

Beat: Politics

SPEECH BY JEAN YVES LE DRIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER AT CONFERENCE BEYOND 1989

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USPA NEWS - Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, attended the conference “Beyond 1989: Hopes & Disillusions after Revolutions” held in Prague, 6 December 2019, and made a remarkable speech, that is now published by USPA, in two sections. This is the first section of the remarks, by the French foreign Affairs Minister addressed at Charles university, Prague, alongside, Mr Thomas Zima Rector of Charles University, and Jerome Heurtaux, Director of the Academy of Sciences, head CEFRES. Here is the full transcript of the speech. « Dear friends, Thirty years have passed since 1989. A generation, who have gone from euphoria to doubt. I am profoundly European and I must say Europe is what drives my political engagement. I remember the enthusiasm and the jubilation of those days that, in autumn 1989, would change the face of our continent and would move all peoples of Europe, without exception. What strikes me today, as French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, is that as each decade passes, we are less enthusiastic and less united in celebrating the commemorations of 1989. Jean Yves le Drian stated as an introduction. This is Part 3 3rd/ end section of speech

WE HOPE AS A EUROPEAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC REFLECTION OF NATO-----

This overhaul of arms control in Europe is our responsibility, as Europeans, if we want to avoid becoming a simple arena for confrontation between third powers. We hope therefore that such European reflection can be launched shortly, as a European contribution to the strategic reflection of NATO launched the day before yesterday and to the defence of our interests and vision of the international order. Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, we need to restore the spirit and intention of Helsinki and the spirit and intention of the Charter of Paris.-----

When the Helsinki principles are ignored or violated, it is always at the expense of what we have been trying to build here in Europe. The last thirty years have shown that. When a “spheres of influence” approach re-emerges, the sovereign equality of States and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty are flouted. When a sole border is challenged by force, it is the inviolability of all borders that is affected and, with it, the principles of non-use of force and territorial integrity of States. When the opposition is imprisoned, when fundamental or academic freedoms are crushed, human rights and democracy are trampled.-----

That is why I think that these basic principles, Helsinki and the Charter of Paris, and the need to see them applied, are clearly relevant in today’s context. It is now up to us to make improvements to what was attempted thirty years ago. In the coming year, we will ensure this discussion happens at European level so that we can address this subject together by next November when the third Paris Peace Forum will be held.-----

Ultimately, as regards security and other issues, our challenge is to build genuine European sovereignty.-----

And we have already started working on this. Thanks to our efforts, Europe is finally beginning to accept its power so that it can remain free to make its own choices and free to promote its own values.-----

This common sovereignty does not take anything away from national sovereignties. In a dangerous and overly competitive world, it protects them. Choosing one does not mean giving up the other. Quite the opposite is true.-----

I understand that countries that up until just thirty years ago belonged to the Eastern Bloc are fiercely attached to their sovereignty. But I would like to tell them that European sovereignty is not a return to the Holy Roman Empire, nor a return to a Brussels version of the Brezhnev Doctrine. It is the possibility for every State to remain independent in a world in which power struggles can be seen in every area.-----

I would like to stress that a real European is not someone who denies the existence and importance of Nation-States, just as a real patriot is not someone who rejects and has given up hope on Europe. A patriotic European or European patriot is someone who, on the contrary, knows that, without strong nations, the European project is weakened and that without a strong Europe, our nations are weaker.-----

Lastly, if we are not to be passive as the 21st century unrolls, there is an area which Europeans must absolutely master to ensure their sovereignty: digital technology. Tomáš Štěrba and I talked at length about this subject earlier.-----

Because in this area as well, there is a real risk that others will impose their choices on us, be it countries or companies.

In this new space of conflicting interests, we can see more and more sophisticated power strategies being used, which aim to attack and destabilize. Another possible risk to us is dependence on the technology of others, from 5G to artificial intelligence. It is finally the

risk that practices of certain major private sector players, which are not subject to regulation, breach the fundamental rights of our citizens, especially when it comes to privacy.-----

We must therefore take action, among Europeans, to build European digital sovereignty which is both effective and in line with our values. In other words, that is neither isolationist nor dominating, but that enables us to decide our future freely.

It is important to remember that we are not starting from scratch. We have technical infrastructure and innovation ecosystems. We have a vision for the digital world we want: a digital world that is “free, open and safe”[?]. We have the ability to promote it. This is what we have done with the General Data Protection Regulation, the GDPR, and we are now working to do the same regarding digital taxation. I believe we should work on implementing four projects to gradually build digital sovereignty in Europe and advocate a European vision of digital technology and human rights in the digital era.

WE NEED TO BEGIN BY BOLSTERING SECURITY IN CYBERSPACE-----

We need to begin by bolstering security in cyber space. As I have said, security is the foundation of our sovereignty. Espionage, sabotage and intrusion take on new dimensions in the digital age and are violations that we cannot accept. To protect ourselves from these threats and, if necessary, respond, we need to have our own capacities. We also need to strengthen the stability of the environment where these threats are emerging: cyber space. We have already launched several initiatives. They include the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, which brings together governments and companies to determine joint principles that will help to better protect individuals’ rights and strengthen international norms, and the Christchurch Call to prevent the Internet being used for terrorist purposes. We also need to help other countries protect themselves without having to be subservient to a cyber power.-----

Secondly, we also need to win the battle of innovation. In just a few years, Europe has found its way back to the path of digital innovation. Several European cities, including Paris, have become innovative ecosystems. Europe needs to rebuild its forces and propose European solutions to the challenges of tomorrow: smart cities, connected health and autonomous transport. We must identify crucial sectors and areas, from 5G to issues related to digital identity and crypto currencies. And of course, we need to progress in research along with businesses.-----

I believe that we must continue to move forward in implementing a genuine single digital market. But this cannot exhaust the subject. We must also work determinedly to strengthen European digital technology in terms of data storage, big data management and cloud computing. This is key to ensuring our values and rights are respected.-----

Thirdly, we must also consolidate our role as a normative power.-----

As we did with the GDPR, we need to continue to innovate when it comes to rules: in order to ensure predictability and trust in the sector, but also to impose adherence to fundamental principles. I am thinking of regulation of artificial intelligence, regulation of content, security and trust in cyber space. Regarding all these subjects, we will need to build, my dear Tomáš, majority coalitions. We can do it. Lastly, we need to protect the common goods that are common and open digital infrastructure. Today, a European innovator has to make use of a whole set of resources ““ infrastructure, data and payment systems ““ that are the property of monopolistic players. These players, through their terms and conditions, which they define themselves and without concertation, set their own rules.-----

As we do not have a hegemonic vision of sovereignty, we would like the digital world to instead be organized around common goods that are not captured by those who hold de facto monopolies thanks to their computing power, mastery of technology, or financial domination. This is why we need to remain vigilant to protect or develop common, open digital infrastructure that is usable by all and improvable by all.-----

Regarding these issues, France hopes that, together with European countries that so wish, we can launch reflection on European digital sovereignty in 2020. I believe this reflection is in line with the first statements made by the new President of the Commission.-----Dear friends,-----

To conclude, and I have had a lot to talk about, I would like to say that if there is one thing we learned from 1989, it is that history is not linear. It is now considered good form to denounce Western arrogance, which, in light of the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, declared it a victory for liberal democracy and the market economy.-----

But the “democratic determinism”[?] of the time should not be followed thirty years later by a “populist determinism”[?]. In light of the rise of populism, the questioning of the liberal democracy model and the challenging of multilateralism, some have predicted “an end to the liberal order”[?]. A new, reversed, ending to the story in a way, which would seem more like a cautious withdrawal than a rosy future.-----

And yet the real lesson of 1989 is that history is never written in advance, and that it is peoples that write it. We can only welcome this as political leaders. It is great news because this means that Europeans are free to determine their future and by working together, they will be able to create and defend models for society and international governance in which they believe. As Václav Havel once said, the spirit of resistance and courage pay.-----

Undoubtedly, 1989 has not yet kept all its promises. Is this a reason to give into the prevailing disillusion? I don’t think so. I see it more

as an additional reason for Europeans to continue working to write their common history.-----

I believe it is the best way to remain true to the spirit of 1989 and pay homage to those who, thirty years ago, with their faith, their endurance and their enthusiasm, made history, your history, our history, for our common Europe: a free, sovereign and humanist Europe. In order to encourage you to dip into the force of 1989 to better build the Europe of tomorrow together, let me conclude by paraphrasing the wise words of Nietzsche: redeem the past while creating the future; let that be our present.

Thank you.//. End of Speech French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean Yves Le Drian.

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