ANDREW MARR:  
Now it seems so long ago, doesn’t it? Do you remember “I agree with Nick” and that hugely touching bromance in the rose garden with David Cameron? However, get into bed with the modern Conservative Party and they kick you out the door before breakfast. But he hasn’t gone away, you know. Nick Clegg, nothing if not resilient, plans to play a major role in the biggest politics of 2016: Britain’s future inside or outside the EU. Welcome, Mr Clegg.

NICK CLEGGE:  
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:  
Now you spent five years with the Prime Minister talking, I’m sure, a lot about Europe in private. Do you think there’s any part of him who’s prepared to lead this country out of the EU really?

NICK CLEGGE:
Well, he himself has said he doesn’t want to and so I take that at face value. I think part of the – we see it in the papers this morning – part of the problem is the debate has been so much about Conservatives debating with Conservatives and at some point David Cameron will need to switch gear from being leader of a slightly split party on Europe into the leader of the country and saying very clearly to the country as a whole what he wants, and that I hope will happen immediately after this complicated renegotiation is finally complete.

ANDREW MARR:
I guess what I’m getting at is a lot of Conservatives think that there’s a lot of smoke and mirrors here; that in the end David Cameron will certainly say let’s stay in the EU and will certainly campaign for that, with everything as it were being fixed towards that end, and whether you think that’s actually quite an accurate assessment of the Prime Minister.

NICK CLEGG:
I don’t think that’s a secret. I mean he’s said what he wants to do is advocate continued membership of the United Kingdom in a European Union, reformed as it might be to various degrees by his renegotiation package. So he’s said clearly that’s what he wants.

ANDREW MARR:
And do you think the renegotiation is effectively a done deal now?

NICK CLEGG:
I think the renegotiation is sort of rather symbolic and insubstantial. There are other parts of it which I think are much more substantial. So the point that George Osborne for instance I think has rightly been emphasising – that we need to make sure that the United Kingdom as the rest of the Eurozone changes and integrates further, that the rights of the United Kingdom as the largest economy in the European Union but outside the Eurozone, that those rights are properly protected – that seems to me to be a substantive thing that does need to be fixed, that I hope will be fixed as part of this process.
ANDREW MARR:
Now as the campaign develops, we’re going to hear a lot from the inside as it were about the dangers and perils of leaving the EU. But there are dangers and perils of staying in too, aren’t there? For instance, there’s the question of Turkish accession. Now you were very in favour of Turkish accession to the EU. Are you still?

NICK CLEGG:
To be honest, I think it’s changed. I think Turkish opinion itself has changed quite dramatically. I don’t think Turkish interest in becoming a full member of the European Union is what it was whenever it was, 30 years ago, when it was first mooted. So I think that is changing quite a lot. But I agree with you that of course there are … there are risks on both sides. My own view is that the people who really count in this referendum - namely the people who don’t either passionately believe we should say or passionately believe we should leave, millions of people who don’t really care about this very much, I suspect at the end of the day - I hope at the end of the day they will believe that the risks of leaving outweigh the imperfections of staying. Of course there are imperfections in the European Union, much as there are in our own political arrangements here.

ANDREW MARR:
\[(over)\] Some people would say more than imperfections. I mean I stay with Turkey …

NICK CLEGG:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… just because it may well become a big issue in the campaign. You called it “a strategic necessity” for Turkey to join at one point. That’s another 75 million people able to come and work here if they so choose and a 500 mile border with Syria, which seems to a lot of people very, very scary indeed. That’s the kind of thing that make people think it might be safer, actually more secure and safer to stay out.

NICK CLEGG:
I’d say two things. Firstly Turkey already has a very, very close relationship with the European Union, so we trade with Turkey in a way that we don’t with many other countries already.

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* But not free movement.

**NICK CLEGG:**

Second … secondly, actually there are very large numbers of Turks – as you know – in Germany and elsewhere who moved many years ago. Thirdly, the idea that if we were to pull out of the European Union suddenly the problem and the challenge of people moving large distances away from conflict and destitution from the Middle East, from Syria, from Africa, that that somehow will go is of course a nonsense. I mean if you look at the way in which …

**ANDREW MARR:**

*(over)* We’d gain more control over our borders surely if we left?

**NICK CLEGG:**

Well … well I question that a little bit. Look we have an arrangement, for instance, which we entered into with France back in 2003 within the context of our shared membership of the European Union such that they check passports and we can check people’s entry into the United Kingdom on French soil. There’s no reason to believe that would necessarily continue if we were to pull out of the European Union. So I just don’t buy this idea that by turning our back on Europe somehow we can wave a magic wand and imagine that mass migration won’t be a problem. It will remain a problem whether we’re in or out. My view is in an uncertain, insecure, unsafe world, there is safety in numbers. And this is a really important point because many people feel that they might have to take this decision based on their views on Europe as it is today. Actually the decision we need to take is what we believe Britain should be for our children and our grandchildren. Should it be open? Should it be closed? Should it work with other countries to deal with those insecurities and challenges or should we be isolated? And I think if you think about the future generations, it’s really important that we keep Britain strong, capable of leading in the world.
ANDREW MARR:
So that’s your very strong case for staying in, but you’re also very keen on the euro. Are you still keen on us joining the euro?

NICK CLEGG:
No I think to be honest there …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So you were wrong about that?

NICK CLEGG:
I think with hindsight it’s quite clear that – and certainly now – joining the euro is not something that I would advocate and, by the way, it’s not something which is on the ballot paper when it comes to the referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Of course not, of course not, but at the time you and many others were saying it’s going to have a devastating effect on our economy, on employment and so forth unless we join this thing, and you’re all completely wrong and so people watching will think well why should we listen to them now when they’re saying we shouldn’t leave the EU itself?

NICK CLEGG:
It’s completely different of course. The …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) They’re both huge issues and …

NICK CLEGG:
Well no, this is about whether we stay in a club of which we’ve been a member since the early 1970s and that was about whether fixing interest rates across the European single market made sense. What I didn’t anticipate, and many people didn’t frankly, was that the rules which were supposed to govern entry into the Eurozone were
fudged as badly as they were - for instance allowing entry of countries like Greece that should never have been allowed in the Eurozone at all. But they are quite, quite separate issues and in my view staying in a club which gives us safety in numbers …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

NICK CLEGG:
… gives us greater security in an uncertain world is on balance better than the imperfections of the European Union.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. Now Nick Clegg himself - a little bit on how it’s been suddenly expelled from that kind of golden little circle of power. You’ve had a lot of criticism yourself of not turning up to vote enough at the House of Commons. In fact I think you’ve got the worst voting record of any MP in 2015. Why is that?

NICK CLEGG:
Oh I think in the months immediately after the General Election you’re right, I didn’t vote as much as I should or indeed will. I’m sure over the course of …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Were you just sort of down with the whole thing?

NICK CLEGG:
No, no, listen there were only very few weeks of voting you know if you take the summer holidays into account last year, but of course over the 5 year parliament, I will vote more. No, look, one of the … Of course you lose responsibility, you lose the ability and the authority to take decisions, which I enjoy doing in government, but of course you also gain much greater freedom.

ANDREW MARR:
So … but pretty bruising. I mean I just wonder if there’s any part of you … You’re one of the very few Liberal Democrats who, thanks probably to Conservative help,
kept your seat. Is there part of you that kind of regrets that, wishes you’d gone down with the ship at the time?

NICK CLEGG:
No, I’m absolutely delighted I’m still MP for my constituency. It’s one of the things I enjoy most in politics. But look, I’m just … I’m afraid if you’re inviting me to sort of lick my wounds in public, I just don’t do that. I don’t think in politics you should do that and try and be mawkish about things when they go down as they also occasionally go up.

ANDREW MARR:
Television cameras love mawkish as you know very well indeed.

NICK CLEGG:
Yeah well you’re not going to get it from me this morning. *(laughs)*

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Nick Clegg, thank you very much indeed.

NICK CLEGG:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS