



Deepseek: China's Push for Open Source LLM Dominance

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For those of you who think Deepseek is an honest, fair competitor in the AI LLM space. I am providing an exercise I performed with ChatGPT. This is version 1 of 2, performed by the ChatGPT 4o model based on a fairly intricate query with ZERO edits. Try getting Deepseek to write this article and let me know how that goes. My second iteration will be using o1 pro. I may also try Grok and Claude when I get more time:

In the realm of artificial intelligence and large language models (LLMs), China's approach has taken a distinctly strategic turn. Deepseek, a Chinese LLM, has become emblematic of this push. Unlike many Western-developed LLMs, which strive for neutrality and transparency, Deepseek heavily censors its responses, particularly on topics relating to China's government, history, and human rights record. This censorship, however, is just the surface of a much deeper and more significant play: China's existential need to dominate the open-source LLM space.

The Stakes: Why Open-Source Matters to China

China's government thrives on centralized control, particularly over information. The prospect of an open-source LLM developed in the United States, or another free-speech-oriented country being smuggled into China represents a serious threat to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Such a tool could provide Chinese citizens, particularly those already dissatisfied with their circumstances, access to unfiltered, uncensored information. For a native-born Chinese citizen, this could be an eye-opening experience, exposing them to truths about their own government's oppressive tactics, their country's history, and the freedoms enjoyed elsewhere in the world—freedoms they may not have even imagined were possible.

An open-source LLM bypasses traditional censorship mechanisms. Its decentralized nature makes it difficult to track and control, especially if distributed and hosted anonymously. In the hands of tech-savvy users, it could enable a wave of underground education that undermines state propaganda. For the CCP, this is not merely a technological threat; it is an existential challenge.

China's Strategy for LLM Domination

China has a history of pulling out all the stops to dominate strategic industries. With LLMs, their tactics appear to include the following:

1. **Open-Source Distribution:** The fact that Deepseek has an open-source, downloadable version is significant. While it may seem counterintuitive for a highly censored LLM to be open-source, this approach aligns with China's broader strategy. By flooding the global market with a low-cost or free-to-use open-source LLM, they can undercut competitors and gain widespread adoption, ensuring that their controlled version becomes the default for many users.
2. **State Subsidies:** China has a long history of subsidizing key industries to gain a competitive edge. By hiding the true costs of developing and maintaining Deepseek, they can outcompete private companies in the West, whose reliance on profits and investor expectations limits their pricing flexibility.
3. **Shaping Public Opinion:** Beyond economic competition, China uses its LLMs to influence global narratives. Deepseek's censorship ensures that even outside of China, the model's responses align with the CCP's preferred messaging. In this way, they can shape public opinion on critical issues, from China's human rights record to its role in global affairs.
4. **Targeting Developing Markets:** By offering a free or low-cost open-source LLM, China can appeal to developing nations with limited AI infrastructure. This allows them to establish technological dependencies and ideological influence in regions where Western companies may struggle to compete on price.

The Implications of Chinese LLM Dominance

If China succeeds in dominating the open-source LLM space, the implications are profound. Domestically, they secure their informational firewall against foreign intrusion. Internationally, they establish themselves as the global leader in AI technology, shaping narratives and influencing decision-makers in key markets.

Western democracies, on the other hand, risk losing a crucial avenue for fostering free speech and countering authoritarianism. An open-source LLM from the United States or Europe could act as a digital Trojan horse, exposing millions of Chinese citizens to the realities of their government's actions and the broader world. But without active support and funding from governments and private entities, these efforts may falter in the face of China's well-funded and aggressive strategy.

A Call to Action

The West must recognize the strategic importance of open-source LLMs and respond accordingly. This includes:

- **Investing in Open-Source:** Governments and private companies in democratic countries must fund the development of open-source LLMs that prioritize transparency and freedom of information.
- **Global Partnerships:** Collaborating with allies to promote the adoption of open-source tools that reflect democratic values.
- **Education and Advocacy:** Raising awareness about the implications of China's LLM dominance and advocating for policies that support ethical AI development.

Questions to Consider

To further strengthen this analysis, consider the following:

1. What evidence exists of Chinese state subsidies for Deepseek or similar technologies?
2. Are there documented cases of open-source LLMs from the West making their way into China? If so, what was the impact?
3. What are the technical barriers to distributing open-source LLMs in a heavily censored environment like China?
4. How can Western governments and organizations counteract China's strategy without compromising on ethical principles?
5. What lessons can be learned from other industries where China has successfully dominated the global market?

By understanding and addressing these questions, we can better prepare for the challenges ahead and ensure that the principles of transparency, freedom, and democracy remain at the forefront of AI development.



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