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Note

Dependance Day?

Fable 5, Mythos 5: Europe's Wake-Up Call

juin 2026

The unilateral suspension of access, without prior notice, to Anthropic's 'Fable 5' and 'Mythos 5' models for non-US users following a US government directive citing national security grounds reveals underlying structural trends in artificial intelligence (AI) that have been intensifying for some time. In this brief note, the French AI and Digital Council offers reflections and proposals to foster increased and open European digital autonomy in the light of this milestone event, which it would be unwise to downplay. Mastering technological dependencies in the digital sphere must become a priority for both European states and private actors.

1. The suspension of access to Anthropic's 'Fable 5' and 'Mythos 5' large language models, enacted on 12 June, marks the materialisation of the 'kill switch'[1], a threat frequently invoked in recent months. Whilst unlikely to occur on a large scale or over the long term for 'traditional' digital services (office suites, cloud hosting), this risk remains concrete and can take various forms. In October 2019, Adobe suspended its services, including the ability to open PDF documents, in Venezuela following an Executive Order signed by the Trump administration. Furthermore, the French judge at the International Criminal Court, Nicolas Guillou, who has been under US sanctions since 2025, no longer has access to digital services developed across the Atlantic. **The restrictions imposed on Anthropic's two most advanced models mark a further, significant, and unprecedented step towards the practical normalisation of this risk.**

2. The digital sphere has always been an arena for power dynamics. Whilst unfortunately this reality was previously expressed in ways that were very real if often hidden (such as through user data collection, online marketplaces, and the struggle to impose standards), it is now taking **a more direct and explicit form**. By unilaterally restricting access to certain frontier models, the US government is effectively classifying Large Language Models (LLMs) as strategic assets, access to which is now conditional, if not outright restricted.

3. **This situation must be viewed through the lens of the AI race between the United States and China.** By deliberately targeting non-US actors, this measure extends the strategy of technological containment[2] which has hitherto been primarily embodied by export control orders on top-tier Nvidia chips. It also aims to prevent a repeat of the 'DeepSeek moment'[3], which left a deep impression on Washington. Chinese developers, whether operating from AI laboratories in China or within

[1] The immediate and controlled remote suspension or de-deployment of all or part of a system, application, or digital service.
[2] This term refers to a diplomatic strategy aimed at limiting the influence of a foreign actor, particularly in military, economic, and ideological spheres.
[3] On 20 January 2025, the Chinese laboratory DeepSeek released an open-source language model with performance remarkably close to benchmark models, unexpectedly and despite US restrictions imposed on high-end Nvidia GPUs.

Silicon Valley, are thus deprived of access to these models to mitigate the risks of hostile distillation[4]. Upon its launch a few days ago, Fable 5 automatically throttled itself during iterative attempts aimed at creating a 'student model'. Yet, distillation is precisely the method by which Chinese laboratories, such as DeepSeek, almost certainly managed to close in to a large extent on American models in the past.

4. **Divergent conceptions of 'digital sovereignty' are proliferating and clashing.** Paradoxically, the vision embodied by the US government closely mirrors the Chinese approach, where the state asserts control (as illustrated by the latest US *Executive Order* dated 2 June 2026, which calls upon American companies to grant the government 30 days of early access to their latest AI models prior to public deployment). The vision of private actors, such as Anthropic or hyperscalers, consists on the one hand of granting early access to their latest models to a select few companies (e.g. Anthropic's Project Glasswing), and on the other hand, of establishing a broad footprint in promising markets, such as Europe or India, by promoting rapid AI adoption, offering new cloud architectures (co-developed with European partners, for instance), and focusing on use cases. Europe's vision, centred on reducing digital vulnerabilities and developing scalable alternatives, continues to suffer from an implementation that is at times too slow.

5. As European enterprises and public administrations prepare for the mass deployment of AI use cases and commit significant investment to them, any engagement with a private actor, particularly an American one, must serve as a wake-up call. Decisions must henceforth be undertaken with a full awareness of the concrete constraints and risks highlighted by this recent episode. **The threat to European digital autonomy is no longer a hypothesis; it has become a tangible reality**. Consequently, it is imperative that all organisations conduct and maintain up-to-date risk assessments.

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6. **The objective of making AI an open technology accessible to the greatest number is under serious threat.** Whether due to costs (access to high-performance AI[5] has so far been heavily subsidised, which is likely to change with the initial public offerings of OpenAI and Anthropic), the increasing invocation of national security concerns, or the technological race, the promise of 'AI for all' in service of the

[4] Model distillation is a machine learning technique that involves transferring knowledge from a complex, high-performance model (known as the teacher model) to a smaller, more lightweight model (known as the student model). The objective is to retain a large portion of the teacher model's performance while reducing its size, complexity, and resource requirements (compute, memory, and energy).
[5] Even if the most advanced models do not necessarily yield significant productivity gains at this stage.

common good—a central theme at recent international AI summits, particularly in Paris and Delhi—faces structural and persistent obstacles. This latest episode could also signal a paradigm shift from AI as a commodity (where models proliferate, democratise, and eventually become accessible to everyone at a low cost, a widespread narrative of the past two years) to AI as a scarce resource, restricted and controlled by a handful of actors. The consequences for Europe, as well as for other 'middle powers', would be particularly detrimental.

7. In parallel, and closely related, we have for several months witnessed **a resurgence of the doctrine of catastrophic, if not existential, risk associated with AI**. Analogies with nuclear technology and deterrence are multiplying, as is distrust towards open-weight models - a stance shared by both the US government[6] and figures such as Geoffrey Hinton last week in Paris. This approach, which was central to the Bletchley Park Summit in November 2023, stems from a well-known strategy initiated by Big Tech (GAFAM) companies, whereby only a handful of actors should possess the most advanced technologies due to their alleged danger, a claim far from reaching scientific consensus. Conversely, such a position allows these same actors to justify increased control over the technologies and the resulting revenues, thereby stifling competition and open innovation.

8. **The ongoing trend against open-source AI raises critical questions.** It undermines our ability to independently audit models, as well as researchers' access to training data, which is vital for ensuring transparency and mitigating bias. Equally concerning, it restricts access to essential tools for combating child pornography, disinformation, and online violence. These tools are predominantly proprietary and controlled by American companies, despite initiatives aiming to make them public such as the Roost initiative which develops open-source tools for AI safety, notably for the protection of children online.

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Against this backdrop, action must urgently encompass the entire value chain:

9. **At the *public policy level*** – French and European responses must crystallise around both supply and demand. While the former has seen intensive work in recent weeks, as exemplified by the latest package of measures announced by the European Commission in early June to strengthen European capabilities in semiconductors and cloud infrastructure, ambition on the latter is not yet commensurate with the stakes. European preference in public procurement,

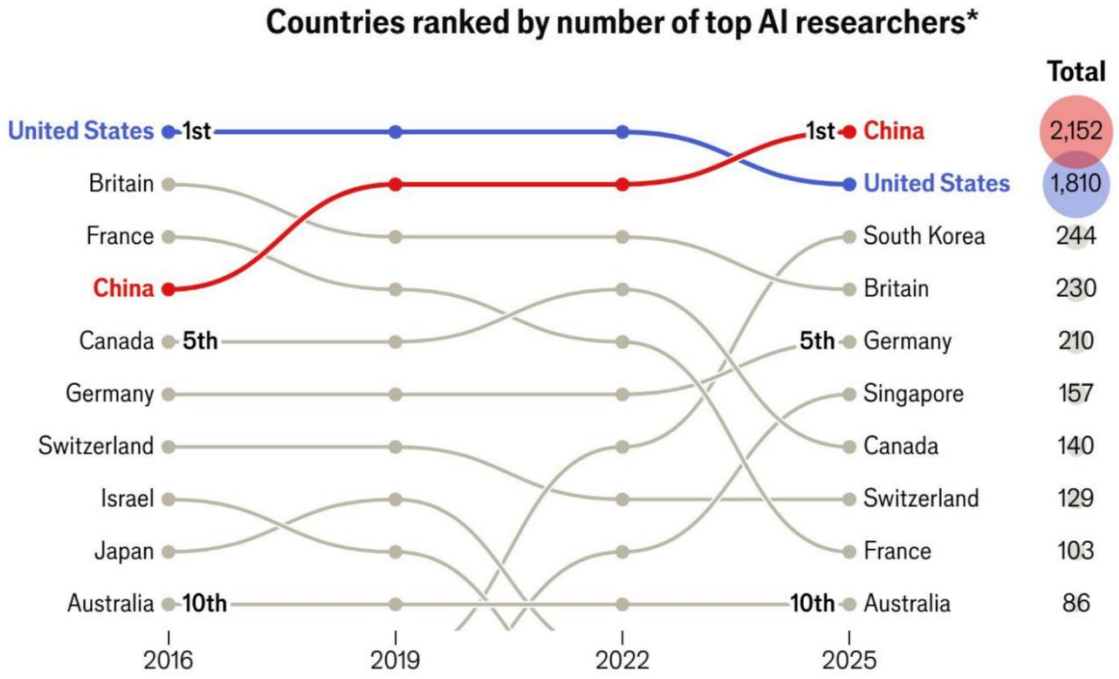
[6] E.g. ongoing discussions in the US Congress regarding the AI Foundation Model Transparency Act, which could impose limitations on sharing the weights of open-weight models.

stimulating demand among large European industrial firms, market-shaping[7] measures at the European level (portability, interoperability, tax or regulatory incentives), and better coordination between public and private ecosystems are all areas where progress must urgently be accelerated to avoid a strategic decoupling.

10. **Regarding the *'technical layers'***, compute power and data centres, the challenge is twofold. Firstly, the verdict remains clear: Europe must imperatively possess sufficient compute power to develop European AI alternatives. Secondly, whilst massive investments into the construction of data centres and AI factories in France signal a clear intent to rebalance critical infrastructure on national territory, **close attention must be paid to the actual allocation of compute power. If it is primarily channeled towards American tech giants, it will fail to address the issue of data sovereignty and the capture of the value generated.** Furthermore, hosting data and compute on French soil, though it may provide leverage in negotiations with US authorities, would not suffice to prevent the risk of a kill switch being activated on American services.

11. **On the question of *personnel*** – At a time when many developers within American tech giants are foreign nationals and directly affected by restrictions imposed by the Trump administration, this situation represents a major opportunity for European, Canadian, and Asian enterprises and laboratories to attract individuals with these skills. France must take this issue very seriously, as the current trend is not entirely in its favour. Indeed, apart from a few rare exceptions, notably Mistral and AMI Labs, the opportunities for developers to work 'at the frontier of AI' in France are highly limited, whether for designing or evaluating frontier models. Consequently, France is falling further behind in the AI talent race, particularly when it comes to retaining its own talent or attracting others (see the chart below):

[7] Market shaping refers, within the framework of economic public policy, to a proactive approach by public authorities aimed at influencing, structuring, or directing a market to achieve strategic objectives.



*Working location of first authors of studies presented at the NeurIPS conference
Sources: NeurIPS; Paper Copilot; *The Economist*

12. **On *model development***, which it would be risky to abandon in favour of the application layer alone under the pretext that foundation models are readily available. The recent example demonstrates that Europe's over-reliance on American or Chinese models constitutes a first-order vulnerability when access to the latest high-performance cybersecurity models, such as Mythos, is cut off. **France and Europe must imperatively build their own scalable capabilities in frontier AI research**, going beyond what currently exists within public research and startups. This must be pursued in a coordinated manner, allocating a portion of the compute capacity from European nations and the European Union (which co-finance AI factories such as Alice Recoque in France or Jupiter in Germany) toward this strategic ambition. This is a matter of emancipation, data sovereignty, talent attraction, and ultimately, economic competitiveness.