



LIVE L BBC NEWS CHANNEL

News services
Your news when you want it



News Front Page

World

UK

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Business

Politics

Health

Education

Science & Environment

Technology

Entertainment

Also in the news

Video and Audio

Have Your Say

Magazine

In Pictures

Country Profiles

Special Reports

RELATED BBC SITES

SPORT

WEATHER

CBBC NEWSROUND

ON THIS DAY

EDITORS' BLOG

Last Updated: Thursday, 1 September 2005, 15:20 GMT 16:20 UK

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

Kenneth Clarke: Speech in full

Conservative leadership hopeful Ken Clarke gives his first speech since announcing his intention to stand. Read it here in full.

“The disastrous decision to invade Iraq has made Britain a more dangerous place.

The war did not create the danger of Islamic terrorism in this country, which had been growing internationally even before the tragedy of the attacks on 9/11.

However the decision by the UK Government to become the leading ally of President Bush in the Iraq debacle has made Britain one of the foremost targets for Islamic extremists.

Personally I would have accepted that increased risk as the price of going to war if I had believed that we were driven to go to war for a just cause and a British national interest that could be pursued in no other way.

I reject the notion that fear of terrorist reprisals should ever deter a British Government from pursuing an honourable and necessary cause.

I had previously supported every war embarked upon by a British Government of whatever party throughout my Parliamentary career.

This was not such a case. The reasons given to Parliament for joining the invasion were bogus.

Bush's real purpose of installing quite quickly a pro-Western democracy in Baghdad, with the support of a grateful liberated population, has proved to be a sad illusion.

The dangers of the invasion providing recruits and impetus to terrorist extremists were clear before the war.

What has been done, has been done. The Prime Minister responsible has made himself accountable to the public in a General Election, which he won.

What matters today is what we do now. I do not believe, as leftist critics of the war argue, that we should just pull the troops out.

It would be immoral to walk away from the consequences of our actions leaving behind anarchy and civil war in Iraq.

I share the late Robin Cook's suspicions that the Bush administration hope to pull out most of their troops in whatever way they can before next year's U.S. mid-term elections.

I hope that our cynicism is wrong. Disengagement from Iraq has to be part of a much larger and more sophisticated political programme than we are delivering at the moment.

But this is all part of a much bigger picture. The problem of our relationship with the Muslim community both

BBC NEWS:VIDEO AND AUDIO
Watch Ken Clarke being quizzed about leadership bid

VIDEO

Conservative Leadership

In Depth



The Cameron story
The life story of the cycling Old Etonian who has become Conservative leader

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

- Johnson gets frontbench job
- Cameron vows green action
- Tory frontline team unveiled
- Cameron: PM 'stuck in past'
- Cameron chosen as Tory leader
- Analysis: Fifth time lucky?



Samantha Cameron
A baronet's daughter who sports a tattoo on her ankle - and now a leader's wife

BACKGROUND

- At-a-glance: New shadow cabinet
- Q&A: New Tory leader
- How Cameron won Tory crown
- What is Cameron's agenda?
- Who's who in inner circle
- Cameron's victory speech
- Conference performances

VIDEO AND AUDIO

Watch TV Reports

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Can Cameron revive Tories?
- Our UK voters' panel react

IN DEPTH

Tory leadership race

RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

David Cameron

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

Ken Clarke

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

internationally and domestically is now one of the major political problems that British Governments are going to have to face for many years to come.

There will be more terrorist outrages and more international crises before anyone can hope to resolve it.

Having made one catastrophic error in putting our troops into Iraq we must seek to avoid further mistakes at home and abroad. Of course the political parties in Britain must seek to achieve a cross-party consensus on where we go now and the present political leaders are trying to do so.

I see little sign yet however that the outline consensus that appears to be emerging is of adequate substance to match the threat.

If the Prime Minister really believes it, he must be the only person left who thinks that the recent bombs in London had no connection at all with his policy in Iraq.

The Government's response to every terrorist event is to propose new tougher anti-terrorist laws. I have always supported tough and exceptional laws against terrorism of every kind as I did when I was Home Secretary in the face of Irish terrorism.

However we do not lack anti-terrorist laws. I do not believe that the recent London bombs were the result of any deficiencies in our legal system. The Government is also now seeking to blame our problems on the behaviour of extremist preachers in our midst.

I support the expulsion of some of these vile propagandists from this country so long as the Courts can be satisfied of their guilt of the crimes they are charged with. I am very conscious of the offence that the extreme propaganda of the worst examples of radical imams can cause to the families of the innocent victims of the outrages that these people support and encourage.

But the public and the media should not be persuaded by the spin from Number 10 that "mad mullahs" are the most important creators of the dangers we face.

They are one of the symptoms of the problem rather than the cause of it. No amount of preaching in itself ever made any person turn to the barbaric practice of suicide bombing.

They foment and support an extreme and fanatic sense of injustice and a crazed drive for revenge that takes root in the minds of a small number of young people for other reasons.

No amount of military action on however great a scale nor tough legislation of however draconian a nature are in themselves going to make us safer or usher in a saner and more rational world. Constructive political responses are far more important.

We found that out for ourselves in Northern Ireland. I marvel that Prime Minister Blair, who has such an excellent record of seeing through John Major's political initiative in Northern Ireland, should fail to make the same judgements on the problem of resolving our conflicts with the Muslim world.

America is a great friend of Britain and our closest ally. The ties that bind us together are not those found in treaties. They are the closest possible ties of a shared history and of shared values.

For over fifty years we have been united in a transatlantic partnership. That partnership helped to secure peace in Europe and bring an end to Soviet tyranny.

It has been a powerful partnership founded on mutual respect and a deep friendship. We break those bonds of friendship at our peril. I have spent my whole political life not just believing in the Atlantic alliance but working to strengthen it.

For many of us in the Conservative Party - I hope the majority - being Atlanticist is not an afterthought but a fundamental part of our philosophy and our values.

But a true friend is a candid friend. US Presidents are not always right. Margaret Thatcher famously told off Ronald Reagan for invading a Commonwealth country without consulting her. Yet America has no greater friend than Margaret Thatcher. She recognised that the first duty of the British Prime Minister is the defence of British interests.

No Conservative would want to see the British relationship with the United States fracture. It is because I believe in it so strongly that I have been robust in my criticism on occasions. The transatlantic partnership has to be just that, a partnership.

After September 11 2001 our Government was quite right to pledge its support for President Bush's campaign against global terrorism, it would have been failing in its duty if it had not done so.

Iraq was a diversion from the core task of the pursuit and destruction of al-Qaeda. Indeed, the failure to prepare properly for the aftermath of invasion has led to a horrifying expansion of terrorist activity in Iraq. We must not make such a mistake again.

Sometimes commentators talk as if there should be a trade-off between Britain and the US. They suggest that our support for invading Iraq should be traded for a US signature on the Kyoto Protocol perhaps. This is to misunderstand the nature of our relationship and to display a certain naivety about US domestic politics.

President Bush will do what he thinks is right for America - and so he should, that's his job. Just as Tony Blair should do what is right for Britain because that is his responsibility. Talk of trade-offs is unhelpful but that does not mean a British Prime Minister should not use his influence, for example, to seek changes in US policy towards a Middle East peace settlement.

Action based on principle in deciding what our response should be to the threat posed by Islamicist terror, I believe we should follow four clear principles: firstly, the methods we use to fight the terrorists should neither undermine our fundamental belief in the rule of law nor give them new grievances to exploit; secondly, the political dimension is a critical part of our response; thirdly, the whole democratic world must work together to counter this problem; Finally, government has to be honest with the British people about the threat we face and the appropriate response to it.

I want to discuss today each of these principles and what applying them means in policy terms.

Principle 1: Using the Right Methods

The methods we use to fight terrorism are critical to our success. I do not just mean in the technical sense that the measures we take should do the job. I also mean that the way in which we tackle the threat - and the reality - of Islamicist terrorism will affect how quickly we can defeat it. If we take

the wrong approach, we shall alienate large sections of our own population, undermine the credibility of the police and the security services and potentially face a worsening security situation. In deciding how to respond to the development of Islamicist terrorism, let us be clear first about what we should not do.

First, sections of the media must desist from reporting every terrorist outrage as a failure by the police or the Security Service. I got increasingly fed up with this sort of nonsense as Home Secretary. Bombs are not the fault of the police or MI5; they are the fault of terrorists.

No agency or organisation exists that can protect us from all terrorist atrocities. The Joint Intelligence Committee said, after the attacks of September 11 2001, that, "New strategies are required to counter the threat of terrorists willing, or even eager, to sacrifice their lives in Islamic extremist or other causes - although there can be no complete protection against them". If they are efficient, the security authorities will thwart a high proportion of terrorist plans and they seem to have had some success on this front in recent months.

At various times during the troubles in Northern Ireland Conservative Ministers were urged to lift the restraints on the security forces. We all get frustrated by the failure to catch the guilty, especially when there has been loss of life, but adopting the methods of the enemy is not the way to beat terrorism. It is also a counsel of despair. Despite criticism in some quarters, we did stick to the rule of law in Northern Ireland. We were right to do so.

Suspending our normal respect for human rights in the belief that somehow "political correctness" is hampering the fight against terrorism will only further alienate Muslim opinion. That does not mean avoiding necessary legal measures or putting the rights of the terrorist before the rights of his victims.

During my time as Home Secretary we had to take exceptional measures that required us to suspend part of the application of the European Convention on Human Rights. But whatever measures we do take to tackle terrorism, they must take account of the danger of the wrong person being arrested or even being killed. Instant legislation is to be viewed with caution too.

I am aware of no evidence that a bomb has gone off because of a gap in the law. Ministers in the present Government seem to reach for the legislative drafting pen as a quick response to the demand that "something must be done".

There are already more than 200 different terrorist offences on the UK statute book. New laws after every terrorist atrocity can feed a sense of panic. They can also encourage the terrorists because if our response is an ever-more repressive set of laws, they will know that those laws are most likely to impact on communities from which they derive sympathy.

Of course we need some special laws to deal with terrorism because of the uniquely terrible nature of the crimes. The judge-only courts in Northern Ireland are a good example of an extraordinary measure to deal with an exceptional problem. But we must always strive to preserve the freedoms we seek to defend. You do not beat the enemies of freedom by taking freedom away. The question is not whether the police need exceptional powers but what powers they should have and under what control. We may need new powers to deal with Islamic terrorism.

But ministers have to make the case for each measure and seek to carry the opposition parties with them. Ministers must be careful to avoid partisanship in this area of the kind that Tony Blair displayed when he tried to portray Conservatives and Liberal Democrats as 'soft on terrorism' when we blocked in Parliament an absurdly ill-thought out Prevention of Terrorism Bill after the Belmarsh judgement.

The Opposition has a particular duty in emergencies of the kind we currently face. The worst legislation is often that rushed through parliament at short notice. It is in the heat of the moment that mistakes are often made. That is why the Opposition must stand back, try to look at issues objectively and offer the government its advice.

It is not an easy position to be in - as the prime minister himself should remember. Special measures have to be proportionate and last only as long as is absolutely necessary. They must be subject to proper scrutiny by independent persons.

Parliament should be given greater opportunities to debate and scrutinise legislation in this sensitive area than it gets given in more ordinary legislative proceedings. The Government must never again seek to curtail debate and use moral blackmail to rush legislation through as it did before the election. Prime Ministerial attacks on judges and their scruples in applying legislation are unhelpful and undignified.

Do not tell me that terrorism is dreadful and we need special measures to tackle it. Several of my Parliamentary colleagues died as a result of Irish terrorism. I was the Home Secretary who had to explain to the House of Commons why we needed to keep the Prevention of Terrorism Act on the statute book. It was my then "shadow", Tony Blair, who argued that no terrorist suspect should be detained for more than 48 hours without judicial review.

The sort of unusual measure that is not acceptable in a democratic society is that known in the United States as "extraordinary rendition". This is a process by which people are captured by or passed to US forces anywhere in the world and then taken to countries that have been heavily criticised for using torture.

It appears to be designed to get round the prohibition on torture in the USA. One of the White House lawyers who drew up the justification for this policy has compared terrorists to slave traders and pirates, people who were not fighting for any country and had no legal protection. But this is not the 17th century; it is the 21st century.

Some might say that what the US does, the US is responsible for. That is true but the British Government cannot evade its responsibilities in this matter. It refuses to say whether British citizens or residents have been the subject of extraordinary rendition. It will not comment on claims that British territory has been used by the US for this purpose. It does not deny having received intelligence from people who have been tortured.

I never thought I would live in a society where the British Government has refused to deny that captured people may be flown out of British airports to some third country where they can be tortured. What kind of country have we become if we permit such outrages? Terrorism is dreadful, we need unusual powers to deal with it but to condone torture to fight terrorism is to debase our cause. More to the point, we know that torture does not work.

The most powerful critics of extraordinary rendition in the United States are former FBI and CIA agents. They argue that torture does not work because the information generated is unreliable. If agreements can be reached with other countries about the prohibition of torture, then it is better that extremists are deported than detained here. That presumes that they cannot be tried within the UK; that is always the best option.

I do agree that the Government's 12 proposed measures all deserve careful consideration but parliament cannot simply be expected to agree to a "wish list". For example, the notion that arrested people should be able to be detained for questioning for up to three months raises profound questions. It is this kind of proposal that can be swept through parliament on a tide of anger after a terrorist outrage and then ever after be regretted. It is a serious and important proposal that deserves proper consideration.

The police do face exceptional difficulties when interrogating terrorist suspects. The time taken to carry out forensic tests adds to the problem. These are issues that cannot just be put to one side by reference to human rights; they must be addressed. But we should not have found out about this proposal from a press briefing; that was not the proper way to treat Parliament. I strongly opposed control orders because I do not believe that politicians should ever have the power to deprive people of their liberty.

When we return again to the question of detaining people in custody who cannot be charged or tried, as the Government have promised we will, then the decision to detain them should be taken by a judge. I believe that it is perfectly possible to devise a system where the judiciary would decide, on a balance of probability and not merely suspicion, whether a person was likely to be involved in terrorism or not. If the person was found likely to be involved, then they could be detained with the proviso that such detention should be regularly reviewed.

Such a system should only apply to non-British nationals. We tried detention without trial of British nationals in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and it helped rather than hindered the IRA. Indeed, the present Government repealed the power to reintroduce internment after it came to office in 1997. For some time now there has been a debate about whether evidence gained through interception should be able to be used in court. Britain is unusual in not allowing such evidence to be used.

The police and most politicians are in favour of changing the law in this area. The resistance to change comes from elements in the intelligence and security community. There are three main arguments against the use of intercepted material. The first is that by doing so you will reveal the methods that the agencies use to gather material. Neither Australia nor the United States, to take two examples, have found that a problem. In my view this is a question of procedure rather than principle. It should be possible to devise rules for the handling of such evidence that protects the method of collection.

The second objection is the suggestion that if intercepted material could be used as evidence, terrorists and other criminals would cease to use the telephone. As we have seen from the actions of the July 7th bombers, these conspiracies are complex and require a great deal of communication between the participants. At least some of it will have to be by telephone or email. The third argument concerns the possibility that the defence will argue in a particular case that

the absence of intercepted material is proof of their client's innocence. I see no reason why that defence should be permitted in terrorism cases.

The absence of a particular type of evidence is never proof of innocence by itself. The case in question would not have got to trial without the Crown having other evidence to offer. So this argument I believe falls too. I agree with the conclusions of the two substantial independent reviews of terrorism law, that of Lord Lloyd in 1996 and the Committee of Privy Counsellors in 2003, that the time has come to lift the bar on intercepted material being used as evidence. It does not follow that in every case where there is intercepted material it should be presented in open court. It will be necessary to have special rules for the handling of such evidence.

But a situation in which Britain is the only country other than the Republic of Ireland to have a blanket ban is in my judgement no longer sustainable. My party has consistently expressed its unhappiness with the nature and operation of the UK's border controls.

I will say something later about the connection between immigration into our own country and terrorism; all I want to do now is to comment on the vexed question of border controls. I describe it as a vexed question because in a free society, with literally hundreds of ports and airports, border control is no easy matter. It cannot be denied however that the UK has not excelled in this field. The inability of the Government to even estimate how many illegal immigrants were in this country until recently was a vivid indication of the collapse of our system of control.

All forms of crime requires good co-operation between different agencies. In the case of terrorism, not only does the Security Service have to liaise with 52 separate police forces, we also have the Secret Intelligence Service, GCHQ, the Immigration Service, Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, the Ministry of Defence and a vast array of private companies concerned with the problem. This complex structure could lead to confusion, lost opportunities and organisational rivalry.

We certainly experienced some significant organisational rivalries in Northern Ireland. One has to be careful here, as it is too easy to lead from the current complex structure towards a solution that would be too centralised. The creation of the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre is a good example of how the expertise of several organisations can be pooled together effectively. Hosted by the Security Service, JTAC brings together expertise from across the relevant departments and agencies. It has been judged to operate successfully.

There may be a case for having a similar organisation, hosted by the Immigration Service, to bring together the agencies concerned with border controls. Border controls are not just a matter for agencies in Britain. We need extensive co-operation with the agencies of our neighbours. Having one point for them to interface with might be more effective than the current arrangements.

The use of special powers to tackle terrorism is controversial in both legal and political terms. Since emergency powers were first introduced in the 1970s in Britain, we have had various forms of independent review of them. These have included ad hoc committees as well as individuals appointed to conduct annual reviews of special powers. I have come to the conclusion that we now need a more permanent arrangement. When I say this, I do not detract from the essential work of the three existing committees in this area - the Intelligence & Security Committee, the Joint Committee on Human Rights

and the Commons' Home Affairs Committee. But the very fact that three committees are involved - and others in the Scottish Parliament - highlights the fragmented nature of the current scrutiny process.

There is a strong case for one independent scrutiny body reporting to Parliament on anti-terrorism powers. I say "powers" and not legislation because I would want such a committee to look at other issues, such as the so-called "shoot to protect" policy of the police. Much of anti-terrorism police work is now co-ordinated by the Association of Chief Police Officers. I am not against that but ACPO is in effect a trade union and it is not accountable either to police authorities or to the public.

I believe that its co-ordination role ought to be the subject of political scrutiny. A scrutiny body would develop expertise in the problems the security forces face and be a source of advice for them. I think senior police officers would often welcome the chance to discuss their tactics and methods with politicians and others who understand the problems that they face. Such an expert committee should be there to help the police and not hinder them in their vital work. It is an idea that I hope the Government will consider carefully.

Principle 2: The Political Dimension

The essential need to recognise the political dimension is the third principle that should underpin our response. You cannot defeat terrorism just through security. It is a priority issue for our foreign policy and it is wrong to pretend that our foreign policy is a completely separate subject, unrelated to terrorism in Britain.

The roots of our present terrorism lie in the Middle East and in a series of conflicts around the world. We cannot solve these problems on our own but Britain does have a role to play in seeking peaceful resolutions to them. Our role partly derives from being a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a prominent member of the European Union. But we have many historic links with the Middle East and a close relationship with Saudi Arabia. We maintain close relationships with several Muslim countries through the Commonwealth. I believe that there is a distinctive contribution for Britain to make in addressing the underlying causes of international terrorism.

The "war on terror" is being fought on many fronts but at the moment the most active of those fronts is in Iraq. Let us be clear about one thing: we cannot just walk out of Iraq. That would be shameful. We started the job and we have to finish it. No one who believes in democracy and the rule of law could want the insurgents to win in Iraq. Whatever any of us felt before we went to war with Saddam Hussein, there can be no turning back now. But there has to be a change of strategy.

We need a clear set of objectives that have to be met before we can withdraw. Top of the list is a sustainable security situation but Iraq also needs a sound basis for economic development. The current high levels of unemployment and poverty only feed instability and violence. There is no doubt that US military tactics are alienating moderate Iraqi opinion. You cannot defeat a terrorist insurgency without winning hearts and minds.

The plain truth is that the British Government lacks influence over the direction of US policy in Iraq. We saw that in the disastrous operation in Fallujah. The US is going to have to accept that if there is ever to be peace in Iraq, the anti-American element in Iraqi politics will have to be part of the

government. Any Government or Constitution that appears to be steered too heavily by the American occupation will lack any credibility or permanence. It is obvious that we went in to Iraq without a clear plan as to what to do when Saddam had been deposed. I now fear that the US administration is about to make the same mistake again - but this time of withdrawing from Iraq without a clear plan of how to get there.

The British Government and the Prime Minister personally must use every ounce of influence they have in Washington to try to prevent that from happening. Given the British experience of fighting terrorism in our own country for thirty-six years, we have hopefully learnt some of the key lessons. I am frankly astonished that US politicians who were quick to lecture the British in the past about miscarriages of justice and alleged brutality by the security forces in Northern Ireland, seem unable to understand the damage to Western credibility done by the scandals at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay. Dubious interrogation techniques might produce information quickly but the effects on public opinion of this approach in the long term far outweigh the short-term benefits.

You do not defend the rule of law successfully by breaking it. It is not just that the innocent are unfairly treated, just as important, the guilty go free. Our mistakes in Northern Ireland gave Irish Republicans a propaganda bonanza that they were quick to exploit - not least when fundraising in the United States. I fear that we are doing the same today. Some of the tactics used in both the United States and in the UK have already alienated a significant section of moderate Muslim opinion.

The problem is not that support for the terrorists is high amongst British Muslims; the overwhelming majority rejects both the actions and the philosophy of the bombers. They also resent the damage that the whole Muslim community suffers from the actions of a few. But what is true is that a surprisingly large number condemn the terrorists but say they understand why they commit these crimes. A Yougov poll for the Daily Telegraph found that 56 per cent of Muslims questioned said that they could understand why the London suicide bombers of 7 July had behaved in the way they did.

I find that depressing and alarming. If we cannot win the hearts and minds of the Muslim community in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, what is already a formidable challenge will prove harder to beat. There are encouraging signs that Muslims in Britain are prepared to work with the security forces but we have a long way to go before trust is truly established. Equally, there is a plain duty on the Muslim community in Britain to have a strategy for protecting their young people from extremist influences.

I said at the beginning that defeating Islamicist terrorism would not be easy and that we needed to plan for the long haul. Part of the reason for this is that events of July have made clear to the whole nation that some of the divisions in our society are more profound than many realised. The reality is that there is still a great deal of racial division in this country. There is still racial discrimination and a multi-cultural society is a concept and not a reality.

In Britain the issue of community relations has been bound up with issues of immigration and asylum for too long. Politicians have become trapped into arguing about numbers and not communities. Of course immigration (and asylum) policies matter enormously. I have always believed that firm but fair immigration control is the essential foundation of a multi-cultural society. I regret the way Labour played the other side of the race "card" in 1997 by promising to liberalise the

immigration rules and to do away with the primary purpose rule.

The expansion of immigration was bound to provoke a backlash and the collapse of the bureaucracy and ineffective administration of the system has made that backlash worse. But talking about immigration issues can divert attention from the question of the fractured communities that exist in many towns and cities in our country. We are not just talking about divisions between white, brown and black here but as much about divisions between different generations of ethnic minorities and between the genders. There are divisions of class and income too.

People on higher incomes are often in favour of more immigration because they benefit from a pool of willing but cheap foreign workers. Those on low incomes, by contrast, feel that what little they have is threatened by an influx of cheap labour from overseas. The government has begun to recognise the depth of some of these problems. I applaud the Prime Minister for recognising that people cannot choose to make their home in this country and then decline to learn our language.

Highlighting the reluctance of some people to embrace the country in which they live is necessary but it is only part of an intricate web of issues that affect some communities. Unemployment is higher amongst some ethnic groups than others. There are too many young men with too little to do who are ripe for indoctrination. Racism is still too common. Inner city schools sometimes struggle to deliver a high standard of education to the diverse group of children they have to teach.

Health care arrangements do not always reflect properly the particular needs of communities. All of these issues are intertwined, one with another and they cannot easily be solved. Successive governments have wrestled with them. It is wrong to believe that problems this profound can be solved by government alone. The role of government, central and local, is to create the right conditions for communities to flourish. That means supporting schools and other public services so that people in the inner cities get the highest and not the lowest standard services.

It means working with the private sector to stimulate growth and jobs. And it means working with the voluntary sector to strengthen the social fabric and to heal the wounds in a fractured society.

Principle 3: Unity of Purpose

My third principle is that democratic nations must work together. Islamicist terrorism is a global phenomenon.

In recent years there have been attacks linked to Muslim extremists in many countries, including Kenya, Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Tanzania and the United States as well as Britain. The threat is found all around the world; the solution must be found in global co-operation. Since the grotesque attacks of September 2001, much progress has been made. Through the United Nations and the European Union, Britain has played an important role in seeking greater and more effective international co-operation against terrorism.

The Government has been right to pursue this approach and my party has been right to support them. There is still more to do in the field of international security co-operation. Extradition procedures are still often time-consuming and

sometimes ineffective. Domestic security agencies are still nervous about co-operating with similar bodies in other countries. Too often terrorists are able to move with relative ease between countries. The terrorists are still able to raise and distribute finance. All these problems can be tackled but not on a one-country basis.

They all require co-operation between nations and that co-operation has to be based on practicable measures. Britain has set an example to other countries by seeking many of these reforms. We need to persuade other countries of the value of this kind of co-operation.

Principle 4: No Room for Spin

Finally, there can be no room for spin. I have been over this ground before in the House of Commons and I will not repeat what I said there. But I do reiterate that episodes such as the frantic demands for new legislation just before a general election raised doubts about the motives of Ministers.

As ministerial credibility is low, Ministers have a special responsibility to ensure that not only what they say but what others say is objectively justified. Self-knowledge is the key to building a relationship with the electorate. I am sorry that the Prime Minister, as his comments at the press conference last month demonstrated, does not understand the limited credibility of his administration.

He is not in a position to say "trust me, there is a threat" because people do not trust him. The problem is made worse by the Government's claims about the links between our involvement in Iraq and the events of July this year. Sensible members of the public know perfectly well that misjudgements over Iraq have made the UK a more dangerous place for its citizens. The public knows it; politicians should have the courage to say so. After all, the Government was warned by the Joint Intelligence Committee before British troops invaded Iraq that the threat from al-Qaeda and its associated groups would be heightened by military action against Iraq.

Inevitably, in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, there will be pressure on ministers to act quickly in some way. I understand the pressures; I know all too well what it is like to sit in the home secretary's chair. In an age of 24-hour rolling news, the pressure on ministers is even greater. For a Government too often tempted by the prospect of a positive headline, there are real dangers here. We saw it in the absurd talk last month about Muslim clerics being charged with treason; any half-competent lawyer knows that is a non-starter.

It was an idea put about to give the impression that the Government was urgently looking for a new solution to a difficult problem; it ended up by making Ministers look foolish. The tendency to want a good press can have more serious consequences. Anyone reading The Times on Thursday 11 August may have been surprised to read on page 7 that, "Britain's promised crackdown on the 'preachers of hate' will begin today with a move to deport Abu Qatada, described as al-Qaeda's spiritual ambassador in Europe".

If I had been one of the police officers charged with arresting Mr Qatada at 6 am that very morning I would have been none too happy that my actions had been trailed in a national newspaper. Anyone in politics knows that you can buy national newspapers from 10pm outside London's railway stations the day before their publication. Supposing one of Mr Qatada's friends had done so on that Wednesday evening?

In this speech I have made some tough criticisms of the Government. I am unapologetic about that. There is nothing that undermines support for the terrorists more than demonstrating that the democratic process is still vibrant in this country. But let no one doubt my determination that we should beat Islamic terrorism in this country, in Iraq and wherever it is seen in the world. As a nation we must be united in our determination to defeat this menace. There are no excuses for terrorism. The Prime Minister was right to say that the use of suicide bombings anywhere is unacceptable, including in Israel. We should not compromise on that.

The Challenge for a New Generation

In this year of World War Two anniversaries we are reminded of the challenges that a previous generation had to face. We look with awe and wonder at the courage they displayed and their stoicism in the face of six long years of conflict. There were those who did not think present generations would be able to cope with the terror that we had feared might be brought to our streets; they were proved wrong in July. Londoners responded with calmness and great restraint. The emergency services showed that essential combination of bravery, professionalism and compassion.

Our parliamentary politicians stood firm under the prime minister's leadership. Our allies around the world gave us their unqualified support. What we learnt in July was that the nation has the will to win. However vile their crimes, however determined they are to destroy our freedoms, the terrorists will not succeed. We will beat them because it is we who stand for freedom, democracy and the rule of law. All these things have been threatened before in our history. A new generation are showing that they will defend them with all the tenacity and passion with which they were defended in the past.

”

 [E-mail this to a friend](#)

 [Printable version](#)

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

[E-mail news](#)

[Mobiles](#)

[Alerts](#)

[News feeds](#)

[Interactive TV](#)

[Podcasts](#)

MMIX

[Back to top](#) ^^

[Help](#) | [Privacy and cookies policy](#) | [News sources](#) | [About the BBC](#) | [Contact us](#)