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David Clark

Nothing is more central to Ed Miliband's political mission than his ambition to create a more productive, equitable and responsible form of capitalism. But creating the conditions for this is not something a future Labour government would find easy to achieve in isolation. It would depend to a considerable extent on efforts to reform and manage the global economy.

Ed Miliband has said relatively little about foreign affairs since taking over as Labour leader and has chosen, quite properly, to focus on issues like the economy, public services and living standards. But we can already tell that the foreign policy of an Ed Miliband government would be values-based, multilaterally engaged, positive and reformist on the EU and strong on the defence of human rights.

It was an axiom of Alastair Campbell's unsentimental approach to political communication that there are 'no votes in foreign policy'. He may have had cause to revise that judgement as Tony Blair prospered through his friendship with Bill Clinton and then faltered through his closeness to George W Bush. But in opposition he was certainly right. The foreign policies of opposition parties barely register in the minds of voters except when issues of national security are directly at stake, as with Labour's support for unilateral nuclear disarmament in the 1980s.

Barring a major turn in world events, foreign policy is unlikely to be a decisive factor in the outcome of the next election. Yet it remains important for the party to develop a clear vision of how it intends to handle the international agenda: first, to re-assure voters that it is a credible government in waiting, and second, to prepare for the rigours of office.

Ed Miliband has said relatively little about foreign affairs since taking over as leader and has chosen, quite properly, to focus on the issues that move votes, like the economy, public services and living standards. But we can already tell quite a lot about the style of foreign policy he is likely to pursue from things he has done, both as a minister and as leader of the opposition. A couple of things in particular stand out.

The first is that having sat in the EU Council of Ministers, and having handled international negotiations on the complex and difficult issue of climate change, Miliband would enter Downing Street with far more diplomatic experience than either Tony Blair or David Cameron enjoyed as incoming prime ministers. What he has taken from that experience is a clear understanding of how important multilateral diplomacy will be in delivering major parts of his domestic policy agenda. What is self-evidently true in relation to the environment is equally so when it comes to Miliband's 'responsible capitalism' agenda. Success is linked to change at a global level.

The second thing to note is that Miliband has demonstrated very strong instincts on international issues around which the outline of his foreign policy can already be discerned. In declaring that the decision to go to war in Iraq was "wrong", supporting recognition of a Palestinian state and making an ambitious humanitarian case for intervention in Libya, Miliband has been willing to take strong and controversial positions on grounds of principle. On all of these issues he could easily have chosen to keep his

head down, as some colleagues would doubtless have preferred him to do. The fact that he didn't tells us something important about his approach to leadership in general and foreign policy in particular. It is a policy area over which he intends to assert personal authority by confronting difficult issues and longstanding taboos.

The world faced by an incoming Miliband government would, of course, be very different from the one that confronted Labour in 1997. The west, in its own estimation, had just won the cold war, leaving America as the lone superpower. Theorists posited the 'end of history' and convergence around what George W Bush hubristically called the "single sustainable model" of American-style democratic capitalism.

All of that came to an end with the global financial crisis of 2007–8. Anglo-American capitalism today looks tired and crisis-prone, while the countries that have weathered the storm most successfully are the ones that have adopted the tenets of the Washington consensus most selectively. This has left them not only economically stronger, but more self-confident and ideologically assertive. The result is that we are now entering a post-western world in which the material, technological and intellectual gap western countries opened up over Asia from the 17th century onwards is in the process of being closed.

The shift to a multipolar world order holds out the prospect of a more equitable division of global wealth and power, and should be welcomed as such. But the process is also full of uncertainties and risks that need to be managed through active international co-operation. World orders based on unipolar domination at least have the merit of limiting the scope for rivalry and competition. World orders based on multiple power centres require balance or restraint to maintain the peace, both of which can easily break down. The last thing we should want is a world resembling Europe of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

So the foreign policy challenges of the next parliament are likely to be formidable. The most pressing will be to reshape the international community in a way that reflects the emerging reality of a multipolar world, with institutions and decision-making processes broadened and deepened. A second crucial challenge will involve navigating a world in which there is going to be much greater competition in the realm of ideas, with emerging centres of power often embodying different views about the appropriate role of states, markets, individual rights, faith and national sovereignty in the modern world. These challenges are in obvious tension: one demands co-operation with autocratic regimes to achieve objectives of common global interest, the other requires a closer relationship with countries and movements that share our basic values and outlook. Managing this will require skill, judgement and imagination.

A detailed account of how Labour intends to respond to these and other international challenges will no doubt emerge as we get closer to the next election. But we can infer some of the key guiding principles from things that Ed Miliband has said publicly, the decisions he has already taken on foreign affairs and his choice of domestic priorities, insofar as they have an international dimension. The following seven principles give a broad outline of the kind of foreign policy we might expect from a Miliband-led administration.

1. Realism isn't a realistic basis for Britain's foreign policy

Ed Miliband's approach to foreign policy is values-based. This came across very clearly in his speech to the House of Commons in which he made an unashamedly moral case for intervention in Libya: "we have to make a judgment about our role in the world and our duty to others. Where there is just cause, where there is reasonable action that

can be taken, where there is international consent – are we really saying we should be a country that stands by and does nothing?”

That is not to say that he regards the national interest as being of secondary importance. The point is that he dismisses the distinction between interests and values as artificial and false to our instincts as a country. The idea of Britain as a force for good in the world is an essential part of our identity as a nation. We see it every time there is a major humanitarian crisis. The British people want to help, partly because they understand the reality of interdependence, but mostly because they are generous in their desire to support those who need it.

2. Our foreign alliances should be shaped by our values, not the other way round

This was one of the main pitches of Ed Miliband’s leadership campaign and sought to address perhaps the greatest source of concern about Labour’s foreign policy in the Blair era – the nature of our relationship with the United States. Miliband is the last person who could reasonably be accused of reflexive anti-Americanism. He has spent a lot of time in the country and talks passionately in private about its politics, sport, culture and ideas. But he refuses to allow his admiration for the United States to cloud his judgement about what is right and wrong.

What Miliband wants is a close and constructive partnership with the United States based on mutual respect and give and take, not one based on blind loyalty. No alliance should become an end in itself. His willingness to support recognition of a Palestinian state, while the government baulked at the idea of breaking ranks with American policy, was a declaration of intent. This may be an easier thing to do in opposition, but don’t expect it to change if Miliband becomes prime minister.

3. Government should be judicious and principled in the use of military power

Ed Miliband has been firm in his view that Labour took Britain into an unnecessary and costly war in Iraq. But he also knows there are times when the use of military power is necessary and legitimate. That was the position he took on Libya. All military interventions cost lives and involve risk, so the threshold for action must necessarily be high. A Miliband-led government would therefore be clear about the principles that ought to guide the responsible use of military force. It should not be used unilaterally, as first resort or to impose a preferred system of government. It should only be used under multilateral authority, as a last resort and for a just cause, such as self-defence or overwhelming humanitarian need.

4. National strength depends as much on soft power as on hard power

In describing how Britain should respond to the Arab Spring, Ed Miliband wrote that: “the neocons were wrong to think we could impose democracy at the point of a gun. In this new era, soft power will often be a better way to achieve hard results.” What he was alluding to is the emerging global battle of ideas described above and what Britain must do to remain competitive in it.

Miliband recognises that our strength as a country will depend increasingly on business innovation, cultural creativity, educational prowess and the attractiveness of our ideas. Our great universities, our world class companies, the BBC and institutions like the British Council are national assets and should be valued and promoted as such.

The World Service does more for Britain than Trident ever will. This doesn't mean that a Miliband government would unilaterally renounce Britain's status as a nuclear power.

It does mean that options for Trident replacement would be considered alongside other, more pressing demands on national expenditure. The argument that we need the same level of weaponry used to deter a fully armed Soviet Union will be viewed with justified scepticism.

5. Multilateralism matters more than ever

Ed Miliband is a multilateralist by instinct, conviction and experience. He certainly recognises the importance of strong bilateral relationships, but only if they are anchored to a broader framework of multilateral institutions that can generate agreement and action at an international level. He rejects the idea that the narrow bilateralism of the current government will ever be enough for a country with Britain's global vocation. The shift in relative wealth and power to the east and south means that an active multilateralism is becoming more important than ever. We need to work more closely with the countries that share our interests and values, to maintain diplomatic influence in a world in which countries of continental scale, like India, China, and Brazil, will join the top rank of world power.

6. Britain should be at the heart of Europe

Having sat in the Council of Ministers, Ed Miliband is more aware of the EU's deficiencies than most people. But he is also convinced of its potential to enhance the strength, prosperity and wellbeing of its member states and believes that engagement in Europe must remain a central pillar of our foreign policy. Britain will stand little chance of remaining influential at a global level if it cannot be strong and influential in its own neighbourhood. He therefore takes the view that disengagement from Europe, whole or partial, would be an act of national defeatism.

British membership of the euro is off the agenda for the foreseeable future, and that will not change under a Miliband-led government. But remaining outside the eurozone makes it all the more important to have a government prepared to work hard to maintain British influence in the European debates that affect our interests. Miliband's Europe policy will be aimed at building the alliances and securing the reforms needed to make the EU work better, not undermining it and retreating into self-imposed isolation.

7. Globalisation isn't always good for you

Nothing is more central to Ed Miliband's political mission than his ambition to create a more productive, equitable and responsible form of capitalism. But creating the conditions for long-term investment, a bigger role for manufacturing, a fairer distribution of the national product, more skilled and rewarding job opportunities and a responsible financial sector is not something a future Labour government would find it easy to achieve in isolation. It would depend to a considerable extent on efforts to reform and manage the global economy.

The market-led globalisation of the Washington consensus proved to be unstable and unsustainable. The division of the global economy into a west that consumes and an east that produces has fuelled the growth of crippling imbalances in trade and finance, changed the character of western societies by redistributing wealth and opportunity from the many to the few and hampered the fight against climate change. Private financial power has been able to exploit the advantage of mobility to gain the upper hand over public power at local and national levels with deleterious consequences for the quality of our democracy.

If we have learned anything as a result of the crash it is that global markets are not self-correcting. Resolving

these imbalances in our economy, society and politics calls for agreement and action at an international level. So a major plank of the next Labour government's foreign policy ought to be an active economic diplomacy through the G20 and other international institutions to alter the terms of globalisation and create the conditions for balanced and sustainable global growth. Priority should be given to measures designed to correct trade imbalances, restrain speculative capital flows, stamp out tax havens and establish minimum social and environmental standards. Whatever the precise policy mix, a Miliband-led government would reject protectionism and laissez-faire and embrace the kind of managed openness that would enable it to achieve progressive domestic goals.

Conclusion

So, the foreign policy of an Ed Miliband government would be values-based, multilaterally engaged, positive and reformist on the EU and strong on the defence of human rights. In its tone and approach, it would therefore look quite a lot like the foreign policy of Tony Blair's first term when Labour signed the EU Social Chapter, rejoined UNESCO, stopped ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, banned landmines and established the International Criminal Court. But the difference with Blair's second and third terms would be equally clear. The relationship with Washington would be based on partnership not subservience, military intervention would be a last resort not the default setting and, in the fight against extremism, our values would be seen as an asset not an inconvenience. Finally, there would be new challenges to face: the historic shift in wealth and power to the east and south, the search for a peaceful and collaborative world order that accommodates rising powers, more

intense competition in the ideas that are going to shape the future of the planet and the need to alter the terms of globalisation to meet Labour's social and democratic priorities.