



75 Nations Now Use AI Facial Recognition For Surveillance

Technocrats have run amok throughout the world while spreading dystopian technology for tracking citizens everywhere. Few have noticed their strategy, but now the shocking numbers are rolling in. □ TN Editor
A growing number of countries are following China's lead in deploying artificial intelligence to track citizens, according to a research group's report published Tuesday.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace says at least 75 countries are actively using AI tools such as facial recognition for surveillance.

The index of countries where some form of AI surveillance is used includes liberal democracies such as the United States and France as well as more autocratic regimes.

Relying on a survey of public records and media reports, the report says Chinese tech companies led by Huawei and Hikvision are supplying

much of the AI surveillance technology to countries around the world. Other companies such as Japan's NEC and U.S.-based IBM, Palantir and Cisco are also major international providers of AI surveillance tools.

Hikvision declined comment Tuesday. The other companies mentioned in the report didn't immediately return requests for comment.

The report encompasses a broad range of AI tools that have some public safety component. The group's index doesn't distinguish between legitimate public safety tools and unlawful or harmful uses such as spying on political opponents.

"I hope citizens will ask tougher questions about how this type of technology is used and what type of impacts it will have," said the report's author, Steven Feldstein, a Carnegie Endowment fellow and associate professor at Boise State University.

Many of the projects cited in Feldstein's report are "smart city" systems in which a municipal government installs an array of sensors, cameras and other internet-connected devices to gather information and communicate with one another. Huawei is a lead provider of such platforms, which can be used to manage traffic or save energy, but which are increasingly also used for public surveillance and security, Feldstein said.

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China Pledges Green While Building New Coal Power Plants

China is proving that green climate hysteria is antithetical to real economic growth. Its official rhetoric pledges to Sustainable Development and Green economy, but it is building record energy capacity with coal generation. □ TN Editor

China, which has pledged that projects built under its Belt and Road Initiative will be green and sustainable, will fund more fossil fuel power projects in Southeast Asia even as western, Japanese and South Korean financiers increasingly walk away from them over sustainability concerns.

This will be the case until the host nations - such as Indonesia - have come up with good enough financial incentives and expanded power transmission and distribution infrastructure to make mass renewable energy projects viable, according to Martin David, Asia-Pacific head of projects practice group at international law firm Baker McKenzie.

“While Chinese officials have signaled a move towards more sustainable

projects in BRI nations, I don't see this materially changing Beijing's [actual] funding of infrastructure projects [there]," he said in an interview. "It will take some time for this to manifest into an obvious change."

Chinese developers - mostly state-backed construction firms - still prefer to build large fossil fuel projects, on effort and return considerations, he added.

This is because bidding and contract preparation work involved in developing a power project typical requires similar effort, whether for a US\$40 million renewable project or a US\$1 billion thermal power project.

The BRI, initiated by President Xi Jinping in 2013, aimed to foster closer trade and investment ties with nations in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, initially through mostly China-funded infrastructure projects.

Xi told the second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in April this year that infrastructure projects built under the BRI must be green and sustainable, adding there will be a focus on transparency and zero tolerance for corruption to ensure "high-quality" growth.

The signalling of a recalibration of China's approach to BRI projects came amid increased international scrutiny on debt-servicing sustainability, corruption and environmental concerns, besides delays or cancellations of key projects.

Push-backs from interest groups at host nations - such as Indonesia and Kenya - may pressure Chinese firms to pare back their ambition on building coal-fired plants in BRI nations, said Charles Yonts, head of power and environment, social and governance research at CLSA.

He cited the recent high profile case of environmentalists and anti-graft campaigners asking the Indonesian corruption watchdog to look into China Huadian Engineering's role in a US\$900 million coal-fired power project, after its local partner was jailed for bribing to win the project.

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IARPA Seeks Long-Range Biometric Identification Tech

Close-up biometric identification is not enough for the Technocrat-laden Intelligence community. Tech is being extended to use Images from drones and long-range cameras to positively identify people. □ TN Editor
The intelligence community is working to build biometric identification systems that can single out individuals from hundreds of yards away or more, a feat that's virtually impossible using the technology that exists today.

Ultimately, the tech would let spy agencies rapidly identify people using cameras deployed on far off rooftops and unmanned aircraft, according to the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity, the research arm for the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

Facial recognition and other types of biometric tech have improved significantly in recent years, but even today's most advanced systems become less reliable without a crystal clear view of their subject. Even when the person is standing nearby and looking directly into the camera,

facial recognition tech can be [prone to errors](#).

But the intelligence community is trying to overcome those limitations in two ways: gathering more extensive training data and creating systems that lean on multiple types of data to identify people.

On Friday, IARPA started looking for researchers to participate in [Biometric Recognition and Identification at Altitude and Range](#), or BRIAR program, which aims to develop identification tools that work from vantage points high above or far away from their subjects. While the program is still getting off the ground, the tech it seeks to develop could significantly enhance the government's ability to surveil adversaries—and citizens—using biometric data.

“Further research in the area of biometric recognition and identification at altitude and range may support protection of critical infrastructure and transportation facilities, military force protection and border security,” officials wrote in the request for information.

Teams interested in participating in the program must respond by Oct. 21.

In the request for information, IARPA asked teams for a wide variety of datasets that could help train biometric technology to work in less than ideal conditions. Today, the range of facial recognition and other identification systems is limited by a lack of training data, they said, and more datasets would help researchers build more versatile and powerful tools.

Specifically, IARPA asked for images of individuals taken from more than 300 meters away or at pitch angles above 20 degrees, as well as biometric research datasets captured by drones and other aircraft.

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