

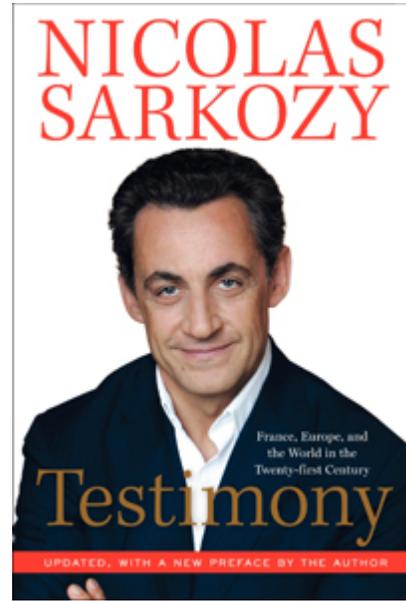
Testimony: France, Europe, and the World in the Twenty-First Century

By Nicolas Sarkozy

Translated by Philip H. Gordon

Preface to the International Edition

I am delighted that this book is being made available to readers in the United States. To be honest, I hadn't really planned to do an international edition until people started approaching me about it. I would never have thought that a French presidential election would generate so much interest abroad. But with so many people around the world trying to get hold of my speeches and my writings, I started to realize that the interest was there, and that it deserved a response.



What explains such interest? I think observers outside of France saw that the 2007 presidential election would be different from those in recent years, and that France was at a turning point. After the extreme right made it into the second round of the presidential election in 2002, and after the failed referendum on the proposed European constitution in 2005, the French people's disdain for politics as usual seemed to have reached a peak. The public's expectations were unusually high, but so was their skepticism about their leaders.

International interest in the French presidential election may also be an indication of one of the more positive aspects of globalization: the realization that our destinies are now so intertwined that we can no longer ignore what's happening in other countries.

Whatever the reasons, once I became aware of the interest abroad, I concluded that it would indeed be a good thing to update my book and make it available abroad. This newly revised edition includes chapters from the three books I have written since 2002 as well as previously unpublished material written since my election as president of France in May 2007. By reading it, I hope non-French speakers can get to know me – and my plans for France – better.

My election was seen by many abroad as a message to the rest of the world. I think we've first got to remember that the French people who voted for me didn't do so to send a message. They did it for themselves, because they believed that my program was best suited to deal with the challenges France faces today.

At the same time, given how ambitious my program was, given that it proposed a break with the past, my election did prove that France is not the inward-looking, overcautious country that some people say it is. In this sense the election did send a powerful message that France is not the country some thought it was.

I always knew that the French were not afraid of change. Instead they were yearning for it. They wanted to break with the status quo and rally to a common project. Most of all I think the French supported me because they understood that I was telling them the truth. I told them that France's problem was that we didn't work enough, because in France work had been undervalued for too long. I told them that it was only by working harder that we could increase their buying power. I told them I believed that rewarding merit was a better approach than relying on state handouts or promoting egalitarianism. I was clear about all my plans before the elections so that I could implement all of them afterwards without surprising anyone. I took the risk of telling the truth, and the French showed confidence in me.

Some now wonder whether the French are really going to support change now that they've voted for it, but I'm convinced that when French voters put their faith in me, they knew what they were doing. They backed a plan for a clean break with the ideas, values, and conduct of the past. They were asking me to do what I said I would do – to change what I said I would change. They understand that in a world of both great opportunity and great risk, nothing would be more dangerous than to stand still.

A few months prior to my election, *The Economist* magazine compared me to Margaret Thatcher. Personally, I don't think you can compare Britain in the 1980s and France today – these are two very different situations, two countries with different mentalities and political cultures. And I think it's also safe to say that Mrs. Thatcher and I do not exactly share the same personality and style.

That said, it is true that there is a certain similarity between the crisis of confidence in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and that of France today. In France, this crisis of confidence results from the fact that our politics have been lacking boldness for too long. We, political leaders, on the right and on the left, bear responsibility for this crisis, because for too long we were incapable of imagining a break with the stale approaches of the past.

The other thing Britain then and France now have in common is the remedy. I know of only one way to restore the confidence of an anxious country, and that is through political will. Mrs. Thatcher's success resulted more than anything else from absolute determination, an unbreakable will to get things moving. Thatcher's story is one of exceptional leadership that thoroughly transformed the United Kingdom and laid the groundwork for its prosperity for decades to come.

The *Economist* article ended by saying that the real question was not whether France is reformable – it is – but whether there was anyone capable of reforming it. Well, I intend to be that person.

Reforming France is a massive undertaking, and some in the French press have already started calling me the *hyperprésident* because I've been extremely active and visible from my first days in office. Frankly, I really don't mind being criticized for doing too much in a country where for so long leaders have been criticized for not doing enough. People

say “You’re going too fast!” In my view, however, that’s a lot better than not going fast enough!

The president of the Republic is elected to govern, not to ruminate. Because the president is elected directly by the people, he has the legitimacy to act. Once he starts governing, however, he’s got to account to voters for his actions, because there is no such thing as power without responsibility. We need to think differently about how the president does his job. I don’t think major constitutional changes are needed, though I do believe that the constitution should limit the number of consecutive presidential terms to two, because energy spent on holding power is energy not spent getting things done. And I think that the president’s power to nominate senior officials should be more closely overseen by parliament, to ensure that competence plays a bigger role than connections.

Anyone who thinks that the prime minister and his government no longer have enough to do completely misunderstands the enormous job of running the government. Believe me, there’s enough work to go around. More than anything we must get beyond the absurdity of competition between the president and the prime minister. Prime Minister François Fillon, all members of the government and I are all part of the same team. Our sole objective is to implement the program on which I was elected.

To put my program into action, I decided to open up the government to talented people from outside my political family. This sort of openness stems from my conviction that the president must be the president of all the French, not the leader of a single party or clan. With a majority in parliament, I wasn’t obliged to reach out to the opposition – it was a choice. The role of the president of the Republic is to bring people together, to speak for everyone, and to encourage diversity in France. I work for all the French, including those who didn’t vote for me. I have no right to abandon part of France because it chose not to support my candidacy.

I was elected on a clear program and I intend to implement this program. Those on the left or in the center who joined my government did so in full knowledge of this, and they agreed to help me implement this presidential program. I don’t see why I should not make use of their talent and their energy just because they’re not part of my political family. Let me add that this inclusiveness is all the more indispensable because my plans for France are so ambitious; you need a big majority to accomplish major reforms.

Where parliament is concerned, I want to reinforce its powers, notably in the area of oversight function. There is no such thing as true responsibility without real checks and balances.

One of my top priorities is to get the French economy moving again, and to do that we need to restore work and merit as the basic values of our society. The French growth rate is one percentage point lower than it should be because we have devalued work and done everything possible to discourage the French from working. I also want to reconcile the French with success and with the taste for risk, because a society that doesn’t value success or encourage risk-taking is destined to decline.

My method is simple. A government must proceed along multiple tracks at the same time. It's a mistake to try to undertake reforms one after the other. Instead, by taking action in different areas at the same time you can create the necessary boost of confidence and the psychological and economic conditions for faster growth. In the weeks that followed my election, I pushed through a number of key reforms: waiving taxes on overtime hours (to encourage work and allow employees to earn more by working more); eliminating estate taxes for 95% of households (so that people can pass on the fruits of their working lives to their children); and lowering the "tax shield" to 50%, meaning that no longer will anyone have to pay more than 50% of their income in taxes.

The recipe for long-term growth is well known: competitiveness, productivity, training and investment. We must quickly lift the obstacles to growth in each of these areas. Labor market reform is critical. I want to bring labor and business together to think about changes in our labor laws that would give companies more flexibility while also reinforcing workers' security with a safety net. I have also proposed that we think about how to adapt jobs contracts to the realities of the labor market. I want to give the unemployed more support during their return to work, but more must then be demanded of them. For example, I am proposing that an unemployed worker no longer be able to turn down more than two consecutive job offers that correspond to his or her qualifications and are in the region where he or she lives.

The return to growth also means encouraging investment, especially in the area of new technologies, and it means we have to promote small and medium-sized businesses. For example, I've proposed the adoption of a French version of the Small Business Act, which would require that a certain amount of public procurement come from small and medium-sized companies.

Finally, we've got to reform our universities to keep our educational system competitive globally. Specifically, we must give them more resources and more autonomy.

Economic growth is at the heart of my project for France, because only economic growth will enable us to reach the goal I have set of returning to full employment in five years. By proceeding along all these tracks at once, we'll create a critical mass of dynamism, energy, innovation and optimism that will get France moving again.

I also have great ambitions for my country as an international actor. I know some people question France's global role. They think it's a vestige of history and that France today is too small to have the influence around the world it did in decades and centuries past.

But it's a mistake to think that France's size or population determine its importance. Throughout its history, France has played a greater role in the world than that which its demography or geography would seem to dictate. Still today, France's voice counts; it is listened to and respected. France is more than its 550,000 km² and its 63 million

inhabitants. It is this one-of-a-kind country that invented the concept of human rights and has fought so hard for freedom.

I am convinced that France still has a prominent role to play in the world. And this, moreover, is what I think we demonstrated during my first few months in office. Already since my election, France has taken a number of major initiatives: the revival of the European Union with the agreement on a simplified treaty; the Darfur conference in Paris, which led to the creation of the United Nations/African Union hybrid force and the resumption of peace talks; the liberation of the Bulgarian nurses being held in Libya; and the resumption of political dialogue in Lebanon. We've made progress in all these areas. France did not act alone – and did not start from scratch – in any of these cases. We built on the previous efforts of others. But in each case France took the initiative and played a critical role.

I want to make clear that we're not looking for a role just for the sake of it, nor do we expect to be involved in every possible issue. We don't take action to prove that we exist but to be useful. We act when we can get things moving and help solve problems.

I do not intend to change everything about our foreign policy, in particular because foreign policy under my predecessor, Jacques Chirac, was in many ways exemplary. This is true for his resolute action in former Yugoslavia, which contributed to peace in that region; for his refusal to involve France in the Iraq war; for the leading role that he played in the fight against global warming; and in his tireless pursuit of a dialogue between civilizations and his respect for cultural identities.

That said, I think it's been too long since we reexamined the core pillars of our foreign policy, the objectives and values that guide and inspire it. The start of a new presidential term should allow us to move forward with such a process, which might lead to change.

Because France's voice is listened to and respected, we have a particular responsibility. I want us to be more direct in our diplomatic relationships. We've got to be frank with all our partners, including our historic allies like the United States and the United Kingdom. An open friendship of choice is the only kind of friendship I can imagine.

I also want us to put values back at the heart of our foreign policy. France is only France when it defends universal values, human rights and individual freedom all around the world. Because our foreign policy reflects our identity as a nation and carries our message around the world, it must be faithful to these values.

Having and incarnating values does not mean showing disdain for other cultures or denying their individual characteristics. Nor does it mean imposing our social model on others. But it does mean rejecting the relativism of those who believe that women and men can be denied their basic rights just because they belong to other cultures. It's a mistake to think that we have to choose between our interests and our values. Defending and promoting our values doesn't mean being a naïve do-gooder. On the contrary,

defending and promoting our values contributes directly to our own security and prosperity.

To facilitate the process of rethinking French foreign policy, I have suggested that we consider putting a national security council in place. I think this makes sense because I want to get experts from different areas involved in our thinking about diplomatic and security issues. This new body, which would include people of diverse backgrounds, would analyze and debate our foreign and defense policy. At the moment, we're still thinking about the precise form that this national security council might take, but I don't think it will look much like the U.S. NSC. Whereas the American NSC is a single structure that advises the U.S. president directly, our national security council will play a consultative role alongside the team of brilliant diplomats who are already working by my side, under the leadership of Jean-David Levitte.

This is not the place for a comprehensive presentation of my views about foreign policy, which are discussed in chapter 11. But let me here at least mention some of my foreign policy priorities, and talk about how France has been pursuing them since my election.

Europe. The very day of my election, I promised the “return” of France to Europe. What I meant by that was that France, which has always been a motor for Europe, must remain faithful to its vocation as a leader in the process of building the European Union. This was particularly important at a time when many in France and in Europe seemed to think the French rejection of the EU constitutional treaty meant that we should stay out of the debate. On the contrary, I always felt that the French “no” in the May 2005 referendum gave us a particular responsibility to revive the EU. In fact, in my view it wasn't the French “no” that provoked the crisis in Europe, but the crisis in Europe – and of the European ideal – that created the conditions for the French “no.”

So when I talked about France's return to Europe, I wanted to say that France would bear its share of the responsibility for putting the European project back on track. I've always believed that overcoming the European crisis requires action. Yet for two years, Europe was stalled, and no one dared do anything about it.

The first priority was institutional: we had to make the EU capable of acting with 27 members. That's why early on, in February 2006, I put forward the idea of a simplified treaty that would include the main institutional elements of the constitutional treaty. This idea gained increasing support and was ultimately adopted by all EU members at the meeting of the European Council in Brussels in June 2007.

This is a good example of the return of France to Europe: not only was it a French idea that was behind Europe's revival, but it was France that played a key role in convincing our partners, including the most reticent among them, to back the idea of a simplified treaty.

I don't intend to stop there. I want us to talk about how to improve the economic governance of the EU as well as how to resolve the question of its borders. I want all

members of the EU to work together to tackle all the issues, including the most difficult ones, because that's what our citizens expect and that's how we'll reconcile them with the European project.

The United States. As you'll see in this book, I have always asserted my friendship with the United States, and I've even done so at times of the greatest misunderstanding between our two countries. I see no reason to apologize for this. My affinity for the United States does not mean that I have always agreed with everything Washington does. On the question of the Iraq war, I always thought that the United States was making a mistake, and it's to France's credit that it sought to caution its American friends.

To me, however, the transatlantic link is strong enough to survive our differences, even those as serious as during the dispute over Iraq. The roots of the friendship between our two countries go back to our shared history and common values. Our bond was forged in our common struggle against totalitarianism. France and the United States share universal values and a historic mission in the service of freedom.

It is the strength of this link that I sought to emphasize at a time when too many others, both in France and the United States, wanted to forget it. I got a lot of criticism for that, but I don't regret it because I believe in the friendship between our two countries. Our relationship must be that of free partners, faithful and demanding friends. Our dialogue must be constant, frank, and based on mutual respect. I am always going to feel free to tell our American friends when I think they're wrong. We'll doubtless have other disagreements, but I am convinced that we can express these disagreements as part of a constructive dialogue without creating a crisis, without resentment, and especially without theatrics.

People keep asking me what transatlantic relations might be like after January 2009, but I am not waiting for the next administration to work closely with the United States and to deepen further the cooperation between our countries on all the big issues. Opportunities to work together exist right now, and it's right now that we must seize them.

Combating Terrorism. One of the key areas of tension across the Atlantic in recent years has been the debate about what the Americans call the "war on terror." Personally, I don't think we can talk about "war" in the traditional meaning of the word, but on such a serious matter these semantic debates are not the most important. Islamist terrorism has diverse and complicated roots, which are manipulated for political purposes. It can be supported by certain regimes and it can find refuge in failed states. It could become even more serious if terrorists were to gain access to nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. No country is able to deal with this threat alone. Only intensive international cooperation will enable us to fight it effectively, which means we have to work closely with the countries the terrorists come from. We've been doing this for several years now, and we must continue to do so.

Like all free and democratic societies, France is a natural target for terrorists. What happened in New York, Madrid or London could very well happen tomorrow in Paris.

To think that we're less threatened than others would be more than a mistake, it would be folly. Having been minister of the interior for more than three years, I'm well placed to know that France is no less threatened than its neighbors. The terrorist threat in France is, today just as yesterday, high and permanent. We must not let our guard down.

Climate Change. There is now a growing international consensus on the seriousness of the issue of climate change. This is great progress compared to recent years, when many still denied the reality of global warming and human responsibility for it.

I'm delighted that attitudes have now changed. At the last G8 summit in Heiligendamm, I told President Bush how important it was for the United States to be involved in defining the international community's response. And he has demonstrated a new consciousness about the issue, which I applaud. President Bush recognizes the role of humans in climate change and has agreed to consider seriously a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. He has also committed to working toward the successful conclusion by 2009 of negotiations on the UN efforts to define a "post-Kyoto" regime. The United States has particular responsibilities on this issue and I will continue to encourage it to uphold them.

Naturally, all the efforts of the industrialized countries will be in vain if they are not closely coordinated with large emerging countries like China, India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. France will play its full role in this necessary dialogue, working closely with its European partners. I applaud President Bush's initiative to bring together for the first time the world's leading emitters of carbon dioxide.

But France's responsibility also includes making sure that developing countries get the attention they deserve. I feel strongly that the post-Kyoto regime should be developed in the framework of the United Nations, because I want everyone to be able to express their concerns.

Dialogue between industrialized countries and emerging countries is absolutely essential, but it cannot and must not be expected to provide solutions that will apply to all the world's countries. Developing countries must be supported for at least two reasons. One is solidarity, because many of these countries will need help adapting to the consequences of climate change. The other is collective interest, because putting in place the conditions for clean growth and encouraging better forest management in the countries concerned will contribute to the health of the entire planet.

Darfur. When it comes to genocide or crimes against humanity, silence and inaction equal complicity. This was clear in the cases of Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We cannot allow such tragedies to happen again.

I have made dealing with the Darfur tragedy a priority because I know that history would never forgive us if we allowed this crime against humanity to take place without reacting.

Since my election, France has taken a number of initiatives to respond to this security and humanitarian crisis and to help promote a political solution to the conflict. We have put in place an air-bridge to help provide assistance to the refugees and displaced persons now in eastern Chad. We also organized in Paris, in late June 2007, a meeting of the enlarged Darfur Contact Group. Following this meeting, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1769, which authorized the deployment of a UN-African Union hybrid force of 26,000 troops and police to Darfur. Meanwhile, negotiations between the Khartoum government and the rebels resumed in August, in Arusha, Tanzania. These are major advances which, I hope, will help accelerate the end of the Darfur tragedy.

Middle East. France and Europe must uphold all their responsibilities in the search for solutions to the crises in the Middle East. The initiatives we take must be first and foremost useful, and they must fit in with the efforts already underway on behalf of the international community. This is what we did on Lebanon, when in July we organized a meeting near Paris of all the players on the Lebanese political scene to help them resume their dialogue.

On the issue of Israel-Palestine, I believe the resolution of the conflict will come in the form of a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution based on the establishment of two viable, democratic, and independent states living side by side in security and within secure and recognized borders.

We must stand by the Palestinians to help them build the state to which they so strongly aspire and to which they are entitled. But in no case can we compromise our values or give any ground in the face of terror and hatred. Israel's existence and security are not negotiable and nothing justifies terrorism. I have always believed that the international community is perfectly justified in demanding of any Hamas government that it respect the three conditions laid down by the United States, EU, UN and Russia as the Middle East "Quartet": recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence, and respect for past commitments. At the same time, I have on a number of occasions told our Israeli friends that pursuing a policy of *faits accomplis* seriously undermined prospects for peace.

Today, while the Palestinians are tearing themselves apart and Hamas has taken control of Gaza, the international community must fully back President Mahmoud Abbas in his fight against extremism and for the reconciliation of the Palestinian people. This is why in June 2007, together with our European partners, we again started providing assistance to the government put in place by President Abbas. The United States has done the same thing, while Israel has resumed tax and customs revenue transfers to the Palestinians.

I am very pleased about the plans for an international conference on the Middle East and I can tell you that France will play its full role alongside the international community to help the peoples of this region, plagued by so many years of war and violence, finally to find the path to peace and reconciliation.

Iran. Iran's access to nuclear weapons is unacceptable. Together with our allies, we must continue to act so that the international community remains united and firm, as it was when it adopted two UN Security Council resolutions unanimously. This pressure on Tehran must be increased if the Iranian regime does not change its behavior. It's now up to Iran to choose between sanctions and cooperation. In return, the international community must guarantee the Iranian authorities that it will keep its commitments: access to nuclear energy for civil purposes and the investment Iran needs for its economic development if Tehran respects its international obligations.

But I think we must distinguish between the Iranian people, a great people born of a great civilization, and their leaders. There's a real debate in Iran today, because an increasing number of Iranians understand that their regime's current policy is isolating them on the international scene, and that this isolation carries a big price. Iranians do not identify with the hateful language of their president. The Iranian people, who have already suffered a great deal, aspire to more than the isolation to which the irresponsible behavior of their leaders condemns them.

Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, French troops are participating in the international community's efforts to fight against the terrorist threat and help this long-suffering country get back on its feet. This is a long-term process. France will fulfill its commitments and will show solidarity with its allies and with the people of Afghanistan. Within weeks of my election, I decided to increase our efforts to train the Afghan National Army and to help rebuild the country.

Iraq. As France has no troops on the ground, we're not well placed to define the timetable for the withdrawal of troops. It seems to me there are two main dangers to avoid: one is a precipitous withdrawal, which would lead to chaos, and the other is the absence of any prospects for withdrawal, which would risk provoking greater violence and play into the terrorists' hands. The wisest approach in my view would be to set a general withdrawal "horizon," whose details would be worked out by the Iraqi leaders and troop-contributing countries depending on the situation on the ground. In this way the Iraqis would be assured that the goal really is to give them back their complete sovereignty.

Beyond that, the only solution in Iraq is a political one. We need a new "deal" among Iraqis that would ensure equal access to the country's institutions and resources to every Iraqi and to all segments of the Iraqi population. That's how we can isolate the terrorists.

The Iraq tragedy reminds us that democratic transitions are long and difficult. But these difficulties must never be used to justify resignation to the status quo. On the contrary, they require us to redouble our efforts to engage for the long term. That is the responsibility of the international community.

Russia. President Putin has a strong personality. He's a determined, and, frankly, sometimes difficult partner. But in the end all he's doing is defending his country's interests, which is the job of every leader on the planet. It's not for others to tell the

Russians what their interests are, even if we may disagree with their methods and say so. I have no problem working with President Putin for this simple reason: he and I both have a preference for straight talk and sincerity. He knows this well: for things to move forward, and to have a constructive relationship, you've got to speak frankly to one another, even if you don't agree.

Common sense suggests that this is the way to proceed: Russia is and will remain one of the major players on the international scene, an unavoidable partner for handling great global challenges like terrorism and climate change and for handling regional crises. We have disagreements with Moscow on some of these: I'm thinking in particular about Kosovo, where the only solution is supervised independence, now inevitable, and not the illusory maintenance of a fictitious Serb sovereignty that has been rejected by the people of Kosovo ever since that territory was placed under international administration. But on other critical subjects, like Iran and North Korea, initial suspicions and misunderstandings have gradually given way to a convergent analysis of the threat, which ultimately enabled us to act with Russia in a coordinated manner, especially in New York where the Security Council was able to agree on several rounds of sanctions.

Without ever renouncing our principles and our values, we must avoid the temptation to try to impose our vision of the world on Russia. Instead we must always make the effort to understand its point of view, even if we don't share it. In this way we'll have the best chance to overcome the disagreements we have, or when that's not possible, to manage them as well as possible given our respective interests and the interest of international stability.

European Defense. I have always thought it rather silly to pit European defense and NATO against each other. This makes no sense. We need both, because they are complementary and reinforce each other. Look at the figures: 21 of the 26 members of NATO are also members of the European Union, while 21 of the 27 members of the EU are members of NATO. Who could possibly believe that one could be built in opposition to the other?

European defense is one of the great successes of the process of building Europe. It allows Europe to uphold its share of responsibility for international security. The success of EU operations in Bosnia, Macedonia and in the Republic of Congo demonstrates that Europeans can play a decisive role on their own continent as well in more distant countries. Together with our European partners, we must continue to reinforce European defense. And I would like to see more EU member states participate, because European defense policy must be a matter for all of us.

But I want to stress this: in no way do I see reinforcing European defense as an alternative to the Atlantic Alliance, to which I hasten to add France is one of the main contributors. Our security also depends on a strong and united Alliance founded on shared values and common interests. French troops have been successfully deployed as part of NATO in a number of cases: in the Balkans after 1995; in Kosovo starting in 1999, first to stop Milosevic's ethnic cleansing and then to help stabilize the situation;

and in Afghanistan against the Taliban since 2002. In the coming months, it will again be Kosovo that illustrates the complementarity between the EU and NATO because both institutions will conduct operations there.

NATO today is a preferred framework for transatlantic strategic partnership, security cooperation with our ally Turkey, and security dialogue with Russia. This is why in the coming months I want to move forward on several fronts at once: reinforcing European defense, renewing NATO, and renewing NATO's relationship with France.

These, then, are some of my priorities as president of France. I hope these few pages give you a better sense of what I am trying to accomplish and how I plan to do so. In the chapters that follow, I hope you'll also get a better sense of who I am – where I come from, how I see the world, and what I have learned in more than three decades of political life.

I love my country. I want it to have a future as great as its past. I believe it is capable of meeting all the challenges of the modern world. I believe it is strong enough not to be afraid to take inspiration from what has worked elsewhere. May this book help provoke the sort of healthy debate about all these issues that all our societies deserve.