Boris Johnson: Of course Jeremy Corbyn’s victory is by a considerable margin, but then this is a very small minority of voters who have chosen him. They have a particular view of the world. And I’m afraid that they have a policy and a series of policies that I think will make Britain less economically secure and that less secure on the world stage as well. And if you look at Corbyn’s policies on taxation – he wants to whack up taxes, he wants to borrow stupendous sums of money which the country can’t afford. I think his economic programme is extremely dangerous. Sort of a left wing 1970s Dave Spart style agenda, and then on the international policy, on Britain’s security and defences. He wants to abolish the Army, he wants our nuclear subs to go to sea without nuclear missiles aboard them so the whole country is literally firing blanks. I mean it’s not serious. I mean I accept that he has substantial support, but as I say my belief is that this is really a small proportion of the overall electorate and the vast middle ground can now see that it’s one nation Conservatives who are offering a united programme to take the country forward, drive up standards in schools

AM: All right.

BJ: Keep the economy motoring along and project Britain across the world.

AM: Let me ask you about the timing of Article 50. You’ve suggested early next year, Donald Tusk has said January or February seems likely. Is that where we’re heading?

BJ: Well, I think the crucial thing is that obviously we’re not going to do it before Christmas and I think we’ve got to do a lot of work
to get our – you know, get our ducks in order and that is – that is going on. But then after that, as the Prime Minister has rightly said, this process probably shouldn’t drag on. And I think what Donald Tusk wants, what everybody wants and I think what everybody in this country – in the UK wants –

AM: So we’re talking about early next year really?

BJ: and our country wants is clarity and getting on with it. And not letting the process drag on I think is the key phrase I would use and the opportunity is to do a deal that I think would be very much in the interests, not only of the – of the UK but also of our friends and partners in the EU. And what I’m finding so interesting, having spent a lot of time over the last week or so talking to other countries is they’re starting to see the opportunities from Brexit.

AM: I’m just really interested in the timing of Article 50. Everybody is at the moment. George Osborne has said recently that actually we really ought to wait till the end of next year before – and he makes a good point – the French and the Germans are going to have elections, we don’t know who we’re going to be dealing with in Paris and Berlin, that’s really, really important, and in his view we can’t get on with it until we know who we’re talking to.

BJ: (laughing) Well look, I think – I think I’ve given you a pretty – a pretty fully and fair answer there, Andrew. What we want to do is not do it by Christmas but obviously we can’t let the process drag on. If you think about it, you know, there’s obviously Euro elections coming down the track. I think people will be wondering whether we want to be sending a fresh batch of UK parliamentarians,

AM: Let’s agree, we won’t want to be sending a fresh batch of them.
BJ: UK Euro MPs to an institution that we are after all going to be leaving. So let’s get on it, we’re not going to let it drag on as the PM has rightly said, and I think we can be incredibly positive about –

AM: Sorry, and so George Osborne says another year –
BJ: What’s so striking talking to businesses here in Boston is how enthusiastic they are about stepping up their engagement with the UK.

AM: All right, now one of the things that’s happened since Brexit is of course the economy has been going very, very well and all those warnings about the economy being in trouble seem to be wrong. For the economy to carry on growing and us to have a really good post Brexit boom we do need of course lots of skilled migrant workers with specific skills still coming into the country. You always said that you were about the only politician in the country prepared to stand up and say, ‘I am pro immigration.’ Are you still pro immigration?

BJ: Yes sir. I am. And that means exactly as you say, that I want skilled and talented people to come to the UK if they want to make their lives, if they want to fulfil their dreams in our country then I have no problem with that, provided that we have control. Now as you saw in the last figures that we had – I think it was something like 333 thousand people came net from around the world. That’s a huge sum, about 130 – 175 thousand net from the – from the EU in an uncontrolled way. I think you can – and I think most people in our country would say those numbers were too high and I would certainly agree with that.

AM: But for the economy to carry on growing we need considerable numbers into the construction industry, the NHS, banking, the universities and a lot of those will come from the EU, so people who voted Brexit thinking that was it – no more
immigration from the EU were completely wrong. Which leads me to the tens of thousands promise which in this context seems barmy.

BJ: Well, no. I think most people – well there’s two things. You say we need, you know, immigration – immigrants to do all these things in construction and the NHS and so on and so forth and to a certain extent that is true. But we’ve also got to invest in our own young people. And we’ve also got to build up the skills of people growing up in this country. And I think for 25 years UK business and industry has been mainlining immigration like a kind of drug without actually investing enough or caring enough, frankly, about the skills and the training of young people in our country and that’s what Theresa May and the new government want to focus on.

AM: A lot of people voted for Brexit because they saw the adverts suggesting a lot of money coming to the NHS. Now the 350 million was much discussed. If you drill into Vote Leave figures it’s perhaps nearer a hundred million pounds a week coming net. Andrew Lansley, has suggested that by the end of his parliament the NHS should be getting about £5 billion a year as a result of us quitting the EU. For all those people who looked at the posters, listened to people like you, watched the broadcasts and think the NHS is definitely going to get a really substantial amount of money per week as a result of us leaving the EU, can you pledge, as a member of the new government, that will happen by the end of this parliament, providing we’ve left?

BJ: Well, yes. I mean in the sense that clearly once we leave, you know this isn’t possibly until that final moment of the change in our arrangements and we take back control of our –

AM: Of course

BJ: the budgets we contribute to the EU, once that happens, as we’ve always said, clearly it will be possible for the UK government
to spend people’s money on our priorities and the number one priority for most people is indeed the NHS. So I think Andrew Lansley, sounds to me as though he’s got it right.

AM: You’ve been talking of course in the States about the massive refugee crisis around the world. And of course the refugee crisis is driven by the war in Syria, a ferocious assault now going on against Aleppo. Our planes in action in Mosul. You have said that you are pretty convinced the Russians attacked that aid convoy in which 20 aid workers were killed. If that isn’t a war crime what is it?

BJ: Well Andrew I think that is the right question to ask. A war crime is defined as when you attack something, attack a civilian target in the knowledge that it is a civilian target. Now Putin’s regime is not only as it were handing Assad the revolver. He is in some instances actually firing the revolver himself. The Russians themselves are actually engaged. We have an absolutely tragic situation now in Aleppo which is being bombed and repeatedly bombed in a way that is absolutely barbaric. And yes, if you say to me that the west is too impotent in its responses I would –

AM: It's all bluster.

BJ: I would really have to agree with you. I would have to agree that since we took those decisions in 2013, since the red lines were crossed, we have not really had a viable military response or any kind of a kinetic response as it were to what is going on. And I don’t think there’s any real appetite for such a thing. We are tightening sanctions against Russia and the UK is in the lead on that and we’re very, very firm on that.

AM: Okay.

BJ: But I think there’s one thing that the Russians respond to and that is the idea that it is they who are in the dock in the court of international opinion, they are guilty of protracting this war and
making it far more hideous. And yes, I think when it comes to instances such as the bombing of civilian apartments – in Aleppo.

AM: But they don’t really care, do they?
BJ: We should be looking at whether – whether or not that targeting is done in the knowledge that those are wholly innocent, wholly innocent civilian targets, that is a war crime.

AM: In other circumstances we might – I might have been talking to you as our new Prime Minister. During the summer your reputation was brutally and publicly assassinated by Michael Gove. Have you spoken, have you had a conversation with him since and have you forgiven him for that?

BJ: Well, you know, I’m very, very happy to be doing the job that I’m doing and I think what people want us to do in politics

AM: Not my question.

BJ: - is get on and – and if you’ll forgive me, get on and deliver the agenda that Theresa May and the new government have set out. That’s my job.

AM: Have you forgiven Michael Gove for what he said about you? Have you spoken to him at all?

BJ: I think – I think people are – if I may say so, probably more interested in the tragic plight of people in Aleppo than in the microcosmographica of Tory Party infighting or whatever it is.

AM: Well quite interesting that you always said that if the ball came loose at the back of the scrum you’d grab is. What’s happened is that Theresa May has run onto the field, grabbed the ball and headed off into the car park. The ball is no longer
available. Do you think it’s all over for you as a possible future prime minister, or does the ambition still burn deep inside the Johnson breast?

BJ: Well, the ambition that burns I think in the whole government is to get on and deliver for the people of this country. A government that works for everybody in the UK. That’s what we want to do. We set out a very ambitious programme and if you look at what we’re doing with schools and look at what we’re doing with the economy I think – I think we are going to take this country forward and I’m, of course I’m very, very proud to be representing our country as Foreign Secretary and I’ll tell you one thing that absolutely amazes me, Andrew. I’ve been knocking around a bit in - in the UN General Assembly talking to people. I think people in Britain I have no idea the kind of stuff that Britain is doing around the world and the respect and affection in which we are held by ordinary people around the world. We are – we are a global player and we shouldn’t forget it.

AM: Boris Johnson Thank you

BJ: Thank you

Ends