

Executive Summary from “Chinese Critiques of Large Language Models”

Large language models have garnered interest worldwide owing to their remarkable ability to “generate” human-like responses to natural language queries—a threshold that at one time was considered “proof” of sentience—and perform other time-saving tasks. Indeed, LLMs are regarded by many as a, or *the*, pathway to general artificial intelligence (GAI)—that hypothesized state where computers reach (or even exceed) human skills at most or all tasks.

The lure of achieving AI’s holy grail through LLMs has drawn investment in the billions of dollars by those focused on this goal. In the United States and Europe especially, big private sector companies have led the way and their focus on LLMs has overshadowed research on other approaches to GAI, despite LLM’s known downsides such as cost, power consumption, unreliable or “hallucinatory” output, and deficits in reasoning abilities. If these companies’ bets on LLMs fail to deliver on expectations of progress toward GAI, western AI developers may be poorly positioned to rapidly fall back on alternate approaches.

In contrast, China follows a state-driven, diverse AI development plan. Like the United States, China also invests in LLMs but simultaneously pursues alternate paths to GAI, including those more explicitly brain-inspired. This report draws on public statements by China’s top scientists, their associated research, and on PRC government announcements to document China’s multifaceted approach.

The Chinese government also sponsors research to infuse “values” into AI intended to guide autonomous learning, provide AI safety, and ensure that China’s advanced AI reflects the needs of the people and the state. This report concludes by recommending U.S. government support for alternative general AI programs and for closer scrutiny of China’s AI research.

For more information:

- Download the report: <https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/chinese-critiques-of-large-language-models/>
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