

Introduction

Context and some theoretical considerations

I stand before you, clear in my task: to once again make Labour a force that takes on established thinking, doesn't succumb to it, speaks for the majority and shapes the centre ground of politics.

Ed Miliband¹

When Ed Miliband became leader of the Labour Party in the autumn of 2010 he promised to turn a page on New Labour. For him, the global financial and economic crisis had shown the limits of New Labour, in particular the party's 'naïve' embrace of lightly regulated capitalism, globalisation, flexible labour markets, and its acceptance of rising social inequalities.² Miliband's epiphany seems to have been inspired by what political scientists call 'critical junctures' or 'external shocks'; that is, periods in history when crises open 'windows of opportunity' for change to occur. When those moments arrive, political actors look for new ideas and solutions to address new policy problems that can no longer be addressed by old recipes.³

The global financial crisis that started in the United States in 2007 as a credit crunch raised fundamental questions about the ideational paradigm – neoliberalism – that had become the governing economic and political philosophy of centre-right but also of centre-left political parties since the 1980s in Europe and North America. Many of its axioms and assumptions were challenged by the events that unfolded in Wall Street and that soon spread to Europe.

The significance of this crisis – which was not just economic, but was also political, social, and ideational – cannot be overstated. The neoliberal assumptions about the rationality of economic agents, about the self-regulating attributes of free markets, about the ability of the market to produce economic growth that would trickle down across society, could not explain the bankruptcy of major financial institutions and the near collapse of the global economy. Even the defenders of the

system were utterly confused with the sequence of events that led to the collapse of Lehman Brothers and to the bailout of financial institutions that were seen as the foundations of financialised capitalism. The former president of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, reflected this mindset when he told the American Congress that the ‘whole intellectual edifice ... collapsed’.⁴

Greenspan was not the only one to be confused with the events of 2007–08. Uncertainty was the prevailing sentiment during those turbulent two years. Newspapers like the *Financial Times* tried to make sense of what happened with a series of articles on the ‘crisis of capitalism’. Popular culture also contributed to this debate with theatre productions, films, and novels. David Hare’s *The Power of Yes*, Lucy Prebble’s *Enron*, John Lanchester’s *Capital*, Oliver Stone’s *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*, and Laura Wade’s *Posh* sought to explain the culture that led economic actors to engage in such risky behaviour.

Across the United States and Europe, millions of protesters, inspired by the Occupy movement, debated alternatives to capitalism. On the left, socialists and social democrats felt (to paraphrase President Obama’s former chief-of-staff Rahm Emanuel) that this crisis of capitalism should ‘not go to waste’.⁵ In other words, the massive bailouts to the banks, coordinated at the international level and with the blessing of institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU), led some social democrats to believe that they had been right all the time about the instability of capitalism and that a ‘social democratic moment’ was within their grasp. But in the corridors of power, policy-makers acted with the hesitancy of individuals who were not sure about how to respond to events of such magnitude. The easy reflex was to rely on the solutions and policy instruments they knew. And that is roughly what they did.

Miliband and the global financial crisis

If caution prevailed in the corridors of power, the mood was somewhat different within the Labour Party, and in particular in Ed Miliband’s close-knit circle of advisers, experts, and supporters. In the early days of his leadership, the pervasive feeling within Miliband’s circle was that Labour should use the opportunity to develop a social democratic response to the big policy puzzles created by the global financial crisis. Indeed, Miliband and his team of advisers spoke openly about ‘re-imagining social democracy’.

The idea of transformative change, but also the sense of possibility, was at the heart of Miliband’s bid for Labour’s leadership. His promise of change was informed by a critique of neoliberalism (and obviously of New Labour’s legacy) but also by a reappraisal of social democratic values and solutions. Miliband’s reasoning was simple enough to understand. For him it was clear that the global financial crisis had exposed the limits and flaws of neoliberalism and of New Labour’s economic paradigm. The belief in unregulated markets had sown the seeds of the financial crisis and created great disparities of wealth in Britain. It had also created a dysfunctional

economy that was over-reliant on the financial services industry and suffered from serious productivity problems as a result. From Miliband's perspective, that economy was also inefficient at distributing the rewards of economic growth.

This book seeks to examine whether the Labour leader was able to use the global financial crisis as a trigger to change the prevailing neoliberal paradigm in Britain. Does Miliband's blueprint represent a successful attempt to renew social democracy, or does it represent a capitulation to the austerity paradigm? What were the factors that contributed to either of these outcomes? By offering answers to these questions, this study will shed some light on some of the causes of Labour's catastrophic defeat at the 2015 general election.

This study argues that under Ed Miliband the Labour Party has sought to re-imagine social democracy by rejecting the main tenets of New Labour, but was only marginally successful in this enterprise. In contrast with New Labour, the Labour Party under Ed Miliband has adopted a critical approach to capitalism, it has placed egalitarian concerns at the centre-stage of its programme, and has developed a new approach to the State that sought to empower individuals. However, the departure from New Labour was not as dramatic as Miliband promised. He faced substantial ideational, institutional, and political constraints that led to the watering down of his initial thinking and plans. His critique of unregulated capitalism was not matched by policy proposals that would reform capitalism along social democratic lines.⁶ Surely, he proposed policies that were presented as solutions (or as beginnings of solutions) to those specific policy puzzles, but their scope was far less ambitious than the rhetoric suggested. Likewise, his concern with rising inequalities and low pay was not matched with robust policy commitments. His pledge to address the crisis of capitalism and the problems of the unresponsive State with a commitment to democratic renewal was timid at best. Last, his attempt to address popular concerns with immigration and the politics of belonging were too nuanced and timid to gain any traction with voters. In short, the blueprint Miliband presented to voters on 7 May lacked clarity, definition, and a unifying message. This lack of definition and clarity was one of the reasons why Milibandism was so overwhelmingly rejected by voters.

Politics and ideas

This book focuses on the ideas that have informed and shaped Ed Miliband's agenda of renewal of the Labour Party⁷ since 2010 and until the run-up to the 2015 general election, and it seeks to contribute to scholarship on the political thought of the Labour Party. As such, it will look at ideas as agents of political change, and assumes, following Sheri Berman, that 'the development of parties cannot be understood without a focus on ideology' because the organisations, political strategies, and electoral coalitions of political parties are shaped 'by the ideological projects they champion.'⁸

Asserting the crucial importance of ideas does not mean that ideas alone can explain the behaviour of a political party, or that ideas are the sole ‘triggers’ for political change, but rather that ideas offer political actors ‘interpretative frameworks’ that help them understand how the world works and develop blueprints that address particular problems.⁹ This is particularly true in moments of crisis and institutional change. As Mark Blyth put it, in these circumstances, ideas enable actors ‘to reduce uncertainty, redefine their interests, and contest and replace institutions.’¹⁰ Ideas can also be ‘facilitators of radical change and a pre-requisite of it.’¹¹

But if ideas can be agents of change they do not operate on their own. When developing a political agenda, political actors can be constrained by a variety of factors. One powerful constraint can be the dominant ideas of the time. As Richard Heffernan argued, it is within the prevailing orthodoxy that ‘political attitudes are forged.’¹² In other words, ‘prevailing orthodoxies’ set the parameters of political debate and often limit the number of options that can be considered plausible and viable. Political actors, no matter how authoritative and prescient, can only do so much.

Other constraints can be institutional arrangements, financial and fiscal constraints, public opinion, electoral considerations, and not forgetting Harold Macmillan’s famous ‘events’. It follows from here that political actors rarely if ever adopt ideas without transforming them and adapting them to the particular contextual circumstances in which they operate, and to the aims they seek to achieve. In the case of political parties, the process of developing a programme of government is heavily constrained by electoral considerations – that is, by power-seeking calculations. These electoral considerations impose on political parties the need to develop an electorally enticing or at the very least a credible programme of government that has the potential to result in an electoral victory.

Having in mind these considerations about ideas, interests, and institutions this book will map out the ideas – old and new – that were debated, adopted, and adapted by the Labour Party under Ed Miliband. In the process, it will explain how the interaction among ideas, institutional, political, and contextual factors informed the development of the Labour Party’s electoral blueprint.

The power of ideas

As a book that focuses on the role of ideas in the life of a political party, it will borrow liberally – as encouraged by Kathleen Thelen¹³ – from the literature on discursive and historical institutionalisms. Both ‘new institutionalisms’ emphasise the role of ideas in politics but they place different emphasis on their importance. Whereas discursive institutionalists see ideas as agents and stress their transformative role, historical institutionalists emphasise the role of structures as facilitators or as constraints to their success. Discursive institutionalists also see institutions as simultaneously

‘constraining structures and enabling constructs of meaning’¹⁴ but they pay far less attention to those institutions than historical institutionalists. I will now explain how I will use both approaches.

Like historical institutionalism, discursive institutionalism looks at ideas as agents of change but it is perhaps better placed to explain that process. Indeed, discursive institutionalism allows us to identify and to map what Alan Finlayson aptly defined as ‘political thinking in the wild’; that is, the way whereby political actors participate in the interpretation but also in the development of political ideologies.¹⁵ As a methodological tool, discursive institutionalism enables us to look at an often neglected facet of politics. By mapping out the ideas that inform and shape a political project we are able to look at politicians as ‘thinking’ beings and not just as strategic actors. That is, by mapping out ideas we are in a better position to understand how political actors think about and approach policy problems, how they develop proposals, and how they justify them to voters.

According to Vivien A. Schmidt, this is so because discursive institutionalism sees political action as ‘the process in which agents create and maintain institutions by using ... their background ideational abilities’ and ‘foreground discursive abilities, through which agents may change (or maintain) their institutions.’¹⁶ As a result, discursive institutionalism sees institutional change as ‘dynamic and explainable across time through agents’ ideas and discourse, rather than largely static because of path-dependent and unexplainable moments.’¹⁷

The mapping of ideas – in particular of conflicting ideas – also sheds light on the distribution of power within political institutions. Stronger or more persuasive actors often present the winning arguments. In short, political change has the potential to occur as a result of a congenial ideational process. More importantly, the mapping out of ideational processes enable us to answer a few ‘why’ questions about the choices made by political actors.

Because discursive institutionalism emphasises the communicative and/or discursive processes whereby ideas are discussed, adopted, and adapted, discursive institutionalists prefer to talk about ‘discourse’ instead of ideas.¹⁸ Schmidt argues that ‘by using the term discourse, we can simultaneously indicate the ideas represented in the discourse ... and the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed.’¹⁹ In particular, it enables us to understand the process whereby ideas evolve ‘from thought to word to deed.’²⁰

Schmidt’s approach involves the tracing of different steps. First, it involves the use of a concept of discourse that includes not only what is said (ideas) but also the context of where, when, how, and why it was said. Second, Schmidt’s approach categorises ideas by degree of generality – policies, programmes, and philosophies – and type of content (cognitive or normative). While cognitive ideas provide recipes and guidelines for political action as well as justifications, normative ideas attach values to political action and legitimise the policies of a political programme. Third, she makes a distinction between two main types of discourse: coordinative, which

is among political actors – and the communicative discourse, which is between political actors and the public.²¹

Alan Finlayson rightly pointed out a missing element in Schmidt's analytical framework. Whilst she stressed the role of experts and political actors in ideational processes she overlooked what Finlayson identified as the intermediate public sphere, which is located between the 'coordinative' and 'communicative' discourses. This public sphere joins formal expertise with political activists, party supporters, and interested citizens.²² Finlayson's intermediate public sphere is an important addition to Schmidt's analytical framework; however, it creates too stark a distinction between the coordinative discourse and the public sphere. The links between the two, in particular in ideational processes that occur in political parties, is more fluid than Finlayson implies. The process of developing a political programme in the coordinative sphere often puts the policy expert, the political activist, and the elected representative together in the same seminar room. Thus, the output of these interactions is a joint effort.

The production of different types of discourses and ideas is carried out by a variety of actors: first, the epistemic community of experts, public intellectuals, and party intellectuals who prioritise issues and policy puzzles, provide cause–effect analysis and theories to policy puzzles, and in some instances can offer solutions;²³ second, political actors who include party leaders and other elected politicians, political advisers, activists, and influential media commentators; and third, the audience, who are the target of the communicative action of political actors. The process of mapping out this ideational activity involves, as Finlayson suggested, the examination 'of how they do or do not connect with each other, and how they cohere as part of an evolving yet traditional ideology'.²⁴

By applying this analytical framework, discursive institutionalism enables us to identify and create a map of the political ideas that shaped a political programme, to ascertain whether the programme as a whole has some intellectual and ideological coherence, and to identify which goals it seeks to achieve. However, it does not offer sufficiently solid hermeneutical tools to evaluate whether and why the ideas in question succeeded or failed at provoking change. Schmidt seemed to be aware of this weakness. She argued that ideas need to be plausible, pertinent, and accepted by relevant actors; however, these elements seldom enter into her analysis.²⁵ And yet, considerations about power and administrative arrangements, as well as considerations about the ability of political actors to build coalitions of support for their ideas, are crucial to explain how they can be agents of political change.

Historical institutionalism helps to bridge this gap because it offers an explanation of the process of ideas-induced political change or stasis. For instance, Margaret Weir argued that in order for ideas to be agents of change, (a) they need to be available, (b) administrative and institutional arrangements should facilitate the diffusion of those ideas, and (c) relevant actors or coalitions of support must have a role in either endorsing or rejecting those ideas.²⁶ A neater formula is

proposed by Peter A. Hall. Indeed, Hall argued that ideas can explain processes of political change. As he put it, ideas ‘can alter the composition of other elements in the political sphere, like a catalyst or binding agent that allows existing ingredients to combine in new ways.’²⁷ Hall also argued that some of the effects of ideas are unintended, as ‘new ideas have the capacity to change the very perceptions of those who wield them as well as the world itself in ways that their advocates often do not fully anticipate or desire.’²⁸

However, the power of ideas is not merely conditional on their innate qualities. As he argued, there are at least three external circumstances that can affect the power of an idea. The first is related to their ability to persuade. The ideas in question need to offer a plausible response to a current policy puzzle. For political parties this is a particularly important, if not difficult, condition, as they have to persuade voters of the appropriateness of their ideas in order to win power.

But persuasiveness is not merely dependent on the intellectual coherence of an idea or on its technical viability. Indeed, there are coherent and viable ideas that are difficult to explain. Hence, in Hall’s model, ideas also need to be comprehensible, and that comprehension is reliant on individuals’ ‘stock of knowledge that is generally conditioned by prior historical experience.’²⁹ Putting it differently, in order to be persuasive ideas need to resonate with people’s cause–effect understanding of policy problems and to a certain extent with their worldviews.

Finally, in order to influence policy, ‘an idea must come to the attention of those who make policy, generally with a favourable endorsement from the relevant authorities.’³⁰ The endorsement of new ideas that can potentially result in the movement from one paradigm to another will depend, according to Hall, ‘not only on the arguments of competing factions, but on their positional advantages within a broader institutional framework, on the ancillary resources they can command in the relevant conflicts, and on exogenous factors affecting the power of one set of actors to impose its paradigm over others.’³¹

There are other external circumstances or conditions that limit the ability of political actors to adopt new ideas. Political actors, and in this case party leaders, are also constrained by the traditions, the rhetorical styles, and the rituals and values of the institutions they represent. From here it follows, as suggested by Finlayson, that political actors need to formulate ideas and policy proposals that are congruent with the ideological tradition of their parties.³² The reason is simple. If parties leapfrog ideologically, they can lose the trust of voters.³³

This being said, political parties as carriers (though they are also interpreters and makers) of ideologies can be – and indeed are – selective in the use of their party’s ideology and traditions. This is so because ideologies are flexible and sufficiently ambiguous to allow for these movements. To use Michael Freeden’s fitting expression, ideologies can be ‘trimmed to fit within an institutional framework.’³⁴ As historical organisations, political parties use their ideological repertoire to respond to particular contexts. In so doing, they reveal interesting aspects of their thought

processes but also of their programmatic aims. For example, New Labour used the traditions of ethical socialism to articulate a new role for the State that dovetailed with the requirements of the neoliberal economy, whilst the Labour Party under Ed Miliband used the traditions of guild socialism, mutualism, and the New Left to articulate a critique of unregulated capitalism and of the unresponsive State.

Mapping the development of Miliband's agenda

Interweaving Schmidt's discursive institutionalism with Weir's and Hall's analytical frameworks to determine whether ideas have succeeded at provoking change, this book will look at the discursive activities centred around the leader of the Labour Party and around the party's frontbench team. The purpose of the exercise is to map out the ideational processes that led to the development of the political agenda of the Labour Party under Ed Miliband from (and following Schmidt) 'thought, to word, to deed'. This will involve, in a first stage, the mapping of coordinative discourse that takes place in the policy and public sphere, and, in a second stage, it will examine the party's communicative discourse targeted at the public.

The focus on the leader of the Labour Party reflects the fact that Labour is a highly centralised party. The leader and his group of advisers are in almost full control of the policy-making process. Party members, backbenchers, and activists have little influence over policy-making and have often complained about it. According to Richard Heffernan, 'the last four Labour manifestos were written by – or for – the leader's office with the Labour Party at large – its conference, national executive or National Policy Forum – merely consulted by being provided with a *fait-accomplis*'.³⁵ Despite Miliband's difficulties in imposing his authority and vision on the party, there is little evidence that he changed this *modus operandi*. Indeed, the drafting of Labour's 2015 manifesto followed a similar pattern. The process of policy renewal was long, and involved a wide party consultation process, but the manifesto was drafted by Miliband's team.

However, the predominance of the leader does not imply that he can impose his vision on the party. Not even the most authoritative and strong leader is able to do that. In the case of Ed Miliband, this book will show that he compromised his policy goals with the members of the party's frontbench team and with powerful party factions in a number of areas in order to obtain their support. In some instances, the process of securing support for his ideas delayed the development of his programme. In others, it blurred the shape and contours of his agenda.

In order to explain how certain ideas shaped Miliband's agenda from 'thought to word to deed', I will examine both the coordinative and communicative discourses deployed by the Labour Party leadership.³⁶ In other words, I will analyse how certain ideas arrived within Labour circles; how they were discussed and interpreted by Miliband and his advisers, public intellectuals associated with or close to the Labour Party, think-tank reports and researchers (mainly from the Institute for Public Policy

Research (IPPR), the Resolution Foundation, the Policy Network, and the Fabian Society), party groupings, and some salient activists (such as Compass, LabourList, and Progress); how they were adopted and adapted by Ed Miliband and the shadow cabinet in their communications to the public; and finally how they were transformed into policy proposals. For that purpose I will analyse speeches and articles from politicians, think-tank reports, activists' blogs, and publications, as well as some interviews that I conducted with members of Ed Miliband's inner circle, Labour politicians and activists, and researchers from think-tanks close to the Labour Party.

It is important to bear in mind that this ideational activity did not happen in a vacuum. It reflected but was also conditioned by a particular political, ideological, and economic context. In addition, Labour's ideational activity was also limited by electoral considerations and institutional constraints. Indeed, one important ideational constraint was the dominance of the austerity paradigm in British and European politics.³⁷ Though there is little evidence that austerity policies are successful at eliminating public deficits,³⁸ the neoliberal paradigm, which fathered the austere response to the debt crisis, was dominant at the time when the Labour Party was developing its post-2010 programme of government. As will become clear in this book, this proved to be a major obstacle that severely hindered Miliband's attempts to develop a credible programme of social democratic renewal. It turns out that other social democratic parties faced a very similar constraint.

The parties of the Coalition Government, influential commentators, international institutions like the EU and the IMF, and even important sections of the Labour Party fully subscribed to the idea that the public deficit was the most important economic problem facing Britain and that austerity was the most plausible response to it. The prevailing belief in austerity at this time had almost a coercive effect, in the sense that it became almost unchallengeable.³⁹ It also had, as Blyth argued, a persuasive simplicity that resonated with individuals' experiences of domestic economy and public perceptions of how debt could be eliminated.⁴⁰

By contrast, Keynes's 'paradox of thrift', which explained why austerity did not work,⁴¹ was difficult to grasp. It did not help that Conservative politicians and commentators used the language of domestic economy to discuss public finances. References to how the previous Labour Government had 'maxed-up the nation's credit card' were never followed by the explanation that public finances cannot be compared to citizens' personal balance sheets because the State has other resources. It also did not help that Labour did little to challenge this facile but misleading idea. Nor did it help that Labour's response to the deficit was confused and intellectually incoherent as it simultaneously embraced 'austerity lite' whilst claiming that austerity did not work.

Some of Miliband's proposals also lacked Hall's 'comprehensibility' – that is, they were not easy to grasp. Ideas such as pre-distribution, the relational State, liberal nationalism, or the entrepreneurial State galvanised Miliband's highly intellectual inner circle of advisers and promoted a creative buzz in think-tanks and academic

circles, but they were not easily translated into attractive and easily understood policy proposals on the doorstep. And when they were transformed into concrete ideas, such as the freeze on energy bills, or the attack on zero-hours contracts, they were presented as individual retail offers that were tenuously connected to a coherent political agenda and enticing narrative.

But perhaps the main constraint Miliband faced was the legacy of New Labour. After all, it was under the watch of New Labour that the global financial crisis and the deficit crisis emerged. Though New Labour was not responsible for the credit crunch that happened in the United States, or for the irresponsible behaviour of British banks like Northern Rock and RBS, it had facilitated it by supporting light-touch regulation of the financial services industry. In fact, Ed Miliband admitted as much. But more importantly, voters blamed New Labour for the deficit and economic recession that followed the massive bailouts to the banks. Thus, in some party circles it was understood that the only way to overcome the legacy of New Labour was to recognise past mistakes and to articulate a credible economic approach. Miliband resisted the 'concede, and move on' strategy perhaps because he felt there were no guarantees that Labour could really 'move on'. Indeed, it is highly likely that admitting to having overspent whilst in power would open a whole new set of questions that would impose new constraints on the Labour leader.

Another constraint Miliband faced was his party. Much has been made of his ability to keep the party united while in opposition; however, he failed to generate enthusiasm on the Labour benches. To use Hall's criteria, Miliband was unable to build a 'coalition of support' within the Labour Party for his own programme. The level of party support that he encountered was reflective of his own problems as Labour leader. He often appeared aloof from the party, undecided about issues; his deliberative and consensual style of decision-making was often taken as a sign of weakness. At times, he was actually weak. Moreover, his limitations as a communicator, and his unwillingness to play the media game of photo-ops and slick media performances, did not contribute to creating the image of the authoritative and natural-born leader, which, for good or evil, is the type of political leadership that is still valued in contemporary British politics.

The media also contributed to Miliband's woes. Throughout his leadership he faced a very hostile media that was determined to portray him as an inadequate politician who was totally unqualified to govern the country. Unfortunately for Miliband, the media had an important role in defining him as a leader and, in the process, in deciding his electoral prospects. By using particular frames, the media constructs the reputations of politicians by deciding the benchmarks against which their leadership skills and their agendas should be assessed. In the process, the media influences the way the public perceives politicians and political parties.

Because the British media was overly hostile to the Labour leader and devoted considerable energy to undermining his authority and ideas, his image and

reputation have suffered as a result. Typically, Miliband was portrayed as ‘Red Ed’, and his policy proposals were often compared to those of the ‘loony’ left or, occasionally, to the Venezuela of Hugo Chávez. In other words, his programme was seen as lacking credibility because it was portrayed as too radical. The fact that so many backbenchers were ready to attack and openly criticise Miliband also enabled the media to frame him as a weak leader.

When some of Miliband’s ideas were actually popular with voters (for example, the proposals to freeze energy prices), the media used other methods to discredit him. He was regularly ‘framed’ in media discourses as ‘geeky’, ‘nerdy’, and ‘weird’. His style, voice, and body language were scrutinised in great detail and were generally assumed to lack authority or to be ‘un-prime-ministerial’. Even his inability to eat a bacon sandwich with dignity was presented as the definite proof that he was not fit to enter Downing Street. Indeed, on the eve of the election, the image of Miliband eating a bacon sandwich was used by the *Sun* newspaper as a narrative device to persuade its readers to vote against the Labour Party.

The constraints outlined here undermined Miliband’s ability to form a coalition of support for his ideas. As a result, he had to compromise, and some of those compromises led to some intellectual incoherence and vagueness. For example, his proposals to reform British capitalism (which, incidentally were completely ignored by the mainstream media) were undermined by Labour’s endorsement of austerity and its approach to the financial services industry. Similarly, his critique of the unresponsive and centralised State resulted in timid proposals for power devolution from Whitehall to English towns and cities.

Last but not least, Miliband’s programme was also influenced by electoral considerations. His programme of government had to be sanctioned by British voters and therefore it had to pass the electoral test. But to develop a popular programme was easier said than done. In an age of multiparty politics and of growing political disengagement it is increasingly difficult for political parties – and not only the Labour Party – to decide which coalitions of supporters they need to target in order to secure an electoral victory. For Labour the challenge was particularly difficult as it faced challenges from the left (Greens, Plaid Cymru, and most importantly the Scottish National Party (SNP)), the centre (the Liberal Democrats), and the populist right (UKIP).

A word or two about ideologies

Thus far I have explained how I will map out the development of Miliband’s programme; however, I have not yet explained which analytical tools will be used to determine whether Miliband’s agenda constituted a renewal of social democracy. In order to do so, I will base my analysis on Freedén’s morphological approach to the study of ideologies and also (loosely) on his morphology of socialism. As Finlayson pointed out,⁴² Freedén’s morphological approach dovetails nicely with Schmidt’s

methodology, in particular with her concepts of programmatic beliefs and political philosophies.

For Freeden, 'ideologies are distinctive configurations of political concepts, and they create specific conceptual patterns from a pool of indeterminate and unlimited combinations'.⁴³ These concepts can play core, adjacent, or peripheral roles in an ideology.⁴⁴ What then defines an ideology is the morphology – that is, the way (or the order) in which those concepts are grouped, but also the meaning ascribed to the different concepts. It is then the way whereby these concepts and their conceptions are arranged that distinguishes one ideology from another.⁴⁵ As Freeden explained using a fitting metaphor, an ideology is defined by particular concepts in its morphology as a kitchen differs from a living room by accommodating cookers and sinks.⁴⁶ It follows from here that though the morphology of an ideology is in constant mutation (in the same way that we can re-organise the furniture in a room), the structure of an ideology 'may snap' if 'completely alien meanings of concepts are hastily injected into a particular ideology'.⁴⁷ Using again Freeden's metaphor, this means that a kitchen stops being one when a cooker is removed and a desk is added. Thus, a political party that so far was defined as socialist will stop being so if it rejects equality or community as morphological concepts. When that happens what emerges is an ideological hybrid. By hybrid, Freeden means groups of concepts that 'cut across overbearing ideological families that have become inadequate categories in their inability to satisfy current comprehensions'.⁴⁸

Freeden's morphological approach to the analysis of ideologies has been criticised for its essentialist assumptions. Andrew Vincent challenged the idea that ideologies are 'concepts bunched together'. Instead they are 'internally complex, intermixed and overlapping',⁴⁹ he argued. But despite his reservations, he too accepted the inevitability of a typology.⁵⁰ In similar vein, Mark Bevir considered Freeden's conceptual approach problematic because it assumed that ideologies were sets of concepts. According to him, 'ideologies are not constructs combining static, albeit contested concepts or debates'; instead they are 'contingent, changing traditions that people produce through their utterances and actions'.⁵¹ Because ideologies are non-reified, they can only be analysed by tracing how they develop over time and as their 'exponents inherit beliefs and actions, modify them and pass them on to others'.⁵² Thus, Bevir prefers to talk about 'traditions', but they are not so radically different from Freeden's morphologies.

Bevir rightly stresses the importance of contextualising ideologies and ideological change, but Freeden's morphological approach does not prevent that contextualisation. Indeed, he argues that the meaning of concepts and the way concepts are prioritised change through time and in reaction to specific contexts. He also assumes that concepts take on different conceptions depending on the context in which they are being used.

Moreover, political parties as carriers of ideologies and as historical institutions are limited in their ability to innovate. Their identity and distinctiveness rely on the

understanding of the party's historical commitment to specific values, ends, and sometimes means. The implication of this is that the essentialism that Bevir and Vincent complain about can be, as Buckler and Dolowitz put it, 'a focus of loyalty and a means of rhetorical strategies in the context of party competition.'⁵³ In other words, the morphology of an ideology can both constrain political parties but also offer opportunities for party change.

The morphology of social democracy

Freeden's morphological approach enables us to make qualitative judgements about the way political parties use and develop ideologies. As Buckler and Dolowitz argued, as historical and ideational institutions political parties are judged on how they follow or deviate from their ideological traditions. Party leaders are acutely aware of this constraint, as party changes tend to be presented as a way of renewing the ideological roots of the party.⁵⁴ Thus, in order to make sense of how political parties understand their ideational trajectories it is important to recall the main concepts and values – that is, the morphology of the ideological traditions they claim allegiance to.

The Labour Party defines itself as a socialist party. But this definition is not as straightforward and simple as it seems, because the morphology of democratic socialism and social democracy is highly contested.⁵⁵ For a long time they meant different things. As Rafal Soborski said, whereas democratic socialists 'encourage a gradual pursuit of socialism', social democrats 'limit themselves to ensuring an equitable provision of social welfare in the capitalist system', and maintain a critical attitude towards capitalism.⁵⁶

Despite the diversity of socialisms there are concepts that are common to all varieties of democratic socialism and social democracy: namely a concept of human nature rooted in social life and as essentially productive, a belief in the equality of human beings, a conception of history, a conception of welfare and happiness, a critical attitude towards capitalism and the free market, and a belief in democracy and liberty.⁵⁷ Across time and space, these concepts have been arranged and re-arranged in a myriad of ways and each arrangement of the socialist morphology has been bitterly contested. For example, the Labour Party has been debating since its foundation whether equality or community is the core concept of socialism. These debates have offered (and continue to do so) wonderful insights about the way political parties understand the world around them, how they prioritise the policy puzzles of the day, and how they see their role in British politics.

This deliberately loose morphology of socialism will enable me to make comparisons between New Labour and the Labour Party under Ed Miliband. Whereas New Labour's ideology was closer to a hybrid⁵⁸ than to social democracy because of its uncritical embrace of market capitalism and its acceptance of inequality, the Labour Party under Ed Miliband seemed to be closer to a social democratic

morphology because it adopted a critical stance towards capitalism, and placed equality, democracy, and community as core concepts of the party. The party has also adopted localism as a peripheral concept upon which the promotion of equality and democracy rely.

The book identifies four areas where the Labour Party under Ed Miliband departed from New Labour. First, it articulated a critique of capitalism that sought to correct New Labour's uncritical embrace of globalisation and acceptance of neo-liberal orthodoxies. Second, it identified rising inequalities and unequal access to power as major policy puzzles that the party attempted to address. Third, it defended a conception of an active but relational State that simultaneously tried to correct the centralisation that characterised New Labour's statecraft and to revive the party's traditions of ethical and guild socialisms. Fourth, it developed a concept of patriotism that sought to correct New Labour's embrace of globalisation and that reformulated the party's approach to immigration.

This being said, there were some interesting continuities with New Labour, in particular with its earlier years. Like New Labour, the Labour Party under Ed Miliband placed community as a core value of the party. More importantly, the break with the neo-liberal orthodoxies of New Labour was not as decisive as the Labour leader intended.

The plan of the book

As a book that seeks to map out the ideological and ideational trajectory of the Labour Party under Ed Miliband it will not offer an exhaustive analysis of all the policy proposals and public policy areas in which the party intervened. Thus, it will not analyse the party's stances on foreign and defence policy, education, law and order, or cultural policies. Indeed, in most of these policy areas, the party's programme was undeveloped. Instead, it will analyse the policy areas that defined Milibandism. By the same token, it will not offer a detailed analysis of the electoral strategy and challenges faced by the Labour Party during Miliband's leadership. Indeed, Tim Bale's *Five Year Mission: The Labour Party under Ed Miliband* offers such a comprehensive and pertinent account of those challenges that there is little left to say about them.⁵⁹ Finally, this book does not aim to offer a post-mortem analysis of why Labour lost the 2015 general election in such a catastrophic manner. Indeed, it is going to take some time until the party, observers, and political scientists can come up with a full explanation for that unexpected result. However, by explaining the ideational process that led to the drafting of Labour's 2015 manifesto it will be possible to identify some of the factors that can partly explain Labour's electoral defeat.

Chapter 1 discusses the state of European social democracy in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and ongoing European sovereign debt crisis. The chapter analyses how the process of European integration has weakened the position of social democratic parties in Europe and how it can partly explain their confused answers to the debt crisis of the Eurozone. The purpose of the chapter is to emphasise an

important ideational constraint faced by the Labour leader. When Miliband was developing Labour's political programme, Europe was in turmoil and European social democratic parties were in no position to offer either inspiration or institutional support to the type of policies he sought to adopt.

Chapter 2 offers an overview of Miliband's broad agenda and identifies the main themes and ideas of his programme. The chapter also examines the institutional constraints he faced: namely the Labour Party, the media, and the party's relationship with the trade unions.

Whilst Chapters 1 and 2 work as background chapters that will help to understand the ideational, political, and institutional constraints Miliband faced when developing Labour's electoral manifesto, the following four chapters will examine his approach to specific policy areas that defined his agenda and will be similar in format. All these chapters will map out the normative and cognitive ideas that were debated by the Labour leadership, how they were adopted and adapted in the party's narrative and discourse, and how they were transformed into policy proposals. While explaining the process of adoption and adaptation of ideas, the specific political and institutional constraints associated with that policy area will be identified and discussed. There is some artificiality in the division of chapters by policy areas given that there are often overlaps between them; however, this separation will make the analysis clearer.

Thus, Chapter 3 deals with Miliband's economic agenda, Chapter 4 explains Miliband's equality and social justice agenda, Chapter 5 concentrates on Miliband's programme of democratic renewal and public services reform, and Chapter 6 focuses on Miliband's politics of belonging. Finally, the Conclusion brings all the different pieces of Labour's programme together and considers whether its programme constituted a renewal of social democracy. The Conclusion also reflects on the role of ideas in politics and on the constraints political leaders face when committed to a process of political change.

Notes

- 1 Ed Miliband, 'The New Generation: Speech to the 2010 Labour Party Annual Conference', 28 September 2010, www.labour.org.uk/ed-miliband-a-new-generation,2010-09-28 (accessed 10 January 2012).
- 2 Miliband, 'The New Generation'.
- 3 Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).
- 4 Alan Greenspan, quoted in Steve Coll, 'The Whole Intellectual Edifice', *New Yorker*, 23 October 2008, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/steve-coll/the-whole-intellectual-edifice> (accessed 20 August 2014).
- 5 The exact quote was: 'You never want a serious crisis to go to waste'; Rahm Emanuel, 'You never want a serious crisis to go to waste', 18 November 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yeA_kHHLow (accessed 22 August 2014).

- 6 Colin Hay, 'Treating the Symptom Not the Condition: Crisis Definition, Deficit Reduction and the Search for a New British Growth Model', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15:1 (February 2013): 23–37 (p. 24).
- 7 In this study I use Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox's concept of ideas. For them, 'ideas are causal beliefs', and as such they 'posit connections between things and between people in the world' and they can 'provide guides for actions'. In Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox, 'Introduction: Ideas and Politics', in Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox (eds), *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–26 (pp. 10–11).
- 8 Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 11.
- 9 Blyth, *Great Transformations*, p. 37.
- 10 Blyth, *Great Transformations*, p. 44. See also Daniel Béland, 'The Idea of Power and the Role of Ideas', *Political Studies* 8 (2010): 145–154 (p. 145).
- 11 Blyth, *Great Transformations*, p. 37.
- 12 Richard Heffernan, *New Labour and Thatcherism: Political Change in Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 14.
- 13 Kathleen Thelen, 'Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 369–404 (p. 380).
- 14 Vivien A. Schmidt, 'Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth "New Institutionalism"', *European Political Science Review* 2:1 (2010): 1–25 (p. 4).
- 15 Alan Finlayson, 'Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies', *Political Studies* 60:4 (2012): 751–767 (p. 765).
- 16 Vivien A. Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse', *Annual Review of Political Science Review* 11 (2008): 303–326 (p. 314).
- 17 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', p. 322.
- 18 Schmidt, 'Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously', p. 4.
- 19 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', p. 309.
- 20 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', p. 309.
- 21 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', pp. 305–307.
- 22 Alan Finlayson, 'From Blue to Green and Everything in Between: Ideational Change and Left Political Economy after New Labour', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15 (2013): 70–88 (p. 71).
- 23 I am using Peter M. Haas's concept of epistemic community, which he described in the following manner: 'an epistemic community may consist of professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they have (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members; (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy options and desired outcomes; (3) shared notions of validity – that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and (4) a common policy enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which

- their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a result'. Peter M. Haas, 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization* 46:1 (Winter 1992): 1–35 (p. 3).
- 24 Finlayson, 'From Blue to Green', p. 74.
 - 25 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', p. 311.
 - 26 Margaret Weir, 'Ideas and Politics: The Acceptance of Keynesianism in Britain and the United States', in Peter A. Hall (ed.), *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism across Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 53–86 (pp. 54–59).
 - 27 Peter A. Hall, 'Conclusion: The Politics of Keynesian Ideas', in Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas*, pp. 361–391 (p. 367). See also Peter A. Hall, 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain', *Comparative Politics* 25:3 (April 1993): 275–296.
 - 28 Hall, 'Conclusion', p. 367. See also Hall, 'Policy Paradigms'.
 - 29 Hall, 'Conclusion', p. 370.
 - 30 Hall, 'Conclusion', pp. 369–370. See also Jal Mehta, 'The Varied Roles of Ideas in Politics: From "Whether" to "How"', in Béland and Cox, *Ideas and Politics*, pp. 23–46 (pp. 28–29). Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett add a further condition to Hall's approach. In order to gain political ascendancy ideas need also to be theorised and promoted by epistemic communities or policy entrepreneurs. For the purposes of this book, I will not explore this condition, as many of Miliband's ideas had been theorised by epistemic communities. Frank Dobbin, Beth Simmons, and Geoffrey Garrett, 'The Global Diffusion of Public Policies: Social Construction, Coercion, Competition, or Learning?', *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 449–472 (p. 454).
 - 31 Hall, 'Policy Paradigms', p. 280.
 - 32 Finlayson, 'From Blue to Green', p. 75.
 - 33 Hans-Dieter Kingemann, Richard I. Hofferbert, and Ian Budge, *Parties, Policies and Democracy* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), p. 24. See also Ian Budge, 'A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally', *British Journal of Political Science* 24:4 (October 1994): 443–467 (p. 448).
 - 34 Michael Freeden, 'Ideology and Political Theory', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11:1 (February 2006): 3–22 (p. 18).
 - 35 Richard Heffernan, 'Labour's New Labour Legacy: Politics after Blair and Brown', *Political Studies Review* 9 (2011): 163–177 (p. 169).
 - 36 Schmidt, 'Discursive Institutionalism', p. 310.
 - 37 Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011). Andrew Gamble, *The Spectre at the Feast: Capitalist Crisis and the Politics of Recession* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Andrew Gamble, *Crisis without End? The Unravelling of Western Prosperity* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
 - 38 Gamble, *Crisis without End?*; Blyth, *Austerity*.
 - 39 Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett, 'The Global Diffusion of Public Policies', p. 456.
 - 40 Blyth, *Austerity*, p. 10.

- 41 Polly Toynbee, 'Tories at Half-Time: Cruel and Inept, with Worse to Come', *Guardian*, 3 December 2012.
- 42 Finlayson, 'From Blue to Green', p. 74.
- 43 Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 4.
- 44 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 77.
- 45 Michael Freeden, 'Practising Ideology and Ideological Practices', *Political Studies*, special issue, 48:2 (2000): 302–322 (p. 304).
- 46 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, p. 62.
- 47 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 82.
- 48 Michael Freeden, 'Conclusion: Ideology – Balances and Projections', in Michael Freeden (ed.), *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 193–208 (pp. 195–196).
- 49 Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 19.
- 50 Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, p. 91.
- 51 Mark Bevir, 'New Labour: A Study in Ideology', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2:3 (2000): 277–301 (p. 281).
- 52 Bevir, 'New Labour', p. 280.
- 53 Steve Buckler and David P. Dolowitz, 'Ideology, Party Identity and Renewal', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 14:1 (February 2009): 11–30 (p. 13).
- 54 Buckler and Dolowitz, 'Ideology, Party Identity and Renewal', p. 13.
- 55 Rafal Soborski, *Ideology in a Global Age: Continuity and Change* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 89.
- 56 Soborski, *Ideology in a Global Age*, p. 90.
- 57 Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, pp. 91–95. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp. 420–433.
- 58 Eunice Goes, *A era Blair em exame* (Lisbon: Quimera, 2003).
- 59 Tim Bale, *Five Year Mission: The Labour Party under Ed Miliband* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).