

BLOG — POST

Endure it alone or decide together ?

European sovereignty as a New Doctrine at the Dawn of Major Transitions

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William Malaterre,
Communications and Events Officer,
Jacques Delors Institute



On June 30, 2026, the Jacques Delors Institute and la Macif were pleased to host a conference devoted to a concept that has (once again) become central to the European debate: **sovereignty**. Long relegated to the background, this concept has now emerged as one of the key lenses through which to view the major transitions our continent is undergoing.

In the face of geopolitical, economic, energy-related, industrial, and digital upheavals, sovereignty can no longer be viewed as an issue confined exclusively to defense or ideology. It must permeate all of our public policies. It also **raises questions about our collective ability to shape our own future rather than merely endure the upheavals the world is experiencing.**

Introduced by **Jean-Louis Grosse-Delasalle**, President of la Macif, and moderated by **Sylvie Matelly**, Director of the Jacques Delors Institute, this event brought together **Matthieu Auzanneau**, an expert on energy issues; **Aurore Lalucq**, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs; and **Jean-Philippe Dogneton**, Chief Executive Officer of Macif. Together, they explored the many dimensions of sovereignty - from energy and digital challenges to economic and governance models - at a time when major transitions are redefining Europe's choices.

As the discussion progressed, a conviction gradually emerged: sovereignty is not just another goal to be achieved. It must constitute a genuine shift in doctrine - a new way of thinking about European action, economic trade-offs, and Europe's place in a world now shaped by the balance of power among major global powers.

I • **The Return of Sovereignty : From a Marginal Concept to a Political Necessity**

A. Sovereignty: A concept long set aside

For several decades, sovereignty seemed to have disappeared from the European lexicon. In the aftermath of the Cold War, globalization and the intensification of economic exchanges fueled the belief that interdependence would be the best guarantee of international stability. The idea of “the end of history,” popularized by Francis Fukuyama, shaped this view of a world in which geopolitical competition would gradually give way to economic cooperation.

In this context, sovereignty appeared to be a concept inherited from a bygone era. Often equated with nationalism, it seemed difficult to reconcile with a European project built on openness, economic integration, and free movement. As Sylvie Matelly pointed out, this distancing from the concept can be explained by the very history of European integration: for several decades, the Union prioritized market integration over the assertion of political power, at a time when globalization was seen above all as a factor of prosperity and stability.

Successive crises, however, have profoundly called this interpretation into question: COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, Donald Trump's return to the White House, trade tensions, and technological and energy dependencies are all events that have revealed that certain interdependencies were in fact strategic dependencies—or even genuine vulnerabilities. Sovereignty is thus reemerging not so much as a step backward as a response to an international environment that has become more unstable and fragmented.

This development nevertheless raises a fundamental question: what kind of sovereignty are we talking about? National sovereignty or European sovereignty? Public debate sometimes tends to pit these two levels against each other, presenting European integration as a factor that weakens the sovereignty of member states—a sovereignty that we are seeking to reclaim. The discussions at the conference, on the contrary, invite us to move beyond this dichotomy.

Europe's current difficulties most often stem from a lack of European sovereignty, and this is the case in several key areas. Financial, energy, digital, and industrial dependencies stem precisely from the absence of collective investments that would enable the Union to control the most strategic sectors. In a context marked by inflation, geopolitical tensions, the erosion of democratic models, and the questioning of certain economic certainties, Europe now faces a decisive choice: to continue to endure the world's transformations separately, or to collectively build its capacity to shape them.

B. Sovereignty defined above all by the ability to choose

However, we must first agree on what we mean by sovereignty. While the speakers offer different formulations, their definitions converge on a single idea: the ability to decide freely.

According to Jean-Philippe Dogneton, sovereignty is a term rarely used in the insurance industry. Macif prefers to speak of “strategic autonomy” or “control over the most critical elements.” In other words, it is about retaining the ability to make choices without being overly dependent on external actors. Aurore Lalucq expands on this approach by emphasizing another essential dimension: a sovereign Europe does not merely protect its interests. It must also be capable of asserting its own standards and influencing the international rules of the game. In a context where the United States appears to be abandoning many of the principles it has long defended, the European Union could become a true normative and ethical power, capable of turning its values into an instrument of influence. This line of thinking aligns with the definition proposed by Sylvie Matelly. Being sovereign does not mean seeking self-sufficiency or breaking away from interdependencies. Sovereignty consists of not being subject to the choices of others, of being able to define one’s own priorities, ensure they are respected, and have the necessary means to implement them.

This conception goes far beyond the mere question of power. It makes sovereignty the very condition for Europe’s capacity to act in a world where economic, industrial, energy, and technological choices have become inextricably linked to geopolitical power dynamics.

II • Sovereignty as a Response to a New Global Balance of Power

The framework that has long shaped European integration - based on open trade, market integration, and growing interdependence - is now being called into question. Successive crises have revealed the limitations of a model based on the idea that interdependence, in and of itself, is a factor of stability. The war in Ukraine has highlighted the continent’s energy vulnerability; trade tensions have underscored the risks of globalization without reciprocity; and technological dependencies and access to critical raw materials serve as a reminder that economic competition is now inextricably linked to geopolitical power dynamics.

As Aurore Lalucq pointed out, the Union faces four major dependencies: energy, economic and trade, digital, and military. In each of these areas, Europe’s ability to act now depends on its capacity to secure the resources, technologies, and infrastructure that underpin its autonomy. This new environment also calls for moving beyond certain divisions inherited from previous decades. Advocating for an ambitious industrial policy, strengthening strategic autonomy, or asserting a form of European sovereignty were often perceived as incompatible with an open economy. Today, these approaches appear less as a challenge to openness and more as the conditions necessary to preserve it in a world where major powers are fully mobilizing economic, technological, and industrial tools to serve their strategic interests.

This paradigm shift does not apply solely to defense or foreign policy. Businesses, too, are now confronted with issues of sovereignty and are taking an interest in them. The digital, climate, and industrial transitions demonstrate that economic actors now play a direct role in a region’s ability to preserve its autonomy.

Jean-Philippe Dogneton's remarks perfectly illustrate this evolution.

For a mutual insurance company like Macif, sovereignty translates very concretely into the ability to support a society's economic transformations over the long term, to finance the investments necessary for these transitions, and to ensure the risk-taking essential for innovation. Through its operations, Macif has become a true instrument of economic stability. It protects households, supports businesses, covers risks - particularly natural disasters - and enables economic actors to invest despite a more uncertain environment. This role is set to become even more strategic as these transitions accelerate.

Jean-Philippe Dogneton notes: "A society that lacks an autonomous and sovereign insurer within its own sphere (...) thereby creates another form of complementary dependence." Sovereignty, therefore, does not concern only energy production, digital infrastructure, or industrial capacity; it also concerns the mechanisms that make these activities possible in the long term.

This line of thinking naturally leads to advocating for the mutualist model championed by Macif. In the face of a growing trend toward the individualization and segmentation of risks, mutualization emerges as a true driver of collective resilience. It helps cushion shocks, maintain investment capacity, and support transformations without undermining the principles of solidarity that underpin the European model. As Jean-Philippe Dogneton summarized, "the best defense against the external environment remains mutualization." This logic extends far beyond the insurance sector alone: it illustrates how Europe could conceive of its own sovereignty - not as isolation, but as a collective capacity to share risks in order to preserve its autonomy.

III • Sovereignty as a Doctrine: changing the European paradigm

The conference discussions ultimately converged on a central idea: sovereignty cannot be reduced to a juxtaposition of sectoral policies—competitiveness, the internal market, the climate transition, innovation, industrial policy, or energy security. These dimensions are now closely intertwined and can no longer be considered independently of one another. Sovereignty implies, above all, a profound transformation of the way we conceive of and carry out public action. It is not merely one additional tool among many, but rather a shift in doctrine.

This idea runs through the remarks of all participants. Aurore Lalucq speaks of a genuine "paradigm shift." Matthieu Auzanneau, too, highlights the need to develop "a doctrine" capable of guiding European decisions in an environment that has become far more challenging.

Every decision has simultaneous effects across multiple areas. Industrial policy influences energy policy. A digital strategy alters the needs for electrical infrastructure. Climate-related decisions determine tomorrow's industrial investments. Defense depends on production capabilities, which in turn depend on energy, raw materials, and available skills.

This observation leads to a second major shift: the need to build a genuine European strategic culture. The speakers point out that each Member State continues to approach issues of sovereignty through the lens of its national history, its own interests, and its political culture. These differences account for some of the difficulties the Union faces when it comes to defining common priorities. Building European sovereignty therefore requires more than just coordination among states. It involves gradually developing a shared framework for analyzing risks, dependencies, and strategic interests.

IV • The needs for a framework to guide european transitions

A. Tools alone are not enough without a shared vision

While it is necessary to strengthen European sovereignty, Matthieu Auzanneau also highlights a risk: that of developing new instruments without a sufficiently clear doctrine to guide them. In his view, the European Union is implementing increasingly ambitious policies without having yet fully defined the strategic framework that should guide its decision-making. This observation does not, however, call into question the progress made by the Union. On the contrary, the speakers acknowledge that Europe has gradually equipped itself with powerful tools in the industrial, climate, energy, and digital sectors. But these tools can only be fully effective if they are embedded within a coherent, long-term political vision.

Aurore Lalucq shares this assessment, while noting that the international context leaves little room for a wait-and-see approach. In a world marked by intensifying economic, technological, and geopolitical rivalries, the EU cannot wait for its doctrine to be fully established before taking action. It must therefore develop its instruments while gradually refining the strategic vision that underpins them: “There is a method to the madness,” she emphasizes. This tension between the urgency of action and the need for strategic coherence is today one of the main challenges facing Europe.

B. Stable governance: a prerequisite for assured sovereignty

Beyond the definition of a doctrine, sovereignty also requires the ability to stay the course over the long term and maintain stable governance. Jean-Philippe Dogneton, CEO of Macif, emphasizes this point when discussing the expectations of the business world. Companies called upon to invest in major transitions need a stable, transparent, and predictable regulatory environment. Frequent shifts in policy, geopolitical upheavals, or conflicting signals can undermine their ability to make long-term investments and plan their strategies.

Yet these investments are essential. The mutual insurer currently allocates 16% of its investments to environmental and societal transition. This clear allocation enables it to strengthen its commitment and exceed the market average, estimated at around 9%. By directing a significant portion of its investments toward these transformations, Jean-Philippe Dogneton explains that Macif has chosen a strategy whose results can only be measured over the long term. This approach requires a coherent public framework capable of supporting economic actors rather than constantly changing the rules of the game.

Matthieu Auzanneau agrees with this analysis, emphasizing the need for political discourse to regain a sense of coherence. Industrial, energy, and climate transformations cannot be sustained over the long term without a collective narrative capable of addressing the choices, priorities, and trade-offs they entail.

V • A new doctrine to guide European transitions

A. Rethinking the European economic model

This development calls, first and foremost, for a rethinking of European economic policy. For several decades, the single market was built around a cardinal principle: making open markets and competition the main drivers of European prosperity. This approach has contributed significantly to the Union's economic development, but today it is revealing its limitations in a context where the major economic powers are deploying their industrial, trade, and customs policies as genuine instruments of power, and where dependencies constitute a real handicap in the balance of international power.

The challenge is not to call the single market into question or to give in to protectionism. Rather, it is a matter of adapting its rules to a profoundly transformed environment by identifying the sectors in which the Union must maintain control over its strategic capabilities. This evolution involves, in particular, rethinking competition policy so that it not only ensures effective competition within the internal market but also strengthens the ability of European companies to compete on a global scale.

It is within this context that the debate on European champions takes place. As Sylvie Matelly emphasized, it is not a matter of pitting competition against industrial policy: “You can have competition among small businesses, and at the same time have European champions that enable you to compete with major American or Chinese conglomerates in the most strategic sectors.”

B. Reconciling Sovereignty and the Energy Transition

Energy issues are central to this discussion. For Matthieu Auzanneau, the challenge goes far beyond the debate between nuclear power and renewable energy. As he pointed out, “Whether you're pro-nuclear or pro-renewable, there's no way—for reasons that are first and foremost physical, and then technical and industrial—that you can maintain Europe's current level of energy consumption using fossil fuels.” More than just a debate about the energy mix, this discussion calls into question the development model on which our economies are based.

Europe remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels, which still account for nearly 60% of its energy consumption. This dependence is all the more concerning given that the continent has limited energy resources and remains largely reliant on imports. It constitutes a geopolitical vulnerability, a hindrance to economic competitiveness, and an obstacle to the climate transition. He (Matthieu Auzanneau) notes that Europe's lag, as highlighted by the Draghi report, is closely correlated with the depletion of North Sea oil.

Regaining energy sovereignty therefore requires much more than simply diversifying supply sources. It requires rethinking production methods, energy use, and the trade-offs between society's various needs. The Irish example illustrates this necessity: the rapid expansion of data centers—powered primarily by gas-fired power plants—highlights the tensions that can arise between digital strategy, energy security, and climate goals.

This analysis leads him to place energy moderation back at the heart of strategic thinking. Far from being part of a logic of degrowth or deprivation, it appears to be the consequence of a physical reality: a Europe that wishes to strengthen its sovereignty cannot sustainably base its model on consumption levels made possible by resources over whose supply and costs it has no control. Energy sovereignty thus requires making choices, weighing trade-offs, and embedding these transitions within a coherent long-term vision.

C. Revitalizing an Industrial Ambition

This new doctrine also places industrial policy back at the heart of the European agenda. Recent crises have revealed the vulnerabilities associated with excessive dependence on globalized value chains: supply chain disruptions, shortages of critical components, pressures on certain raw materials, and a shortage of industrial skills. In this context, strengthening Europe's industrial base appears to be one of the key levers for increasing the continent's resilience in the face of external dependencies, particularly vis-à-vis major exporting powers such as China.

However, this ambition cannot be considered in isolation. Industrial choices determine needs in energy, digital infrastructure, research and innovation, as well as skills. European sovereignty rests precisely on the ability to coordinate these various dimensions within the framework of a coherent, long-term strategy.

The speakers also emphasize that this evolution reflects a profound ideological transformation. Long viewed with caution—and even as incompatible with the European economic philosophy based on open markets and competition—industrial policy is now regaining new legitimacy, driven by the need to preserve and develop the continent's productive capacities. This ambition must, however, be accompanied by a genuine long-term governance framework capable of providing visibility to investors and fully mobilizing economic actors in this transformation.

D. Making Digital Technology a Pillar of Sovereignty

Digital technology is likely one of the most emblematic examples of this new approach to European sovereignty. Aurore Lalucq particularly praised recent progress on the digital euro, while issues related to digital technology and artificial intelligence featured prominently in the discussions. They also highlighted the tensions faced by economic actors: between the desire to strengthen European sovereignty and the search for short-term solutions, as well as between the need to control strategic infrastructure and the logic of competition that still largely shapes European policies.

Debates surrounding texts such as the Financial Data Access Regulation (FIDA) or the Data Regulation illustrate this issue. European companies today generate a considerable amount of data but remain largely dependent on digital infrastructure and cloud services controlled by non-European actors.

For Macif, this situation raises a particularly concrete question of sovereignty: how can control over strategic data be guaranteed when its storage, processing, or use relies on infrastructure located outside the European Union?

This question extends far beyond the insurance sector alone. It speaks to Europe's ability to develop its own technologies, strengthen its critical infrastructure, and define the rules governing their use. Today, a large portion of the cloud services used by European companies still relies on U.S. providers such as Google, Microsoft, and Amazon. While Europe is now seeking to catch up in this area, this ambition requires a sustained and coordinated effort, supported by economic actors willing to invest in this transition, such as Macif.

E. A Climate Transition That Strengthens European Autonomy.

Finally, the discussions underscore that the climate transition cannot be separated from issues of sovereignty. For Jean-Philippe Dogneton, adaptation and mitigation are two complementary imperatives. In the face of increasingly frequent natural disasters, preserving a mutual insurance model is becoming an essential condition for collective resilience in the face of the fragmentation and growing individualization of risks.

More broadly, the ecological transition is no longer merely an environmental goal. It is becoming a factor in economic, energy, and political security. In other words, Europe will not be able to sustainably strengthen its autonomy without simultaneously succeeding in its climate transition.

• **Conclusion : Choose together rather than endure separately**

Sovereignty is not an end in itself. It is the condition that enables France and Europe to preserve their capacity for action in a rapidly changing international environment. Far from implying a retreat into isolation, this conference highlighted how sovereignty refers to a collective capacity to define priorities, manage dependencies, and drive transitions.

Ultimately, the real issue is not whether Europe is sovereign or must become so. It is determining how it intends to exercise its sovereignty. One clear path forward has emerged: this will require the development of a genuine European doctrine. A doctrine capable of aligning industrial, energy, digital, economic, and climate policies around a single ambition: to enable Europeans to regain control of their collective destiny.

For this is indeed the choice Europe now faces: to continue enduring the world's transformations separately, or to learn to shape them together.