

Key Takeaways for “China’s Military AI Roadblocks”

China has made significant investments in military artificial intelligence over the past several years. Given that AI and related emerging technologies could play critical roles in future wars, the U.S. national security establishment is concerned about falling behind China in developing and deploying these technologies.

But it is difficult to develop a comprehensive idea of where each military stands when it comes to military AI development and adoption, let alone conduct a direct comparison between the two. Often missing from existing assessments of Chinese military AI are Chinese perspectives on their own progress.

This paper outlines several of the key challenges Chinese defense experts argue China is facing in developing and deploying AI and related emerging technologies. It draws on 59 Chinese-language journal articles published between 2020 and 2022 by People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officers or researchers, engineers in the Chinese defense industry, and academics working on AI and other emerging technologies.

Key findings include the following:

- Chinese defense scholars believe that AI and other emerging technologies present China with a unique opportunity to **catch up to or surpass the United States militarily**.
- Many of them are concerned, however, that the **PLA remains behind the U.S. military in developing and fielding AI and related emerging technologies**.
- Several Chinese analysts are concerned about the PLA’s ability to **develop trustworthy AI systems, guarantee network and cyber security, and maintain communications in future high-intensity conflicts**.
- The experts also point out issues that may be unique to the PLA, including those related to **military data collection, management, and analysis, and the development of high-end sensors**.
- They also appear worried about the PLA’s **insufficiently robust military standards and testing and evaluation practices**.
- Contrary to some U.S. discussions of China’s views of military AI, **many of the Chinese experts advocate for the development and use of trustworthy AI in military systems**.

For more information:

- Download the report: <https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/chinas-military-ai-roadblocks/>
- Contact us: cset@georgetown.edu