is Ken Clarke a Conservative?

SJ: Yes.

AM: Is Nick Soames a Conservative?

SJ: Yes.

AM: So why have you got rid of them? You've pushed them out of the party, you've taken the whip away and you've caused enormous pain. Do you yourself feel comfortable about what's happened?

SJ: I'm saddened about what's happened. I don't know a single Conservative who is not sad about the way things have turned out last week. I would – I hope eventually there's some way for people to come back if that's what they wish to do, but as long as they sign up to the government's policy, and that means the government's central policy. You know, we've already lost two prime ministers because of this Europe issue and we don't want to

have all this – these problems all over again. We've just been through a leadership election and the prime minister, Boris Johnson, couldn't be clearer on his policy. So whilst I'm sad about what's happened, he was absolutely right to make the vote last week a vote of confidence, and all MPs know what happens if you defy a vote of confidence.

AM: His own brother doesn't trust him.

SJ: His own brother, who I also have huge respect for, he's one of my ministers in one of my previous departments. You know, he's had to make his own decision, but it is right that if you are a minister and you're not comfortable with the policy of leaving on 31st October, deal or no deal, then you have to make your own decisions.

AM: We're in a strange position at the moment because clearly your party is in terrible trouble at Westminster. What people call inside the Westminster bubble, SW1 at the moment. But out in the country you're doing quite well in the polling and we watch the Prime Minister charging about and he appears to be electioneering already, there's a sense of an election starting. Now to absolutely guarantee that you do well in that election and bring back a big pro-Brexit majority in the House of Commons you need to do some kind of arrangement with the Brexit Party and Nigel Farage. Can I ask you if you personally would feel comfortable standing on a platform having done a deal with Nigel Farage?

SJ: Look, we're not – I mean first of all we absolutely now need an election. It's actually – it's sad we've come to this point because I would have liked the next election to come at the right time, but it's been forced upon us because parliament is trying to kneecap –

AM: And answer the question I asked.

SJ: - these negotiations.

AM: I'm sorry, that wasn't my question. That was not my question. My question is about Nigel Farage.

SJ: - Therefore we need an election. Your question about electoral alliances and things, we don't need an electoral alliance with anyone. We can stand on our own two feet, put our message across which is not just the message on this key issue, which is leaving the EU, no more further dither and delay, but it is also about bringing the nation together. You know you haven't the opportunity to ask me about my spending round last week.

AM: Tragically, we'll get to that.

SJ: But which would have been you know in normal circumstances quite a moment, but I point to that because if you look at the measures there about whether it's education, it's health, it's crime, these are the issues the British people also care about, but these are all the issues that bring people together. We need to heal society. We are a one nation party, we are a proud one nation party and that's what we will be at an election, bringing the country together and ending this uncertainty about EU exit.

AM: So this is really really important because a lot of Conservatives looking at the government at the moment say this is no longer quite the Conservative Party that I recognise. This is more like a vote leave campaign in number 10. That's what you're now serving, that's what it's become. You're offering almost nothing at all for the 48 percent and now it's clear there's going to have to be some kind of arrangement or compact with Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party. I know Boris Johnson said privately it won't happen, can you say publicly now there will be no pact, no deal, no alliance with Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party?

SJ: Look I've been – we don't need an alliance with anyone.

AM: You said you don't need. I want to rule it out.

SJ: The point that you've made there about - the picture I think you could say our opponents are painting of us and of course they would paint a false picture.

AM: These are Conservatives I'm pressing.

SJ: No we are a proud centre right moderate one nation party. There is nothing extremist about wanting to meet the will of the

British people on a simple question which was do you want to leave the EU or not? People want that honoured. There's nothing extremist about that and we are a party that is committed to everyone -

AM: I'm asking you one question.

SJ: - in our society about healing the wounds and that is what you will see from this government.

AM: I'm asking you one question really here, can you rule out an agreement with the Brexit Party, yes or no?

SJ: Look, we're not in election yet, when we get there –

AM: So you can't?

SJ: - where I'm clear that we don't need an alliance with anyone. I think our message will resonate across the country. You already pointed out that out there when you get away from Westminster which often can give you a very false picture of what real people think our true masters, the British people, it is clear that they want this uncertainty ended and they also like all the other things that we've been talking about, about keeping the economy strong and investing in our public services.

AM: But you can't rule it out? You won't use that words? You can't say, I, Sajid Javid, Chancellor of the Exchequer rule out an agreement between the Conservative Party and the Brexit Party at the next election?

SJ: I'm telling you don't need alliance with anyone.

AM: Don't need is not the same as ruling it out.

SJ: We don't need it.

AM: Don't need it. All right, well let's turn to one more big issue which you've mentioned already, your public spending.

SJ: Thank you.

AM: You've got lots and lots of promises on police and health and I'm sure they're very, very popular but they've been in no manifesto and they're not going to be debated by the House of

Commons at any point in the near future. You have no real mandate for this.

SJ: Well I think first all I think we have an mandate to invest in the NHS, to have more police on the street, 20 thousand more police, to invest in schools and invest in FE colleges. I don't think the British people are going to be surprised the government supports these –

AM: No, they're not.

SJ: - wonderful vital public services.

AM: This spending must all presumably be based on your best assessment of what's going to happen to the economy. Is it still the case that every way of leaving the EU is better for the British economy than no deal? No deal is the worst possible outcome in terms of economic growth. That's what every single piece of data we've seen from the government says. Is it still the case?

SJ: Well I don't think anyone would argue with the point it's much better for the country to get a deal –

AM: So it is still the case?

SJ: - and that's what - as I've said that we've been absolutely working towards, but it is also right that if we can't get a deal, for whatever reason, a good deal that can pass through this parliament then we have to leave with no deal. And in doing so I think it is absolutely right as a government that we prepare as much as we can to make sure if there is any disruption it's kept to an absolute minimum.

AM: I get that.

SJ: And that preparation has been going on.

AM: I get all of that. I'm just asking if, iof the possible outcomes no deal is still the worst economically as far as the British government is concerned?

SJ: Look, I – no one's ever pretended that no deal is some kind of ideal outcome, of course –

AM: is it the worst?

SJ: - even if you had. Look here's how it would work.

AM: is it the worst?

SJ: - even if you had no deal you'd still then quickly have to get round the negotiating table. It won't be the sort of long term outcome, you'd have to get back to the table and try to strike a deal on trade, on tariffs and all these important issues. But in terms of an outcome you know I think it is something that where we can keep disruptions to a minimum – yeah, I'll tell you something Andrew. Last week that was missed on the news. Let me tell you. The Bank of England itself independently said last week that all - because of all the mitigations the government has been working on in the last few months they have had –

AM: But we're still 5% worse.

SJ: - a material positive impact.

AM: One final question. A second referendum, is that a goer?

SJ: No way, absolutely not.

AM: Under no circumstances. Sajid Javid, thanks very much indeed for talking to us.

Ends