

Funding the Future

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I have never been much of a fan of David Miliband. Seemingly clone like in his behaviour; it has always been hard to discern any original political contribution he had or might make. His [espousal of centre ground politics in the Observer](#) today does little to shake that impression.

I do not wish to leave the EU: I have made that very clear. The reasons are partly pragmatic. I do not want the economic and social chaos of leaving imposed on this country.

They are also cultural. As a citizen of two EU countries at present I have always felt European. As a child of the 1950s I was also brought up with an ingrained sense that peace had to be a better alternative to war, and that European cooperation was the basis for that.

Economically it so happens that I also think European cooperation good news: costs are reduced, markets are enlarged, driving common standards up is a good thing, regulation has overall been a big win for many, especially in employment and these days on tax. The list goes on.

But, this does not mean I embrace the centre ground of Nick Clegg, Philip Hammond and David Milliband and believe that the political solution to the UK's approach to the EU will be found in embracing the status quo, the failed politics of austerity and the dedication to the power structures that support existing wealth inequality. The Brexit vote was many things to many people. Amongst them was a clear rejection of this policy agenda that so obviously left most people behind.

Some do link this agenda with the EU itself. In that centre-right and even far-right governments of member states have sought to use the EU to promote this agenda, and have tried (sometimes successfully) to reflect that culture in its institutions that is correct: it would be wrong to say that this has not happened. But to reject the EU for this reason would, I believe, be akin to rejecting democracy because it's not been good at delivering many reforming, left of centre, UK governments in its history, which is also true. I do not reject democracy for that reason. So I will not the EU either. What I instead want is the EU to reflect the wishes of such reforming left of centre

governments, and of course it could very easily do that. They just have to be formed first.

Whatever David Miliband says he is not likely to be a part of that process, most especially if he chooses Philip Hammond as an ally. The fact that he does not want us to leave the EU does not, that issue excepted, make him a politician whose ideas I can support, because that would be to sell out on all principles of reform that are needed if the EU, as well as the UK, is to succeed socially and economically.

We need to restrain market excesses and not permit them in the false belief that it is only markets that permit state sector activity.

We need an interventionist state dedicated to sustainable full employment for those who want work.

We need progressive taxation to help create greater equality.

We need a social safety net.

We need a state that is permitted to act in the full interests of those it represents, and that is not just an enabler for corporate power.

And all of those things will be easier to deliver if there is international cooperation.

That is why we need to be in the EU to reform it. Preserving the EU we have is an absurd political goal when it has obvious failings at present. But creating an EU that works is, and should be, as much a part of left of centre thinking as any internationalist project has ever been. If David Miliband wanted to show leadership ability he would say so. But he isn't. His vision is a fudge. No wonder he never sold well.