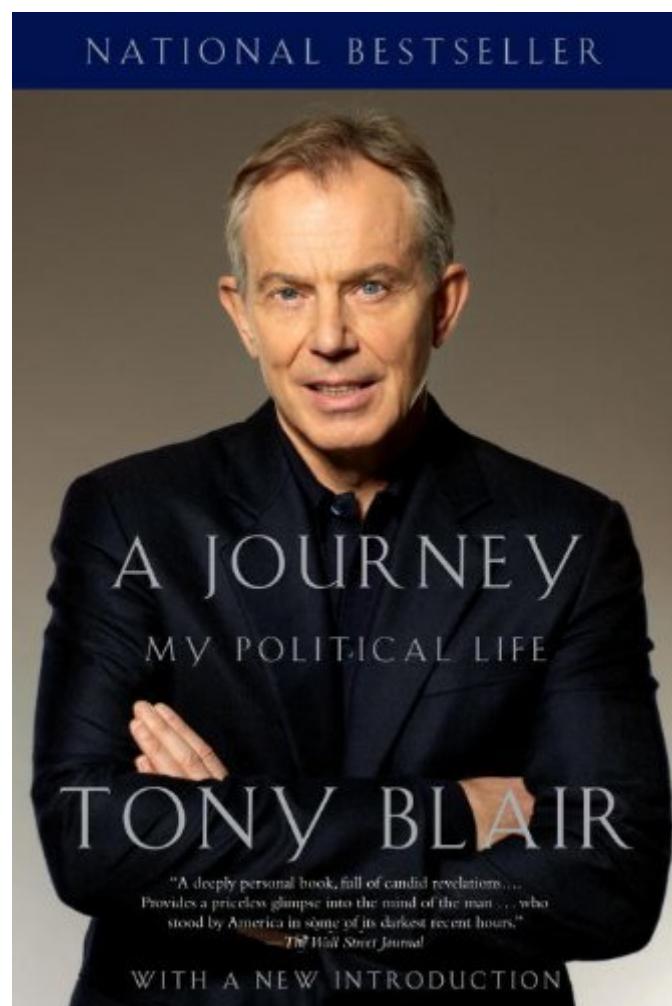


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# A Journey: My Political Life



## **Synopsis**

Tony Blair is a politician who defines our times. His emergence as Labour Party leader in 1994 marked a seismic shift in British politics. Within a few short years, he had transformed his party and rallied the country behind him, becoming prime minister in 1997 with the biggest victory in Labour's history, and bringing to an end eighteen years of Conservative government. He took Labour to a historic three terms in office as Britain's dominant political figure of the last two decades. *A Journey* is Tony Blair's firsthand account of his years in office and beyond. Here he describes for the first time his role in shaping our recent history, from the aftermath of Princess Diana's death to the war on terror. He reveals the leadership decisions that were necessary to reinvent his party, the relationships with colleagues including Gordon Brown, the grueling negotiations for peace in Northern Ireland, the implementation of the biggest reforms to public services in Britain since 1945, and his relationships with leaders on the world stage—Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin, George W. Bush. He analyzes the belief in ethical intervention that led to his decisions to go to war in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and, most controversially of all, in Iraq. *A Journey* is a book about the nature and uses of political power. In frank, unflinching, often wry detail, Tony Blair charts the ups and downs of his career to provide insight into the man as well as the politician and statesman. He explores the challenges of leadership, and the ramifications of standing up, clearly and forcefully, for what one believes in. He also looks ahead, to emerging power relationships and economies, addressing the vital issues and complexities of our global world. Few British prime ministers have shaped the nation's course as profoundly as Tony Blair, and his achievements and his legacy will be debated for years to come. Here, uniquely, we have his own journey, in his own words. From the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

As Tony Blair said it at the beginning of the book, this is not a memoir; it is a reflection of history that unravelled around him mainly during the time of his prime ministership. Readers may have extremely different political views and a review risks appearing taking one side or another. My review is not about Tony Blair the politician, but Tony Blair the writer. I am only judging the book from the point of view of the quality of writing describing personal development, political views, exposure to events and people packed in one single volume. My conclusion is if you can put the politics aside, it is a great read. Undeniably, Tony is a master of political thinking. He is the longest serving Labour Prime Minister after all. You will find in this book a superb analysis of leadership when he writes about the period before the election in 1992. He is a genius when it comes to understanding the change in the public mood and society, although not without fault, as history has shown. An interesting read is the analysis of Labour philosophy, its political agenda, the structure of the voters who favoured Labour, and who didn't, the meaning of "working class" in the 80's (the philosophical essence of the change to New Labour could be summarised in his words: "I hate class. I love aspiration"), the thinking system of some of the Labour main public figures. The book is personal story narrated in a style that changes throughout the book. It can be crisp and clear, but it can be convoluted, dragging the argument on and on. It gives away a schism between two sides which contradict themselves: the intense, ambitious political man who has the point blank desire to get the power ("it is an extraordinary feeling...

First my objective analysis: Blair was Labor leader in 1994, and rode that position to become Prime minister in 1997 with the biggest victory in Labor's history. The book contains 22 chapters covering the period 1997 to 2007. There is a chapter dealing with 2007 - 2010 which are issues that are current and subsequent to his service as Prime Minister. As you know all biography is subjective

and selective, and this book is no less so than others. The book's most interesting chapters are:3) New Labor5) Princess Diane6) Peace in Northern Ireland8) Kosovo12) 9/11 "Shoulder to Shoulder" "My Subjective Analysis": Tony Blair can write, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. You know an author is at the very top of his form when he can put together sentences in such a way that you say to yourself, if I had a month to think about it, I don't think I could have put it any better. An example is in the introduction, where Blair states the American burden is that it wants to be loved, but knows it can't be. Love is given to nations with which we sympathize...powerful nations aren't loved...they have to be feared by their enemies. Blair also seems to be excellent at understanding the world leaders that he developed extensive personal and long relationships with. This includes Vladimir Putin, Clinton, Bush, and now Obama. Listen in just a few words at what awaits you: Bill Clinton - The Prime Minister found Clinton to be, "The most formidable politician I ever met, actually a brilliant President. He made it at times look easy." George W. Bush - Blair thought Bush was straight forward and direct.

Tony Blair's autobiography hits all the high points of his tenure and a few around it: Some brief background about Blair's fairly pedestrian middle class background; his rise to power in Labor including the timely death of one of his predecessors which allowed him to jump to leadership; his three elections and the many episodes that came between them such as Iraq, peace efforts in Ireland, National Health Service reform, and the millennium; and his long, somewhat tortured departure. A few observations: 1. Tony Blair never really had a friendship with Gordon Brown. Oh he says they were friends and the press has told us they were, but if you read between the lines they always viewed each other as competitors. Blair did not miss many opportunities to leapfrog over Brown in the party leadership or slap Brown down as PM. He then seems surprised when Brown does not treat him with total deference. I am sure he said something nice about Brown somewhere in the book, but I cannot recall where. 2. Blair is much more conservative than I thought. I always thought of Blair as a progressive to moderate who was muscular on national security. Blair tries to align himself with Bill Clinton as a third way type of centrist progressive. But other than climate change and a few platitudes towards progressive programs, Blair does not really have much patience for them. This really comes through with his criticism to the economic crisis that occurred once he was out of office, which he seems to believe the market could have solved. But throughout the book his description of "new labor" has a lot in common with the Republican Party in the United States. Oh I am sure I am overstating it, but I was really surprised by the way his positions came off. 3.

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