

‘Something History Will Not Forgive’

Excerpts from Tony Blair’s Speech to Congress, July 18, 2003

On *Weapons of Mass Destruction*: The risk is that terrorism and states developing weapons of mass destruction come together. And when people say, “That risk is fanciful,” I say we know the Taliban supported al-Qaeda. We know Iraq under Saddam gave haven to and supported terrorists. We know there are states in the Middle East now actively funding and helping people, who regard it as God’s will in the act of suicide to take as many innocent lives with them on their way to God’s judgment.

Some of these states are desperately trying to acquire nuclear weapons. We know that companies and individuals with expertise sell it to the highest bidder, and we know that at least one state, North Korea, lets its people starve while spending billions of dollars on developing nuclear weapons and exporting the technology abroad.

This isn’t fantasy, it is 21st-century reality, and it confronts us now. Can we be sure that terrorism and weapons of mass destruction will join together? Let us say one thing: If we are wrong, we will have

destroyed a threat that at its least is responsible for inhuman carnage and suffering. That is something I am confident history will forgive.

But if our critics are wrong, if we are right, as I believe with every fiber of instinct and conviction I have that we are, and we do not act, then we will have hesitated in the face of this menace when we should have given leadership. That is something history will not forgive.

But precisely because the threat is new, it isn't obvious. It turns upside-down our concepts of how we should act and when, and it crosses the frontiers of many nations. So just as it redefines our notions of security, so it must refine our notions of diplomacy.

On the Environment: Ever since the world started to open up, it has prospered.

And that prosperity has to be environmentally sustainable, too. You know, I remember at one of our earliest international meetings, a European prime minister telling President Bush that the solution was quite simple: just double the tax on American gasoline. Your president gave him a most eloquent look...

But frankly, we need to go beyond even Kyoto, and science and technology is the way. Climate change, deforestation, the voracious drain on natural resources cannot be ignored. Unchecked, these forces will hinder the economic development of the most vulnerable nations first and ultimately all nations. So we must show the world that we are willing to step up to these challenges around the world and in our own backyards.