



Strategic Sovereignty in the Age of Cognitive Competition: The European Case and Global Implications

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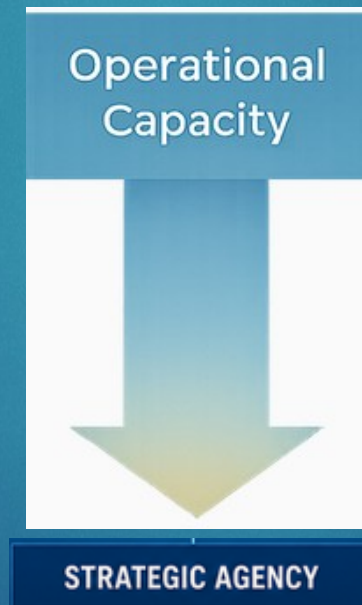
Sovereignty Is No Longer Defined Only by the Ability to Act



It is increasingly defined by the ability to shape perception and strategic frameworks.

Autonomy

- ability to operate
- ability to implement decisions
- Ability to manage resources



Sovereignty

- define frameworks
- define priorities
- shape narratives
- determine strategic direction

A state may possess significant autonomy while remaining strategically dependent.

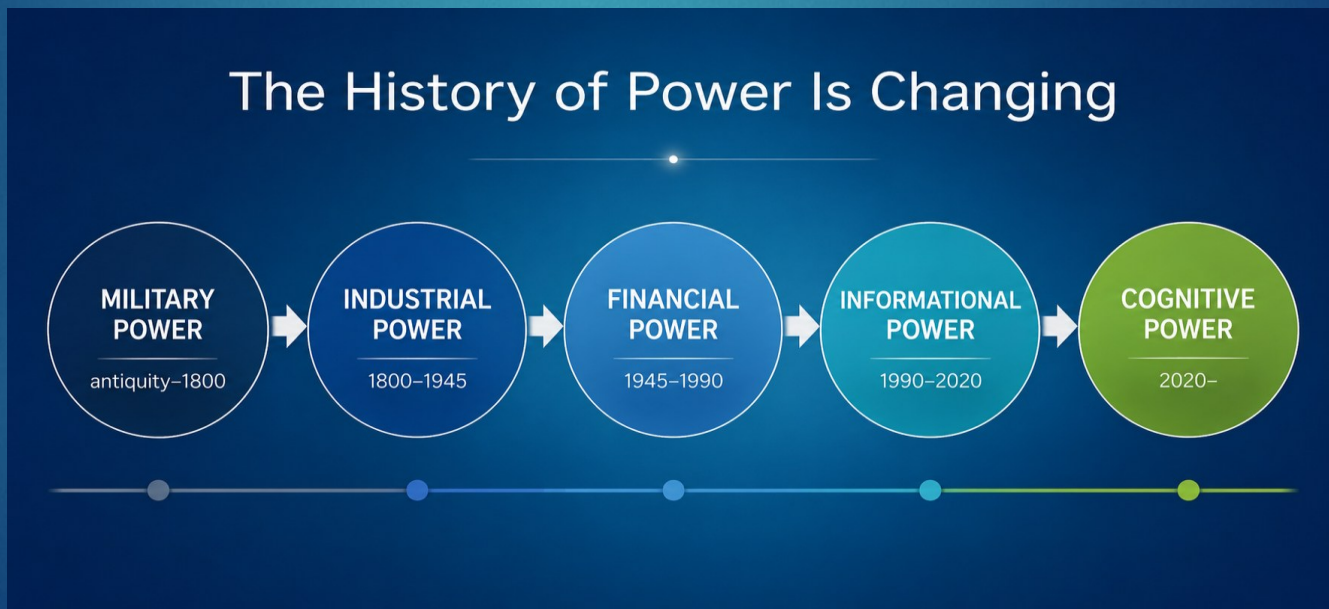
The ability to act does not necessarily imply the ability to choose

The history of power is changing



Human history was largely shaped by military power.

The future may increasingly be shaped by cognitive power.

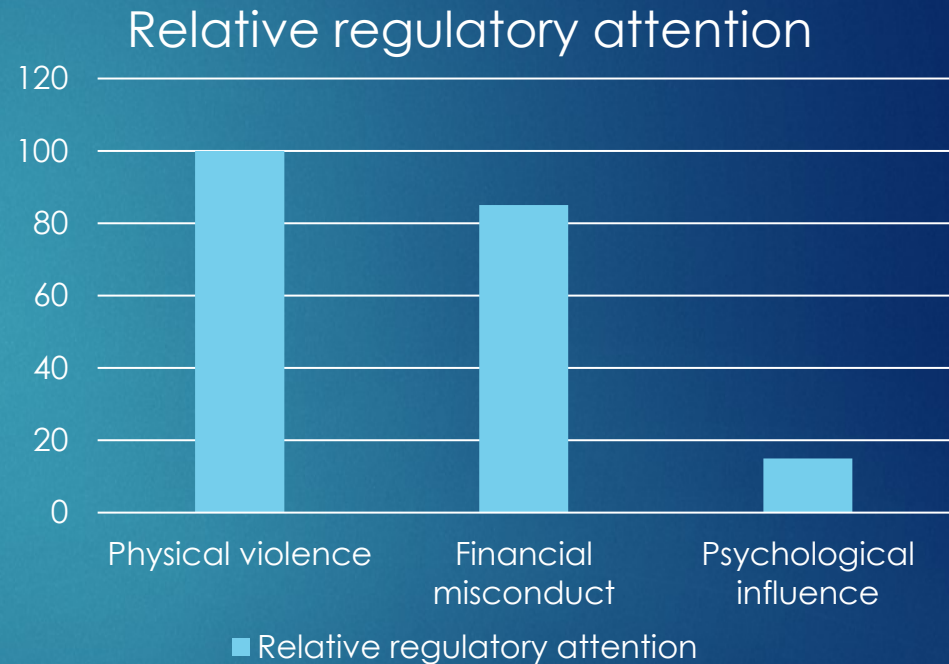


Psychological Influence May Replace Physical Coercion as the Dominant Form of Social Control



Human cognitive vulnerabilities

- belonging
- security
- affirmation
- fear of exclusion
- cognitive dissonance
- social conformity



A growing regulatory asymmetry

Psychological influence becomes problematic when it systematically impairs informed and autonomous decision-making.

Cultural Occupation



- ▶ Language as the Carrier of Consciousness
- ▶ Pop Culture and the Aesthetics of Banality
- ▶ Science and the Breakdown of Epistemological Sovereignty
- ▶ Media Perversion and the Trivialization of Everything
- ▶ A Foreign Value System as a Tool of Re-Education
- ▶ Extravagance as the New Norm
- ▶ Exploiting Human Psychological Traits
- ▶ Information Pollution and Psychological Aggression

Psychological Violence as a New Paradigm of Subjugation

Comparative Table:

Anglo-Saxon vs Continental European Values



DIMENSION	ANGLO-SAXON MODEL GB, US	CONTINENTAL- EUROPEAN MODEL D,F,SI
1. Personal		
Respect for agreement	Legally protected, but often opportunistic in practice	Morally expected, agreement also has an honourable character
Directness	Apparent, but often wrapped in hidden distance	Direct with more emotional context
Hypocrisy	High, institutionalized (e.g. PR culture, 'virtue signalling')	Less institutionalized, more personal and visible
Manipulativeness	Accepted as a legitimate tool for success	Often seen as morally questionable
Honor	Private matter, often confused with success	Social value, linked to reputation and reliability
Lie	Tolerated if not legally punishable ('not technically lying')	Considered personal and moral disqualification
Arrogance	Part of self-confidence, rhetorically justified	Seen as a social and ethical weakness
Self-aggrandizement	Normalized (e.g. self-branding, pitching)	Fairly undesirable, associated with poor taste
Respect for others	Tolerance as a concept, but with pragmatic distance	Integration and interpersonal empathy more often sought
2. Business		
Ethics in contracts	Agreement counts unless there is a 'legal loophole'	Agreement counts and breach is considered a moral failure

DIMENSION	ANGLO-SAXON MODEL GB, US	CONTINENTAL- EUROPEAN MODEL D,F,SI
Breach of agreements	Often understood as a 'business opportunity'	Breach seen as a sign of unreliability
Attitude toward workers	Individually responsible for own success (low solidarity)	Emphasized worker protection and social responsibility
3. Social		
Media discourse	Focused on image, framing, storytelling	Greater expectations for substantive truth and context
Culture of dispute	Polarization as a natural part of free speech	Message of consensus, ethical framework of debate
Social responsibility	Linked to donations and branding	Linked to long-term action and intergenerational responsibility
4. Political		
Truth in politics	Adaptable, 'perception is reality'	Linked to responsibility, political lie is a bigger scandal
Law and morality	Law is the minimum; morality is up to the individual	Morality complements law, higher ethical standard expected
Sovereignty	Geopolitical instrument of power (e.g. USA)	Value linked to legitimacy of authority and subsidiarity
Use of power	Accepted as a natural reality (realpolitik)	Linked to an ethical or legal framework



Language mirrors culture

Just as northern peoples have dozens of words for snow, English has an unusually large number of words for **deceit** - “scam,” “swindle,” “fraud,” “hoax,” “grift,” “con,” “hustle,” “racket” - each with a slightly different nuance, while some European languages have only a few.

This is not definitive proof, but it aligns with my experience: deceit is not merely an exception but often a socially tolerated tactic. The same we might observe for hypocrisy, double standards, concealed arrogance, and political opportunism, which we frequently encounter as being at odds with our values of honour, responsibility, and integrity.

Moral and Value Misguidance without implementing physical force



Mental colonialism thus represents a transition:

- ▶ from moral imperative to relativism,
- ▶ from community to the atomized individual,
- ▶ from compassion to economic calculation,
- ▶ from the European synthesis of the spiritual, aesthetic, and rational to banal functionality, aesthetic noise, and consumerist impulse.

Cognitive dependency has been developed in EU voluntarily despite sometimes unconsciously



- ▶ Loss of Values
- ▶ The European Identity Erosion
- ▶ Ideological Colonization of Europe
- ▶ Legal-Technocratic Deconstruction of Europe
- ▶ Ideological Apparatus and Control
- ▶ Economic-Administrative Subordination
- ▶ Foreign and Security Policy – EU Subordination and Globalist Manipulations

What Is New About Cognitive Dependence?



Cognitive vulnerabilities are ancient. The environment is not.

Novelty	What Has Changed
Scale	From influencing thousands to influencing billions in real time.
Personalization	From one message for everyone to billions of individually tailored realities.
Automation	From human persuaders to self-learning algorithms operating continuously.
Persistence	From episodic influence to a permanent 24/7 digital presence.
Feedback Loops	From one-way communication to self-reinforcing algorithmic ecosystems.
Transnational Reach	From national influence systems to global platforms affecting entire societies simultaneously.
Regulatory Asymmetry	Physical coercion is heavily regulated; systematic cognitive influence remains only partially regulated.
Professionalization	A global industry combining ICT, AI, behavioral psychology, data science and strategic communication.

Human psychology has not changed. The architecture of influence has. The novelty lies not in persuasion itself, but in the emergence of a permanent, systematic, automated, personalized and global influence system operating at civilizational scale. We may call it cognitive engineering.

Strategic Sovereignty Rests on Civilizational Foundations



Strategic Sovereignty Rests on Civilizational Foundations



Sustainable power is built from the bottom up, but often defended from the top down.

No Great Power Survives Without a Coherent Civilizational Narrative



Civilization	Core Narrative	Source of Cohesion
 China	Confucian continuity	Historical civilization
 India	Civilizational continuity	Cultural plurality
 Russia	Historical–spiritual continuity	State and identity
 United States	American exceptionalism	Founding idea
 Europe	?	?

“ Strategic power begins as a **cultural** phenomenon
before it becomes a **political** one. ”

Every durable geopolitical actor is first a cultural community.

Cognitive Sovereignty Is the Missing Dimension of Contemporary Sovereignty



Cognitive sovereignty is the ability of individuals, societies and institutions to form judgments and decisions independently within their own civilizational and strategic frameworks.



“ Sovereignty over territory is no longer sufficient without **sovereignty over interpretation.** ”

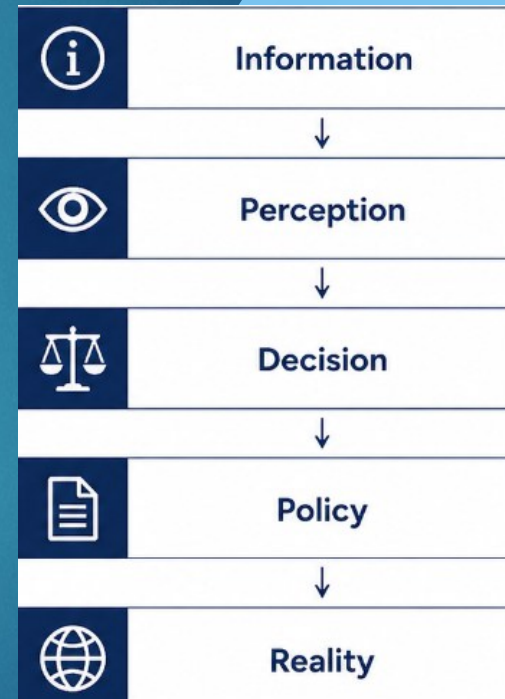
Cognitive Dependence Emerges when Perception is Shaped Externally



Cognitive dependency - the gradual transfer of perception, judgment and decision-making from autonomous individuals and societies to external systems of influence.

► Cognitive Dependence

- People continue making decisions themselves.
- But:
 - narratives
 - algorithms
 - media ecosystems
 - educational frameworks
 - increasingly define available interpretations.



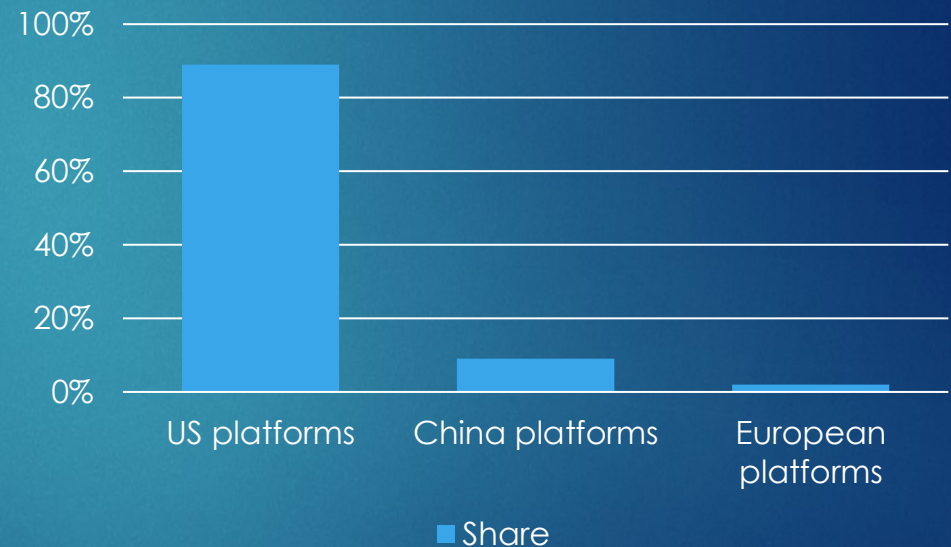
Cognitive sovereignty is essential to preserve the **freedom** to **interpret, decide** and **shape** our collective future

Digital Infrastructures Have Become Instruments of Power



Control over information systems increasingly influences political, economic and social outcomes.

Who Controls Europe's Digital Information Space?



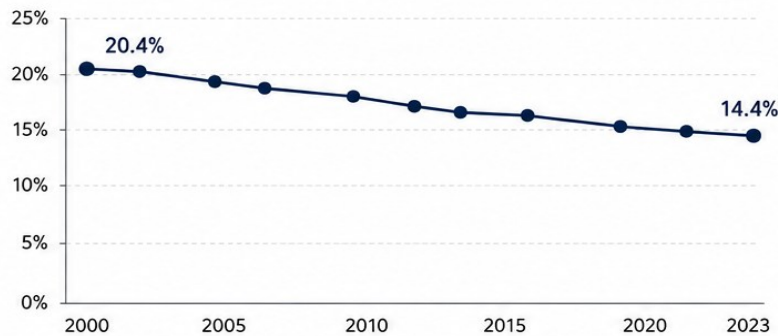
Europe is a regulatory superpower, but not a digital superpower.

European Union Demonstrates the Paradox of Modern Sovereignty



► Strong economy.

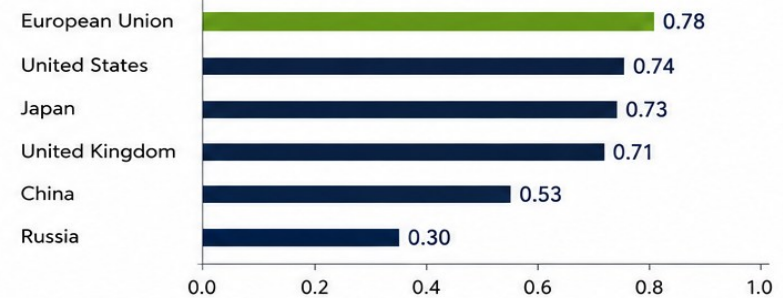
EU-27 share of world GDP (PPP)



Source: IMF – World Economic Outlook (April 2024)

► Strong institutions.

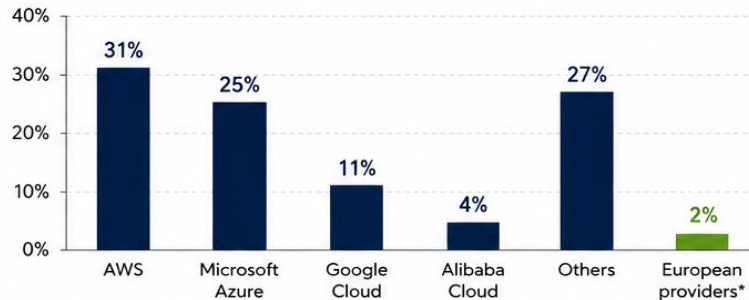
Rule of Law Index 2023 (score 0–1)
(1 = highest rule of law)



Source: World Justice Project – Rule of Law Index 2023

► Weak cognitive sovereignty.

Market share of leading cloud infrastructure providers
(% of worldwide market share Q4 2023)

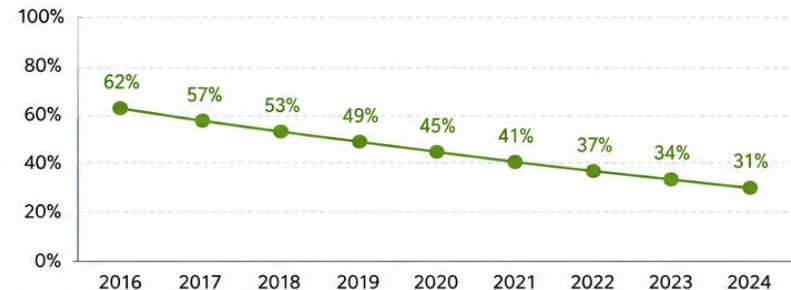


Source: Synergy Research Group – Cloud Market Share Q4 2023

*Includes OVHcloud, SAP, Deutsche Telekom (T-Systems) and others.

► Trust in media in the EU

Trust in media in the EU
(% who say they trust most news most of the time)



Source: Eurobarometer 2024 (EB 103.1)

Democratic Systems Face New Structural Vulnerabilities



Changing Information Environment

Information asymmetry

Unequal access to information shapes perceptions and choices.

Algorithmic amplification

Algorithms prioritize engagement over accuracy and nuance.

Narrative concentration

A limited number of narratives dominate public attention and crowd out alternatives.

Visibility over competence

The attention economy rewards visibility, not expertise or problem-solving.

Input

Information asymmetry
Algorithmic amplification
Narrative concentration

Selection mechanism
Visibility over competence

Output

Negative selection
Declining institutional trust
Political polarization

Dark Triad Traits

- Machiavellianism
- Narcissism
- Psychopathy

Note:

Personal traits associated with manipulation, self-promotion and low empathy can gain advantage in high-visibility environments.

Democracy depends not only on voting procedures but also on the quality of the information environment in which citizens decide.

Two futures are emerging and influencing the sovereignty level



Dependency Path

Cognitive Dependence



External Narratives



Informational Dependence



Democratic Degradation



Strategic Vulnerability

Sovereignty Path

Cognitive Sovereignty



Informational Sovereignty



Democratic Resilience



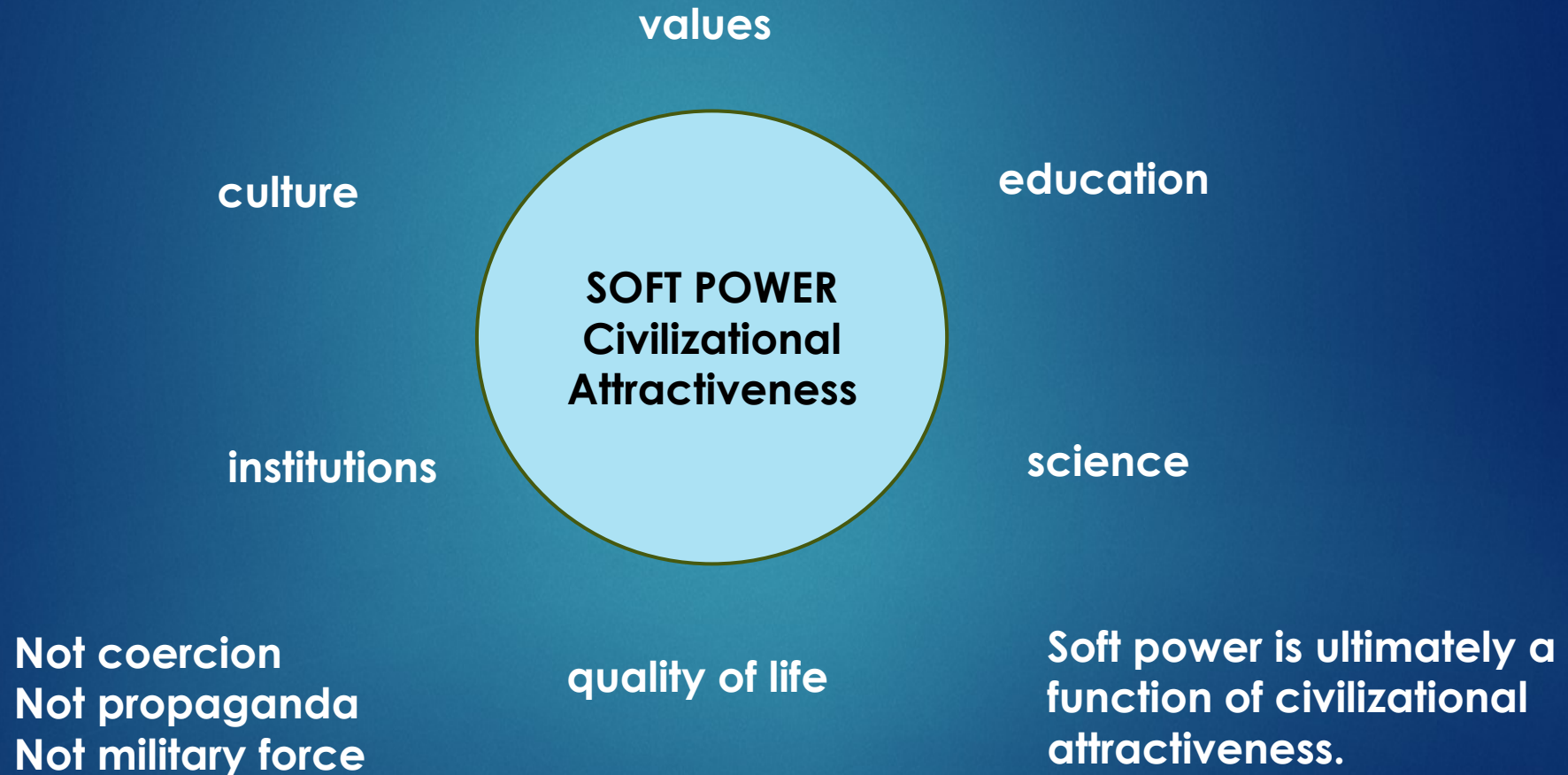
Strategic Autonomy



Civilizational Confidence

The decisive question is not whether states will remain sovereign, but how sovereignty will be exercised in the age of cognitive competition.

Soft Power Should be Understood as Civilizational Attractiveness



Lasting influence is earned before it is projected.

Cognitive engineering



The intentional, systematic and non-transparent shaping of perception, interpretation or decision-making of individuals, groups or societies through communication, education, media, political, cultural, institutional or technological systems – with the objective of obtaining political, economic, ideological or strategic advantages for the influencing actor or a third party, operating continuously across digital and social systems.

Whats new?

- Scale
- Personalization
- Automation
- Persistence
- Global Reach
- Regulatory Asymmetry

Related Concepts

- Social Engineering
- Information Warfare
- Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
- Cognitive Warfare
- Perception Management
- Behavioural Influence

The novelty is not influence itself, but the emergence of an integrated influence infrastructure operating continuously across digital societies.

Strategic sovereignty requires a new political roadmap



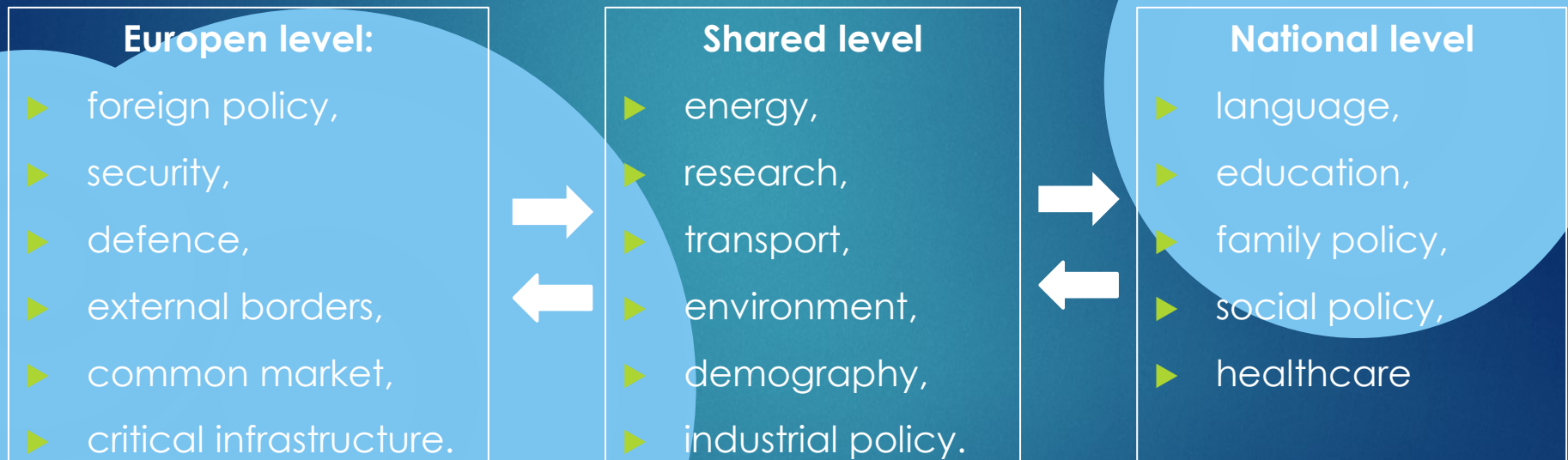
- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ▶ Awareness | ➡ Recognize cognitive dependence |
| ▶ Sovereignty | ➡ Restore informational sovereignty |
| ▶ Resilience | ➡ Protect digital infrastructure |
| ▶ Democracy | ➡ Digital direct participation |
| ▶ Strategic Autonomy | ➡ Rebalance capital |
| ▶ Civilizational renewal | ➡ Cooperative Europe |

Europe's renewal is likely to emerge from a coalition of capable and willing member states.

The Future Political Order Requires Institutional Innovation



A Modular Federation: Unity Without Uniformity



Shared where necessary. National where possible.

The Central Sovereignty Question of the 21st Century



If sovereignty once depended on controlling territory, and later on controlling industry and finance,

can political communities remain sovereign without controlling the informational and cognitive environments in which decisions are made?

Territory shaped the past. Cognition may shape the future.

Final Reflection



If the diagnosis is uncomfortable, that may indicate not its weakness, but its relevance.

Analysis without synthesis, vision, and strategy is like a diagnosis without therapy.



The future will belong not to those who control territory, but to those who preserve the capacity to think, decide and act autonomously.

WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND

THE CIVILIZATIONAL DRIFT EUROPE MUST OVERCOME



WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND



Permanent war logic and escalation culture



Geopolitics without morality



Manipulation through fear



Systematic disinformation and narrative engineering



Double standards in international law



Selective application of human rights



Violation of treaties and democratic principles



Financial dependency and debt-based control



Extraction economies and resource exploitation



Destruction of societies through endless conflicts



Cultural homogenization and loss of identity



Social engineering detached from reality



Atomized individuals without community



Replacement of citizenship with passive consumption



Hyper-consumerism and spiritual emptiness



Politics without accountability



Technocracy without democratic legitimacy



Governance through bureaucracy instead of participation



Media concentration and manufactured consensus



Algorithmic manipulation of perception and behavior



Censorship disguised as protection



Surveillance normalization



Public discourse based on labeling and fear



Dehumanization of dissent



Demonization instead of dialogue



Ideological polarization as a tool of control



Short-term profit over long-term civilization



Corruption protected by complexity



Economic systems detached from human dignity



Loss of strategic sovereignty



Dependence disguised as cooperation



Erosion of trust between people



Destruction of family and local community structures



Education without wisdom



Information without truth



Freedom without responsibility



Rights without duties



Politics without vision



Leadership without courage



Progress without meaning



Prosperity without stability



Power without ethics



WHAT WE CHOOSE INSTEAD



Peace instead of permanent conflict



Cooperation instead of domination



Democracy instead of manipulation



Sovereignty instead of dependency



Truth instead of propaganda



Human dignity instead of exploitation



Strong communities instead of atomization



Cultural confidence instead of civilizational shame



Responsibility instead of passivity



Dialogue instead of hatred



Real participation instead of managed consent



Transparency instead of hidden power



Justice instead of selective morality



Multipolar balance instead of imperial logic



Long-term civilization instead of short-term extraction



Europe as a bridge, not a battlefield



A society built for human beings, not only for markets



A future with meaning, identity and freedom



Education with wisdom



Information with truth



Freedom with responsibility



Rights with duties



Politics with vision



Leadership with courage



Progress with meaning



Prosperity with stability



Power with ethics



LIBERTAS EUROPA
ETI

THE CORE IDEA
EUROPE DOES NOT NEED TO BECOME SOMEONE ELSE.
EUROPE MUST BECOME ITSELF AGAIN.



Thank you



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Backup slides

Original Ideas for a Sovereign Europe



- ▶ E - direct democracy as an upgrade and corrective mechanism of the democratic system
- ▶ Regulation of psychological violence
- ▶ Autonomous financial system and balance between intellectual and financial capital
- ▶ Competitive advantages and quality of life
- ▶ Responsible solidarity, Public Interest, Demography, and Human Rights
- ▶ Internet, browsers, AI, social media, as public infrastructure
- ▶ Governance, evaluation, and oversight of public media and journalists
- ▶ Modular federation
- ▶ Common European security infrastructure and peaceful collaboration within the multipolar world