

UK Prime Minister's Speech on Anti-Extremism, 20th July 2015. Birmingham

It's great to be here at this outstanding school, Ninestiles School. Your inspiring teachers and your commitment to British values means you are not just achieving outstanding academic success, but you are building a shared community where children of many faiths and backgrounds learn not just with each other, but from each other too.

And that goes right to the heart of what I want to talk about today.

I said on the steps of Downing Street that this would be a 'one nation' government, bringing our country together.

Today, I want to talk about a vital element of that. How together we defeat extremism and at the same time build a stronger, more cohesive society.

My starting point is this.

Over generations, we have built something extraordinary in Britain – a successful multi-racial, multi-faith democracy. It's open, diverse, welcoming – these characteristics are as British as queuing and talking about the weather.

It is here in Britain where different people, from different backgrounds, who follow different religions and different customs don't just rub alongside each other but are relatives and friends; husbands, wives, cousins, neighbours and colleagues.

It is here in Britain where in one or two generations people can come with nothing and rise as high as their talent allows.

It is here in Britain where success is achieved not in spite of our diversity, but because of our diversity.

So as we talk about the threat of extremism and the challenge of integration, we should not do our country down – we are, without a shadow of doubt, a beacon to the world.

And as we debate these issues, neither should we demonise people of particular backgrounds. Every one of the communities that has come to call our country home has made Britain a better place. And because the focus of my remarks today is on tackling Islamist extremism – not Islam the religion – let me say this.

I know what a profound contribution Muslims from all backgrounds and denominations are making in every sphere of our society, proud to be both British and Muslim, without conflict or contradiction.

And I know something else: I know too how much you hate the extremists who are seeking to divide our communities and how you loathe that damage they do.

As Prime Minister, I want to work with you to confront and defeat this poison. Today, I want to set out how. I want to explain what I believe we need to do as a country to defeat this extremism, and help to strengthen our multi-racial, multi-faith democracy

Roots of the problem

It begins – it must begin – by understanding the threat we face and why we face it. What we are fighting, in Islamist extremism, is an ideology. It is an extreme doctrine.

And like any extreme doctrine, it is subversive. At its furthest end it seeks to destroy nation-states to invent its own barbaric realm. And it often backs violence to achieve this aim – mostly violence against fellow Muslims – who don't subscribe to its sick worldview.

But you don't have to support violence to subscribe to certain intolerant ideas which create a climate in which extremists can flourish.

Ideas which are hostile to basic liberal values such as democracy, freedom and sexual equality.

Ideas which actively promote discrimination, sectarianism and segregation.

Ideas – like those of the despicable far right – which privilege one identity to the detriment of the rights and freedoms of others.

And ideas also based on conspiracy: that Jews exercise malevolent power; or that Western powers, in concert with Israel, are deliberately humiliating Muslims, because they aim to destroy Islam. In this warped worldview, such conclusions are reached – that 9/11 was actually inspired by Mossad to provoke the invasion of Afghanistan; that British security services knew about 7/7, but didn't do anything about it because they wanted to provoke an anti-Muslim backlash.

And like so many ideologies that have existed before – whether fascist or communist – many people, especially young people, are being drawn to it. We need to understand why it is proving so attractive

Some argue it's because of historic injustices and recent wars, or because of poverty and hardship. This argument, what I call the grievance justification, must be challenged.

So when people say "it's because of the involvement in the Iraq War that people are attacking the West", we should remind them: 9/11 – the biggest loss of life of British citizens in a terrorist attack – happened before the Iraq War.

When they say that these are wronged Muslims getting revenge on their Western wrongdoers, let's remind them: from Kosovo to Somalia, countries like Britain have stepped in to save Muslim people from massacres – it's groups like ISIL, Al Qaeda and Boko Haram that are the ones murdering Muslims.

Now others might say: it's because terrorists are driven to their actions by poverty. But that ignores the fact that many of these terrorists have had the full advantages of prosperous families or a Western university education.

Now let me be clear, I am not saying these issues aren't important. But let's not delude ourselves. We could deal with all these issues – and some people in our country and elsewhere would still be drawn to Islamist extremism.

No – we must be clear. The root cause of the threat we face is the extremist ideology itself.

And I would argue that young people are drawn to it for 4 main reasons.

One – like any extreme doctrine, it can seem energising, especially to young people. They are watching videos that eulogise ISIL as a pioneering state taking on the world, that makes celebrities of violent murderers. So people today don't just have a cause in Islamist extremism; in ISIL, they now have its living and breathing expression.

Two – you don't have to believe in barbaric violence to be drawn to the ideology. No-one becomes a terrorist from a standing start. It starts with a process of radicalisation. When you look in detail at the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were first influenced by what some would call non-violent extremists.

It may begin with hearing about the so-called Jewish conspiracy and then develop into hostility to the West and fundamental liberal values, before finally becoming a cultish attachment to death. Put another way, the extremist world view is the gateway, and violence is the ultimate destination.

Three: the adherents of this ideology are overpowering other voices within Muslim debate, especially those trying to challenge it. There are so many strong, positive Muslim voices that are being drowned out.

Ask yourself, how is it possible that when young teenagers leave their London homes to fight for ISIL, the debate all too often focuses on whether the security services are to blame? And how can it be that after the tragic events at Charlie Hebdo in Paris, weeks were spent discussing the limits of free speech and satire, rather than whether terrorists should be executing people full stop?

When we allow the extremists to set the terms of the debate in this way, is it any wonder that people are attracted to this ideology?

Four: there is also the question of identity.

For all our successes as multi-racial, multi-faith democracy, we have to confront a tragic truth that there are people born and raised in this country who don't really identify with Britain – and who feel little or no attachment to other people here. Indeed, there is a danger in some of our communities that you can go your whole life and have little to do with people from other faiths and backgrounds.

So when groups like ISIL seek to rally our young people to their poisonous cause, it can offer them a sense of belonging that they can lack here at home, leaving them more susceptible to radicalisation and even violence against other British people to whom they feel no real allegiance.

So this is what we face – a radical ideology – that is not just subversive, but can seem exciting; one that has often sucked people in from non-violence to violence; one that is overpowering moderate voices within the debate and one which can gain traction because of issues of identity and failures of integration.

So we have to answer each 1 of these 4 points. If we do that, the right approach for defeating this extremism will follow.

In the autumn, we will publish our Counter-Extremism Strategy, setting out in detail what we will do to counter this threat. But today I want to set out the principles that we will adopt.

Counter-ideology

First, any strategy to defeat extremism must confront, head on, the extreme ideology that underpins it. We must take its component parts to pieces - the cultish worldview, the conspiracy theories, and yes, the so-called glamorous parts of it as well.

In doing so, let's not forget our strongest weapon: our own liberal values. We should expose their extremism for what it is – a belief system that glorifies violence and subjugates its people – not least Muslim people.

We should contrast their bigotry, aggression and theocracy with our values. We have, in our country, a very clear creed and we need to promote it much more confidently. Wherever we are from, whatever our background, whatever our religion, there are things we share together.

We are all British. We respect democracy and the rule of law. We believe in freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, equal rights regardless of race, sex, sexuality or faith.

We believe in respecting different faiths but also expecting those faiths to support the British way of life. These are British values. And are underpinned by distinct British institutions. Our freedom comes

from our Parliamentary democracy. The rule of law exists because of our independent judiciary. This is the home that we are building together.

Whether you are Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Christian or Sikh, whether you were born here or born abroad, we can all feel part of this country – and we must now all come together and stand up for our values with confidence and pride.

And as we do so, we should together challenge the ludicrous conspiracy theories of the extremists. The world is not conspiring against Islam; the security services aren't behind terrorist attacks; our new Prevent duty for schools is not about criminalising or spying on Muslim children. This is paranoia in the extreme.

In fact that duty will empower parents and teachers to protect children from all forms of extremism – whether Islamist or neo-Nazi. **Mr Cameron also took aim at the far-right**

We should challenge together the conspiracy theories about our Muslim communities too and I know how much pain these can cause.

We must stand up to those who try to suggest that there is some kind of secret Muslim conspiracy to take over our government, or that Islam and Britain are somehow incompatible.

People who say these things are trying to undermine our shared values and make Muslims feel like they don't belong here, and we will not let these conspiracy theorists win.

We must also de-glamourise the extremist cause, especially ISIL. This is a group that throws people off buildings, that burns them alive, and as Channel 4's documentary last week showed, its men rape underage girls, and stone innocent women to death. This isn't a pioneering movement – it is vicious, brutal, and a fundamentally abhorrent existence.

And here's my message to any young person here in Britain thinking of going out there:

You won't be some valued member of a movement. You are cannon fodder for them. They will use you.

If you are a boy, they will brainwash you, strap bombs to your body and blow you up.

If you are a girl, they will enslave and abuse you.

That is the sick and brutal reality of ISIL.

So when we bring forward our Counter- Extremism Strategy in the autumn, here are the things we will be looking at:

using people who really understand the true nature of what life is like under ISIL to communicate to young and vulnerable people the brutal reality of this ideology

empowering the UK's Syrian, Iraqi and Kurdish communities, so they can have platforms from which to speak out against the carnage ISIL is conducting in their countries

countering this ideology better on the ground through specific de-radicalisation programmes

I also want to go much further in dealing with this ideology in prison and online. We need to have a total rethink of what we do in our prisons to tackle extremism. And we need our internet companies to go further in helping us identify potential terrorists online.

Many of their commercial models are built around monitoring platforms for personal data, packaging it up and selling it on to third parties. And when it comes to doing what's right for their business, they

are happy to engineer technologies to track our likes and dislikes. But when it comes to doing what's right in the fight against terrorism, we too often hear that it's all too difficult.

Well I'm sorry – I just don't buy that.

They – the internet companies - have shown with the vital work they are doing in clamping down on child abuse images that they can step up when there is a moral imperative to act. And it's now time for them to do the same to protect their users from the scourge of radicalisation.

And as we do all of this work to counter the Islamist extremist ideology, let's also recognise that we will have to enter some pretty uncomfortable debates – especially cultural ones. Too often we have lacked the confidence to enforce our values, for fear of causing offence. The failure in the past to confront the horrors of forced marriage I view as a case in point. So is the utter brutality of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

It sickens me to think that there were nearly 4,000 cases of FGM reported in our country last year alone. Four thousand cases; think about that. And 11,000 cases of so called honour-based violence over the last 5 years – and that's just the reported cases.

We need more co-ordinated efforts to drive this out of our society. More prosecutions. No more turning a blind eye on the false basis of cultural sensitivities. Why does this matter so much?

Well, think what passive tolerance says to young British Muslim girls.

We can't expect them to see the power and liberating force of our values if we don't stand up for them when they come under attack. So I am glad we have gone further than any government in tackling these appalling crimes. And we are keeping up the pressure on cultural practices that can run directly counter to these vital values.

That's why the Home Secretary has already announced a review of sharia courts.

It's why we have said we will toughen the regulations. so schools have to report children who go missing from school rolls mid-year – some of whom, we fear, may be being forced into marriage.

It's why we legislated for authorities to seize the passports of people they suspect are planning on taking girls abroad for FGM – new protection orders which came into force last Friday and were used immediately by Bedfordshire police to prevent two girls being taken to Africa.

And it's why today I can also announce we will consult on legislating for lifetime anonymity for victims of forced marriage, so that no-one should ever again feel afraid to come forward and report these horrific crimes.

There are other examples of this passive tolerance of practices running totally contrary to our values. The failure of social services, the police and local authorities, to deal with child sex abuse in places like Rotherham was frankly unforgivable.

And look what happened in Tower Hamlets, in the heart of our capital city. We had political corruption on an epic scale: with voters intimidated and a court adjudicating on accusations of 'undue spiritual influence' for the first time since the 19th century. As the judge said: those in authority were too afraid to 'confront wrongdoing for fear of allegations of racism'.

Well this has got to stop.

We need everyone – government, local authorities, police, schools, all of us – to enforce our values right across the spectrum.

Non-violent and violent

Second, as we counter this ideology, a key part of our strategy must be to tackle both parts of the creed – the non-violent and violent.

This means confronting groups and organisations that may not advocate violence – but which do promote other parts of the extremist narrative.

We've got to show that if you say “yes I condemn terror – but the Kuffar are inferior”, or “violence in London isn't justified, but suicide bombs in Israel are a different matter” – then you too are part of the problem. Unwittingly or not, and in a lot of cases it's not unwittingly, you are providing succour to those who want to commit, or get others to commit to, violence.

For example, I find it remarkable that some groups say “We don't support ISIL” as if that alone proves their anti-extremist credentials. And let's be clear Al-Qaeda don't support ISIL. So we can't let the bar sink to that level. Condemning a mass-murdering, child-raping organisation cannot be enough to prove you're challenging the extremists.

We must demand that people also condemn the wild conspiracy theories, the anti-Semitism, and the sectarianism too. Being tough on this is entirely keeping with our values. We should challenge every part of the hateful ideology spread by neo-Nazis – so why shouldn't we here?

Government has a key role to play in this. It's why we ban hate preachers from our country. It's why we threw out Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada. And it's why, since my Munich speech in 2011, we have redirected public funds from bodies that promote non-violent extremism to those that don't. We also need to do more in education.

We undertook an immediate review when it became apparent that extremists had taken over some of our schools in the so-called Trojan Horse scandal here in Birmingham. But I have to be honest here – one year on, although we are making progress, it is not quick enough. It has taken too long to take action against the governors and teachers involved in the scandal and to support the schools affected to turn themselves around.

So as we develop our Counter-Extremism Strategy, I want us to deal with these issues properly, and we will also bring forward further measures to guard against the radicalisation of children in some so-called supplementary schools or tuition centres.

And there's something else we will do.

We need to put out of action the key extremist influencers who are careful to operate just inside the law, but who clearly detest British society and everything we stand for. These people aren't just extremists. There are despicable far right groups too. And what links them all is their aim to groom young people and brainwash their minds.

And again let's be clear who benefits most from us being tough on these non-violent extremists – it's Muslim families living in fear that their children could be radicalised and run off to Syria, and communities worried about some poisonous far right extremists who are planning to attack your mosque.

So as part of our Extremism Bill, we are going to introduce new narrowly targeted powers to enable us to deal with these facilitators and cult leaders, and stop them peddling their hatred. And we will also work to strengthen Ofcom's role to enable us to take action against foreign channels that broadcast hate preachers and extremist content.

But confronting non-violent extremism isn't just about changing laws, it's about all of us, changing our approach. Take, for example, some of our universities. Now, of course universities are bastions of free speech and incubators of new and challenging ideas. But sometimes they fail to see the creeping extremism on their campuses.

When David Irving goes to a university to deny the Holocaust – university leaders rightly come out and condemn him. They don't deny his right to speak but they do challenge what he says. But when an Islamist extremist goes there to promote their poisonous ideology, too often university leaders look the other way through a mixture of misguided liberalism and cultural sensitivity.

As I said, this is not about clamping down on free speech. It's just about applying our shared values uniformly.

And while I am it, I want to say something to the National Union of Students. When you choose to ally yourselves with an organisation like CAGE, which called Jihadi John a "beautiful young man" and told people to "support the jihad" in Iraq and Afghanistan, it really does, in my opinion, shame your organisation and your noble history of campaigning for justice.

We also need the support of families and communities too. The local environment, their families, their peers, their communities, are among the key influencers in any young person's life. So if they hear parts of the extremist worldview in their home, or their wider community, it will help legitimise it in their minds.

And government will help where it can. I know how worried some people are that their children might turn to this ideology – and even seek to travel to Syria or Iraq.

So I can announce today we are going to introduce a new scheme to enable parents to apply directly to get their child's passport cancelled to prevent travel.

Together, in partnership, let us protect our young people.

Islam

Now the third plank of our strategy is to embolden different voices within the Muslim community. Just as we do not engage with extremist groups and individuals, we're now going to actively encourage the reforming and moderate Muslim voices. This is a significant shift in government approach – and an important one.

In the past, governments have been too quick to dismiss the religious aspect of Islamist extremism. That is totally understandable. It cannot be said clearly enough: this extremist ideology is not true Islam. I have said it myself many, many times, and it's absolutely right to do so. And I'll say it again today.

But simply denying any connection between the religion of Islam and the extremists doesn't work, because these extremists are self-identifying as Muslims. The fact is from Woolwich to Tunisia, from Ottawa to Bali, these murderers all spout the same twisted narrative, one that claims to be based on a particular faith.

Now it is an exercise in futility to deny that. And more than that, it can be dangerous. To deny it has anything to do with Islam means you disempower the critical reforming voices; the voices that are challenging the fusing of religion and politics; the voices that want to challenge the scriptural basis which extremists claim to be acting on; the voices that are crucial in providing an alternative worldview that could stop a teenager's slide along the spectrum of extremism.

These reforming voices, they have a tough enough time as it is: the extremists are the ones who have the money, the leaders, the iconography and the propaganda machines. We need to turn the tables.

We can't stand neutral in this battle of ideas. We have to back those who share our values. So here's my offer.

If you're interested in reform; if you want to challenge the extremists in our midst; if you want to build an alternative narrative or if you just want to help protect your kids – we are with you and we will back

you – with practical help, with funding, with campaigns, with protection and with political representation.

This should form a key part of our Counter-Extremism Strategy.

And let's remember that it's only the extremists who divide people into good Muslims and bad Muslims, by forcing their warped doctrine onto fellow Muslims and telling them that it is the only way to believe. Our new approach is about isolating the extremists from everyone else, so that all our Muslim communities can be free from the poison of Islamist extremism.

Now for my part, I am going to set up a new community engagement forum so I can hear directly from those out there who are challenging extremism. And I also want to issue a challenge to the broadcasters in our country. You are, of course, free to put whoever you want on the airwaves.

But there are a huge number of Muslims in our country who have a proper claim to represent liberal values in local communities – people who run credible charities, community organisations, councillors and MPs – including Labour MPs here in Birmingham – so do consider giving them the platform they deserve.

I know other voices may make for more explosive television – but please exercise your judgement, and do recognise the huge power you have in shaping these debates in a positive way.

Isolation and identity

The fourth and final part of our strategy must be to build a more cohesive society, so more people feel a part of it and are therefore less vulnerable to extremism.

And I want to say this directly to all young people growing up in our country.

I understand that it can be hard being young, and that it can be even harder being young and Muslim, or young and Sikh, or young and black in our country. I know that at times you are grappling with huge issues over your identity, neither feeling a part of the British mainstream nor a part of the culture from your parents' background.

And I know that for as long as injustice remains – be it with racism, discrimination or sickening Islamophobia - you may feel there is no place for you in Britain. But I want you to know: there is a place for you and I will do everything I can to support you.

The speech I was proudest to give in the election campaign was where I outlined my 2020 vision for our black and minority ethnic communities.

20% more jobs; 20% more university places; a 20% increase in apprenticeship take-up and police and armed forces that are much more representative of the people they serve.

And it's not just about representation – it's about being in positions of influence, leadership and political power. That also means more magistrates, more school governors, more Members of Parliament, more councillors, and yes, Cabinet Ministers too.

When we discussed childcare at Cabinet last week (political content), the item was introduced by a Black British son of a single parent – Sam Gyimah, who was backed up by the daughter of Gujarati immigrants from East Africa – Priti Patel – and the first speaker was the son of Pakistani immigrants – Sajid Javid – whose father came to Britain to drive the buses.

So we've made good progress in recent years, including I am pleased to say – in my own political party. But we need to go further. Because it comes down to this.

We need young people to understand that here in the UK they can shape the future by being an active part of our great democracy.

Achieve this and more people from ethnic minority backgrounds will feel they have a real stake in our society. And at the same time we need to lift the horizons of some of our most isolated and deprived communities. At the moment we have parts of our country where opportunities remain limited; where language remains a real barrier; where too many women from minority communities remain trapped outside the workforce and where educational attainment is low.

So we need specific action here. So I can announce today I have charged Louise Casey to carry out a review of how to boost opportunity and integration in these communities and bring Britain together as one nation. She will look at issues like how we can ensure people learn English; how we boost employment outcomes, especially for women; how state agencies can work with these communities to properly promote integration and opportunity but also learning lessons from past mistakes - when funding was simply handed over to self-appointed 'community leaders' who sometimes used the money in a divisive way.

Louise will provide an interim report early next year. And we will use this report to inform our plans for funding a new wider Cohesive Communities Programme next year, focusing resources on improving integration and extending opportunity in those communities that most need it.

But as well as tackling isolation, there is one other area we must look at if we are to build a truly cohesive society – and that is segregation.

It cannot be right, for example, that people can grow up and go to school and hardly ever come into meaningful contact with people from other backgrounds and faiths. That doesn't foster a sense of shared belonging and understanding – it can drive people apart. Now let's be clear that these patterns of segregation in schools or housing are not the fault or responsibility of any particular community. This is a complex problem that dates back decades.

But we do need to recognise the scale of the challenge in some communities. Areas of cities and towns like Bradford or Oldham continue to be some of the most segregated parts of our country. And it's no coincidence that these can be some of the places where community relations have historically been most tense, where poisonous far right and Islamist extremists desperately try to stoke tension and foster division.

Now let me be clear. I'm not talking about uprooting people from their homes or schools and forcing integration. But I am talking about taking a fresh look at the sort of shared future we want for our young people. In terms of housing, for example, there are parts of our country where segregation has actually increased or stayed deeply entrenched for decades.

So the government needs to start asking searching questions about social housing, to promote integration, to avoid segregated social housing estates where people living there are from the same single minority ethnic background.

Similarly in education, while overall segregation in schooling is declining, in our most divided communities, the education that our young people receive is actually even more segregated than the neighbourhoods they live in.

Now, bussing children to different areas is not the right approach for this country. Nor should we try to dismantle faith schools.

Many faith schools achieve excellent results and I'm the first to support the great education they provide. I chose one for my own children. Today I visited King David's school, a Jewish school here in Birmingham where the majority of children are from faith backgrounds.

But it is right to look again more broadly at how we can move away from segregated schooling in our most divided communities. We have already said that all new faith academies and free schools must allocate half their places without reference to faith.

But now we'll go further to incentivise schools in our most divided areas to provide a shared future for our children, whether by sharing the same site and facilities; by more integrated teaching across sites; or by supporting the creation of new integrated free schools in the most segregated areas.

At the same time, we will continue to back National Citizen Service, which is bringing together 16 and 17 year olds from every background and every part of our country.

Because when you see how NCS changes the perceptions that young people have of other communities – I've seen it myself many, many times – it should give us all the hope and the confidence that our young people can be the key to bringing our country together.

Conclusion

So this is how I believe we can win the struggle of our generation. Countering the extremist ideology by standing up and promoting our shared British values. Taking on extremism in all its forms – both violent and non-violent.

Empowering those moderate and reforming voices who speak for the vast majority of Muslims that want to reclaim their religion. And addressing the identity crisis that some young people feel by bringing our communities together and extending opportunity to all.

And I hope I have given a sense of how we have all got to contribute to this process. This isn't an issue for just any one community or any one part of our society – it's for all of us. Of course, Muslim communities have crucial parts to play. You are part of the solution. But we in government have got to deal with failure, like dealing with extremism in schools.

We need the police to step up and not stand by as crimes take place. We need universities to stand up against extremism; broadcasters to give platforms to different voices; and internet service providers to do their bit too. Together, we can do this.

Britain has never been cowed by fear or hatred or terror.

Our Great British resolve faced down Hitler; it defeated Communism; it saw off the IRA's assaults on our way of life. Time and again we have stood up to aggression and tyranny.

We have refused to compromise on our values or to give up our way of life. And we shall do so again.

Together we will defeat the extremists and build a stronger and more cohesive country, for our children, our grandchildren and for every generation to come