



Televised address by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic

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Paris, 11 March 2007

My dear compatriots in metropolitan and overseas France and abroad,

It is with, in my heart, a love of and pride in France that I come before you this evening.

France is a spirited, independent nation. France is a nation committed to justice and to peace. Her voice transcends individual interests.

My dear compatriots, I passionately love France. I have put my whole heart, all my energy and strength into serving her, into serving you. Serving France and serving peace is my lifetime commitment.

I would, of course, have liked to have done more to overcome resistance to change and self-centred aspirations in order to address more quickly the difficulties some of you are experiencing. But I'm proud of the work we have accomplished together. Proud to have restored with you essential Republican values, such as the secular principle. Proud to have carried out some important reforms to safeguard our pensions and provide better help to the dependent elderly and the disabled. Proud to have relentlessly fought insecurity and reduced crime. Proud to see French women and men embarked on the paths of innovation and of the future. Proud, above all, to have shown that there was no inevitability about unemployment. Even though we have to go far further, unemployment is the lowest it's been for a quarter of a century. France is holding her own. She is affirming her place in the world.

All this is thanks to you, thanks to your talent, thanks to your creativity. Thanks too, and I don't underestimate this, to the considerable efforts you have agreed to.

My dear compatriots,

At the end of the mandate you entrusted to me, the moment will have come for me to serve you in a different way. I shall not seek your votes for a new term. In



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a different way, but serving you with undiminished enthusiasm and the same passion, I shall go on fighting our battles, the battles I have been fighting all my life, for justice, for progress, for peace, for the greatness of France.

In the elections, I shall have the opportunity to express my personal choices. But this evening, because of the trust you have placed in me, I should like to leave you with several messages.

First of all, never compromise with extremism, racism, anti-Semitism or the rejection of the Other. In our history, extremism has already almost led us to the abyss. It's a poison. It divides. It perverts, it destroys. Everything in France's soul says "no" to extremism.

France's real battle, France's noble battle, is for unity, for cohesion. Yes, our values mean something! Yes, France is rich because of her diversity! Yes, the honourable role of politics is first of all to work for equality of opportunity! It is to enable everyone, every young person to have his or her opportunity. This battle, despite all the obstacles and even though I don't underestimate the length of the path which still has to be travelled, has now got off to a good start. It must unite us for the long term. It is one of the keys to our future.

My second message is that you must always believe in yourself and in France. We have so many strengths. We must not fear global change. We must tackle this new world head on. We must go on putting our stamp on it. And do so without ever surrendering our French model. This model is right for us. And, above all, it is extremely well tailored to today's world, provided of course we find the way to keep on modernizing it.

We must resolutely pursue the path of reform, always opting for work, innovation and entrepreneurship.

My third message concerns Europe.

In the referendum, you expressed your doubts, your concerns and your expectations. It's vital to go on building Europe. The nationalism which has caused our continent so much harm can re-emerge at any time. And alone we shall not be able to withstand the global economic upheavals. France must assert the imperative of Europe as a world power. Of a political Europe. Of a Europe guaranteeing our social model. Our future is at stake. Let's always promote this ideal and this determination.

My fourth message is that France isn't a country like others. She has special responsibilities, inherited from her history and the universal values she has helped forge. Consequently, faced with the risk of a clash of civilizations, faced with the rise of religious and other forms of extremism, France must champion tolerance, dialogue and respect between people and between cultures. At stake are peace and the world's security.



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Similarly, it would be immoral and dangerous to let unbridled free trade widen the gap between an increasingly rich part of the world and billions of men, women and children abandoned to poverty and despair. France's duty is to exert all her influence to get the global economy to take on board the necessity of development for all.

Finally, there's the ecological revolution which is beginning. If we don't succeed in reconciling mankind's need for growth with the suffering of a planet running out of resources, we are courting disaster. We need a revolution in our minds as much as we need one at world level. To design a new type of relationship with nature and invent another form of growth. With her research, her businesses, her agriculture, the lead she has taken in nuclear power and the resolute choices she has made in renewable energies, France has all the assets to take up this major challenge of the twenty-first century.

My dear compatriots,

As you can imagine, talking to you this evening I feel very emotional. Not for an instant have you stopped living in my heart and mind. Not for one minute have I stopped serving this magnificent France. The France I love as much as I love you. The France who is rich because of her young people, strong because of her history and her diversity, thirsting for justice and eager to play her role. The France who, believe me, has not finished astonishing the world.

Long live the Republic! Long live France!

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