ANDREW MARR:
Now then, David Cameron has reportedly warned cabinet colleagues not to patronise Jeremy Corbyn. Far from it. They seem to be talking him up - a threat to the UK’s national and economic security one minister said yesterday. So does the government regard this as a serious change in the political landscape? I’m joined now by the Justice Secretary Michael Gove. Welcome and thanks for coming on. First of all, the second most courteous man in British politics has just won the Labour leadership. You’re probably the most courteous. Any message for Jeremy Corbyn to start with?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well first of all, Andrew, that’s very kind of you. And I simply congratulate him because I think in any election you’re putting yourself forward, your character is on the line and it’s never an easy process, and he enjoys a very special sort of vindication. To win an election by the margin that he has means that any of us who are democrats have to congratulate him on that. You mentioned earlier that the attitude of some Conservatives might be gleeful or derisive. Not at all. The attitude I think of most of us who are Conservatives is sombre, respectful of Jeremy Corbyn’s mandate, but also concerned about what it means for the country.
ANDREW MARR:
You look at the huge and very fast and unpredicted uprising of supporters that he had …

MICHAEL GOVE:
(over) Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… during the Labour leadership. Could that be carried on into a general election? Is Jeremy Corbyn a man who could win a general election in this country?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes and we have to face up to that reality. The Labour Party have made a decision eyes wide open that Jeremy Corbyn is the person that they want to have as the alternative prime minister. Now there are some people who are still commenting on the Labour election as though it were a sort of social media phenomenon that we can you know gleefully detach ourselves from and comment on as though it didn’t bear on who’s going to govern this country and who’s going to lead it in four and a half years’ time. We have to face up to the fact that Jeremy Corbyn is the person that the Labour Party want to have as prime minister now, and if he were prime minister as you said that would be a real danger to our national security but also to the economic security.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I have to be neutral on this. But what we do know is that by 2020 there’ll be a huge argument over Europe, whatever happens with that, and we may well have seen yet another international recession. People are pencilling in 2018 as a possible. So the circumstances are totally different. Do you un… Is it conceivable, therefore, that a kind of anti-austerity, angry surge across the country could take the Labour Party into power?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well it’s conceivable that Jeremy Corbyn could become prime minister and we have to face up to that. Now none of us will know what the circumstances are globally over
the course of the next four years. We do know that we live in a world where there are many risks and many dangers, and it’s because of that that I think that we need to lay out at this time the scale of the risk that would be posed to Britain if Jeremy Corbyn were prime minister. The way in which – as he’s been perfectly clear, to his enormous credit – he would, as you pointed out earlier in this programme, he would unilaterally disarm. He would give up our nuclear deterrent at a time when other countries and indeed terrorists are anxious to acquire a nuclear capacity. He would, as he made perfectly clear, like to leave the NATO Alliance, desert our friends – the Dutch, the French, the Americans - and the people he calls friends in the international sphere are the terrorist organisations Hamas and Hezbollah.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot …

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
This is a serious danger.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot of people who are not kind of particularly extreme in their politics one way or another look back over the last 10 or 15 years and they see war after war after war, threat after threat after threat, and they feel not more secure but less secure and they say well why can’t we go in a completely different direction, let’s get away from … This has not worked for us. We feel insecure now partly because of what’s happened over the last … these wars which went horribly wrong not just in Iraq but Syria, Libya and so forth.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
I absolutely understand and it’s a very serious thing to do to intervene in the affairs of another country, but it’s also the case that we cannot shut ourselves off from what happens globally. And I think one of the worrying things about Jeremy Corbyn’s politics is he’s simultaneously isolationist – he believes that Britain can stop the world and get off – but he’s also inclined to see as his friends many of those people and many of those organisations who don’t have an interest in peace long-term. His record during the Northern Ireland troubles, and in particular his position now, suggests that
he shows a greater degree of sympathy with those people who are not interested in peace but who are interested in conflict than is wise for someone who aspires to be prime minister.

ANDREW MARR:
You say he’s isolationist, but you’re somebody who’d quite like to get out of the EU as it’s currently constructed – as would a lot of people around him. Do you think there’s going to be a kind of left and right alliance which will take this country out of Europe?

MICHAEL GOVE:
No I don’t think that. I think what we’re going to see is reform of the European Union. It’s clear that there’s an appetite not just in this country but across Europe for change and that’s been reflected in a number of political developments, and I think that the Prime Minister is in a very strong position to secure exactly the sort of change that Europe needs in order to make sure not just that people are more secure here economically but also that the whole continent recovers and that there are more young people who are currently unemployed in jobs and contributing to what we all want to see, which is cooperation between nations and economic growth.

ANDREW MARR:
This has been a very civilised conversation, but a lot of people have said to me they’re worried about the tone of politics coming next; there is a much angrier, rawer tone coming into the political debate, particularly around austerity. Do you agree with that threat?

MICHAEL GOVE:
There is a danger. And again you were quite right to say that Jeremy Corbyn in his manner is one of the most polite, straightforward, indeed charming of people, but there are – as David Blunkett alluded to earlier – some people behind him who do have a tradition in politics which is very different from Jeremy Corbyn’s own humane tradition. And I do worry – as we saw even in the last parliament with organisations like UK Uncut – that there are some people who want to bring protest onto the streets. I think it’s important that we keep our politics civilised. And one other concern that I
have is that actually if you have a strong opposition leader, if you have a strong alternative prime minister, then people are less inclined to take their anger onto the streets, they’re more inclined to see the House of Commons and civilised political discourse as the way to change this country. So there is a danger, I think, to the health of our democracy overall that Labour have not chosen someone who would be their strongest alternative prime minister.

ANDREW MARR:
Let me ask you about Syria in specific terms. Now I know it’s not actually your responsibility, the legal backing, but let me ask you are you absolutely sure that under Article 51 of the United Nations …

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… those drone strikes were legal?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Absolutely, yes I am.

ANDREW MARR:
Because that article is supposed to be about one state being attacked by another state and it’s not supposed to be retrospective or theoretical. In other words, there has to be an absolute direct real threat to this country that you know about …

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… and is clear and unequivocal before you can do that kind of thing.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Absolutely. But it is al…
ANDREW MARR:
And we have not seen the evidence for this.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well we haven’t as individuals, but the Prime Minister has and the Attorney General gave him clear advice that it was absolutely legal to do it. And you are right that Article 51 makes it clear that states have the right of self-defence, but it was also the case that there was a United Nations resolution that was passed in the wake of 9/11 that made it clear that states could also defend themselves against an organised terrorist strike on their soil. We have to be clear that the nature of the threats we face has changed and so must our response.

ANDREW MARR:
They were killed after the alleged plots happened of course and there is a certain ambiguity at the moment about exactly what our justification for this is. We’ve told the United Nations it was to protect Iraq as part of our general protection of the Iraqi state and that was where they attach on. The House of Commons was told it was about us. So which is it? Do you know?

MICHAEL GOVE:
It is about the right of self-defence. We do know that there was serious intelligence that a direct threat was posed to Britain. Now I haven’t seen that intelligence and I understand that when claims are made on the basis of intelligence that there are always going to be some people who will arch an eyebrow and be sceptical.

ANDREW MARR:
Particularly after the last 20 years or so.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Indeed. But it’s also the case that the Prime Minister has a responsibility and a duty to keep us safe and I think the decision would not have been taken lightly. It was only taken after extensive consideration of the legal arguments and an absolute assurance that it was justified, proportionate and legal.
ANDREW MARR:
Two things. First of all, did we notify the United Nations as we’re supposed to under Article 51?

MICHAEL GOVE:
I myself don’t know about that.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. Second question: should the Commons’ Intelligence and Security Committee not have sight of the actual raw intelligence on which this decision was made?

MICHAEL GOVE:
The Commons’ Intelligence and Security Committee has been reconstituted …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

MICHAEL GOVE:
… and there’s a new role for it, I think, in playing a larger part in helping to examine whether or not decisions such as this are right and wise. But I wouldn’t want to usurp the decision that will be made by the new chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee whoever that might be.

ANDREW MARR:
To see that stuff?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Absolutely.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay one final point just about Syria more generally. We are in a difficult position here where we are sort of at war and sort of not at war, and that’s after the House of Commons vote. Do we not need to go … Do you not need to go back to the House of Commons one way or another and resolve legally and politically our attitude to this
conflict?

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well I think it’s important to draw a distinction between interventions like the drone strikes, which are legal in their own right, and the broader question of what we can do in order to contribute to the war against the fanatical killers, mass murderers who run what is called Islamic State. Now we’re already committed in Iraq. If we were to extend our commitment to Syria, that is something where – as Tom Watson pointed out – a case would need to be made and taken to parliament and then a vote would have to be passed. As my friend George Osborne pointed out last week, it was a great pity that the House of Commons did not vote to give the Prime Minister room to intervene last time round. I hope that if a case is made that the House of Commons would support the Prime Minister in what he needs to do.

**ANDREW MARR:**
I asked him whether he thought that would be easier or harder to get that vote if Jeremy Corbyn became leader and he quite rightly said well we don’t know that Jeremy Corbyn’s going to become leader.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Yes.

**ANDREW MARR:**
We know now …

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Yes.

**ANDREW MARR:**
… so the question still applies.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
I don’t know, I don’t know. I mean I think that Jeremy Corbyn is someone who throughout his time has been very clear that he’s sceptical about intervention, but I
think it’s only fair now that he’s assumed the mantle of leadership, even though I’m deeply worried about his position and his policies, to give him time to consider this case.

ANDREW MARR:
Michael Gove, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

ENDS