

Old Democracy and New Challenges

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My subject is — the destiny of democracy in the world and in particular in Europe under the new challenges and circumstances, and the terrorist threats, which we are facing now. These challenges and threats have already split European society into two different camps.

I think that Britain represents the true face of democracy and has done so for many years. Terrorism presents a special threat to any democracy, but in particular, to a liberal democracy like the United Kingdom. It presented a threat when we had the Troubles in Northern Ireland, but that threat was in a sense an internal problem and it wasn't worldwide terrorism as we see it represented, at the present time. The difficulty with the current, fundamentalist type of terrorism, where people are quite prepared to kill themselves in the name of God (or whoever), is in how to combat it without actually compromising or losing the freedoms that we cherish and value. There has to be a balance struck between the freedom of people to speak and to act in certain ways; and of course the State of Parliament; more accurately, a balance between imposing restrictions on what people are or are not allowed to do.

There is clearly a fundamental distinction between people who are UK citizens and people who are 'aliens', who aren't UK citizens. And we've found ourselves at the present time in a dilemma, because we have a number of people being held in custody, who we can't deport because they allege that they would be in mortal danger if we sent them back to their country of origin. There are also people who are living in this country illegally and are involved in illegal activities. We can't charge them, because we haven't got sufficient evidence, but we certainly have sufficient intelligence to warrant detaining them. And of course there's a big divide, a big debate at the present time between the Executive power – which is represented by the Home Secretary and the government, – and the Judiciary power, who are very critical of the Home Secretary's fairly hard line, and the Civil Liberties Groups, who hold their beliefs so powerfully that they seem to ignore the great danger of terrorist outrages being inflicted on our population in a similar manner that occurred in places like Madrid. And of course, like Madrid, we are an open society and a democracy, and these issues have clearly got to be dealt with. My experience of thirty-five-years of policing, is that what one should not do, as a policeman – and I think the same thing applies to a country, – is not give into threats and blackmail. If we had been minded to do that, Winston Churchill would have probably thrown in the towel in when he was standing alone in the West against Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich. So I think the British nature, – the "bulldog" spirit – is not to give in. And I was saddened, certainly, when I saw what the Spanish government did in the light of the bombings in Madrid. The sitting gov-

ernment was overturned. In addition, it divided Europe; as we know its strength is in unity. Churchill always argued that if the smaller European countries had amalgamated and stuck together with Britain and France against the Germans, then Germany might well have been deterred from attacking. But what Hitler did, was pick off each country, one by one, until we were standing alone, I think that's a good example for not being weak in the face of international terrorism.

Clearly, we need to consider giving up some of our freedoms and the big issue at the moment that runs in the United Kingdom, is the question of whether to accept identity cards. Prior to the First World War we had a powerful navy, which prevented us being invaded. By the Second World War, a navy wasn't sufficient because of aircrafts, so we needed, therefore, to build an air force to protect ourselves.

We are now under a different type of threat – the threat of terrorism, including suicide bombers. Its no good trying to detect it after the event, because the suicide bomber isn't there and the damage is already inflicted. What you have got to try and do is use intelligence and detect it before it happens and actually deter people from committing the act.

We have to be absolutely sure that the authorities, who will be responsible for dealing with the cards, will not be corrupted. Do we have in all the EU countries enough protection against that threat?

In this country, I think the protection we have is the ancient freedom of an independent Parliament, and I've got sufficient confidence in our system of government, in the Executive power being separate from the Parliament, a free Press, and an independent Police service, not under the control of the government. I am confident that we have that protection.

For newer, emerging democracies, I suspect the same rules won't apply, because perhaps they haven't got the safe guard built into the system yet. Hopefully that will evolve, but when you think how long British democracy has been going, we hopefully have safeguards; we also value the protection of the individual. Therefore, I'm a firm believer in identity cards, because one of the problems in a liberal democracy, where people can move freely – and people are moving throughout the world more freely now – is identifying individuals and making sure that people are who they say they are.

Of course I'm talking about the UK looking after its own interests. There may well be a common system, and that will be invaluable, because presumably we will end up with an European database eventually, which will identify people with previous convictions, and any previous history of mixing with terrorists. 35% of all terrorists arrested are found to be using false identities. You could argue that that means that if 65% aren't, any good police agency or law enforcement body will use that valuable information to trace the others involved in the conspiracy, if indeed that's what it is. With the new biometric systems it's virtually impossible, as I understand it, to forge one's identity, particularly if you use two or three different measurements, for example identification by the iris. If we add to that finger prints and

possibly facial recognition, and have three combined on one document, on one database, then it will make it very difficult for terrorists, master criminals, organised criminals and the mafia. Quite often these things overlap, because terrorists quite often get involved in fairly serious crimes – drugs, etc., to fund their terrorism.

As a policeman, I've seen allegations made against the police in this country that the accused wasn't at the scene of the crime, somebody must have planted the fingerprints there, and of course that's a very easy thing to do. But you hope that we have such a system, that a fair trial would get to the bottom of it, and if the suspect has a string of previous convictions and a history of burglary and his fingerprints are found at the scene of a burglary, I think it's a reasonable assumption that he's the burglar. If it's somebody that has never been involved before in any crime, then the court may take the view that the evidence has been transplanted. That is a different argument to the one that I'm putting forward: the identification of individuals to prevent crime and terrorism by using biometrics, which I understand is virtually fool-proof. And one of the major problems at the present time is that terrorists, and criminals are stealing other peoples identifies.

It's very difficult to deal with terrorists within societies unless you can identify them. If you can identify them and get good intelligence and use modern technology to intercept e-mails, mobile telephone text messages and calls – technology can be used by governments to fight terrorism globally. At the same time, however, these methods are an infringement on civil liberties established in our society.

The difference from fifty years ago or a hundred years ago and now, is really the scope of mobility nowadays; people are prepared to use terrorism, particularly when its for fundamentalist religious purposes, where they do not care about losing their own lives to destroy the whole Western way of life. We have got to stand firm, we have got to be prepared to take a hit, and let's not have any doubt about that; it could happen in this country, the same as it happened in Spain. But we've got to steal our resolve, to resist it, use every piece of modern technology that we can and use infiltration if possible.

Coming back now to the problem of European cooperation in countering terrorism, I should state my philosophical view that I don't believe in a federal Europe. I think each Member State should retain its independence, but I can see some sense in being united, having a European constitution. Having a constitution doesn't necessarily mean it needs a separate, individual government. It can have rules that everybody abides by, without losing one's independence, that's probably what will happen if this constitution is adopted. This country, or the government now, in Great Britain, has agreed to hold a referendum. That's a very dangerous position for the Prime Minister to take, because he is at risk of losing it. The general opinion is that he would lose face and would probably have to resign. It is not impossible to have a positive result, providing the arguments are put sensibly and people are quite clear about what it is they're voting about. An independent body will approve the question in the referendum; it won't be the government that's asking the question. There has to be a lot of discussion now, a lot of explaining, and a thorough debate about the whole question of what the new European draft con-

stitution is all about. If it's thrown out, and it might not be thrown out by the UK, it might be one of the other countries that won't agree to it. If that happens, then I suppose we will go back to the drawing board. But originally the EU was set up as an economic union, the EC.

As we all remember, the project of a united Europe started to emerge in the late forties, after World War II. It was not only driven by economic reasons, but also for the protection of democracy in the whole of Europe and assurances that unification would protect European countries from the return of dictatorships. The values of freedom and peace and individual security were the foundation stones of the European Union, and the economy was a tool. The project has been well designed.

There is a view though, I'm not saying I share it, that when people in this country voted to go into Europe, they thought they were simply joining a common market. With no barriers in terms of trade and the movement of people. What they weren't agreeing to was to some kind of political union. In a sense politics was the fundamental reason, and it worked, because we've had a relatively peaceful Europe for all that time, apart from the Balkans. The question is – how much further can we unite? I would be surprised if the government agrees to actually hand over fiscal controls to a European bank, or a European body. This country would want to retain control over things like that, similarly with defence. One can have a general defence policy, which is admirable, but I think, at the end of the day, individual governments would need to control. When they went to war and similar issues such as important fundamental issues of State.

Let us come back to the criminal world. There is a legal world where people have job, pay taxes, support the civil system and this is the world which has the United Nations, the European Union and so on. But there exists an illegal world. Before a few years ago, this world was more or less local, nationalised. In Colombia there is a mafia, in Sicily there is a mafia and so on, and they haven't been united. And the legal world has created integral systems, economic systems, systems of communication, law systems and so on. In the current situation we can discuss the terms of the legal and illegal worlds, because the illegal world is also trying to unify itself now. Illegal migration and illegal drugs are becoming more and more worldwide systems and the same thing is happening with terrorism.

Nations, or groups of nations, Europe, need to cooperate and join together, just as Churchill said, to combat this international threat. Every individual country has its black economy, it has its illegal, criminal underbelly if you like, which avoids paying taxes, which works from criminal enterprises – that is another argument for having some kind of identification process; so that people who are here illegally, and there are quite a few, possibly from outside Europe, will not be able to abuse this system. Some of them are living off the State, they are possibly using false papers, and they'll be using the National Health Service and have never ever contributed. If we had some kind of identification system, which clearly illustrated that they weren't who they say they are, then there would be tremendous savings for citizens.

At the same time it might be helpful, for example, to create a European Union body, as an independent European Union court against terrorism, a specialised court against terrorism. Like there was after the Second World War: the Nuremberg tribunal.

We have already signed up to the international war-crimes court. But who wouldn't sign up to that agreement? The Americans are setting a very bad example by not signing up to the international war-crimes tribunal.

As for the economic foundations of terrorism, Bin Laden, to use him as an example, is a very wealthy man. But terrorism needs funds and I think that's another area where governments are united. They should be given the power to force banks to give information on individual bank accounts, and the movement of money across boundaries. I think that is another tool that governments could use. Does it mean, for example, that under that track, offshore banks, and offshore systems will fail? If terrorists are seen to be using offshore banks as a means of evading capture, then that's a liberty that we might have to limit. It may well be, once the threat has gone we can restore it, but it needs to be discussed. Clearly it's an infringement of liberty, like identity cards. You've got to give up certain rights in order to safeguard the welfare of the vast majority of people and we've all got to be prepared to do that in certain circumstances.