

**Speech by Michel Barnier at the Sorbonne, 21 January 2019**

**The strategic affirmation of the Europeans**

*Check against delivery.*

Chancellor of the “académie de Paris”,

President of the University,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am very honoured to be before you today, in this historical place, to inaugurate the 2019 cycle of your programme on “Major contemporary strategic issues”.
- And I want to thank the programme’s director, Louis Gautier, for inviting me to speak on the subject of “**the strategic assertion of Europeans.**”
- In September 2017, **in this auditorium, President Macron delivered a landmark speech on European sovereignty**, echoing President Juncker’s vision of a Europe that protects and the words of German Chancellor Angela Merkel about a Europe that takes its future in its own hands.
- **Emmanuel Macron said that “Only Europe, can ensure real sovereignty**, i.e. our capacity to exist in today’s world to defend our values and our interests. There is a European sovereignty to build”. Here we are!
- Tomorrow, France and Germany will sign a new Treaty in Aachen reinforcing their **cooperation for a « united, efficient, sovereign and strong Europe”**.

- This momentum expresses the dual requirement of **lucidity** and **voluntarism** that we Europeans need if we want to assert ourselves in the world.
  - Lucidity, since none of our countries taken alone, be it the most powerful, has the size needed to negotiate on an equal footing with « continental states » like China or the US.
  - Understand me well: European sovereignty does not replace national sovereignty. It adds to it. It strengthens it.
  - This capacity, we have it collectively, and we have it only at Union level.
  - This is especially true for security and defence. Digital. The economy. And ecology.
  - I am convinced that we can make it if we use our assets and **turn obstacles and crises into opportunities**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- In June 2016, the majority of British people took the sovereign decision to leave the European Union, after more than 40 years of common history.
- **This decision was a shock** to all those who had faith in the European project as a way to converge and unite our energies.
- On a personal note, I regret this decision all the more, since my very first vote in the referendum organised in France in April 1972, was in favour of the United Kingdom joining the European Communities.
- But **Brexit has also made us more lucid**. It has made us aware of a certain fragility of the European project.

- With the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, the Union loses a leading nuclear, military, diplomatic and economic power.
- We now see a bit more clearly the strategy of those who seek to use Brexit to divide us, weaken us and better establish their influence.
- Today, we have realised that if we don't turn the Union into a stronger player on the global stage, if we don't bring it closer to citizens, we are hampering the reason why we have been living in peace and stability for 70 years.
- The Brexit vote also expresses a social anger, a feeling of exclusion in many places. It is now urgent to understand, listen and respond.
- **We have also been lucid in our response to Brexit.** A lucidity that has never been aggressive.
  - For more than two years, **we have relentlessly co-built common and strong negotiating positions** with the 27 Member States, with the European Parliament, with social partners and civil society.
  - **Relentlessly, we have affirmed these positions with one single voice, justifying them by the principles on which our Union was founded:** the indivisibility of the four freedoms, the integrity of the Single Market, the autonomy of decision of the Union.
  - **Relentlessly, we have explained that we will never unravel our Single Market,** which is our strength between us and in the world.
  - **Relentlessly, we have worked with the British negotiators to bring about this Withdrawal Agreement** of nearly 600 pages. Only this agreement will allow for an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom, and minimise the negative consequences for citizens,

businesses and territories – I have in mind in particular Ireland and Northern Ireland.

- And, **relentlessly, we have built with the British government the framework of a future relationship**, which the European Union wants to be as close and ambitious as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As you know, this agreement was agreed by the European Council and the British government. It was approved by the European Parliament. **But it was massively rejected by the British Parliament last week.**
- British Prime Minister **Theresa May this afternoon provided a number of clarifications** on how she intends to address the next steps in these negotiations.
- **I will not comment here and now on these statements, as we must respect the ongoing parliamentary debate in the United Kingdom.**
- We will continue to work with the United Kingdom in the spirit that has been ours, mine, since the beginning of these negotiations: **firmness as to the integrity of the Union, openness to build a partnership with the UK, as ambitious as possible.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- Brexit has made us more lucid. **I am convinced it should make us more voluntarist.**
- There is no added-value in Brexit. This is a negative negotiation.

- Therefore, that unity we have built and maintained all along the negotiation should serve a **positive agenda**. It should be used to develop those policies that enable the **strategic assertiveness of our Union**.
- **Let's pause for a moment the world as it stands today :**
  - The **United States** has made the choice for unilateralism as never before in the past.
  - **China** has drawn a political and economic model that competes with the one we have today.
  - Our relationship with **Russia** remains complex and unstable, with unsolved issues such as Crimea.
  - **Too often in the concert of nations power goes over law**. The authority of the UN, WTO, World Bank, NATO, and International Criminal Court has been questioned, sometimes contested.
- The rules of the game should not be decided by others! **We should affirm our strategic autonomy ourselves. Nobody will do it for us.**
- **Europe should be capable of getting its voice heard and its interests promoted.**
  - Remaining allied with the US but not necessarily aligned.
  - Cooperating with China on the global stage, while remaining firm on our values and our vision of an economy that is both global, open and respects individuals.
  - Renewing our dialogue with Russia without ever compromising the need to respect international law and the integrity of States.
  - Standing up for the stability of the Mediterranean basin.

- Reforming and reenergising international institutions.
- To this end, **we should collectively assert our sovereignty in all domains** where we want to remain actors, rather than spectators.
- I would like to touch upon 4 big issues related to European sovereignty: **defence, digital, economy, ecology.**

### **1/ Affirmation of European diplomacy and defence**

- 20 years ago, the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, prepared the ground for true European defence.
- On the occasion of the Saint-Malo Summit in 1998, they agreed that the Union must have “the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces” to respond to international crises.
- We have laid down the foundation of **European defence**. Autonomous and complementary with NATO.
  - We have deployed 150, 000 personnel in 35 EU-led operations – military or civilian – that have contributed to the security of the Mediterranean basin.
    - Atalanta to fight piracy off the coast of Somali.
    - Sofia to fight human trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea.
    - In Georgia to contribute to the stabilisation of the situation.
  - We have pooled part of our defence research and technology efforts notably within the framework of the European Defence Agency.

- Upon the request of Jean-Yves Le Drian, at that time Defence Minister of France, we activated the mutual assistance clause in 2015, to support France in its fight against Daech.
- **We should go beyond** and reinforce two natural levers of our sovereignty: diplomacy and defence.
- We should consolidate **European diplomacy** by making best use of what we have:
  - **140 EU delegations across the world**, acting as sensors and relays that we should better exploit;
  - Our **sanctions** against third states or individuals. With around 35 sanctions regimes in place today, we have a major economic and strategic weapon;
  - **Development aid, for which we are the biggest donor in the world**, with 75 billion euros in 2017!
  - A **European External Action Service** that enables to pool – without diluting – our rich and diverse national diplomacies, networks, cultures geographies.
- Those tools should serve a **common vision**. There is European diplomacy from the moment we speak with one voice, as we did on the nuclear deal in Iran.
- And our **diplomacy can be effective** only if we can react quickly.
- Together, let's think again our approach. Together, let's mobilise our policies and means to respond to the **challenges generated by the two major continents in the 21st century** :

- **Africa** our neighbourhood – 14 kilometres away from us – with whom we should renew our partnership. There will be more than 2.5 billion inhabitants in Africa in 2050, half of them under 18 years of age!
  - **China**, seeking a new international order, and investing to become the first global power.
  - **Only the Union can give us the size and the necessary credibility to have eye to eye dialogue with those giants.**
- **In parallel to our diplomacy, we should give a place to European defence.** Is it not the right time for our governments and institutions to identify a political leader to best coordinate our efforts in this domain, as we are doing in foreign policy with the High Representative Federica Mogherini?
  - I recall here in Paris that this was one of the intentions of the founding fathers in 1952 with the project for a European Defence Community.
  - We are the continent that invests the most in defence after the United States. Yet, there is **too much fragmentation, too much duplication.**
    - We have 180 combat systems in Europe. The United States have 30.
    - There are 17 different tank models in Europe and only 1 tank model across the Atlantic.
    - There are six parallel projects for building frigates in Europe.
  - **We have made some progress.** The European Defence Fund will stimulate the development of joint equipment and technology.



Permanent Structured Cooperation will enhance the commitment of Member States.

- But **we need to go much further.**
- We need, together with Member States, to reflect on **the building blocks of a Defence Union**, as proposed by President Juncker:
  - A **common strategic vision** for the world of 2030, formalised in a **European White Paper.**
  - A **collective capability to anticipate developments and take decisions**, especially through strengthening our intelligence gathering capabilities.
  - More robust and credible **structures for crisis management**, including more rapid deployment of **joint forces.**
  - A **strong European defence industry** to ensure we can master the technologies and produce the equipment that we need to execute missions.
  - Of course, we will also have to build an ambitious partnership with the United Kingdom in this area to protect our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **2/ The second element of our sovereignty is digital technology.**

- **In the interconnected world of today, asserting our European sovereignty in this sphere is a must.**
- The expansion of digital technology and services create tremendous opportunities. But they also create **new forms of vulnerability.**

- Some are already exploiting these new weaknesses. **These new types of attacks can hit any sector:** health services, the economy, the financial sphere, energy...
  - In December 2015 and in December 2016 cyber-attacks paralysed the Estonian and Ukrainian energy networks for several hours.
  - In 2017, one year after the cyber-attacks during their presidential elections, the United States added voting systems to the list of critical infrastructure.
  - Still in 2017, a computer virus temporarily closed down several British hospitals.
  
- **We see clearly that social networks, which are often anonymous, can even undermine our democracy and our social cohesion.** They can be both:
  - **Instruments for propaganda and hate speech** in the case of Daech;
  - **Instruments for interference in national elections and in our democratic life** by foreign powers, as we have seen in the United States or in Europe.
  
- The EU needs to **have the means to protect itself and respond to the proliferation** of this threat that neither respects physical barriers **nor national borders.**
  
- This means **protecting our critical infrastructure:** satellites, underwater cables, electricity distribution networks.
  
- **This also means protecting our industrial and technological sectors.**

- This does not mean cutting ourselves off from the world. The European Union is the biggest destination for foreign direct investment in the world.
- But more and more often **our companies in critical sectors**, such as electronics, telecommunications, energy, and even defence, are **targeted by hostile operations**.
- When such operations present security risks, we must collectively have the tools to prevent these. This was one of the proposals that President Macron made in this hall and I also support it.
- We must continue our efforts towards **European screening of foreign investments**, for example through a European *blacklist* that excludes some foreign companies or technologies where they pose a security risk.
- In order to assert ourselves in the digital domain, we also need **a positive approach based on joint investment**:
  - In **developing our own technologies** in the area of artificial intelligence, big data analysis, cryptology, microchips, which will have numerous applications in our everyday life. In this way, we will also reduce our vulnerability.
  - In **establishing European technological and industrial ecosystems that are also in control of our supply chains**. This will reduce our reliance on third countries.
  - In preventing that **tomorrow's economy – that of 5G connectivity, apps, Internet-of-things, driverless cars and smart cities – becomes a plaything in the hands of spies**;
  - And in **developing human capital**. Europe has a key role in responding to the social and economic challenges of digitalisation!

- Finally, asserting Europe in the digital domain requires that we make **full use of our regulatory powers**:
  - We have already done this for example by setting the pace for data protection standards.
  - We must **go further**. Tech giants should not restrict our individual or collective freedom to choose through opaque algorithms and coding!
- In order to respond effectively to the digital challenge at the European level, we need a **smart combination of industrial policy and Single Market rules**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**3/ In this context, our third pillar should be to assert our sovereignty in economic and monetary matters.**

- In 1991, on the eve of the first Gulf War, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Eyskens described the EU as an “economic giant, but a political dwarf”.
- In the world of trade wars, accelerating innovation, and competition with emerging markets, it is urgent to **transform the EU’s considerable economic resources into instruments of influence**.
- We have three levers for this.
- First, our **Single Market**.
  - It is our **biggest asset** to generate growth and employment.
  - But it is also what allows us to **defend and project our commercial interests** across the world. It is the foundation thanks to which we discuss as equals with Japan or the United States.

- It is also the instrument that **allows us to be rule-makers not only in the EU but also on the international stage** – as we have for instance done with the General Data Protection Regulation, or on the topic of chemical products with REACH.
  - This **normative power**, which we do not fully make use of yet, is a real instrument for the strategic assertiveness of Europe.
- The **second lever is the Euro** – our common currency.
    - January 2019 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation. And **in just 20 years, the Euro has become the second most powerful currency in the world.**
    - The economic benefits it has generated are obvious: trade facilitation, lowering of interest rates, improved mortgage access.
    - But as President Juncker said, **there is still more to be done in particular to improve its international statute** and value, to strengthen EU's autonomy.
      - The **United States, strong of their “exorbitant privilege”**, as Valery Giscard d’Estaing coined in 1965, are able to take unilateral decisions generating extraterritorial effects, as was the case in the Iran deal.
      - And **China continues to promote the Renminbi** internationally, making it the pillar of its external trade policy.
    - **Europe must face up to these realities and change its approach.** There are no valid reasons, for instance, why 80% of our transactions of our energy imports are done in dollar, whereas only 2% of them originate from the US!

- But **changing our approach should not be understood as reverting to a protectionist strategy.**
- It means being less naïve on the world stage, but it means **being ambitious and assertive in the investments we can make together. This is our third lever.**
  - **Investing in research, innovation, infrastructure, culture, knowledge.**
  - As fostered in the Juncker Plan, which will generate 500bn euros by 2020.
  - As we have also done in the Space sector, with Galileo:
    - With its 26 orbital satellites, it offers a fully European autonomous navigation system and geolocation services.
    - Only continental States like the USA, China and Russia, have equivalent systems.
    - With Galileo, we have gained sovereignty at the EU level that we would have lost at national level.
- **Making use of the power of our Single Market, strengthening the international dimension of the Euro, building common investments: it all contributes to reinforcing our ability to assert our sovereignty internationally.**

#### **4/ Last – but no less important – pillar of EU sovereignty: a Green Europe.**

- The stability of our continent, the well-being of our citizens, will very much depend on **our ability to face the challenges of climate change, and master the ecological transition process.**
- If we want to reach our goal of **zero CO<sup>2</sup> net emissions by 2050**, all of our models of production and consumption must be shifted.

- We cannot afford and allow ourselves to exclude ecological matters from our political priorities, or overestimate their importance, as we too often did in the past.
- Instead, we must **reaffirm our ecological sovereignty**, another key component of the strategic autonomy of the EU.
- First, by **mastering key technologies to move towards carbon neutrality**.
  - **Hydrogen, batteries, new generations of solar panels**, etc.
  - Do we want to import these technologies from China, or develop them ourselves?
  - Mastering technologies in this field is also about competitiveness, jobs, and the condition of our sovereignty.
  - And for **most of these technologies, the right level of investment and development, is at EU level**.
- Second, **we need to consume less and consume better, to be less dependent on other countries**.
  - The European continent is the richest in human capital. Yet, it is also the one with the least natural fossil and mine resources.
  - An **economy less reliant on fossil energy** not only limits the impact on our climate, but also improves the security of our supplies in an unstable geopolitical context.
 

The cheapest kilowatt to produce and the cheapest barrel of oil are those which we do not consume in the first place!
  - **Investing in renewables** makes us less reliant on oil and gas imports from the Gulf or Russia.
- In order to reduce our consumption of resources, **the European economy also needs to become more circular**.

- Today, out of 7 tons of materials used by European industry, only one ton is recycled waste.
- Forecasts show great potential for savings, as increasing the level of recycling can reduce costs for European companies by more than 200 billion euro per year.
- By **investing in the circular economy**, European industry also reduces its dependence on Chinese minerals, and our agriculture becomes less reliant on soya imports from Brazil or the United States.
- **European agriculture** is naturally a central element of both our strategic autonomy and of the “Green Europe” that we want to build.
  - On the one hand, we need to accelerate the ecological transition in our production methods and respond to consumer demands for quality goods.
  - On the other, we need to ensure farmers receive fair pay and are protected from unfair competition.
  - We need to find a new balance between these goals.
- This illustrates a key aspect of the green agenda.
- Too often ecological measures are seen as **making it harder for people to “make ends meet at the end of the month”**, as Nicolas Hulot has said.
  - I remain convinced that properly designed, the ecological agenda **does not need to be neither economically nor socially regressive.**
  - Ecology needs to be a **positive agenda at European level.**
  - For example: by investing together in batteries and electric vehicles, Europe can become the first “electric” continent.



- This is true not only for our future **competitiveness and jobs**, but also for the fight against cancer and respiratory diseases – and therefore for **our health**.
- In fact, ecology can be a major element in **reconnecting Europe with its citizens**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- Pierre Mendés-France said, in his address to youth in 1955, that **“One should not sacrifice the future for the present”**.
- The present is difficult for many Europeans. But we must **preserve our energy, time, and audacity to shape the future**.
- Let us look at the world as it is and consider the future clearly. If we want to be able to **choose our own destiny** in the coming decades, we need to assert ourselves at the level of the EU.
- **Our European sovereignty does not mean withdrawal.**
- **Quite the opposite. Our European sovereignty means simply the freedom to choose. To defend our European common goods.**
- **And sovereignty for Europe does not mean rejecting the sovereignty of our nation states.** To the contrary, it multiplies and amplifies national sovereignty.
- It is about **forging an opportunity to overcome these significant challenges and to transmit this opportunity to future generations.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As you can imagine, these last few months I have often thought about British authors.

- I still remember the question that my friend and former colleague Chris Patten, then EU commissioner, asked several years ago: **“Is it only the nation that can defend the national interest?”**
- I am deeply convinced that we could be, that we must be, **patriots and Europeans. To be European does not mean giving up being French!**
- Thank you for your attention.