

'Robot Army' Narrative Is Getting Ahead of Reality

Clear Voice

By LIANG Yilian & ZHANG Mengran

Recently, Reuters published a lengthy report titled "From dance floor to war: China readies humanoid robots for combat." The report opened with last month's second World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing, where robots ran, boxed and danced as spectators cheered the machines' improving capabilities and their meme-worthy stumbles.

The tone then changed sharply. Reuters said it had reviewed more than 100 Chinese military procurement notices, academic studies, patents, official publications, government records and defense-company materials, and concluded that Chinese military institutions were testing humanoid robots for battlefield requirements. The report was quickly followed by coverage by other Western media outlets, and the headlines were overnight full of a supposed "Chinese robot army."

Yet the Reuters report had to acknowledge a crucial fact: There is no evidence that China has deployed an armed humanoid with an operational People's Liberation Army unit. If there is no such evidence, where does the claim that China is "preparing" humanoid robots for war come from? Public procurement notices, academic papers and corporate patents have been selectively assembled into a ready-made picture of "military preparations."

This narrative is hardly unfamiliar. A 2022 report by the Washington, D.C.-headquartered Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, titled "Threat Inflation and the Chinese Military," warned that portraying China's military challenge in categorical, alarmist and worst-case terms effectively means "China becomes 10 feet tall." The report argued that such threat inflation can be more



Visitors interact with an embodied intelligent robot during the 2026 World Intelligence Expo held in Tianjin, May 29. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

dangerous than underestimating a threat. Years later, the old script has simply acquired a new prop: humanoid robots.

So who is actually trying to put humanoid robots on the battlefield? The answer is not China. A look at recent Western media reports makes that clear.

A March 2026 investigation by *TIME* reported on a San Francisco-based startup called Foundation Future Industries, which is developing the Phantom MK-1 humanoid robot for military applications. Two Phantom MK-1 robots were sent to Ukraine in February, initially for frontline reconnaissance support.

A May report by CNBC provided further evidence of the U.S. military's involvement. Foundation Future Industries has received about 24 million USD in U.S. government research contracts covering inspection, logistics and weapons-handling feasibility work involving the Army, Navy and Air Force. The company described its deployment of two Phantom MK-1 units in Ukraine as "the first known deployment of humanoid robots in a combat theater," while CEO

Sankaet Pathak said he aimed to deploy the technology with the U.S. military and, if needed, "on the front lines of conflicts" within the next 12 to 18 months.

Earlier, the Pentagon awarded AI contracts worth up to 200 million USD each to four Silicon Valley giants including Google and OpenAI, with the U.S. Department of Defense officials openly stating the aim was to "maintain strategic advantage over our adversaries." Sending its own robots into real battlefields while making a fuss over other countries' advanced technology research smacks of incredible double standard.

Putting the rhetoric aside, how close are humanoid robots to actual combat? The industry itself remains considerably more cautious. A December 2025 Wall Street Journal report was bluntly titled "Even the Companies Making Humanoid Robots Think They're Overhyped."

A March study by the Center for Strategic and International Intelligence on the Ukraine battlefield acknowledged

that AI faces a "significant gap between aspiration and reality," with problems such as sensor failures in harsh weather and difficulty tracking fast-moving targets still unresolved. Even analysts at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which has consistently taken a hard line on China, conceded amid the hype that humanoid robots are currently not a "practical battlefield system" and may not be for another five to 10 years.

That is precisely why the most realistic and humane role for humanoid robots at this stage is to enter toxic zones and collapsed buildings in place of humans — taking over the most dangerous jobs. To portray such technological exploration as a robot army marching to the front lines is either ignorance or deliberate distortion.

What truly warrants vigilance has never been any single country's laboratory, but the runaway competition in the militarization of artificial intelligence.

Researchers at the research organization RAND Europe have warned that hype around military AI could fuel an "arms race" narrative around military AI and increase the possibility of unintended escalation during a crisis.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres made it plain at the Global Dialogue on AI Governance in Geneva this July: "Let us call them what they are: Killer robots. Machines selecting and engaging their target and taking a life — without human control and judgment. That is morally repugnant. It is politically unacceptable. And it must be banned by international law."

That is the conversation the international community needs: major powers sitting down to establish rules and shared understandings, rather than scrutinizing another country's procurement notices for evidence to justify confrontation. Instead of inventing a "robot army" for someone else, perhaps the world should confront the more fundamental question of our time: Do we really want to teach robots how to pull the trigger?

Voice of the World

Lunar Soil Donated to UN Boosts Global Space Exploration

Edited by QI Liming

A ceremony to present the first lunar soil samples collected from the far side of the moon by Chang'e-6 to the United Nations (UN) was held in Vienna, Austria on September 14. More than 400 guests, including heads of various international organizations, representatives of various countries, and representatives from all walks of life, attended the event.

Aarti Holla-Maini, director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, praised China's gesture. The Chang'e-6 mission is an unprecedented human achievement in the field of lunar exploration in recent years. From sampling on the far side of the moon, to bringing the samples to Earth, and finally donating them to the UN, it embodies scientific exploration and international cooperation.

She said the donation reflected the concept that "outer space truly belongs to all mankind." The donated item was a "teacher" as well as a specimen, providing an opportunity for students, representatives and visitors from all over the world who come to the UN each year to observe and learn.

Richard Trappl, an Austrian sinologist and former director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna, said although the moon is about 380,000 kilometers away from Earth, "today, not only has the moon come to Vienna, but it has also come to the United Nations."

Monica Juma, director-general of the UN Office at Vienna, said the Chinese decision to permanently exhibit the lunar soil samples at the UN headquarters is significant as they represent

the human race's sci-tech creativity and determination to explore the universe. They also reflect China's support for the UN in promoting international cooperation to address common challenges.

Harvey Dzodin, a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization in Beijing, said the uniqueness of the samples lies in their origin. Probably for most people viewing them, it was the first time they had seen items from the far side of the moon. The samples can also serve as an "envoy" for China, showcasing its sci-tech strength.

Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN said Pakistan is honored to be one of the closest partners of China in aerospace. The Pakistani satellite ICUBE-Q accompanied the Chang'e-6 mission and successfully completed Pakistan's first lunar exploration. China has made cutting-edge advancements in lunar science, and contributed to the well-being of all. Pakistan, he added, looks forward to deepening cooperation with China in tasks such as deep space exploration and manned spaceflight, achieving more results.

The Italian permanent representative to the UN, said lunar exploration is a common human cause. Italian astronauts once used the sentence "Looking up at the vastness of the universe and observing the abundance of all things" from the Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion, the famous fourth-century Chinese literary and calligraphic masterpiece, to describe the magnificent landscape of the universe. China and Italy have carried out numerous cooperation projects in areas such as lunar exploration and astronaut training.

Hi-Tech

AI-powered Machine Reshapes Crayfish Processing

By Staff Reporters

As artificial intelligence continues to advance, robots are moving beyond laboratories and exhibition halls to take on an expanding range of tasks once performed entirely by humans. From everyday services to industrial production, intelligent machines are increasingly being put to practical use, helping improve efficiency, consistency and hygiene while addressing challenges in traditional industries.

In Hubei province in central China, one of the nation's major crayfish-producing regions, this trend is seen in the crayfish industry, where AI-powered equipment is transforming a labor-intensive processing task.

Cities such as Qianjiang and Jianli in Hubei have developed comprehensive crayfish industrial chains. At the 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services held in Beijing recently, the Hubei exhibition area showcased the province's latest achievements and core strengths in the digital transformation of trade in services. The focus was on cutting-edge fields including AI foundation models, intelligent computing, big data governance, digital entertainment and intelligent construction.

Among the exhibits, an image and introduction of a fully automated AI-powered crayfish-peeling machine drew crowds of visitors. Developed by Ruifeng Intelligent Control Equipment Manufacturing Co., Ltd. in Qianjiang, it is the world's first fully automated AI-powered crayfish-peeling machine. It can flexibly

and non-destructively remove the head and tail in two separate workstations, achieving 98 percent whole-shrimp meat yield and 100 percent crayfish vein removal. The fully automated and hygienic production process eliminates manual contact during processing, ensuring consistent quality and controllable hygiene standards.

Wang Huidong, a staff member at the exhibition, said the machine was developed using motion data collected from more than 10,000 experienced crayfish peelers. Powered by continuously optimized AI algorithms, it can accurately identify the shape of individual crayfish and peel automatically.

The deployment of such intelligent equipment has significantly boosted the efficiency of crayfish processing, marking a shift in the industry from labor-intensive production toward technology-driven manufacturing.



A fully automated AI-powered crayfish-peeling machine. (PHOTO: Ruifeng Intelligent Control Equipment Manufacturing Co., Ltd.)

AI Must Not Be Used to Entrench Distorted View of History

Comment

By GONG Qian

Japan has launched a large-scale pilot trial of its in-house generated AI platform Gennai, which is to be accessible to about 180,000 government employees across 39 agencies, Japan's Kyodo News reported. The system is expected to be fully implemented in fiscal 2027.

While this may appear to be a routine step in Japan's digital transformation, it should raise serious concerns. Given that Gennai's training corpus has been selectively filtered, it risks becoming a new vehicle for carrying and spreading one-sided historical narratives.

Developed by Japan's Digital Agency, Gennai is a generative AI platform built at a cost of 4.4 billion Japanese yen (28 million USD). One of its key functions is to help bureaucrats draft responses to parliamentary questions. Kyodo News reported in May that Japanese officials had already used Gennai to prepare replies for a plenary session of the

House of Councillors, the upper house of Japan's national legislature.

The values embedded in a technological tool are shaped by its data rules and underlying orientation. Gennai's corpus has been artificially fine-tuned and deliberately skewed to align with the political positions of the current Japanese cabinet. It draws mainly on official government documents, including cabinet resolutions, parliamentary records and official gazettes issued after the enforcement of Japan's current Constitution in May 1947. On the other hand, pre-war archives, documents relating to Japan's surrender, and records of the Tokyo Trials are excluded. Trained on such one-sided materials, Gennai is liable to produce biased outputs. On sensitive issues such as historical perception, territorial disputes and wartime responsibility, it will generate responses that reflect the Japanese cabinet's political stance while distorting established historical facts.

Gennai's assistance in drafting parliamentary responses integrates multiple AI-powered functions, including analyzing questions, retrieving past replies and

reference materials, drafting response texts, anticipating follow-up questions from lawmakers, and checking for internal inconsistencies. This means that if materials carrying warped historical perceptions are absorbed into "authoritative" official discourse, AI-generated replies may present biased positions as "objective evidence." The false narratives would then be reinforced and recycled within official institutions, becoming institutionally entrenched and regularly disseminated.

Japan's right-wing forces have played a conspicuous role in advancing Gennai. According to the Digital Agency, the AI system is underpinned by the Act on the Promotion of Research and Development, and Utilization of AI-Related Technology, enacted in May 2025, and the Basic Plan on Artificial Intelligence, approved by the Cabinet in December 2025 under Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

In the third meeting of the AI Strategic Headquarters last year, Takaichi instructed the government to make full use of "Government AI Gennai." She directed that by May 2026, over 100,000 government employees should be able to use it to carry out their duties more creatively and demonstrate the value of "trustworthy AI" to the public. However, the "trustworthiness" of an AI embedded with skewed historical perceptions is highly questionable.

Moreover, Gennai currently relies on U.S. closed-source models, including Anthropic's Claude. The company explicitly labels China an "adversary country," and its technical alignment is steeped in Western geopolitical prejudices. Gennai is therefore not technologically neutral from the outset; it carries

a built-in positional bias.

Separately, Nikkei Asia reported that the Digital Agency has introduced AI systems developed by Japanese firms, arguing that government AI must adopt large language models that "fit Japanese vocabulary and expressions and respect Japanese culture and values." This statement lays bare the intention to embed specific political stances deep within technological infrastructure.

Moreover, the bias embedded in Gennai carries spillover risks. According to The Japan News, the Japanese government plans to promote Gennai in emerging and developing countries in Southeast Asia and other regions. If this biased AI system spreads overseas, distorted historical views could reach wider audiences through technology exports, contaminate global datasets, and mislead the international community's understanding and judgment of the history of World War II.

History cannot be falsified, nor can truth be twisted. From tampering with history textbooks and successive visits by Japanese politicians to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates convicted Japanese war criminals, to now attempting to reshape historical narratives through AI, Japan's historical revisionism continues to evolve in its tactics.

Compared with traditional propaganda, AI-powered dissemination is more covert and efficient, capable of cementing false public perceptions subtly over time. AI should be harnessed for the benefit of all humanity, it should not become a new tool for the Japanese government to peddle skewed historical narratives and overturn established historical conclusions.



The 9.18 Historical Museum in Shenyang, north-east China's Liaoning province, September 1, 2026. (PHOTO: XINHUA)