ANDREW MARR:
Now this week’s news was dominated as well by the violent exchanges of course between Israel and Gaza and the ceasefire negotiated by Egypt’s Islamist President who’s now tried to dig himself in by awarding himself sweeping new powers. The Arab Awakening and the rise of Islamism has brought a whole new dimension to Middle Eastern politics and our Western governments are wondering aloud what to do about Syria. Could an intervention be on the cards? Well David Miliband observes all of this as a former Foreign Secretary and he is with me now. Good morning.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
Good morning. Thank you for coming in. Now of course what’s happened over the last few weeks between Hamas on the one side and Israel on the other has been extraordinarily disproportionate in terms of the number of people who’ve died - far, far more Palestinians have died than Israelis - and yet they are claiming some kind of victory with a ceasefire. It’s very confusing I think for outsiders.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well it’s old violence in a new Middle East. The big losers are obviously the very high numbers of Palestinian casualties; also five Israelis killed. But the political winners are clearly Hamas and President Morsi of Egypt. There is I think an …

**ANDREW MARR:**
And why is that? Because they persuaded Israel not to have a ground invasion?

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
I think there are two reasons really. First of all, it’s chilling but it’s true that when Palestinians in Gaza see pictures of Israelis running into bomb shelters in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, they think that is a victory; they think that is a shift in the terms of trade. And, secondly, Egypt is returning to a very powerful role in the Middle East. In fact there are three countries that are really on the rise in the Middle East: there’s Egypt, there’s Turkey and Qatar. That’s why I think it’s right to say that the Arab Spring is being succeeded by an Islamist Autumn. And these countries, these three countries, they’ve got close links to Hamas, they’ve got links into Iran as well, and they have difficult relations with the West. That’s the new set-up in the Middle East.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure and we’re seeing what his opponents regard as a rather brutal power grab in Egypt by the new President. Meanwhile in Syria, we don’t know what’s going to happen of course in the end, but there’s a huge Islamist influence in the opposition there.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
I mean, look, the word ‘Islamism’ gets used for all sorts of reasons …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Of course.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
… so one’s got to be very, very careful. There are Jihadists who call themselves Islamists and there are conventional politicians who call themselves Islamists too. Look, all around the world countries and communities are becoming more diverse.
The great danger in the Middle East is that it splits into sectarian camps. And Syria is the absolute anvil of that. We see it as a humanitarian crisis. It’s also an intra-regional crisis - Iran versus Saudi Arabia importantly - and it’s a sectarian division.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Do you think we’re going to be drawn into that? I mean there’s been a lot of discussion on this show about whether we will have some kind of limited military intervention either to protect people around the borders or to seal …

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
(over) I think the balance has shifted basically …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yuh.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
… because you can see the caution of countries like Turkey, who don’t want to arm militias who then get their arms to the PKK, who are the Kurds, who are then attacking Turkey. But I think the balance has shifted. The humanitarian catastrophe I think … I mean the figure, the official figure is thirty thousand. No way, I’m sure it’s …

**ANDREW MARR:**
It’s much bigger than that.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
… three, four times that. And also the longer this goes on, the worse it’s going to get for the future. And I think now we need to be looking much more strongly not just at the political track - what does a post-Assad Syria look like - that’s important for the Russians, it’s also important for the Turks and for the minorities there. Secondly, the way this will end best is with a palace coup and we need to be supporting that very, very strongly.
ANDREW MARR:
A palace coup? Sorry …

DAVID MILIBAND:
A palace coup against Assad.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

DAVID MILIBAND:
There are people around him who are looking at the murder of their country, the implosion of their country - never mind the murder of tens of thousands of their citizens - and I think that that is going to be very, very chilling for them. What they want to know is what’s their position afterwards. And there is a military element as well, but honestly …

ANDREW MARR:
I’m sorry, can I just press you …

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… because you say that would be the best outcome because that would not involve a long or an even more protracted civil war because it would end the thing, no doubt bloodily but quickly, right at the centre.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yes, I mean the fear of intervention was always it would create chaos. We’ve got chaos now. Can I just come back to Gaza and Israel though …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.
DAVID MILIBAND:
… because I said it was a conventional exchange of violence, we had this four years ago, in unconventional circumstances. The Prime Minister said this week - rightly, I think - that the hopes for a two state solution in the Middle East are dwindling.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

DAVID MILIBAND:
And while it’s not true that establishing a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel will solve all the problems of the Middle East, it is fundamental to the future of the region and the future of the world. And I think we’ve got to take seriously the Prime Minister’s warning, but we’ve got to act on it. He’s right that it’s dwindle… (Marr tries to interject) Let me just … The sort of things …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I was going to ask how we do that because some people are saying with you know President Obama re-elected, we can look to the Americans to come in and somehow put enough pressure on them.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well the Americans are important, but they can’t do it on their own. I think four things are really important. First of all, the old sage we can just leave it to the parties, I don’t is true. They don’t want compromise more than we want a settlement, and we need the UN Security Council to set the parameters of a deal and the timetable for getting one. Secondly, we can’t ignore Hamas. They’ve dealt themselves into the game. They’re at the table now. We’ve got to recognise that. Thirdly, the responsibilities of the wider Arab states because at the moment Tony Blair is doing hugely diligent work on behalf of the Quartet, but …

ANDREW MARR:
Unsuccessful work, it has to be said, for years.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yeah but … And working incredibly hard at it. But there are no Arabs represented on the Quartet. We need to give responsibility to the Arab states. And there is a final thing and it’s about America. There won’t be a solution without a big American role, but the President can’t do it on his own. I’ve had this thought. Look, who is the person who President Obama could appoint as an envoy who really knows the region, who could really make a difference? It’s President Bill Clinton. I mean he should be the US Envoy to the Middle East. He authored the Clinton Parameters in 2000. He’s also …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And have you spoken to Hillary or anybody else about this?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well he’s not going to … he’s certainly not running for election in 2016 …

ANDREW MARR:
No, no.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… so he’s safely out of that game.

ANDREW MARR:
Have you put this to them?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well I’ve put this publicly, so I don’t have to say it privately to them.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, right.

DAVID MILIBAND:
But that’s the kind of game changer that we need because without that, this thing of a two state solution is going to become part of your and my early years that was a dream that was never fulfilled.
ANDREW MARR:
Very interesting. Let’s come a little bit nearer to home. After this week’s negotiation and all the kind of growth of euro-scepticism (in the country as well as in the Conservative Party) do you look on this and think, yeah, we are definitely going to have some kind of referendum over the next few years?

DAVID MILIBAND:
I don’t think you can say that. I think there is a big argument starting about Europe and it’s about time too. The truth is we’re not going to have global governance around the world, but lots of problems can’t be solved by nation states on their own, so regional associations of the kind that the European Union is are actually going to come into fashion in the next ten or twenty years, not go out of fashion. And for this country, I think it’s a tragedy it’s taken us two years to find under this government that we’ve got allies in the rest of Europe. It shouldn’t take a crisis summit for Germany and Sweden and Denmark to come out of the closet, if you like, as supports of the UK. We should have been with them two years ago fashioning a reform agenda for the European budget. That’s what we were working on in 2009/10.

ANDREW MARR:
And looking to here and now, do you understand the Labour Party’s policy on Europe at the moment?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yes I do. I mean the Labour Party’s policy is to be absolutely clear about the need for reform, but also clear that Britain is better off in Europe; and, critically, Europe is stronger with Britain in it. I cannot overemphasise to you the sense of disappointment, frustration, anger that exists on the continent at us not just betraying our own future but by betraying their future by not being part of the European debate in a very, very serious way. And I think it’s got big consequences for Britain. No serious power in the 21st century is going to be divorced from its neighbours.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.
DAVID MILIBAND:
It’s just a matter of fact. And actually in South America and elsewhere countries are coming together …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… to fashion regional association.

ANDREW MARR:
So here you are talking very passionately and eloquently …

DAVID MILIBAND:
Sorry, I get a bit … (laughs)

ANDREW MARR:
No … about big political issues, and you’ve been doing a lot of work on youth unemployment here at home. Are you coming back to frontline politics? Surely it is about time to decide.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well I feel I’m on the frontline, not on the front bench. This week I had three job summits around the country about this youth unemployment issue. It’s an area we desperately need a government u-turn on this.

ANDREW MARR:
Yuh.

DAVID MILIBAND:
You’ve been discussing on this programme, attacking the government for u-turns. I want to welcome a u-turn because what they’ve done - the government figures came out on Friday - they’ve scrapped the Future Jobs Fund that was bringing benefit to the
country, reducing benefit claimants, getting people into work. They’ve brought in a work programme that is all programme and no work. And so 450,000 young people have been unemployed for more than six months; 380 in my own community in South Shields. And we’ve got wage subsidies that are not being claimed, we’ve got apprenticeships that are going to the over-25s, we’ve got voluntary organisations being squeezed out. And this is an area where the government desperately needs to recognise that it’s not working.

ANDREW MARR:
It happens in places like your own South Shields. At what point do you say to the electors of South Shields I am staying with you?

DAVID MILIBAND:
I’ve said that many times.

ANDREW MARR:
So you’re going to stay in politics …

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… you’re going to stay in the House of Commons?

DAVID MILIBAND:
I’ve said that. And my commitment …

ANDREW MARR:
And you’ve taken that decision?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Yeah, my commitment is to fight for these people because they need a Labour MP, but the truth is they need a Labour Government too. We can elect Labour MPs in South Shields till kingdom come. Unless we elect them in Stevenage, in Ipswich and Gloucester, there’s not going to be a Labour Government. I want to be part of the
Labour team on the frontline even if I’m not on the front bench.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well a lot of people in the Labour Party will be watching this interview and saying also we need him; we do need him back on the front bench, we do need him back. If the call comes, do you now say yes?

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
Well you’ve got me on the frontline. That’s where … And I make a judgement about this.

**ANDREW MARR:**
I’m asking a very straightforward question here.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
And I’ll give you a very straightforward answer. I keep a watching brief on this. I said to you two years ago I think on this programme, I thought … I didn’t want a soap opera, I didn’t want permanent invidious comparison. The comparison that counts is Ed against David Cameron, not Ed against me …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure.

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
… and it’s very, very important.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Has that not been put to bed now?

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
No, I think that the decision I took has actually been proven right. I think Ed is giving strong leadership. I think that I am refreshing myself, I’m learning, I’m engaging in a different kind of politics because … Let me just finish …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Okay.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… because I think this is important. The country needs politics at its best. The problems that we face are so serious …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And not a bickering soap opera.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… that the parties need - all parties, both parties, Labour and Tory - need to recognise they have to explain to the public why they want power and what are they going to do with it, and that is something that I want to contribute to by learning and contributing at the frontline.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. David Miliband, thank you very much for joining us this morning.

INTERVIEW ENDS