ANDREW MARR:
Now the legacy of President John F. Kennedy continues to fascinate historians. And not only historians. The former Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has returned briefly to London to give a lecture tomorrow on JFK’s view of the relationship between the US, Britain and Europe. David Miliband, good morning.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Good morning, Andrew. Good to be back.

ANDREW MARR:
Nice to have you back. And in this lecture, you make a great play of Kennedy’s support for the European project, and in some ways it’s a paean of praise to European federalism. You want to see a tighter, stronger Europe.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well it was remarkable really. JFK is famous for many things, but not in my understanding for his engagement with the foundation of the European Union in the
late 1950s. And just doing a bit of research for this lecture, it became clear that he was passionate about the integration of Europe and, interestingly, about Britain’s place in Europe. One of his key advisers says words to the effect that without Britain, then the European Union is lacking its lodestone. And I think that’s important.

ANDREW MARR:
But in the lecture, you talk about twin pools - the pool for ever bigger units of organisation and economics and so forth towards unity, but also the pool for democracy - and in your lecture, you don’t really explain much about where democracy is going to fit into this new Europe.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well I think that the interesting thing is that in the late 50s, before he went into government, JFK was setting the agenda. He said … *A Democrat Looks At Foreign Policy* was the title of an important essay in foreign affairs. And he said yes Europe is integrating, but around the rest of the world there’s actually a movement for independence. What we’re dealing with today is independent countries that can’t actually hold the ring, and that’s what you’re seeing in Syria, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The European lesson he drew was a slightly different one actually. It wasn’t about democracy; it was about delivery. And it seems to me that’s the lesson for the European Union. It needs to expand its economy; it needs to make sure it’s not a two-tier Europe; it’s got to do this trade and investment partnership with the US, which is something that Kennedy was engaged with as well.

ANDREW MARR:
But you’re a very lone voice in this at the moment. There is a drive for independence inside Europe and all throughout Europe, and if you look not just at the UK Independence Party but the parties in Italy and France and so forth, it’s gaining in strength.

DAVID MILIBAND:
You’re right, that the Kennedy model of more and more integration is under challenge from if you like a splintering. Now I think that from my point of view, now living three thousand miles from London, if Europe is going to have a voice in the world but
also if Britain’s going to have a voice in the world, it’s not that we subsume ourselves into the European Union; it’s that we’re stronger with a more effective European Union. And that’s why I think JFK’s warnings don’t split Europe - remember it was a divided Europe that he was living with - but also build up Europe as a partner of the US, I think is a really important message.

ANDREW MARR:
Can I turn to the International Rescue Committee, I should have said, not just International Rescue.

DAVID MILIBAND:
International Rescue. I saw that on your …

ANDREW MARR:
Thunderbirds and stuff.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Exactly, I thought the thunderbirds had taken over when you introduced me in that way.

ANDREW MARR:
You have no thunderbirds, alright.

DAVID MILIBAND:
No.

ANDREW MARR:
But the biggest crisis at the moment is still clearly Syria. It’s kind of drifted away from the headlines and people have turned away from it a bit. How bad are things there at the moment, do you think?

DAVID MILIBAND:
This is an apocalyptic crisis now, a defining crisis. Why do I say that? The country of Syria is dissolving before our eyes. At least one in three and possibly one in two
Syrians have been displaced from their homes. The siege into neighbouring countries is immense. I mean Lebanon or Jordan, those countries have had 20 per cent of their population increased. It’s the equivalent, I say to Americans - the number of refugees in Lebanon is like the whole of Britain moving to America. I mean it’s that level of siege. And with the announcement about polio this week - I’m sure that people will have heard about that, the WHO have found that - what you’ve got is absolute dissolution and the world, if anything, turning away. It’s almost like this chemical weapons thing is being sorted out and, therefore, we don’t need to worry about it. *(Marr over)* And for an organisation like mine, I mean we are … 800,000 Syrians are dependent on healthcare for us. We have to smuggle that across the border. One of the biggest problems on my desk at the moment: 300,000 young Syrians who are refugees in Lebanon without any education. That’s the kind of issue that is energising me, challenging me, inspiring me at the moment.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Is this big enough, if mishandled, to upend Turkey and Lebanon and even Israel, do you think? Is it that …

**DAVID MILIBAND:**
I think … Well I think it’s a very good point you make; that propping up the neighbouring states, often allied states - remember Turkey’s in NATO, Jordan a long-term ally of the rest, Israel in a slightly different position, I would say - but the four neighbours where we’re working - Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan - that they’re under siege at the moment, and unless they get support on the scale of the Marshall Plan that came to Europe in the 1940s, then you can see them buckling. And that’s an area where the humanitarian challenge has big political consequences and I think that it’s important to warn people about that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure. Can I turn to another foreign affairs issue which you talked about last time you were here, when you talked very vociferously about your drive to get the Taliban to negotiate in Afghanistan early on. What is your feeling about the latest drone strike killing the very Taliban leader the Pakistanis were hoping to negotiate with? That’s surely a classic case of the own goal the West does again and again?
DAVID MILIBAND:
Yeah, well the Americans are saying actually that they have got contacts lower down the chain who they think are going to be more engaged. I mean I’ve got to be careful about what I say about this. The IRC’s been in Afghanistan for thirty years, in two thousand villages around Afghanistan we’re delivering services, and my first priority has to be the safety of my staff …

ANDREW MARR:
(*over*) Sure - I understand that, yes.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… so I have to be very careful what I’m able to say. What I would say is this - that for ten years there’s been a vicious and bloody battle that’s cost British and American and other lives as well as many Afghan lives. And I think a lot of people are thinking well thank goodness 2014, we can “pull out”.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

DAVID MILIBAND:
My organisation is going to be arguing that on a humanitarian level, we’ve got to surge into Afghanistan. If we spent 0.1 per cent of what is being spent on the military on the humanitarian side, we could actually make a difference in that country. The American bill for the military operation in Afghanistan - 10 billion dollars a month. If we spent 0.1 per cent of that …

ANDREW MARR:
(*over*) And how well spent has it been?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well that’s a very good point.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.
DAVID MILIBAND:
But if we spent 0.1 per cent of that on actually education and health, the basics of a decent society, that’s where the future of Afghanistan is. And, remember, it’s the 170th out of the 175 poorest countries in the world.

ANDREW MARR:
Let me bring you back, if I may, to a domestic issue now, which is way back I remember you were part of the Citizen Organising Foundation. You were training and so forth there. They’re the people who’ve created this idea of the living wage, which is now spreading around the country, and your brother’s been suggesting that firms who pay the living wage should be reimbursed by the Government. Do you think that’s a good idea? Do you think that’s what we should be doing?

DAVID MILIBAND:
(over) I think it’s good, I think it’s very encouraging to see real ideas coming through if you like from the progressive side of politics. The organisation itself is called Movement for Change. It’s doing extraordinary work around the country to organise people outside conventional politics. Now, with what Ed’s saying today, conventional politics is picking it up. And what I would say is that all across the Western world, the issue of how people in the middle and the lower end of the income scale are going to get some benefit from economic growth…

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Pay the bills.

DAVID MILIBAND:
… is the issue. This issue of inequality, the squeezed middle, what Ed talked about - the break between economic growth and the prosperity of the ordinary person - that is the issue. It’s the issue in America, it’s the issue in Europe, it’s the issue … In Europe, they’ve got the unemployment issue too, but here it’s a major issue. And I think the idea that we can build on the minimum wage, which sets a national minimum, and then say sector by sector you build up a living wage, I think is a wonderful idea.
ANDREW MARR:
But, on the other hand, we’ve seen some of I suppose the old politics coming back in the crisis over the Unite union and so on. When you look at that, do you have a sort of shiver - this reminds you of the 1970s and the 1980s and entry-ism? Do you think it’s a really big issue for the Labour Party?

DAVID MILIBAND:
Well I think that it’s so big that Ed was right to say that he wants to reform the relationship with the unions because the truth is that the leadership of the party has got to represent the whole country. Working people have an important stake, it’s important to bring them in, but what you call “old politics” rightly has no place obviously.

ANDREW MARR:
Now this is the first time I’ve had a chance to ask you about what was said about your father - the man who hated Britain. We’ve heard your brother talk about this. We haven’t heard you talk about it. How did you feel?

DAVID MILIBAND:
I thought it was … I thought it was hateful really. I mean my dad was taken away from me, from us nearly 20 years ago in 1994; and at the same time as being taken away from us, what he left can never be taken away from me. He left memories of love and fun and engagement and just what it meant to be a close family. And so I felt on the one hand it was hateful. On the other hand, I felt no-one, not even the Daily Mail can take my dad away from me or at least my memories away from me. And I think it must have been very, very hard for my mum. It is hard for her, I think. But for me, he was a dad and I know that he loved Britain and that’s what’s important.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

DAVID MILIBAND:
So do I. It’s nice to be back. (laughs)
ANDREW MARR:
Indeed. Nice to be back, okay.

DAVID MILIBAND:
Thank you.

ANDREW MARR:
David Miliband, thank you very much indeed.

INTERVIEW ENDS