ANDREW MARR:
Now, as we heard in the paper review earlier, the row in the Tory Party over Europe is not abating. It’s ramping up on various fronts fuelled by the latest spat over demands from Brussels for an additional payment by Britain of £1.7 billion. With reports that huge extra funding is coming in for UKIP and that that party’s now determined to fight in earnest not the 20 odd seats we were told about but 100, it looks like the Conservatives are going to be forced to bang on about Europe from now until polling day. Well the former immigration minister Damian Green is with me. Good morning, Mr Green.

DAMIAN GREEN:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Banging on about Europe until polling day, what would that do for the Conservative fortunes do you think?

DAMIAN GREEN:
Well I would much prefer to bang on about the government’s record on the economy
and education. But clearly other issues - whether it’s Europe or immigration - do intrude, so we need to have a sensible position on them. And I think that now is the time for, in that old phrase, keep calm and carry on; that we have a perfectly good European policy, which is to enter into a renegotiation, which will be tough but is possible, and then have a referendum.

ANDREW MARR:
Is it possible, is it possible because, putting the question I was putting to the paper reviewers earlier on, David Cameron has said that he's going to end the free movement of peoples? From what we read today, again Angela Merkel after Barroso and many other European leaders, that is simply not going to be conceded. He’s between a rock and a hard place and he’s put them both there himself. What can he do?

DAMIAN GREEN:
Well I think what you get at this stage of the negotiation – you know the stage before the negotiation starts – are people setting out positions from which they will negotiate, and I think the Sunday Times story today about Angela Merkel saying no change at all on this should be seen in that light because we know that when we get to the details of negotiations there are always things that we want to do actually that the Germans want to do as well and other countries want to do. And that seems to me to be the fruitful area where you can have a successful negotiation.

ANDREW MARR:
Meanwhile you’ve pulled out of the European arrest warrant. Theresa May is clearly worried about that, but by and large the Conservative hierarchy from the Chief Whip upwards as it were are determined that that’s the right thing to do, that’s a way of sopping … a little sop for UKIP?

DAMIAN GREEN:
I think that would be much more than a sop to UKIP. That would be really dangerous. I genuinely can’t understand why my eurosceptic colleagues have chosen this as a battle to fight because not opting back into the European arrest warrant would make this a less safe country. We would become the country in Europe where all Europe’s
criminals and terrorists would be inclined to come because not only would we not be able to get terrorists back from other countries as quickly as we can now – and we got one of the failed 21/7 bombers back from Italy in 56 days, when France under the previous regime tried to extradite a terrorist from here, it took 10 years, so there are big practical changes – but also rapists, murderers, child molesters and so on would think Britain is probably the place to go where you’d have most chance of not being convicted of crimes you commit in the rest of Europe. It would be very, very bad for the safety of our streets not to have the European arrest warrant.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Is it possible to appease UKIP, do you think, or UKIP voters?

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
Well there’s a difference between UKIP and UKIP voters. I mean UKIP is a separate political party whose aim is damage to the Conservative Party. It’s a free country, they’re allowed to do that. UKIP voters need, particularly at the General Election, to decide who is likely to form the next government which I would most like, and on that we have an extremely good story to tell from the leader down.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And yet right at the moment there is, as we both know, a mood of real unease verging on panic about the UKIP threat inside the Conservative Party. What happens to the Conservative leadership if you lose Rochester and Strood?

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
Well I don’t accept the premise; I think we’re doing well in Rochester in Strood. But I think any …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well the polls put UKIP ahead.

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
Sure, but by-elections are notoriously volatile. But whatever happens my advice would be the same – that it would be a complete disaster for the Tory Party to become
UKIP Lite or to do a pact with UKIP. There is a great myth that some people foster that you can simply add the current UKIP vote to the current Conservative vote and produce a majority because of course if the Conservative Party tries to turn itself into something like UKIP, tries to sound like UKIP, tries to adopt UKIP policies, it will haemorrhage voters in other parts of the political spectrum. So that is not a sensible policy to take.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And yet the Eurosceptics are completely in the saddle at the moment inside the Conservative Party, aren’t they?

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
No, I don’t think they are. I think they are considerably noisy. You started the interview by talking about “banging on about Europe”, and it is certainly the case over 20 years or so that those who think that you know the balance of advantage for Britain is to be inside the European Union have not wanted to bang on about it because we recognise that most people care about other things more. Those of my colleagues who think Britain is better off out constantly bang on about it and, therefore, they are noisier, they get more public attention. Actually I think – and I’m self-critical on this as well – pro-Europeans need to talk more.

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* Need to be louder, need to be louder.

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
We need to be louder.

**ANDREW MARR:**
David Cameron is throwing the kitchen sink and himself and all his colleagues at Rochester. What happens to his leadership if he doesn’t win it?

**DAMIAN GREEN:**
Well we carry on. As I say, I don’t accept the premise of the question.
ANDREW MARR:
Well the premise is there’s an ‘if’ in it.

DAMIAN GREEN:
Indeed. But whatever happens, I think he should carry on with the strategy. You should not change your strategy just because of by-elections. You know we won Newark, we lost Clacton. But …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) This is a different kind of by-election, isn’t it? There’s something kind of existential about this by-election.

DAMIAN GREEN:
(over) No.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) This is the moment when you were going to, as a party, you were going to … I remember all the stuff… You were going to stop the UKIP bandwagon in its tracks. You were going to stand and fight in Rochester. If you stand and fight and lose in Rochester, that’s a terribly big moment for the party, isn’t it?

DAMIAN GREEN:
Well every by-election in history is always the most important by-election in history. I think we’ve both been round the block long enough to know that. But what we need to do is to make the public debate on the areas where it’s most important to the British people and where we have the strongest relative tale to tell, which is largely the economy but also other aspects such as education, the fact that crime is down. The things that actually people care about in their daily lives have got better under this government …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

DAMIAN GREEN:
… and we need to calm down and keep talking about that.

ANDREW MARR:
Damian Green, thank you very much indeed for joining us today.

INTERVIEW ENDS