IFRI STUDIES

GEOPOLITICS OF TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APRIL 2026

Trump II vs. Digital Governance

A Crusade in the United States and Europe

Mathilde VELLIET

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ISBN: 979-10-373-1213-6

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Cover: President Donald Trump in the Oval Office, December 21, 2018
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How to cite this publication:

Mathilde Velliet, "Trump II vs. Digital Governance: A Crusade in the United States and Europe", *Ifri Studies*, Ifri, April 2026.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Sahar for their assistance with data analysis and visualization, particularly regarding posts by U.S. and European officials on X. She would also like to thank Alexandre Nayez for his work on the infographics.

Résumé

Depuis son arrivée à la Maison-Blanche, l'administration Trump II a mené une campagne systématique de déréglementation des secteurs technologiques, tant aux États-Unis qu'en Europe, justifiée par un récit mettant en garde contre une innovation prétendument entravée, la rivalité avec la Chine et la « censure ». Aux États-Unis, cette offensive s'est traduite par la suppression des cadres existants en matière d'intelligence artificielle (IA), de cybersécurité et de modération des contenus. Elle est portée par une galaxie d'acteurs publics – président et vice-président, bureaux au sein de la Maison-Blanche, agences indépendantes comme la Commission fédérale des communications (FCC) et la Commission fédérale du commerce (FTC), législateurs – et privés aux outils puissants, sans faire toutefois l'unanimité dans le camp républicain.

En Europe, la pression américaine s'est fortement intensifiée, dépassant les critiques historiques de Washington (protectionnisme, discrimination contre les entreprises américaines) pour dénoncer une supposée censure gouvernementale et l'illégitimité démocratique de l'Union européenne (UE). Pour affaiblir les cadres réglementaires européens, l'administration américaine mobilise une panoplie de leviers diplomatiques, économiques et informationnels : enquêtes menées par les ambassades, interdiction de séjour aux États-Unis, menaces de barrières douanières, de contrôle des exportations ou de contraintes d'accès au marché américain, campagne sur les réseaux sociaux… Conformément à l'objectif de l'administration de « cultiver la résistance », cette stratégie américaine s'appuie sur des relais européens (élus d'extrême droite, entreprises, organisations non gouvernementales). À l'aide des éléments d'analyse et de visualisation fournis par Sahar, cette étude met en évidence la consolidation d'un écosystème discursif et politique transatlantique hostile à la réglementation du numérique.

Face à cette campagne américaine, l'Europe a tout intérêt à accélérer ses efforts de souveraineté et de continuité des services numériques. Les entreprises européennes, quant à elles, gagneraient à mieux cartographier leurs vulnérabilités aux leviers de pression américains. Sur le plan réglementaire, maintenir une ligne ferme s'impose : tout recul affaiblirait la crédibilité de l'UE et encouragerait l'instabilité. Une communication précise – sur l'impératif de transparence et non de censure prévu par le règlement sur les services numériques (DSA) – et cohérente – évitant les apparences d'une implémentation discriminatoire – reste cruciale. Explorer les coopérations ciblées avec l'exécutif (cybersécurité, protection des mineurs, lutte contre la fraude), dialoguer avec les législateurs fédéraux et nationaux américains sur

l'IA et les données, et avertir les entreprises américaines des effets contre-productifs de cette offensive pourraient atténuer certaines divergences.

Abstract

Since taking office, the Trump II administration has waged a systematic deregulation campaign targeting the tech sector in both the United States (US) and Europe, framed by a narrative warning against allegedly stifled innovation, rivalry with China, and "censorship". Domestically, this push has led to the dismantling of existing frameworks in Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and content moderation. It is driven by a network of public actors—the president and vice president, White House offices, independent agencies like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and legislators—and private stakeholders with powerful tools, though not without dissent within Republican ranks.

In Europe, US pressure has intensified significantly, moving beyond Washington's traditional criticisms (protectionism, discrimination against American firms) to denounce alleged government censorship and the European Union's (EU) democratic illegitimacy. To undermine European regulatory frameworks, the administration has deployed a range of diplomatic, economic, and informational levers: embassy investigations, US entry bans, threats of tariffs, export controls, or market access restrictions, and social media campaigns. In line with the administration's goal of "cultivating resistance," this strategy also relies on European actors (such as far-right lawmakers, businesses, or non-governmental organizations). Drawing on Sahar's analytical and visual materials, this study highlights the consolidation of a transatlantic discursive and political ecosystem opposed to digital regulation.

In response, Europe would benefit from accelerating its efforts toward digital sovereignty and service continuity. European companies should more thoroughly map their vulnerabilities to US leverage. Regulatorily, holding firm is essential: any concession would undermine the EU's credibility and foster instability. Precise communication—emphasizing, for instance, the Digital Service Act's (DSA) transparency requirements, not censorship—and consistency—avoiding perceptions of discriminatory enforcement—remain critical. Pursuing targeted cooperation with the US executive—on cybersecurity, the protection of minors online, or fraud prevention—, engaging with federal and state legislators on AI and data governance, and warning American companies of the counterproductive effects of this offensive could help mitigate some transatlantic tensions.

Contents

INTRODUCTION **7**

"DELETE, DELETE, DELETE": THE DEREGULATION CAMPAIGN WITHIN THE UNITED STATES **9**

Three objectives: unleashing innovation, competing with China, dismantling censorship **9**

One year of deregulation targeting AI, cybersecurity and content moderation **11**

The pivotal role of the White House and independent agencies **14**

A campaign undermined by contradictions and opposition **16**

Deregulation vs. instrumentalization *16*

States vs. the federal government: Republican resistance *18*

"SHOW RESPECT TO AMERICA AND OUR AMAZING TECH COMPANIES": OPPOSITION TO EUROPEAN REGULATION **20**

Censorship, threats to sovereignty, illegitimacy of the EU: accusations from Washington **20**

A vast array of actors wielding powerful tools **23**

The U.S. government and its levers of influence *23*

A campaign taken up by private actors *30*

"Cultivating resistance": The U.S. strategy relies on European partners *32*

An effective campaign? Resistance and concessions **38**

A clear show of resistance *38*

Initial signs of success *39*

Potential for unintended consequences *40*

CONCLUSION: HOW SHOULD EUROPE RESPOND? **43**

Introduction

On December 23, 2025, as Christmas drew near, the U.S. State Department announced it would follow through on a threat it had been brandishing for several months: former European Commissioner Thierry Breton, as well as four representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to combat disinformation,[1] all of whom Secretary of State Marco Rubio accused of acting as "agents of the global censorship industrial complex",[2] would be banned from entering the United States. This measure was only the tip of the iceberg regarding the Trump administration's national and international campaign against regulation in the technology sector.

On the domestic front, the Trump administration is pushing much further the Republicans' traditional support for smaller government, engaging in sweeping deregulation and slashing the ranks of government officials responsible for enforcement, whether in the telecommunications, energy, banking,[3] or healthcare sectors.[4] Though the ambition to "unleash prosperity through deregulation"[5] does extend beyond the tech world, the second Trump administration—backed by Silicon Valley executives and their allies in the White House[6]—has shown particular determination in dismantling existing (and proposed) regulations governing the practices of major tech companies, for example regarding content moderation or the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Further adding to Washington's longstanding discontent with European regulatory efforts, the Trump administration has aggressively

1. Imran Ahmed, director of the Center for Countering Digital Hate, Clare Melford, head of the UK-based Global Disinformation Index, and two representatives of German NGO HateAid, Anna-Lena von Hodenberg and Josephine Ballon. See "Thierry Breton et des personnalités européennes sanctionnés par Washington pour leur rôle dans la régulation de la tech", *Le Monde*, December 23, 2025.
2. M. Rubio, "Announcement of Actions to Combat the Global Censorship-Industrial Complex", U.S. Department of State, December 23, 2025, available at: www.state.gov.
3. M. Arnold, "The US Is Deregulating Banks: Will the Rest of the World Follow?", *Financial Times*, November 27, 2025, available at: www.ft.com.
4. The White House has reported, after one year, 646 "deregulatory" actions, and 5 regulatory actions, though these figures are difficult to verify. See "White House Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs Releases End-of-Year Deregulatory Stats: Showing the Trump Administration Has Best Deregulation Year in History", White House, December 19, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
5. D. Trump, "Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation," Executive Order 14192, White House, January 31, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
6. On the growing ties between the American right and tech executives, see in particular: M. Kandel, "La droite tech contre la démocratie : comment la Silicon Valley s'est radicalisée", *Mediapart*, March 17, 2024; L. Nardon, "From Conservative Nationalists to Tech-Libertarians: Far-Right Ideologies in the Trump 2 Administration", *Chroniques américaines*, Ifri, January 31, 2025; S. Laurent, *La Contre-révolution californienne*, Paris: Seuil, 2025.

pursued this campaign across the Atlantic. The sanctions against Thierry Breton and the NGO representatives are just one of a wide range of tools employed by the United States to pressure the European Union (EU) and its member states to reconsider their positions on a variety of issues (content moderation, transparency requirements, AI regulation, anti-monopoly measures, data governance, taxation, etc.).

Which arguments and actors are most influential in the current U.S. effort to deregulate the tech industry? What are the informational, legal, economic, and political tools being leveraged to weaken U.S. and European regulatory frameworks? How can Europe respond?

To understand the political dynamics, driving forces, and contradictions underlying the United States' campaign to deregulate the tech sector, this paper will first examine how this campaign has played out domestically, as it is often underreported. It will then explore its aggressive expansion into Europe, driven by a wide range of actors with powerful tools, and provide an initial overview of its effectiveness. The conclusion will present recommendations to help Europeans respond to this American campaign.

"Delete, delete, delete":[7] The deregulation campaign within the United States

Since his first day back in the White House, President Trump has launched an aggressive effort to reduce what he has described as "the ever-expanding morass of complicated Federal regulation", rolling back many of his predecessors' policies. The objective is stated in no uncertain terms: for every new regulation adopted, ten existing ones must first be repealed.[8] This sweeping deregulation effort is in line with the Republican Party's tradition of favoring limited government intervention in the economy, as well as with the Trump administration's goal of dismantling the "deep state" (as exemplified by the actions of the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE). In the tech sector, this also reflects the criticism shared by Trump and Silicon Valley regarding the Biden administration's increases in regulatory measures, which have been characterized as "anti-tech".[9] A review of this first year of deregulation reveals the scale of the changes, the key role played by certain actors both within and outside of the executive branch (independent agencies, Congress, the private sector), as well as the ideological contradictions and internal opposition hindering this campaign.

Three objectives: unleashing innovation, competing with China, dismantling censorship

This wave of deregulation in the United States is justified through three main narratives, all of which emerged long before the second Trump administration, but have been (re)emphasized and implemented with far

7. This is the title of a "massive deregulation initiative" led by the Federal Communications Commission since March 2025, following executive orders calling for such action. See B. Carr, "FCC Chairman Carr Launches Massive Deregulation Initiative", Federal Communications Commission, March 12, 2025, available at: www.fcc.gov.

8. D. Trump, "Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation", *op. cit.*

9. See, for example, an initiative by the Chamber of Progress (a trade association representing the interests of tech companies such as Amazon, Uber, Meta, Google, and Apple) condemning the "hostile turn against tech" taken by Democrats in recent years: "Chamber of Progress Launches 'Blue Horizon Project' to Restore Democratic Tech Optimism", Chamber of Progress, September 9, 2025, available at: https://progresschamber.org.

greater force over the past year: the stifling of innovation, the Chinese threat, and the fear of censorship.

Firstly, the president's remarks calling for the removal of measures "that act as barriers to American AI innovation",[10] as well as the vice president's, expressing concern that "excessive regulation [...] could kill a transformative industry",[11] call upon core tenets of the American model, which has since the 1990s rested on the premise that regulation hinders innovation and economic growth.[12]

This supposed barrier to innovation is seen as all the more concerning in the context of competition with China. Well aware of how compelling the narrative of a "race" against China can prove to be, U.S. tech companies have invoked it since the late 2010s to dissuade the federal government from regulating their practices (anti-competitive conduct, data collection, etc.).[13] It is now the underlying theme of U.S. deregulation efforts. The White House's AI action plan, released in the summer of 2025 and titled "Winning the Race", states that "to *maintain global leadership* in AI, America's private sector must be unencumbered by bureaucratic red tape."[14] During the public presentation of this plan, President Trump was even more explicit, stating that it is impossible to require AI companies to pay royalties because "if you're going to be beating China [...] you have to be able to play by the same set of rules" and that "it'll be a policy of the United States to do whatever it takes to lead the world in artificial intelligence."[15]

Finally, with regard specifically to regulations governing content moderation, the Republicans' current efforts are consistent with a bipartisan American tradition of defending freedom of expression through minimal regulation. In its most extreme form, it equates any government effort to encourage platforms to combat disinformation and online hate speech with censorship. Already championed by the first Trump administration—for example, in the 2020 executive order titled "Preventing Online Censorship"[16]—this approach has regained

10. "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence", White House, January 23, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
11. J. D. Vance, "Remarks by the Vice President at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit", Paris, February 11, 2025.
12. A. Bradford, *Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023, pp. 34-40.
13. See, for example, K. Wagner, "Mark Zuckerberg Says Breaking Up Facebook Would Pave the Way for China's Tech Companies to Dominate", Vox, July 18, 2018; N. Tiku, "Big Tech: Breaking Us Up Will Only Help China", *Wired*, May 23, 2019.
14. "Winning the Race. America's AI Action Plan", White House, July 2025, p. 3, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
15. See D. Trump, "President Trump Delivers Remarks and Signs Executive Orders at AI Summit", White House, July 23, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
16. D. Trump, "Executive Order on Preventing Online Censorship", White House, May 28, 2020, available at: https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov.

prominence in recent years with the rise of MAGA Republicans in Congress and Donald Trump's return to the White House.

Both in the administration and in Congress, Republicans who are strongly critical of efforts to moderate content and combat misinformation are thus being appointed to key positions. There is no legislation in the United States that establishes general rules for content moderation; as a result, moderation policies vary from platform to platform and over time.[17] The Biden administration had nevertheless sought to encourage platforms to limit the spread of misinformation, particularly regarding Covid-19 and the elections, through public condemnation[18] and informal requests.[19]

Many Republicans and members of the current Trump administration have condemned such "pressures", deeming them a violation of the First Amendment and the freedom of speech it protects. These include Brendan Carr, who, upon his appointment as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), vowed to "smash the censorship cartel", and far-right Representative Jim Jordan, who has served as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee since January 2023. Under his leadership, this committee has issued numerous reports and held hearings detailing "the censorship-industrial complex: how top Biden White House officials coerced big tech to censor Americans [...] and critics of the administration"[20] or "censorship's next frontier: the federal government's attempt to control artificial intelligence to suppress free speech".[21]

One year of deregulation targeting AI, cybersecurity and content moderation

With these objectives in mind, the Trump administration has eliminated numerous regulations related to AI risk management, cybersecurity, and content moderation.

17. C. Cho and L. Zhu, "Social Media: Content Dissemination and Moderation Practices", *CRS Report*, Congress, March 2025.
18. For example, in response to a question about COVID-19 misinformation, President Biden stated that platforms like Facebook were "killing people". See "'They're killing people': President Biden on Social Media Spreading COVID Misinformation", Reuters, July 16, 2021, available at: www.youtube.com.
19. M. Teitler, "Missouri v. Biden Raises More First Amendment Questions Than It Answers", Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, July 19, 2023.
20. "The Censorship-Industrial Complex: How Top Biden White House Officials Coerced Big Tech to Censor Americans, True Information, and Critics of the Biden Administration", House Judiciary Committee and Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, May 1, 2024, available at: https://judiciary.house.gov.
21. "Censorship's Next Frontier: The Federal Government's Attempt to Control Artificial Intelligence to Suppress Free Speech", House Judiciary Committee and Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, December 18, 2024, available at: https://judiciary.house.gov.

Concerning AI, upon his arrival at the White House, President Trump rescinded his predecessor's sweeping executive order addressing the ethical and security risks associated with AI.[22] This was quickly followed by the issuance of an executive order aimed at "removing barriers to U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence"[23] (January 2025), followed by an action plan in July. This plan, a key priority of which was to "eliminate red tape and onerous regulation", calls on federal agencies (including the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Office of Management and Budget within the White House) to identify and review existing rules hindering the development and deployment of AI. The plan also recommends eliminating any references to misinformation, diversity issues, and climate change from the AI Risk Management Framework,[24] and streamlining and expediting the permitting process for data centers, semiconductor factories, and energy infrastructure.[25]

With regard to cybersecurity, the Trump administration is taking steps towards a similar policy reversal, seeking to undo the efforts undertaken since 2021. The Biden administration, through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), had sought "on the one hand, to shift the 'cybersecurity burden' away from users and onto federal authorities or major private-sector actors, and on the other hand, to incentivize tech businesses to invest in security right from the product design stage".[26] The White House opted to revise this strategy in favor of a less restrictive, less centralized approach at the federal level, placing greater emphasis on innovation (particularly through AI) in cybersecurity.

This policy change was reflected in an executive order issued in June 2025, which, among other things, struck the provision requiring government contractors to adhere to "minimum cybersecurity practices" and relaxed procedures for software security certification.[27] More broadly, this strategy has led to a reduction in federal government funding for cybersecurity. The Trump administration oversaw the departure of approximately one-third of CISA staff (including the entire Cyber Safety Review Board, tasked with investigating cyberattacks), and proposed in its

22. "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions", White House, January 20, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
23. "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence", White House, January 23, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
24. The AI Risk Management Framework, developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (U.S. Department of Commerce).
25. "Winning the Race. America's AI Action Plan", White House, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 and 14.
26. S. Taillat, *De la cybersécurité en Amérique. Puissance et vulnérabilités à l'ère numérique*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2024, p. 192.
27. S. Sabbague, "Pourquoi les GAFAM et autres géants du numérique sont très satisfaits du retour de Trump…", Calipia, September 11, 2025, available at: https://blog.calipia.com.

budget for fiscal year 2026 to cut $491 million from the agency's budget—a year-on-year reduction of about 17 percent.[28]

This reduction in federal resources is even more pronounced for teams focused on combating disinformation and foreign interference, which have been targeted by the campaign to combat the "censorship industrial complex". These teams were downsized or eliminated:

- within CISA;
- in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): the Foreign Influence Task Force was disbanded in February 2025;[29]
- in the State Department: the Counter Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Office was closed in April 2025;[30]
- in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI): the Foreign Malign Influence Center and the Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center were both shut down;[31]
- and within the National Security Agency (NSA).

Beyond these cuts, President Trump has, since his first day in office, denounced the "substantial coercive pressure" the government has placed on platforms in recent years to moderate online content, "under the guise of combating 'misinformation', 'disinformation', and 'malinformation'", and has proclaimed the "ending of federal censorship".[32] This strategy has resulted in platforms reducing their moderation efforts, as evidenced by YouTube's announcement of more lenient video removal policies[33] and Meta's announcement that it would no longer conduct fact-checking.[34]

These efforts by the administration—through executive orders, changes to regulatory requirements and non-binding guidelines, threats to withhold public funding,[35] and signals sent to platforms—have coincided with reduced scrutiny from authorities responsible for regulatory enforcement. This leniency reflects both implicit and explicit signals sent

28. S. Sabin, "Another Round of Layoffs Hits Cyber Defense Agency", Axios, October 14, 2025, available at: www.axios.com; R. T. Vought, "Letter to the Committee on Appropriations", White House, May 2, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.
29. K. Dilanian, "Pam Bondi Ends FBI Effort to Combat Foreign Influence in U.S. Politics", NBC News, February 7, 2025, available at: www.nbcnews.com.
30. M. Rubio, "Protecting and Championing Free Speech at the State Department", U.S. Department of State, April 16, 2025, available at: www.state.gov.
31. "Fact Sheet: ODNI 2.0 Launch", Director of National Intelligence, available at: www.dni.gov.
32. "Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship", White House, January 20, 2025, available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov.
33. N. Grant and T. Mickle, "YouTube Loosens Rules Guiding Video Moderation", *The New York Times*, June 9, 2025, available at: www.nytimes.com.
34. "Meta met fin à son programme de fact-checking aux États-Unis ce lundi", *Le Monde*, April 7, 2025, available at: www.lemonde.fr.
35. The AI Action Plan thus states that "the Federal government should not allow AI-related Federal funding to be directed toward states with burdensome AI regulations". See "Winning the Race. America's AI Action Plan", White House, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

by the administration: the AI Action Plan calls on the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to review investigations opened under the previous administration to ensure that they do not unduly stifle AI innovation. While it is still too early to quantify this relaxing of standards, a report by the NGO Public Citizen estimated that of the 142 investigations and actions targeting tech companies at the start of the Trump administration, one-third (47) had been suspended or withdrawn after six months.[36]

The pivotal role of the White House and independent agencies

These efforts are spearheaded by President Trump and Vice President Vance, who have played a very active role in this area, as well as by a number of officials within the administration. Some among them espouse libertarian ideals, seeking to minimize the federal government and its regulations, such as Russell Vaught, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Under his leadership, the OMB has played a more active role than in previous administrations, pushing for deregulation[37] and, more broadly, for agencies to implement the priorities set by the White House.[38] Others have emerged from Silicon Valley and the venture capital world; they advocate for an optimistic, export-oriented philosophy, with minimal government oversight of tech, and active support from the private sector. In addition to Vice President Vance, this group includes Michael Kratsios, head of the Office of Science and Technology Policy,[39] and David Sacks,[40] the President's science and technology advisor. On the diplomatic front (primarily targeting European measures), the State Department has been very active, particularly Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers. Outside of the administration itself, the directors of (ostensibly) independent agencies have also taken up this agenda:

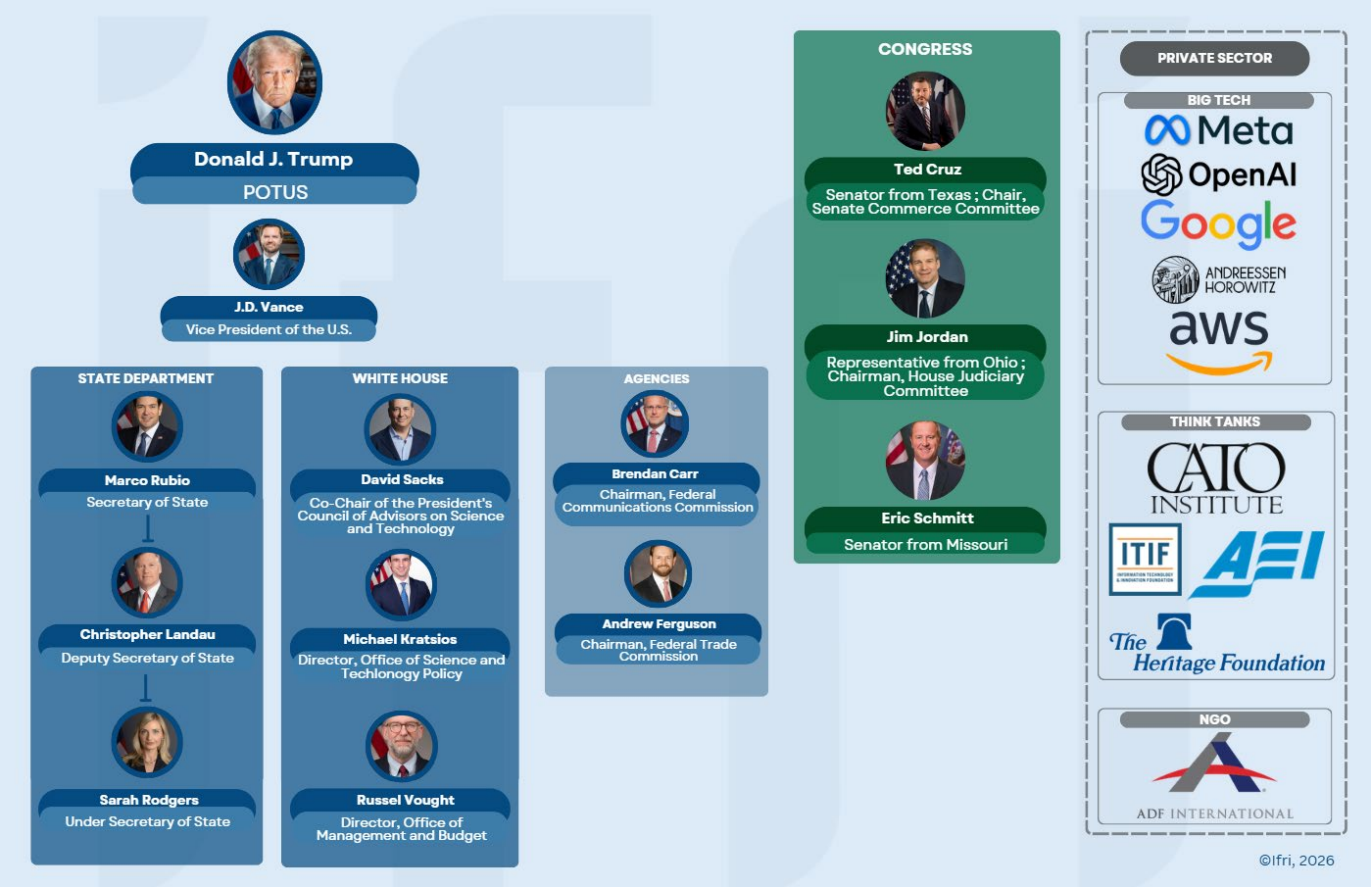
- Brendan Carr, who chairs the Federal Communications Commission, has launched a "massive deregulation initiative" dubbed "delete, delete, delete";

36. R. Claypool, "Deleting Tech Enforcement", Public Citizen, August 13, 2025, available at: www.citizen.org.
37. For example: "Request for Information: Deregulation", Federal Register, April 11, 2025, available at: www.federalregister.gov.
38. Interview conducted under Chatham House rules, Washington, D.C., December 4, 2025.
39. The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) has requested public comments on existing federal measures that hinder the deployment and adoption of AI in September 2025. See "Notice of Request for Information; Regulatory Reform on Artificial Intelligence", Federal Register, September 26, 2025, available at: www.federalregister.gov.
40. A leading figure among Washington "tech bros", David Sacks has come under fire for numerous conflicts of interest: a New York Times investigation identified 708 tech investments held by Sacks, including stakes in at least 449 AI-related companies that could directly or indirectly benefit from the policies he is implementing. See C. Kang *et al.*, "Silicon Valley's Man in the White House Is Benefiting Himself and His Friends", *The New York Times*, November 30, 2025, available at: www.nytimes.com.

- Andrew Ferguson, appointed head of the Federal Trade Commission (responsible for combating monopolistic practices), has both recommended the repeal of numerous regulations and launched investigations into issues the president has championed, such as "censorship by technology platforms".[41]

The administration also has the support of parts of Congress in this effort. Though there is a lack of consensus among Republicans, some elected officials have significant influence on these issues, such as Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who chairs the Senate Commerce Committee and has advocated for the deregulation of AI,[42] and Ohio Representative and Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan, who is strongly opposed to online content moderation.

Leading U.S. figures in tech deregulation in the United States and Europe



41. "Federal Trade Commission Launches Inquiry into Tech Censorship", Federal Trade Commission, February 20, 2025, available at: www.ftc.gov.
42. J. Kraus, "Ted Cruz Has a Detailed Plan to Loosen AI Regulations", Lawfare, January 26, 2026, available at: www.lawfaremedia.org.

A campaign undermined by contradictions and opposition

Although this large-scale campaign of deregulation, carried out by the administration in its entirety, may appear consistent in its stated objectives, it nevertheless carries contradictions, internal tensions, and resistance that limit its scope and complicate its implementation.

Deregulation vs. instrumentalization

What may appear to be a systematic effort to reduce government intervention in the tech sector still carries certain regulatory ambitions. With regard to online child protection, for example, figures such as Tennessee Republican Senator Marsha Blackburn[43] and Vice President J. D. Vance have actively promoted legislative initiatives, such as the TAKE IT DOWN Act, which aims to ban the publication of sexually explicit images or deepfakes, particularly those depicting minors.[44]

Rather than eliminating any and all forms of regulation, the administration aims to reframe its objectives to better align them with the government's political and ideological priorities. The issue of "ideologically unbiased" AI is a case in point. Rather than eliminating AI regulation entirely, the administration is modifying existing regulatory frameworks, for example by revising the NIST AI Risk Management Framework, through the executive order on preventing a "woke" bias in algorithms used by the government, or the requirement for AI that is "free from ideological bias and [...] designed to pursue objective truth rather than social engineering agendas"[45] in the White House plan. Beyond the technical challenges such requirements pose, these measures reveal a desire to shape regulation to serve a specific political vision of AI, rather than to eliminate it entirely.

Likewise, regarding antitrust policy, President Trump—himself a vocal critic of Big Tech's monopolistic practices[46]—has appointed two figures known for their staunch opposition to anti-competitive practices to key positions: Gail Slater, as head of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division,

43. Senator Blackburn has reintroduced the Kids Online Safety Act in May 2025, with the support of Senate Republican and Democratic leaders.
44. The Tools to Address Known Exploitation by Immobilizing Technological Deepfakes on Websites and Networks Act (or TAKE IT DOWN Act) was enacted in May 2025. The FTC also announced its intention to tackle the issue of online child protection and the impact of social media on their mental health. See R. Reader, "The FTC Takes on Kids Online Safety", Politico, June 5, 2025.
45. "Winning the Race: America's AI Action Plan", White House, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
46. See Trump's post announcing Gail Slanter's nomination in December 2024: "Big Tech has run wild for years, stifling competition in our most innovative sector and, as we all know, using its market power to crack down on the rights of so many Americans, as well as those of Little Tech!" "I was proud to fight these abuses during my first term, and our Department of Justice's antitrust team will continue that work under Gail's leadership." Post by Donald Trump, @realDonaldTrump, on Truth Social, December 4, 2024, available at: https://truthsocial.com.

and Andrew Ferguson, as chairman of the FTC. Both have reaffirmed their intention to continue imposing significant pressure on the major platforms.[47] They are supported in this effort by a large segment of the MAGA ecosystem in Congress and the administration, which deplores the market dominance of a small number of tech giants who, they claim, use their power to censor conservative speech.[48] Among other examples, James D. Vance has stated that "[a new industrial revolution] will never come to pass [...] if we allow AI to become dominated by massive players looking to use the tech to censor or control users' thoughts".[49] Frequently denounced by Jim Jordan,[50] the political impact of major platform dominance is summarized by the pro-Trump think tank Center for Renewing America, which warns:

> "the iron grip of the Big Tech oligarchy on American public life must be loosened—and, if necessary, shattered—to ensure the American idea lives on for future generations. Big Tech companies have risen to the top of the power hierarchy in ways unimagined by previous generations. In their adherence to radical woke ideology, we are witnessing the transformation of these monopolistic tech juggernauts into political cudgels for a radical authoritarian worldview."[51]

The government also relies on tools other than antitrust laws to "smash" this alleged "censorship cartel". The day prior to his appointment as FCC chairman, Brendan Carr threatened to strip Meta, Google, Microsoft, and Apple of their legal protection against lawsuits related to user-posted content (granted under Section 230 of the Communications Act) in order to force them—a move that has since proven successful—to realign their content moderation policies in a direction more favorable to the Trump administration and conservative views.[52]

The Republican push for deregulation thus coexists with a political desire to leverage regulation to force tech companies to align with the administration's ideological priorities.

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47. D. Primack, "Trump Names Gail Slater to Lead DOJ's Antitrust Unit", Axios, December 4, 2024, available at: www.axios.com.
48. "Big Tech", Center for Renewing America, available at: www.americarenewing.com.
49. J. D. Vance, "Remarks by the Vice President at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit", *op. cit.*
50. Jim Jordan and his Judiciary Committee have thus strongly criticized Big Tech's alleged collusion with the Biden administration in favor of censorship. See "The Censorship-Industrial Complex", Committee on the Judiciary, May 1, 2024.
51. "Big Tech", Center for Renewing America, *op. cit.*
52. Section 230 of the Communications Act protects social media platforms from legal liability for content posted on their platforms. In his chapter of Project 2025 and in a letter to Big Tech, Brendan Carr asserts that it is up to the Federal Communications Commission to determine whether these platforms' moderation decisions are made "in good faith", a necessary condition for them to benefit from this legal protection. In practice, this means that the FCC could penalize platforms if their moderation policies are deemed "biased" or "discriminatory" toward conservative voices, forcing companies to comply with the administration's demands in order to retain their immunity. See B. Carr, "Letter to Messrs. Pichai, Zuckerberg, Nadella, and Cook", FCC, November 13, 2024, available at: www.fcc.gov.

States vs. the federal government: Republican resistance

These deregulation efforts also clash with the desire of states to establish regulatory frameworks for data protection or AI governance. Wanting to avoid a "patchwork" of state regulations, and citing the risk of falling behind China, the Trump administration and some Republican lawmakers[53] have attempted to impose a decade-long moratorium on any state-level AI regulations, with the backing of tech companies such as OpenAI, Google, Meta, and Andreessen Horowitz.[54] First proposed in Congress, this moratorium has faced bipartisan opposition at both the local (governors, attorneys general) and national levels.[55] It was rejected by a vote of 99 to 1 in the Senate, forcing the administration to act by executive order (the legality of which is disputed) in December 2025.[56] The order gives the Department of Justice the authority to challenge state laws deemed too restrictive and directs the Secretary of Commerce to block access to federal funds for states that adopt them. The national policy framework on AI unveiled by the White House on March 20, 2026, builds on this approach by calling on Congress to preempt state AI laws in order "to ensure a minimally burdensome national standard".[57]

The Trump administration is also putting direct pressure on state lawmakers (including in Utah and Ohio[58]) to push them to abandon their AI bills, prompting 50 local Republican lawmakers to issue an open letter protesting these actions in March 2026.[59] Setting aside the Republican Party's traditional preference for "states' rights", the Trump administration is thus attempting to use its budgetary and regulatory power to prevent the emergence of AI governance at the local level.

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53. Texas Republican Representative Ted Cruz, or California Representative Darrell Issa in "AI at a Crossroads: A Nationwide Strategy or Californication?", U.S. House of Representatives, September 18, 2025, available at: https://judiciary.house.gov.

54. D. Cochrane and W. Hodges, "A Federalist Approach to AI Policy", The Heritage Foundation, August 7, 2025, available at: www.heritage.org; "Trump to Issue Order Creating National AI Rule", Reuters, December 8, 2025, available at: www.reuters.com. Several of these firms, including OpenAI and Andreessen Horowitz, provide funding for U.S. Super PACs (Political Action Committees) such as Leading the Future, which support political candidates opposed to tech regulation. See T. Schleifer, "Anthropic Puts $20 Million Into a Super PAC Operation to Counter OpenAI", *The New York Times*, February 12, 2026, available at: www.nytimes.com.

55. A. Atterbury, "Desantis: Trump's AI Order 'Can't Preempt' States From Taking Action", Politico, August 12, 2025, available at: www.politico.com.

56. D. Trump, "Ensuring a National Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence", White House, December 11, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov; J. Godoy, "Trump's Order Targeting State AI Laws Faces Political and Legal Hurdles", Reuters, December 12, 2025, available at: www.reuters.com.

57. "National Policy Framework – Artificial Intelligence", White House, March 20, 2026, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.

58. A. Gold, "White House Puts Red State AI Laws Under Scrutiny", Axios, March 6, 2025, available at: www.axios.com.

59. L. Blessing *et al.*, "Letter to the President", March 3, 2026, available at: https://ari.us.

While the Trump administration is pursuing a campaign of digital deregulation at both the local and federal levels, this effort is being carried out with even greater vigor across the Atlantic.

"Show respect to America and our amazing tech companies": opposition to European regulation

Washington's objections to European regulations in the digital and technology sectors did not first appear during the second Trump administration, or even the first. In the early days of the Internet, the Clinton administration launched a bilateral and multilateral diplomatic campaign favoring limited regulation for technology and digital commerce, an approach that subsequent administrations would largely continue to pursue.[60] Even the more Atlanticist administrations have criticized European regulation: from President Obama, who, in defending Google and Facebook—then under investigation by the European Commission—said in 2015 that the EU's response "is sometimes a mask for European protectionism", to the Biden administration, which, while attempting to better regulate major platforms domestically, simultaneously sought to slow down and dilute European efforts to reform the sector.[61]

Over the past year, however, this opposition has intensified, becoming increasingly aggressive, with the administration deploying new tactics and placing a growing emphasis on accusations of "censorship".

Censorship, threats to sovereignty, illegitimacy of the EU: accusations from Washington

The U.S. has raised numerous objections to European regulation, some of which echo the arguments outlined above: the negative impact of regulation on innovation, ensuring that U.S. companies are not hindered in their competition with China,[62] and equating content moderation

60. J.-B. Velut, "Technological Leader, Regulatory Laggard? Washington and the Shifting Governance of Digital Trade", in: M. Stricof and I. Vagnoux, *U.S. Leadership in a World of Uncertainties*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.
61. M. Velliet, "Digital Sovereignty: European Policies, American Dilemmas", *Notes de l'Ifri*, Ifri, January 2023.
62. For example, Tennessee Republican Representative Diana Harshbarger posted on X: "The EU's enforcement actions today under the #DMA unfairly target some of our nation's leading innovators. These orders risk harming consumers and threaten to put us behind our foreign adversaries on the

policies with censorship. Their focus is set on a number of (existing or planned) measures around the world, with particular emphasis on Europe:

- the Digital Services Act (DSA);
- the Digital Markets Act (DMA);
- the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act);
- the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR);
- proposed regulations on space (EU Space Act) and data centers (Cloud and AI Development Act);
- cloud security measures (EU Cybersecurity Certification Scheme on Cloud Services (EUCS) at the European level, SecNumCloud at the French level);
- national digital services taxes (DSTs).

Unlike the Biden administration, the Trump administration (backed by Republican lawmakers like Jim Jordan) focuses most of its criticism on the alleged "censorship" that the DSA would impose and the content moderation requirements.[63] U.S. lawmakers thus portray the DSA as a tool for European governments to silence their critics, censor conservatives while emboldening left-wing civil society organizations, and force major platforms to alter their global content moderation practices (which would infringe on the free speech of U.S. citizens). The DSA, it should be noted, is not a tool for censorship, but a framework designed to hold digital platforms accountable by regulating the moderation of illegal content (such as hate speech and misinformation) and ensuring transparency, in particular regarding their moderation policies, in order to protect users' fundamental rights. Furthermore, the text's legal scope is strictly European: it applies to providers offering their services to users located in the EU, and considers content to be illegal when defined as such by a Member State's national law or EU law.

The U.S.'s vehement criticism, based more on ideology than economics, has become both a foreign policy objective and a tool of domestic politics, aimed at winning over conservatives by positioning the administration as a bulwark against what it portrays as an attack on free speech. This is sometimes taken to absurd lengths, making transatlantic dialogue on the subject difficult: some U.S. diplomats have complained to

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global stage." Post by Diana Harshbarger, @RepHarshbarger, on X, March 20, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

63. Interviews conducted under Chatham House Rules, Washington, D.C., December 2025. This priority is also evident in posts on X by U.S. officials criticizing European regulations, more than 60% of which (since January 1, 2025) have cited concerns regarding censorship or free speech. Analysis of posts on X by lawmakers and executive branch representatives critical of European regulations, published between January 1, 2025, and February 10, 2026, using Sahar.

their European counterparts that U.S. platforms receive ten times as many requests to remove content in the United Kingdom, a democratic state, as in China… overlooking the obvious contrast in the two ecosystems' degree of openness.[64]

Other criticisms are more commonplace, though they are being voiced with greater aggression, such as accusations of protectionism and discrimination against U.S. companies. Indeed, most of these European measures (DSA, DMA, DSTs) set a threshold above which companies are subject to regulation.[65] These thresholds, designed to target the digital sector's major players due to their economic clout and market influence, effectively apply mainly to U.S. companies, not because of their nationality, but because they structurally dominate the global digital ecosystem.

Washington generally views European digital governance with skepticism, considering it burdensome due to its impact on the revenues of U.S. companies. Digital services taxes cut into the profits of U.S. (and European) companies.[66] Regulations such as the DMA and the GDPR are considered problematic because they place a dual burden on major U.S. platforms: firstly, the direct cost of ensuring compliance, and secondly, the indirect costs resulting from the structural disruption to their business model, which is based on the large-scale collection of personal data and vertical integration strategies. U.S. businesses and the U.S. government also oppose measures adopted in the name of digital sovereignty and cybersecurity which involve the targeted exclusion of U.S. technologies, challenging, for example, the requirement for "immunity" from extraterritorial laws proposed in the EUCS, as well as any European preference clause proposed in the Cloud and AI Development Act.[67]

Finally, this campaign by Washington reflects the United States' long-standing reluctance to see its companies subject to foreign regulation. Beyond the current administration's preference for a lack of regulatory constraints, the fact that these constraints are being imposed by a non-U.S. entity is especially aggravating. European regulations are thus

64. Interview with the author conducted under Chatham House rules, Washington, D.C., December 2025.
65. For example, the DSA applies to platforms with more than 45 million active users in the EU, while France's digital services tax applies to companies with global revenue exceeding 750 million euros and revenue in France exceeding 25 million euros.
66. The French digital services tax, which applies to a few dozen French and foreign companies, generated 680 million euros in revenue for the government in 2023. "Évaluation des voies et moyens", Annexe au projet de loi de finances pour 2025, Tome 1 : Recettes, French Government, 2025, p. 24.
67. This opposition appears to have paid off: the cybersecurity regulation presented in January 2026 no longer features the idea (advocated for by France) of a safeguard against extraterritorial laws. The announcement of the package which includes the Cloud and AI Development Act has been postponed once again and is now scheduled for late May 2026. See M. Laghrari, "Cloud : l'Europe renonce à imposer des critères de souveraineté", *Les Échos*, January 26, 2026; M. Henning, "Le paquet phare sur la souveraineté technologique de l'UE une nouvelle fois reporté", Euractiv, March 17, 2026.

portrayed as "a fundamental attack on our sovereignty"[68] and an "infringement on American sovereignty",[69] paradoxically echoing the very notion of digital sovereignty. This perception fuels resentment toward the EU, whose democratic legitimacy is called into question. This criticism is reflected in U.S. government officials' posts on X, using technocratic vocabulary, or sometimes more direct language, with Senator Eric Schmitt describing the regulations as "tyrannical censorship", or Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Landau describing the EU as "unelected, undemocratic, and unrepresentative".[70] EU policy—even when it targets business activities in Europe, data collection from European users, and influence on European politics—is described as "extraterritorial."[71]

A vast array of actors wielding powerful tools

The U.S. government and its levers of influence

These criticisms are actively amplified by the U.S. executive branch—in particular the offices of the president, vice president, State Department, and FCC—which employs a wide range of tools to pressure Europe into relaxing, suspending, or eliminating its regulations.

Members of the administration and Congress repeatedly criticize the regulations in speeches, media statements, and social media posts—J. D. Vance describing them as "a terrible mistake not just for the United States of America but for your own countries"[72]—and declare Washington's total opposition to these measures.[73] These statements also

68. Post by Under Secretary of State Sarah B. Rogers, @UnderSecPD, on X, December 5, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

69. Post by Arkansas Republican Senator Tom Cotton, @SenTomCotton, on X, December 9, 2025, available at: https://x.com. National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard, for her part, calls it a "gross violation of our sovereignty". See Tulsi Gabbard's post, @DNIGabbard, on X, December 24, 2025, available at: https://x.com. This rhetoric also appears in the December 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy (p. 10) and in the February 2025 presidential memorandum condemning countries that have adopted digital services taxes. See D. Trump, "Defending American Companies and Innovators From Overseas Extortion and Unfair Fines and Penalties", Federal Register, February 26, 2025, available at: www.federalregister.gov.

70. This technocratic vocabulary denounces the actions of "Eurocrats", "foreign bureaucrats", and "ideologues" imposing "regulatory decrees". Post by Senator Eric Schmitt, @SenEricSchmitt, on X, December 23, 2025, available at: https://x.com; Post by Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, @DeputySecState, on X, December 6, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

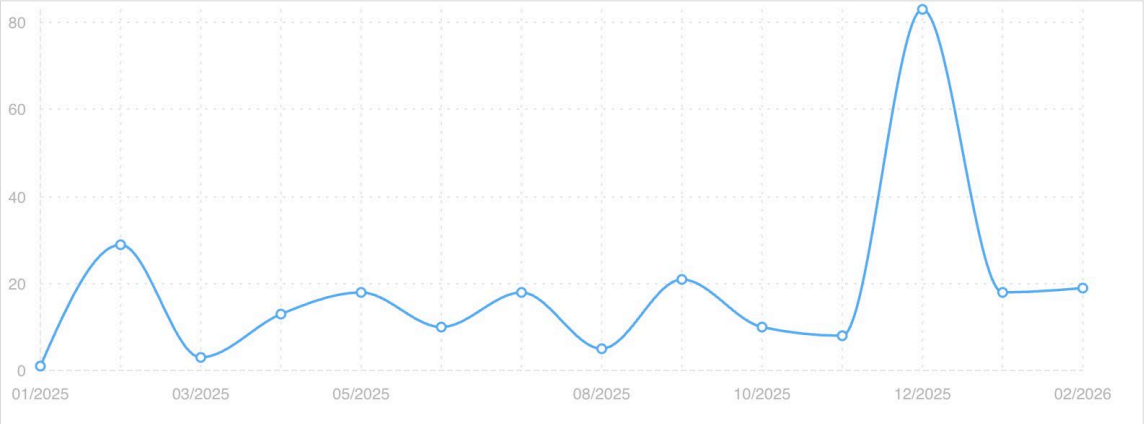
71. A term employed, among others, by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers, government spokesperson Karoline Leavitt, and Senator Eric Schmitt in their posts on X.

72. J. D. Vance, "Remarks by the Vice President at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit", *op. cit.*

73. Among many other examples, see: Donald Trump's post, @realDonaldTrump, on Truth Social, August 26, 2025, available at: https://truthsocial.com; J. D. Vance's speech in February 2025 in Paris, available at: www.presidency.ucsb.edu; or statements made to the *Financial Times* by U.S. Ambassador to the EU Andrew Puzder. See H. Foy and B. Moens, "Brussels Told to Prove Digital Rules Do Not 'Punish' US Tech or Fix Them", *Financial Times*, September 28, 2025, available at: www.ft.com.

strongly condemn the fines imposed by the European Commission on U.S. companies for violating European regulations. The €120 million fine imposed on X, in particular, led to a surge in activity on the network by U.S. officials in December 2025.[74]

Posts on X by the U.S. government regarding European digital regulations



Source: Publicly available posts on X, published between January 1, 2025, and February 10, 2026. Data visualization by Sahar.

Posts by members of the Trump administration condemning the fine imposed by the EU on X

Secretary Marco Rubio
@SecRubio

The European Commission's $140 million fine isn't just an attack on @X, it's an attack on all American tech platforms and the American people by foreign governments.

The days of censoring Americans online are over.

5:06 PM · Dec 5, 2025 · **24.2M** Views

JD Vance
@JDVance

Rumors swirling that the EU commission will fine X hundreds of millions of dollars for not engaging in censorship. The EU should be supporting free speech not attacking American companies over garbage.

11:03 PM · Dec 4, 2025 · **51.4M** Views

Andrew Ferguson
@AFergusonFTC

Secretary Rubio is right. The EU not only wants to censor Americans, it's paying itself for the privilege. Disgraceful. Censorship and the targeting of American companies by foreign governments needs to stop now.

> **Secretary Marco Rubio** @SecRubio · Dec 5, 2025
> The European Commission's $140 million fine isn't just an attack on @X, it's an attack on all American tech platforms and the American people by foreign governments.
>
> The days of censoring Americans online are over.

11:10 PM · Dec 5, 2025 · **1M** Views

Under Secretary of State Sarah B. Rogers reposted

Under Secretary of State Jacob S. Helberg
@UnderSecE

The DSA was sold as "online safety" but it's become a blunt instrument of political control and financial extortion—now hitting @X with a $120M fine for refusing to let Brussels police online speech.

Let's be clear: this isn't "digital regulation." It's censorship and a backdoor cash grab by an EU bureaucracy that can't levy taxes openly, so it weaponizes fines instead.

And those most hurt are everyday European citizens—these punitive fines kill investment, crush business confidence, and drive innovators away.

America will never adopt this model!

Last edited 9:15 PM · Dec 5, 2025 · **50.1K** Views

74. The number of posts on X by members of the U.S. government (in the executive branch and Congress) regarding European digital regulations quadrupled in December 2025 compared to the monthly average for the rest of the year.

Ranking the government's most active members on X on the issue of European digital regulations helps highlight the involvement of the individuals mentioned above. Both the legislative and executive branches are actively involved, though in different ways: while members of Congress post more messages, those from the Undersecretary of State generate significantly more engagement (likes, replies, reposts).

Official U.S. accounts with the most posts criticizing European digital regulations[75]

Utilisateur	↓ Messages	Interactions
JudiciaryGOP	48	54 860 548
UnderSecPD	32	129 501 701
Jim_Jordan	32	21 377 476
SenEricSchmitt	18	3 517 846
tedcruz	9	26 650 755

Aside from rhetoric, the administration also attempts to sway Europe through trade restrictions. On several occasions, President Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on countries that "attack our incredible American tech companies" by enacting regulations.[76] Starting in February 2025, the White House has directed the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to determine whether to launch investigations against countries that have implemented digital services taxes (such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, or Spain).[77] Citing Sections 301 and 302 of the Trade Act, these investigations could lead to new tariff restrictions targeting these countries.[78] Beyond these threats, existing customs barriers—which, in theory, have nothing to do with tech—are also being used as leverage. During transatlantic negotiations aimed at reducing tariffs on steel and aluminum, which had been significantly raised by the Trump administration, Commerce Secretary

75. Posts on X published between January 1, 2025, and February 10, 2026, publicly available on x.com. "Interactions" include likes, replies, and reposts. Sahar software tools were used to analyze this data.

76. Post by Donald Trump, @realDonaldTrump, on Truth Social, August 26, 2025, available at: https://truthsocial.com.

77. D. Trump, "Defending American Companies and Innovators from Extortion and Unfair Fines and Penalties", *op. cit.*

78. The first Trump administration had already launched Section 301 investigations into this matter in 2020, which were closed following negotiations in 2021. It is currently unclear where the USTR stands with regard to (re)opening such investigations. The administration has the support of some members of Congress in this effort: several lawmakers have called on the executive branch to reopen these investigations, for example in retaliation for France's plans to increase the digital services tax in November 2025. R. Estes *et al.*, "Letter to President Trump on France's DST", November 25, 2025, available at: www.calameo.com.

Howard Lutnick stated that the EU would need to relax its regulations if it wished to secure exemptions.[79]

Threats of non-tariff barriers are brandished as well, for example, in retaliation for the EU Space Act currently under negotiation, which, according to the U.S. government, would impose "unacceptable regulatory burdens on U.S. providers".[80] In response to European requirements calling on companies (of all nationalities) to limit their space debris and pollution and to strengthen their cybersecurity, Brendan Carr threatened to restrict European companies' access to the U.S. market.[81] President Trump has also threatened to impose restrictions on U.S. technology exports to countries that impose taxes and regulations on the digital sector, thereby depriving them of advanced semiconductors manufactured by Nvidia or AMD.[82] The Department of Commerce has also considered introducing new controls on exports of AI chips worldwide, which could require Europeans to obtain approval from the Trump administration for their purchases of graphics processors.[83]

These threats help Washington enlist American and European companies in its campaign against regulation, including companies outside the digital sector. The Trump administration can, for example, encourage companies to lobby the European Commission on this issue, lest the reimbursement of their tariffs (should courts rule in their favor) be significantly delayed.[84] In France, the Parliament's examination in late October 2025 of an amendment to the budget bill that would increase the digital services tax has prompted threats of "aggressive retaliatory action" from Washington, including from Congress.[85] Fearing they might become the target of these retaliatory tariffs, French representatives for the wine and spirits sector actively campaigned against the amendment,

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79. The Secretary of Commerce also urged Europe to "solve" outstanding cases against Google, Microsoft, and Amazon and to "create a framework that we are comfortable with". H. Lutnick, quoted in A. Bounds, B. Moens, and A. Williams, "Howard Lutnick Warns EU to Relax Tech Rules if It Wants Lower Steel Tariffs", *Financial Times*, November 24, 2025, available at: www.ft.com.

80. "Comments of the United States of America on the Proposed EU Space Act", Federal Register, 2025, p. 1, available at: https://cdn.table.media.

81. M. Pollet, "Top Trump Ally Threatens Retaliation Over EU Space Tech Law", Politico, March 3, 2026; "Space Bureau and Office of International Affairs Seek Comment on Satellite Market Access Reciprocity", *Public Notice*, Federal Communications Commission, March 2, 2026, available at: https://docs.fcc.gov.

82. Post by Donald Trump on Truth Social, August 26, 2025, *op. cit.*

83. This proposed rule appears to have been suspended on March 13, 2026. See M. Hawkins, "US Considers Requiring Permits for Nvidia and AMD's Global AI Chip Sales", Bloomberg, March 5, 2026.

84. Interview with the author under Chatham House Rules, Washington, D.C., December 5, 2025. This argument was being used even before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the trade barriers imposed by President Trump under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which took effect on February 20, 2025.

85. R. Estes *et al.*, "Letter to President Trump on France's DST", *op. cit.*; "Ways and Means Committee Republican Leaders Slam French Proposal to Impose Higher Discriminatory Digital Services Tax on U.S. Innovators", House Committee on Ways and Means, October 27, 2025, available at: https://waysandmeans.house.gov.

even attaching the U.S. Congress's letter to their own letter to the congressman responsible for the amendment.[86]

Another tool employed by the administration is the threat of barring entry into the United States. First suggested by Secretary of State Marco Rubio as a measure against those involved in the implementation of European regulations starting in May 2025, it was put into effect in December with sanctions targeting former Commissioner Thierry Breton and four NGO representatives.[87] The Secretary of State also warned that he is prepared to "expand this list if others do not reverse course".[88]

The State Department has also instructed all of its European embassies to raise U.S. concerns over the DSA and its costs to European businesses in their interactions with local authorities, to propose amendments to the text, and to investigate any suspected government censorship (primarily affecting U.S. citizens and businesses) by engaging with government officials, businesses, civil society representatives, etc.[89]

In addition to these investigations and diplomatic efforts, the State Department has deployed resources to circumvent European regulations, such as the freedom.gov website. This website, live since February 2026, currently only displays the message "freedom is coming", but is intended to allow Europeans to access content deemed illegal by their governments (hate speech, terrorist propaganda, etc.).[90] This initiative stands in contrast to the U.S. decision to largely dismantle the State Department's Internet Freedom program, which since the 2000s had been providing funding to local groups developing technologies to circumvent censorship in countries across the globe, from Myanmar to Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela.[91]

Finally, a less frequently mentioned lever, though one with considerable strategic implications, lies in the conditionality of U.S. security assistance. In September 2024, J. D. Vance, then a vice-presidential candidate, asserted that U.S. support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would be contingent on it adhering to a "pro-

86. "Lettre au député EELV Arnaud Bonnet", Comité interprofessionnel du vin de champagne, January 13, 2026, available at: www.calameo.com; see the investigation by Radio France's investigative unit on the subject: M. Dupin, "Comment les États-Unis ont contraint la France à renoncer à augmenter la taxe Gafam", Radio France, January 16, 2026, available at: www.radiofrance.fr.
87. S. Lewis and D. Psaledakis, "US to Ban Foreign Officials over 'Flagrant Censorship' on Social Media", Reuters, May 28, 2025; M. Rubio, "Announcement of Actions to Combat the Global Censorship-Industrial Complex", *op. cit.*
88. Post by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, @SecRubio, on X, December 23, 2025, available at: https://x.com.
89. H. Pamuk, "Exclusive: Rubio Orders U.S. Diplomats to Launch Lobbying Blitz Against Europe's Tech Law", Reuters, August 7, 2025.
90. S. Lewis, H. Pamuk, and G. Slattery, "U.S. Plans Online Portal to Bypass Content Bans in Europe and Elsewhere", Reuters, February 18, 2026.
91. A. Down, "U.S. Funding for Global Internet Freedom 'Effectively Gutted'", *The Guardian*, February 19, 2026.

free speech" stance (i.e., the absence of transparency and moderation regulations targeting U.S. companies), in reaction to a letter from Thierry Breton reminding Elon Musk of his obligations under the DSA.[92] More recently, following the fine imposed on X for its violations of the DSA, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Landau made a similar statement.[93]

In an effort to ease or eliminate European digital regulations, the Trump administration has thus aggressively pursued a number of strategies, combining public advocacy with diplomatic pressure, threats of trade retaliation, and security concerns. While it is difficult to measure the individual impact of each approach, as one European diplomat has observed: "it is their combination that makes them effective, and their unpredictability".[94]

92. R. Rommen, "J D Vance Suggested the U.S. Could Withdraw Support for NATO If Europe Tries to Regulate Elon Musk's X", Business Insider, September 21, 2024, available at: www.businessinsider.com.
93. He declared on X: "What's even worse is that the US is in a MILITARY ALLIANCE with the very countries attacking us via the EU. [...] this contradiction cannot continue. The nations of Europe cannot look to the US for their own security at the same time they affirmatively undermine the security of the US itself [...]". Post by Christopher Landau, @DeputySecState, on X, December 6, 2025, available at: https://x.com.
94. Interview with an anonymous diplomat, Washington, D.C., December 2025.

Selective chronology of European measures and U.S. responses

2018
- Adoption of the **GDPR.**

2019
- France adopts a 3% tax on digital services.

2021
- The USTR determines that the digital services taxes (DSTs) adopted by several countries are discriminatory and announces additional tariffs, which are ultimately suspended.

2022
- Adoption of the **DSA** and the **DMA.**

2024
- Adoption of the **AI Act.**

2025
- **January 28, 2025**: Trump dismisses the Democratic members of the PCLOB.
- **February 11–14, 2025**: Speeches by J. D. Vance on the "deregulatory flavor" in the digital and AI sectors (February 11) and at the Munich Security Conference (February 14).
- **February 21, 2025**: Presidential Memorandum on "Protecting American Businesses and Innovators from Extortion and Unfair Fines and Penalties."
- **February 2025**: Trump directs the USTR to determine whether to reopen the Section 301 investigation into digital service taxes imposed by France and other countries.
- **April 23, 2025**: The European Commission fines Meta and Apple a total of €700 million for failing to comply with the **DMA**.
- **July 2025**: Report by the House Judiciary Committee on "How the DSA Imposes Global Censorship and Violates American Freedom of Speech."
- **August 2025**: Rubio sends a diplomatic cable to U.S. embassies in Europe to launch a campaign against national policies and laws that "restrict online freedom of expression."
- **September 4, 2025**: The European Commission fines Google €2.95 billion for its advertising practices.
- **August 26, 2025**: Trump denounces on Truth Social the "countries that are attacking our amazing American tech companies [...]".
- **October 2025**: France is considering raising its digital services tax.
- **November 19, 2025**: The European Commission publishes a proposal for a comprehensive digital regulation on AI.
- **November 24, 2025**: Secretary Lutnick states that the EU must ease its tech regulations if it wants to negotiate a reduction in U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum.
- **December 4, 2025**: The European Commission fines X €120 million for failing to comply with the **DSA**.
- **December 23, 2025**: Thierry Breton and four civil society leaders are denied U.S. visas.

2026
- **January 2026**: The Trump administration prepares to launch the freedom.gov website.

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The Trump administration is supported in this effort by the Republican majority in Congress. In addition to criticizing European actions on social media, Republican lawmakers have drafted letters urging the executive branch to sanction Europe[95] or questioning the European Commission, held hearings, published reports (including one entitled "How the European Union's Digital Services Act Compels Global Censorship and Infringes on American Free Speech"),[96] and compelled major platforms to hand over their communications with "foreign censors".[97] These reports, published in July 2025 and February 2026, publicly identify (along with their email addresses) multiple members of the European Commission in charge of regulatory enforcement, a move widely interpreted as an attempt to intimidate authorities and hinder law enforcement.[98] Some elected officials have even proposed resolutions condemning European laws and regulations,[99] as well as bills to prohibit their enforcement.[100] European Commission representatives have therefore increased their efforts to advocate for digital regulation not only with the executive branch but also with Congress (particularly the House Judiciary Committee).

A campaign taken up by private actors

This American campaign is also being promoted in Europe by civil society organizations. First and foremost, the vast majority of U.S. tech companies support deregulation,[101] both in the United States and in Europe. While some companies like Meta and X are strongly opposed to the DSA and what they view as European censorship, most are focused on other regulations (e.g., the DMA, GDPR, and AI Act), which have a greater financial impact on them.

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95. For example, to urge the executive branch to reopen a Section 301 investigation against France and its digital services tax, or to sanction "apparatchiks" in the EU (among other countries). See R. Estes *et al.*, "Letter to President Trump on France's DST", *op. cit.*; E. Schmitt, "Letter to Undersecretary Rogers", December 18, 2025, available at: https://t.co/EnDsbVtflM.

96. "The Foreign Censorship Threat: How the European Union's Digital Services Act Compels Global Censorship and Infringes on American Free Speech", Republican Majority Report, House Committee on the Judiciary, July 25, 2025. A second volume of this report was published on February 3, 2026, and is available at: https://judiciary.house.gov.

97. In February and April 2025, nine platforms were subpoenaed and compelled by Congress to hand over their communications as part of its investigation into the "threat of foreign censorship": X, Meta, Alphabet, Reddit, Rumble, Apple, Amazon, TikTok, Microsoft, and Reddit.

98. E. Gkritsi, "EU Tech Enforcer Tells Officials Not to Be Scared by US Threats", Politico, February 16, 2026.

99. Such as the resolution proposed on December 18, 2025, by seven Republican representatives, available at: www.congress.gov.

100. Such as the GRANITE Act ("Guaranteeing Rights Against Novel International Tyranny & Extortion Act"), which will soon be introduced in the House and targets the DSA, or the PROTECT USA Act (Prevent Regulatory Overreach from Turning Essential Companies into Targets Act), introduced in March 2025 by Senator Hagerty. See P. Byrne, "The GRANITE Act: How Congress Can Strike Back Against Foreign Censors", October 18, 2025, available at: https://prestonbyrne.com; "S.985 – PROTECT USA Act of 2025", U.S. Congress, March 12, 2025, available at: www.congress.gov.

101. There are some exceptions, however, such as AI firm Anthropic.

In an effort to push for digital deregulation, major platforms have increased their lobbying spending in the EU by 33.6% since 2023—with Meta, Microsoft, Apple, and Amazon ranking among the top spenders.[102] They employ a range of direct and indirect lobbying strategies to influence European digital policy.[103] In terms of direct action, these companies hold very frequent meetings with Commission representatives: an average of more than one per day between January and June 2025.[104] Indirectly, they run advertising campaigns in traditional and social media, commission reports from consulting firms, and provide funding to organizations purporting to represent small and midsize businesses,[105] in order to promote their messages.

Arguments against European digital regulation are echoed by a number of U.S. think tanks (some of which receive funding from Big Tech), particularly those with close ties to the Trump camp and/or Silicon Valley, such as the highly conservative Heritage Foundation,[106] the libertarian CATO Institute,[107] the American Enterprise Institute,[108] and the pro-tech Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF).[109] Similarly, among the many think tanks in Brussels with funding from Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft (GAFAM), some (such as the Center for Data Innovation) have helped amplify their critical narrative regarding European regulation.[110]

Finally, these U.S. efforts can draw on the support of nongovernmental organizations such as the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a U.S. organization that describes itself as dedicated to defending the rights of conservative Christians. Its overseas subsidiary, ADF International, has actively campaigned against abortion, as well as against the DSA: it has

102. "Big Tech Lobby Budgets Hit Record Levels", Corporate Europe Observatory, October 29, 2025, available at: https://corporateeurope.org.
103. R. Gorwa, G. Lechowski, and D. Schnei, "Platform Lobbying: Policy Influence Strategies and the EU's Digital Services Act", *Internet Policy Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2024.
104. "Big Tech Lobby Budgets Hit Record Levels", Corporate Europe Observatory, *op. cit.*
105. The tech giants have thus launched a campaign stressing the importance of their services for small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), and thus the negative economic consequences that European digital regulations would have for SMEs. They have been lobbying European institutions on this issue by providing funding to organizations such as Allied for Startups and SME Connect, which are actively campaigning against the DSA and DMA.
106. D. Cochrane, "Europe Wants to Be the World's Speech Police", The Heritage Foundation, March 6, 2025, available at: www.heritage.org.
107. E. Hopp, "Regulation Is Europe's Key Leverage in the Global Tech Industry", Cato Institute, July 9, 2024, available at: www.cato.org.
108. S. Tews, "The US Cost of Europe's Digital Markets Act", American Enterprise Institute, October 15, 2025, available at: www.aei.org; S. Tews, "Rebuilding the Transatlantic Tech Alliance: Why Innovation, Not Regulation, Should Guide the Way", American Enterprise Institute, March 6, 2025, available at: www.aei.org.
109. T. Nagrath, "Europe's DSA Puts an Unfair Target on American Tech Companies", Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, February 6, 2026, available at: https://itif.org.
110. "Big Tech Lobby Budgets Hit Record Levels", Corporate Europe Observatory, *op. cit.*

spoken out against the bill before the U.S. Congress,[111] published numerous articles on the subject on its website, and organized an event at the European Parliament in May 2025.[112] In October 2025, it also published a petition opposing the alleged censorship the DSA would cause.[113]

Photo of the event organized by ADF International on the DSA

From left to right: Paul Coleman (Executive Director of ADF International), Virginie Joron, Adina Portaru (Advisor to ADF International), Rod Dreher (a conservative American writer living in Hungary), Stephen Nikola Bartulica, and Marion Maréchal at an event organized by ADF International on the DSA.

Source: @ADFIntl, X, 21/05/2025, x.com.

"Cultivating resistance": The U.S. strategy relies on European partners

The example of ADF International illustrates how U.S. efforts to promote deregulation find support in Europe. As mentioned above, both the White House and Big Tech are enlisting European companies in this effort. The Trump administration is also leveraging its ties with Europe's far-right movements, with the stated aim of "cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations"[114] on issues related to digital regulation and far beyond.[115]

111. "Europe's Threat to American Speech and Innovation", House Committee on the Judiciary, September 3, 2025, available at: https://judiciary.house.gov.
112. C. Eyte, "Opposition Grows Against EU Digital Censorship Law Ahead of European Parliament Event: 'One of the Most Serious Threats to Online Free Speech'", *Christian Daily*, March 19, 2025, available at: www.christiandaily.com.
113. "Say 'NO' to Online Censorship under the Digital Services Act (DSA)", ADF International petition, launched on October 9, 2025, available at: https://adfinternational.org.
114. National Security Strategy, White House, December 2025, p. 27.
115. M. Kandel, "Comment l'extrême droite trumpiste exporte ses croyances et son influence", *Mediapart*, February 3, 2026.

U.S. officials' meetings with far-right politicians are a case in point,[116] highlighting their opposition to censorship and support for deregulation. Besides Vice President Vance's meeting with leaders of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) following the Munich conference in February 2025, the details of which were not made public, Sarah Rogers, for example, spoke with German lawmaker Markus Frohnmaier and praised the AfD's "anti-censorship stance".[117] During the State Department's meeting with the Hungarian Minister of Culture, she also emphasized that the two countries are "united in our defense of free speech".[118] In December 2025, the U.S. Ambassador to the EU also expressed satisfaction at having had the opportunity to discuss "the importance of the [regulatory] simplification process" with Nicola Procaccini, a Member of the European Parliament affiliated with Fratelli d'Italia and co-chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group.[119]

In addition to these meetings, the State Department plans to provide funding for think tanks and foundations in Europe that align with MAGA positions on "free speech".[120] Some members of the U.S. government are also sharing posts from far-right European media outlets on social media. Representatives Scott Fitzgerald and Jim Jordan, as well as the @JudiciaryGOP account, for example, reposted a critique of the DSA published by Brussels Signal.[121] This new media outlet, launched in 2023, is published by Remedia Europe, which is owned by Patrick Egan, an American and former regional director of the International Republican Institute,[122] strategist for Viktor Orbán's party and a key player in Hungary's information war in Brussels, accused in 2025 by Mediapart of participating in a pro-National Rally influence campaign in France targeting internet users based on political criteria.[123] Jim Jordan also

116. MEPs affiliated with the Patriots for Europe (PfE) group, and, to a lesser extent, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, are the most vocal opponents of digital regulation. More than a third of posts by European elected officials on X since January 2025 came from one of the following accounts: @v_joron (Virginie Jordon, France, PfE), @hermanntertsch (Hermann Tertsch, Spain, PfE), @StjepoBartulica (Stephen Nikola Bartulica, Croatia, ECR) and @TomVandendriese (Tom Vandendriessche, Belgium, PfE)

117. Post by Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers, @UnderSecPD, on X, December 14, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

118. Post by Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers, @UnderSecPD, on X, April 22, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

119. Post by Andrew Puzder, U.S. Ambassador to the European Union (@USAmbEU), on X, December 3, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

120. A. Gross *et al.*, "US Government to Fund Maga-Aligned Think Tanks and Charities in Europe", *Financial Times*, February 6, 2026.

121. Repost by Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, @RepFitzgerald, on X, July 28, 2025, available at: https://x.com; Repost by Representative Jim Jordan, @Jim_Jordan, on X, July 28, 2025, available at: https://x.com; Repost by the House Judiciary Committee, @JudiciaryGOP, on X, July 28, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

122. Patrick Egan's LinkedIn profile, available at: www.linkedin.com.

123. S. Wheaton and E. Wax, "Viktor Orbán Brings Culture War to Brussels", Politico, November 15, 2023, available at: www.politico.eu; F. Arfi and A. Rouget, "Une agence pro-Orbán a mené une

reposted (via his official JudiciaryGOP account) a post on X by The European Conservative regarding a letter he sent to the European Commission criticizing the DSA, which The European Conservative managed to "obtain".[124] This media outlet, based in Hungary, is part of the same network as Brussels Signal and promotes conservative and pro-Orbán views.[125] In another similar example, Sarah Rogers shared a post from the ultra-conservative Polish account Visegrad24 (with which Elon Musk has also interacted more than 96 times since January 1, 2025) in a post criticizing AI regulation.[126] Though limited in number, these posts reveal how transatlantic networks are mobilizing to spread Trumpist ideas in support of digital deregulation, and confirm Hungary's role as a "transatlantic conduit", or even "a hub for Europe's far-right movements", as analyzed by political scientist Maya Kandel.[127]

These networks can also be seen through the organization of major conferences attended by actors from both sides of the Atlantic. The Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and "NatCon" conferences, which began as American events, now include European participants (including The European Conservative)[128] and even hold European editions. Some conferences focus specifically on issues related to digital deregulation, such as the conference on the DSA organized at the European Parliament in May 2025 by a branch of the U.S. NGO Alliance for Defending Freedom, attended by European elected officials including Stephen Nicola Bartulica (European Conservatives and Reformists, ECR), Valérie Joron (Patriots for Europe, PfE), and Marion Maréchal (ECR), as well as American intellectual and friend of J. D. Vance, Rod Dreher.[129] More recently, on February 2 and 3, 2026, the Patriots for Europe and European Conservatives and Reformists groups co-organized a "transatlantic summit" with the ultra-conservative international platform Political Network for Values (PNfV). Titled "free speech vs. regulated

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campagne numérique occulte pour le RN en France", *Mediapart*, July 3, 2025, available at: www.mediapart.fr.

124. Repost by the House Judiciary Committee, @JudiciaryGOP, on X, May 13, 2025, available at: https://x.com; Repost by Rep. Jim Jordan, @Jim_Jordan, on X, May 13, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

125. V. Behr and E. Gianoncelli, "Une internationale d'intellectuels conservateurs aiguille le débat public dans plusieurs pays", *Le Monde*, July 4, 2025, available at: www.lemonde.fr.

126. Post by Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers, @UnderSecPD, on X, January 21, 2026, available at: https://x.com; D. Leloup and M. Szadkowski, "Visegrad24, le petit compte polonais sur X devenu l'un des plus efficaces soutiens d'Israël en ligne", *Le Monde*, April 16, 2025, available at: www.lemonde.fr; Data compiled using X's advanced search feature, between January 1, 2025, and February 24, 2026.

127. M. Kandel, "Comment l'extrême droite trumpiste exporte ses croyances et son influence", *op. cit.* Secretary of State Marco Rubio, for example, visited Hungary on February 16, 2026, with the explicit aim of supporting Viktor Orbán in the run-up to the Hungarian elections. See J.-B. Chastand, "En Hongrie, Viktor Orbán obtient le soutien de l'administration Trump, à deux mois des élections législatives", *Le Monde*, February 16, 2026.

128. V. Behr and E. Gianoncelli, "Une internationale d'intellectuels conservateurs aiguille le débat public dans plusieurs pays", *op. cit.*

129. Post by ADF International, @ADFIntl, on X, May 21, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

speech", this summit is supported by several U.S. organizations, including the Heritage Foundation, ADF International, and the Tholos Foundation.[130]

Through these meetings, joint events, and efforts to promote European far-right media, American actors are leveraging the European conservative ecosystem to amplify their criticism of European digital regulation. This ecosystem shares a number of incentives with U.S. actors: an ideological commitment to a conservative interpretation of free speech (which takes precedence over the fight against hate speech and misinformation); considerations of organizational survival (their media ecosystem depends directly upon platforms' permissiveness, which regulation puts at risk); and a reflexive anti-EU stance paired with transactional alliances with a U.S. tech sector which, under Musk, has become a structural ally of the global right.[131] This coordination also stems from years of transnational institutional development through think tanks, conferences, and shared funding streams.

This U.S. campaign is, in turn, frequently cited by European lawmakers who oppose the regulation of the tech industry, both on social media and in their questions to the Commission. In their questions criticizing the DSA and the DMA, members of the European Parliament (mostly from the Patriots for Europe and Europe of Sovereign Nations groups) cite reports from the House Judiciary Committee, as well as criticisms leveled by U.S. figures like James D. Vance, Marco Rubio and his deputy Christopher Landau and Elon Musk.[132] Social media is rife with examples of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who, like German representative Christine Anderson (AfD, Europe of Sovereign Nations group), cite Jim Jordan to stress that he "is right to question the EU's overreach"[133] with the DSA, or J. D. Vance, saying it is "reassuring to see that the U.S. recognizes the severity of the situation" regarding "censorship".[134] These examples are far from isolated. The graphic below—

130. This foundation, established in 1985 "at the request of President Ronald Reagan" (according to its official website) by Americans for Tax Reform, conducts research and educational initiatives on economic policy with a liberal perspective.

131. For some authoritarian-leaning governments, the stakes are even greater: weakening European digital regulation amounts to neutralizing the mechanisms—independent researchers, trusted watchdogs, platform audits—capable of scrutinizing their elections, their control over the media, and their disinformation campaigns, making this campaign not so much a libertarian movement as a means of preserving their hold on power.

132. See, for example, the questions submitted to the Commission on October 2 or December 19, 2025: M. Ehlers and A. Zijlstra, "Disturbing Google Testimony to the US Congress on EU Censorship Legislation", European Parliament, October 2, 2025, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu; M. Khan *et al.*, "Multi-Million Euro Fine Against X to Enforce the EU Censorship Agenda under the Guise of Alleged Violations of Transparency Obligations under the DSA", European Parliament, December 19, 2025, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu.

133. Post by Christine Anderson, @AndersonAfDMdEP, on X, September 23, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

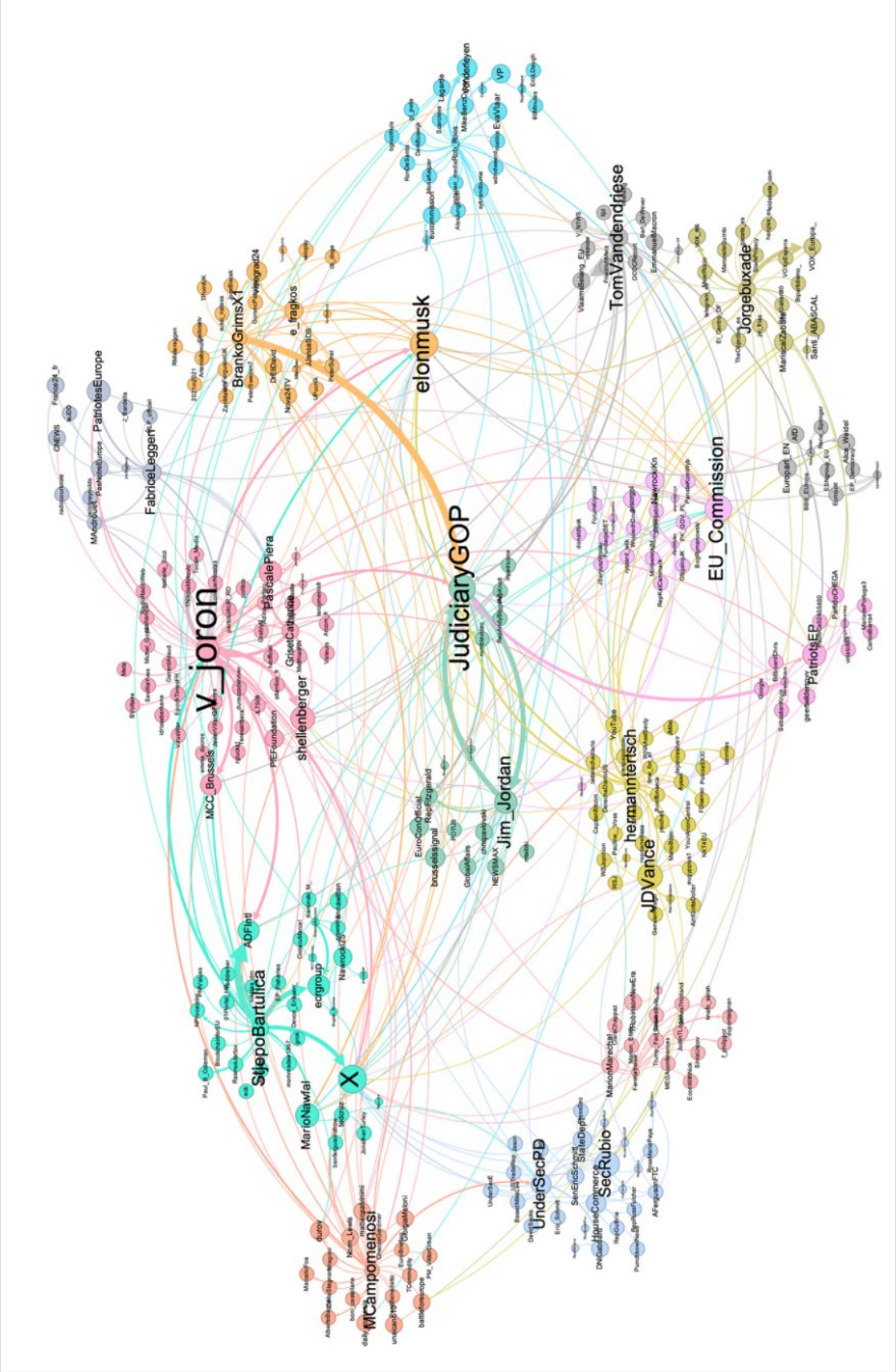
134. Post by Christine Anderson, @AndersonAfDMdEP, on X, February 17, 2025, available at: https://x.com.

which maps mentions, replies, and retweets from MEPs criticizing European digital regulations—highlights the significant presence of U.S. accounts within this ecosystem: in addition to some of the aforementioned MEPs, accounts such as Jim_Jordan, JudiciaryGOP, and elonmusk feature prominently in the center of the graph and serve as shared points of reference for these European accounts.[135] These EU representatives thus amplify the U.S.'s campaign on two levels: they cite its arguments as definitive, and echo Washington's concerns by warning of the "numerous negative consequences on relations between the European Union and the USA" and the "tensions in transatlantic relations" that the law's implementation would "cause".[136]

These factors demonstrate a close connection between Trump loyalists in the executive branch and Congress and Europe's far-right groups, helping to cement a transatlantic political and discursive ecosystem hostile to digital regulation, and in particular to the DSA.

135. Analysis by Sahar based on data from posts published on X between January 1, 2025, and February 10, 2026.
136. B. Grims, Speech before the European Parliament, December 15, 2025, available at: https://x.com; M. Khan *et al.*, "Multi-Million Euro Fine Against X to Enforce the EU Censorship Agenda under the Guise of Alleged Violations of Transparency Obligations under the DSA", *op. cit.*

Mentions and retweets from Members of the European Parliament opposed to EU digital regulation



An effective campaign? Resistance and concessions

While the outlines of this transatlantic offensive are clear, it is still too early to draw any definitive conclusions after only one year of Trump's second term in office. An initial assessment of its effectiveness—amid institutional resistance and concessions—allows us, however, to gauge its impact on European digital regulation.

A clear show of resistance

In response to this pressure, the Commission has sought to educate U.S. authorities on these measures, while emphasizing that the DSA and the DMA will enter into force and are non-negotiable, including as part of trade negotiations with Washington.[137] Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized this in her September 2025 State of the EU address:

> "I want to be crystal clear on one point: whether on environmental or digital regulation. We set our own standards. We set our own regulations. Europe will always decide for itself."[138]

This statement came alongside concrete actions to enforce these regulations, despite U.S. objections, such as the fines imposed on Meta and Apple for violations of the DMA in April 2025 (totaling 700 million euros),[139] Google in September 2025 for its advertising practices (€2.95 billion),[140] and X in December 2025 for non-compliance with the DSA (€120 million).[141] Contrasting with Washington's claim that European measures discriminate against U.S. companies and target them exclusively, in February 2026, the Commission also reached a preliminary conclusion finding TikTok's addictive design to be in violation of the DSA.[142]

137. See the responses to Parliament provided by Executive Vice-Presidents Ribera and Virkkunen: "Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera on behalf of the European Commission", European Parliament, July 29, 2025, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu; "Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission", European Parliament, August 18, 2025, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu.
138. "2025 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen", European Commission, September 10, 2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.
139. "Commission Finds Apple and Meta in Breach of the Digital Markets Act", European Commission, April 23, 2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.
140. "Commission Fines Google €2.95 Billion Over Abusive Practices in Online Advertising Technology", European Commission, September 5, 2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.
141. "Commission Fines X €120 Million Under the Digital Services Act", European Commission, December 5, 2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.
142. "Commission preliminarily finds TikTok's addictive design in breach of the Digital Services Act", European Commission, February 6, 2026, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.

Initial signs of success

While these measures reflect Europe's determination to resist threats to its regulatory autonomy, they are not proof that the U.S. approach is ineffective. It has, to begin, succeeded in delaying certain European decisions, such as the fines imposed on Meta and Apple in April, just as transatlantic trade negotiations were about to begin.[143] In September 2025, against the advice of the Commissioner for Competition Ribera, Trade Commissioner Šefčovič also intervened to delay the announcement of the decision regarding the fine imposed on Google.[144]

Furthermore, while the DSA and DMA were deliberately excluded from trade negotiations, the transatlantic agreement signed in August does contain European commitments regarding digital issues. Specifically, the EU agrees to "address unjustified digital trade barriers" and to "not adopt or maintain network usage fees" (which telecom operators support but the tech giants oppose).[145] In November 2025, the EU also announced its digital simplification package, proposing to streamline a range of regulations (the GDPR, the Data Act, the AI Act, and cybersecurity measures). The respective weight of U.S. influence and internal European priorities is hard to untangle.[146]

At the national level, Washington's campaign appears to have largely dissuaded authorities from taking action on digital regulation or taxation, both on the European continent and far beyond. Echoing U.S. discourse, some European actors have criticized EU regulations (as detailed above) and even opposed their implementation. Poland's nationalist president, Karol Nawrocki, thus borrowed U.S. talking points regarding the DSA's alleged "Orwellian" censorship and vetoed the Polish law, which would have brought it into effect in January 2026.[147]

In terms of digital services taxation, France has abandoned its plan to increase the existing tax due to pressure from Congress and the executive

143. K. Mackrael, "EU Delayed Punishing Apple and Meta Just Before Trade Talks Began", *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2025.
144. F. Micheletti and J. Parry, "EU Google Antitrust Penalty Halted Amid Trump's Tariff Threats", Politico, September 2, 2025, available at: www.politico.eu. This campaign has reignited calls in the European Parliament for the creation of a regulatory agency that would be independent of the Commission and the pressures it may face. See A. Datta, "Lead Competition Legislator Pitches 'Independent' Authority", Euractiv, February 24, 2026, available at: www.euractiv.com.
145. "Joint Statement on a United States–European Union Framework for an Agreement on Reciprocal, Fair, and Balanced Trade", European Commission, August 21, 2025, available at: https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu.
146. Numerous European figures—from Mario Draghi to some 50 CEOs of companies such as ASML, Airbus, Mercedes-Benz, and MistralAI—have called for the implementation of the AI Act to be suspended. See I. Uytdehaage *et al.*, "Stop the Clock – Open Letter", EU AI Champions Initiative, July 2025, available at: https://aichampions.eu.
147. W. Kość, "Polish President Aligns With Trump to Block Brussels' Big Tech Law", Politico, January 9, 2026.

branch,[148] while some countries (Canada, India) have repealed their tax and others (Brazil) have delayed it.[149] At least seven countries (including Switzerland and Liechtenstein) have committed in their bilateral agreements with the United States not to impose such a tax, and the number of developments related to digital taxation fell by half in the eight months following the publication of Trump's memorandum "defending American companies [...] from overseas extortion" (February 2025) compared to the eight months preceding it.[150]

Announcements of national restrictions on data flows, which the United States has opposed since the early days of the internet, also appear to have decreased by 25% worldwide since February 2025, especially those involving mandatory restrictions.[151] The impact of the U.S. campaign is also being felt when it comes to AI governance, even beyond the amendments made to the European AI Act. The United Kingdom has chosen to align itself with the Trump administration by delaying the introduction of a bill in Parliament that would impose security and intellectual property requirements on AI companies,[152] and by refusing, like the United States, to sign the joint statement issued at the Paris AI Summit in February 2025. Along with Japan and South Korea, the United Kingdom also signed a "technology prosperity deal" in September, committing to "advancing pro-innovation AI policy frameworks".[153]

Potential for unintended consequences

The intensity and effectiveness of this U.S. deregulation campaign raise serious concerns about Europe's ability to regulate, under its own standards, the activities of large technology companies and their impact in Europe. This offensive also risks backfiring on the United States itself in some respects, in ways that seem less well-documented and that Europe could bring attention to.

While the deregulation campaign in the United States benefits tech companies in the short and medium term, the current approach also creates

148. M. Dupin, "Comment les États-Unis ont contraint la France à renoncer à augmenter la taxe Gafam", *op. cit.* This increase in the digital services tax would have generated between several hundred million euros and "a few billion", according to the amendment's author, although no official estimate is available. See M. Kagni, "Taxe sur les Gafam : la commission des finances relève le taux de la taxe sur les géants du numérique", LCP-Assemblée nationale, October 22, 2025.
149. T. Giardini, "Is U.S. Pressure Against Foreign Digital Policy Working?", Digital Policy Alert, December 2, 2025.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
152. E. Courea, "UK Delays Plans To Regulate AI as Ministers Seek to Align With Trump Administration", *The Guardian*, February 24, 2025, available at: www.theguardian.com; T. Bristow, "How the UK Fell Out of Love with an AI Bill", Politico, December 22, 2025.
153. "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Regarding the Technology Prosperity Deal", White House, September 18, 2025, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.

new vulnerabilities. The removal of regulatory constraints, as well as the elimination of government teams tasked with mitigating risks related to the malicious use of AI, foreign interference, and cybersecurity, leaves the American public, democracy, and critical infrastructure far more vulnerable. Although the electoral impact remains uncertain, the administration's stance on AI governance could also backfire on Republicans in the upcoming elections, as polls show a growing number of Americans are "concerned" about AI and a majority (58%) want more regulation.[154]

At the same time, the offensive being waged in Europe risks triggering a backlash that would harm not only transatlantic relations but also U.S. businesses. Growing pressure, vitriolic rhetoric, and support for Europe's far-right movements—combined with other recent foreign policy decisions (regarding Greenland or Ukraine, for example)—are fueling concerns, even among the most staunch Atlanticists, over the dangers of remaining dependent on U.S. technology. Until now, primarily a French ambition, the push for digital sovereignty has gained new momentum since last year, as illustrated by the Franco-German summit devoted to the subject held in November 2025,[155] which could result in market barriers being imposed on foreign companies (and U.S. companies in particular). In a similarly counterproductive move, the White House's (in particular Kratsios's) aggressive promotion of U.S. tech exports highlights the shared interests between the U.S. government and the firms producing these technologies, even as those firms seek to stress their independence, in accordance with European sovereignty requirements. In addition to potential new market barriers, the U.S. campaign is fueling MEPs' desire to create a powerful regulatory authority independent of the Commission—and thus of the foreign pressures faced by Europe's executive — to enforce its digital laws.[156]

Finally, the administration's approach risks penalizing U.S. companies by creating uncertainty regarding the regulatory framework governing transatlantic trade. Trade flows are trapped between constantly fluctuating U.S. tariffs and European reprisals (the Parliament's reluctance to ratify the August 2025 trade agreement, and calls to trigger the anti-coercion instrument). The legal framework governing data transfers (Data Privacy Framework, DPF) between the United States and the EU has also been weakened. This transatlantic agreement serves as the basis for the

154. In 2025, 50% of Americans (compared to 31% in 2021) were "more concerned than excited" about the growing use of AI in daily life, 38% were "equally concerned and excited", and 10% were "more excited than concerned". See B. Kennedy *et al.*, "How Americans View AI and Its Impact on People and Society", Pew Research Center, September 17, 2025; C. McClain *et al.*, "How the U.S. Public and AI Experts View Artificial Intelligence", Pew Research Center, April 3, 2025.
155. M. Pollet, "Germany Wakes Up to US Tech Dominance", Politico, November 19, 2025.
156. P. Haeck, "US Pressure Revives Call for Powerful EU Tech Regulator", Politico, January 18, 2026; A. Datta, "Lead Competition Legislator Pitches 'Independent' Authority", *op. cit.*

Commission's decision in 2023 to recognize the United States as providing an adequate level of protection (i.e., comparable to that of the EU) for the transfer of personal data from the EU to the United States. This level of protection was ruled adequate thanks to safeguards established by a Biden administration executive order, which restricted U.S. security agencies' access to European data to only what is necessary and proportionate, established a redress mechanism for Europeans, and created an independent five-member oversight body (the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, PCLOB) in the United States.[157] This adequacy decision is currently being challenged before the European Court of Justice.[158] The judges will have to decide: given that Trump dismissed the three Democratic members of the PCLOB in January 2025 and placed supposedly independent agencies (such as the Federal Trade Commission)[159] under his control, can the Board still be considered an independent body? Were the Court to invalidate the DPF, businesses would be plunged into legal limbo, with increased compliance costs, fragmented regulations, and a slowdown in transatlantic data transfers, while policymakers would be forced to negotiate a new framework, with no guarantee of stability.

157. J. Biden, "Enhancing Safeguards for United States Signals Intelligence Activities", Executive Order 14086, October 7, 2022, available at: www.federalregister.gov.

158. In September 2025, the General Court of the EU upheld the validity of the existing framework in the "Latombe v. Commission" ruling, which also reaffirmed the importance of the PCLOB's independence. However, this framework is currently being challenged before the European Court of Justice, which could take into account recent developments in the United States casting doubt on the independence of the mechanisms in question (in addition to other legal issues) and invalidate the Data Privacy Framework. See "Latombe v. Commission", General Court of the European Union, September 2025, available at: https://infocuria.curia.europa.eu; I. Nash, "The European Commission's Rejection of Latombe", Lawfare, November 3, 2025.

159. Though current case law limits the president's authority to remove the heads of independent government agencies, President Trump fired two Democratic commissioners from the Federal Trade Commission (out of a total of five members) in March 2025, as well as the chair of the Federal Reserve in August 2025. The Supreme Court is set to rule on the constitutionality of these dismissals, in decisions that could significantly undermine these agencies' independence.

Conclusion: How should Europe respond?

The second Trump administration has waged a systematic campaign to deregulate the tech sector, both in the United States and in Europe, drawing on a narrative that combined claims of stifled innovation, competition with China, and accusations of "censorship". In the United States, this offensive–whose support is not unanimous within the Republican camp–has resulted in the dismantling of existing frameworks for AI, cybersecurity, and content moderation, driven by a wide range of public and private actors wielding powerful tools. In Europe, U.S. pressure has escalated significantly, with a range of diplomatic, economic, and informational tactics being employed, and support from European allies being leveraged to weaken European regulatory frameworks (DSA, DMA, AI Act), regarded as a threat to the sovereignty and interests of U.S. firms. These conclusions allow us to put forward several recommendations.

First, drawing on previous efforts, this pressure from the United States should encourage Europe to refine and implement its initiatives regarding digital and technological sovereignty, to mitigate the vulnerabilities inherent in its external dependencies.[160] To address the risk of foreign governments disrupting or interrupting cloud services, emerging initiatives aimed at ensuring service continuity for key government agencies and businesses in Europe must be accelerated and expanded.[161] It would also be in Europe's interest to strengthen its own capabilities against cyber threats and interference, given that its partnership with the United States stands to suffer from declining U.S. capabilities in this area, not to mention the U.S.'s own stated ambition to interfere in European politics. For European companies, a detailed assessment of critical dependencies and vulnerabilities to U.S. pressures should become a priority in order to anticipate, through robust scenarios, the risks associated with a potential deterioration in transatlantic relations and to adapt their resilience strategies accordingly.

160. For a discussion of the distinctions between technological and digital sovereignty (and related concepts such as "cloud sovereignty" and "data sovereignty", etc.) and European measures adopted in recent months, see F. Burwell and K. Propp, "Digital Sovereignty: Europe's Declaration of Independence?", Atlantic Council, February 2026.

161. Microsoft has already reached an agreement with German software company SAP, allowing its subsidiary Delos Cloud to continue providing Azure services to European customers affected by potential U.S. sanctions. In France, Bleu is exploring a similar solution. See E. Badaoui and A.-T. Norodom, "(Extra)territorialité des données : quelle souveraineté pour l'Europe ?", *Études de l'Ifri*, Ifri, March 2026, pp. 35–36, available at: www.ifri.org.

Regarding the enforcement of existing regulatory frameworks and the development of future regulations, Europe must stand firm. Giving in to U.S. pressure would undermine the Commission's credibility in the eyes of the European population (which is more concerned about tech and digital security than military, energy, or food security, according to a December 2025 poll).[162] Relaxing the rules would result in a costly increase in regulatory uncertainty and set a dangerous precedent, signaling to foreign governments that European measures are negotiable, eroding their credibility.

Despite these challenges, it would be worthwhile for the EU and national governments to persevere in their efforts to educate U.S. authorities about European regulations, which are often–whether intentionally or unintentionally–misunderstood. For example, highlighting the designation of Chinese entities (such as AliExpress, Shein, TikTok, and Temu) and European entities (such as Germany's Zalando and the Netherlands' Booking) as "very large online platforms" (VLOPs) subject to the DSA should mitigate U.S. concerns about discrimination targeting only U.S. firms.[163] The elements of the DSA that focus not on content moderation but on transparency also deserve to be highlighted: U.S. authorities' accusations of "censorship" following the announcement of the European fine imposed on X in December 2025 completely obscure the fact that the platform was not penalized for a failure to moderate content, but for its lack of transparency (regarding its "blue checkmarks", its advertising registry, and researchers' access to its data).[164]

The success of these efforts will also depend on the ability of senior French and European officials to deliver a consistent message, focusing on European measures' impartial enforcement, and avoiding any statements that might imply that some major platforms (such as X) are being scrutinized more closely than others. In this regard, Thierry Breton's (then European Commissioner for the Internal Market) August 2024 letter to Elon Musk, urging him to comply with the DSA just hours before his interview with presidential candidate Donald Trump was posted on X, undermined Europe's position. While European diplomats maintain that this was not an official statement and does not reflect the Commission's position, it has been—and continues to be—widely cited by U.S. authorities as evidence of European regulations censoring American political discourse.[165] Other off-the-record statements by senior French officials regarding the special attention being paid to platforms like X are similarly undermining the credibility of Europe's rhetoric in the eyes of their counterparts in the U.S.

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162. J.-Y. Dormagen, "Ce que les Européens veulent vraiment : le dernier sondage Eurobazooka", *Le Grand Continent*, December 4, 2025.
163. "Supervision of Designated Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines Under the DSA", European Commission, available at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu.
164. "Commission fines X €120 million under the Digital Services Act", European Commission, December 5, 2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu.
165. R. Rommen, "J D Vance Suggested the U.S. Could Withdraw Support for NATO If Europe Tries to Regulate Elon Musk's X", *op. cit.*; "Censorship's Next Frontier", House Judiciary Committee and Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, *op. cit.*

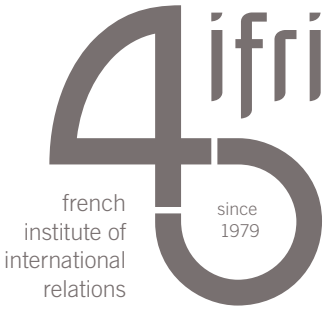
Certain shared areas of interest offer opportunities for continued cooperation. One shared concern which European diplomats have clearly identified, online child protection, continues to be a subject of transatlantic dialogue. Despite shifts in the U.S. federal government's approach to this issue, cybersecurity cooperation remains a priority on both sides of the Atlantic. Other subjects aligned with the Trump administration's priorities could drive discussions, such as combating online fraud or fighting drug and human trafficking. However, given their limited scope, these areas of common interest are unlikely to be actively pursued by U.S. diplomats, whose leaders have little interest in making Europe a priority.

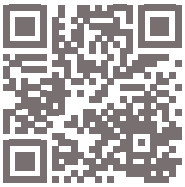
Europe would also benefit from convincing U.S. tech companies of the importance of mitigating the Trump administration's most disruptive initiatives, to preserve regulatory predictability, curb the rise of a more radical approach to digital sovereignty, and prevent major upheavals (such as the DPF's invalidation). Aligning themselves unconditionally with Washington would also expose these companies to significant reputational risks in Europe, where 86% of citizens already find it plausible that the U.S. might restrict access to digital services,[166] undermining consumer confidence amid growing distrust of the Trump administration.

Finally, beyond the Trump administration, Europe could find potential partners for dialogue among elected officials in Congress and state legislatures. On the subjects of data governance or AI, both are eager to take action and interested in learning from European experiences.

In the face of this deregulation campaign, which is as aggressive as it is unpredictable, Europe must therefore be both firm in enforcing its rules and persistent in pursuing dialogue—with the executive branch, as well as with Congress and U.S. companies—while engaging states and private-sector actors in a coordinated and resilient response. In its dealings with Washington, Europe will not have the luxury of choosing between rules and relations: it will have to maintain both, simultaneously and for the long term.

166. M. Pollet, "Europeans Think Trump Can Shut Down Their Internet", Politico, March 19, 2026.





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