ANDREW MARR SHOW
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SADIQ KHAN,
MAYOR OF LONDON

AM: Now you are coming out today for a second referendum on the Brexit issue. Why?

SK: Well, I’ve long and hard about this. I’ve spent the last two years and three months working with the government to get the best deal from the European Union. I’ve met with the Brexit Secretary, David Davis, many, many times, the Prime Minister and others. I’ve given to the government City Hall advice and information. I’ve been to Brussels to meet with various EU Presidents, officials, politicians to explain to them how an extreme hard Brexit is bad for them too. And the reality is this, Andrew. We’ve now reached a position where there are two outcomes as a consequence of the government’s negotiations. A bad deal, and by that I include us leaving the EU without knowing the terms of the future relationship, a sort of blindfold Brexit, or no deal. And independent research I’ve taken for us shows that no deal would lead to 500,000 fewer jobs, 87,000 fewer jobs in London alone and £50 billion less investment in our country. That’s bad for our country, hugely damaging to London and our country.

AM: So you’re against Brexit and that is familiar but on the idea of a second referendum you have changed your mind quite dramatically.

SK: No, this is really important. I’m not one of those advocating for a rerun. I’m not a referendumite. What I’m saying is for the first time ever –

AM: We need a second referendum.

SK: - the British public should have a say on the outcome of the negotiations, including what the Prime Minister negotiates with the EU, plus the option of staying in the EU.
AM: Let’s just remind ourselves what you said after the first referendum on LBC.

LBC, July 2016
‘I think the problem for those of us who are saying to the British public there should be a second referendum, it will lead to even more cynicism. It will lead to the British public saying hold on a sec, these are the rules of the game, we voted in record numbers and now you’re ignoring us and I’ve got grievances about the way the campaign was conducted, but the reality is Julian, the British public had a say. They voted and they voted to leave. And my job as the Mayor of London is to heal some of the rifts that were created during the campaign and make sure our city carries on being the greatest city in the world.’

SK: And I’ve done that. So one of the things I could have done over the last two years and three months is cross my arms and watch it all fail and say I told you so. I’ve met David Davis eight times. The Prime Minister, the Chancellor –
AM: But you said then no going back. It would create cynicism and create rifts. What’s changed?

SK: And it’s really important that is not a rerun of the referendum but the British public having a say for the first time on the outcome.

AM: But it is a second referendum, that’s what it is.
SK: Yeah but when the campaign was taking place, Boris Johnson said we could leave the EU and have access to the single market. Untrue. Liam Fox said this would be the easiest trade deal to be done in history. Untrue. Nobody said there’d be jobs being lost. We have from London already the European Medicines Agency leaving London to go to Amsterdam, 900 jobs plus some. We’ve
already got an example of Euro-Clearing leaving London. We have NHS wards understaffed.

AM: So the evidence has changed, is your answer, because some of your colleagues, I mean Andy Burnham up in Manchester says there would be civil unrest in Great Manchester if the vote was rerun in any sense.

SK: Well, let me tell you the facts which are the police currently are preparing for the possibility of civil unrest. That’s happening now already. What’s happening now already are NHS wards understaffed. What’s happening now already is developers I speak to telling me construction workers haven’t returned from their summer holidays. What’s happening already is the highest vacancy rates in London for mental health nurses, for NHS nurses and for social care.

AM: Let me just read you what Barry Gardiner in the Shadow Cabinet said about this. He said: “This is playing with our democracy. It is playing with the foundations of our country in a way that is really, really damaging. We have to respect people’s votes in that referendum.”

SK: You know what would be so incredibly divisive is if the public didn’t have a say on the outcome of the negotiations and it would lead to livelihoods being damaged, lead to businesses suffering, lead to the possibility – and this is now a real possibility – of our national security being weakened because we can’t have the same access to information with our European colleagues as we have now.

AM: Let’s move on from the principle then to the actual practicalities. The first referendum where the two main parties were basically agreed and it was a very straight forward binary vote took nearly a year of parliamentary work to get ready. We
have only a few months to go now before we leave the EU. It’s not possible, is it?

SK: Well what could very easily happen is our government says to the European Union let’s suspend –

AM: But our government’s against a second vote, so they’re not going to.

SK: Well hold on a sec. I mean what’s clear is Theresa May can’t even negotiate within her own party, let alone the European Union, so what needs to happen is this. We defer us leaving the European Union to allow the British public for the first time to have a say in the outcome of the negotiations, really important that happens. The reality is this. The Conservative Party already has rejected Chequers. The European Union has rejected the Chequers offer, so we’re in a situation where we could slide out of the European Union with either no deal, we know that would be hugely damaging to London and the country, or a bad deal. And that includes, by the way –

AM: So are you calling now for Article 50 to be extended so that a people’s vote or a second referendum can actually happen?

SK: Well bearing in mind the proximity to us leaving the European Union, bearing in mind how we’re already seeing some of the consequences of a bad deal or potential no deal, I think the sensible thing for the Prime Minister to do would be to call a General Election and that’s my first option. I think we should have a General Election so we can have a Labour government installed in Downing Street.

AM: She’s not going to do that.

SK: Well that’s my point. If we can’t get two thirds of a majority to agree to a new election or there’s not going to be a General Election, the next best thing is for the British public to have a say on the outcome of the negotiations. And by the way, this is the public taking back control from politicians who have failed.
AM: What did Jeremy Corbyn say when you told him what you were going to do?

SK: Well, I’ve been fully supportive of the six tests. I’ve been fully supportive of us having all the options on the table –

AM: No, but what did he say?

SK: Well Jeremy, not unreasonably reminded me, and he’s right to do so that we’ve got a position now where the six tests are set out there clearly. What appears to me is the government has got to meet those six tests. I would, like Jeremy, want to see a General Election. I want to see Jeremy Corbyn as our Prime Minister. If that’s not going to happen, as far as I’m concerned, the British public should have a say in the outcome of the negotiations, including the option of staying in the EU.

AM; As Rachel Shabi was pointing out there’s three big unions come out for the people’s vote, so called, the second referendum. Frances O’Grady of the TUC has done so as well, now you’re doing it. Is this going to be a crunch moment at the Labour Party Conference? Are you going to be able to shift party policy on this do you think?

SK: Well the way we work is we don’t have crunch moments or pressure -

AM: Oh go on, have a crunch moment, please.

SK: The Labour Party makes policy for our party and one of the good things about this leadership is they encourage debate and votes after debates as well and I think the reality is because of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell, Keir Starmer, Emily Thornberry’s hard work over the summer, the TUC motion last week, the various work being done by members across the country around CLPs, we all have a debate at a conference, with a vote as well.

AM: Really big question is, what is the question?

SK: You mean on the referendum?
AM: Yeah.
SK: That’s one of the things that you know it’s really important parliament resolves. I would like to see one of the options on the referendum, the option to stay in the European Union. The British public have now seen all the promises broken by the likes of Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, Liam Fox and others.

AM: So what is the question? Is it Theresa May’s compromise, or staying in the EU, is that the question?

SK: I think the question should be a choice between the deal done by this government, or staying in the European Union and the deals done by this government we can now see what actually the consequences would be. Two years ago, two and a half years ago, when this debate was taking place was theoretical. It was abstract. We were told for example various things by Brexiteers that haven't proved to be true.

AM: That would cut out all of those people who want something more than Theresa May’s offering. All those people who want a so called ‘hard Brexit’ would be completely disenfranchised by your idea.

SK: Well because the reality is the options on the table are the deals negotiated by the government and those are one of two things. A bad deal or no deal. And my point is this. Rather than having a bad deal or a no deal, let’s put that to the British public with the option of staying in the EU.

AM: This is going to get a lot of attention. Is this a distraction from your own record as Mayor, because you have been under a huge amount of attack over knife crime, housing, transport and much else in London.
SK: Well I’m really happy to talk about my record over the last two years, from record numbers of homes, affordable homes begun last year, record numbers of social homes begun last year. Four times more than the previous four years –

AM: You’re under huge attack, including from London’s main newspaper, the Evening Standard which ran the Khan Files. We can see the front pages and they’ve been doing this day after day after day.

‘Khan ‘has no plan’ to fight crime in London.’

AM: Are you concerned this is starting to cut home among London voters?

SK: Can I reassure you, George Osborne doesn’t concern me the slightest and if he wants to rewrite history, if he wants the Londoners to have selective amnesia it’s not going to work. So I want to remind Londoners that the architect of the massive cuts to the police in London, the massive cuts to youth services in London – David Cameron’s right hand man when we had the referendum was George Osborne and if he wants to go to battle with me, good luck, looking forward to it.

AM: Sounding very personal. Sadiq Khan, thanks very much indeed for joining us.

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