

China's Leader Pitches 'Openness' in Push to Shape A.I.'s Future

Xi Jinping said the development of artificial intelligence systems should be a “symphony of global collaboration.”



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China's leader on Friday laid out his nation's bid to shape the path of artificial intelligence, casting China as a champion of an open approach to the technology and a trusted ally of developing nations in advancing A.I.

The remarks by Xi Jinping highlighted the importance that China's top political and governmental leadership place on artificial intelligence. Mr. Xi's speech did not mention the United States by name, but the message was clear: China plans to compete as the world's other A.I. superpower.

Speaking at an A.I. conference in Shanghai, Mr. Xi said that “A.I. development should not be a solo performance by a single country but a symphony of global collaboration.”

He described open-source A.I. technology, in which much of the software can be freely shared and modified, as a “rare and historical opportunity” to spread the benefits of A.I. globally. The technology, he said, must be shared by developing nations or raise the threat of “new historical injustices.”

Mr. Xi's vision is assuredly one of national self-interest as well. China is generally regarded as trailing the United States in A.I., but it is catching up. That is particularly evident in the open-source software developed by China's leading A.I. software companies like DeepSeek, Moonshot and Zhipu.

Their A.I. systems are closing the gap with the leading American A.I. chatbots and question-answering programs, including OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude and Google's Gemini.

On Friday, a Chinese company, Moonshot, introduced a new model that it claimed performed as well as American models from Anthropic and OpenAI. The announcement of the model, Kimi K3, helped roil financial markets.

The U.S. companies, which have spent many billions of dollars creating their frontier models, do not share their technology freely. They have also accused the Chinese of pilfering their technology. And China remains well behind in the most advanced A.I. chips, a market dominated by Nvidia.

Mr. Xi's speech at the beginning of an A.I. conference in Shanghai came as China builds support for its World AI Cooperation Organization. The group was created a year ago, China said, partly to give developing nations a greater say in A.I. governance.

In his address, Mr. Xi also said China planned to offer its A.I. technology and training to developing countries that were friendly to China. “We must uphold openness and win-win cooperation,” he said.

China’s international outreach is meant to supplement its A.I. ambitions at home. Mr. Xi has exhorted his country to “occupy the commanding heights” of technology, with A.I. at the forefront.

But A.I., depending on how far and fast it progresses, poses a dilemma for the ruling Communist Party. How should it manage the rise of a technology that could one day be so disruptive that it could threaten its interests — and its grip on power?

Chinese regulation of A.I. has varied in intensity over the years, depending on where the country assesses its strengths and weaknesses.

When the Chinese government was worried that it had fallen behind the United States in 2022, after the introduction of ChatGPT, it took a more hands-off approach that ultimately allowed ventures like DeepSeek and others to thrive.

At the same time, researchers have documented efforts by the Chinese government to monitor and manipulate public opinion in Hong Kong and Taiwan using companies with expertise in A.I. And the Philippines on Friday condemned as racist an A.I.-generated video posted by a Chinese state-run news site that depicted the Southeast Asian country as a karaoke-singing monkey doing the bidding of the United States and Japan.

Xinyun Wu contributed reporting from Taiwan, Taipei.

Steve Lohr writes about technology and its impact on the economy, jobs and the workplace.