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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

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## AI experts disown Musk-backed campaign citing their research

LONDON, March 31 (Reuters) - Four artificial intelligence experts have expressed concern after their work was cited in an open letter – co-signed by Elon Musk – demanding an urgent pause in research.

The letter, dated March 22 and with more than 1,800 signatures by Friday, called for a six-month circuit-breaker in the development of systems “more powerful” than Microsoft-backed (MSFT.O) OpenAI’s new GPT-4, which can hold human-like conversation, compose songs and summarise lengthy documents.

Since GPT-4’s predecessor ChatGPT was released last year, rival companies have rushed to launch similar products.

The open letter says AI systems with “human-competitive intelligence” pose profound risks to humanity, citing 12 pieces of research from experts including university academics as well as current and former employees of OpenAI, Google (GOOGL.O) and its subsidiary DeepMind.

Civil society groups in the U.S. and EU have since pressed lawmakers to rein in OpenAI’s research. OpenAI did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Critics have accused the Future of Life Institute (FLI), the organisation behind the letter which is primarily funded by the Musk Foundation, of prioritising imagined apocalyptic scenarios over more immediate concerns about AI, such as racist or sexist biases being programmed into the machines.

Among the research cited was “On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots”, a well-known paper co-authored by Margaret Mitchell, who previously oversaw ethical AI research at Google.

Mitchell, now chief ethical scientist at AI firm Hugging Face, criticised the letter, telling Reuters it was unclear what counted

as “more powerful than GPT4”.

“By treating a lot of questionable ideas as a given, the letter asserts a set of priorities and a narrative on AI that benefits the supporters of FLI,” she said. “Ignoring active harms right now is a privilege that some of us don’t have.”

Her co-authors Timnit Gebru and Emily M. Bender criticised the letter on Twitter, with the latter branding some of its claims “unhinged”.

FLI president Max Tegmark told Reuters the campaign was not an attempt to hinder OpenAI’s corporate advantage.

“It’s quite hilarious. I’ve seen people say, ‘Elon Musk is trying to slow down the competition,’” he said, adding that Musk had no role in drafting the letter. “This is not about one company.”

**RISKS NOW**  
Shiri Dori-Hacohen, an assistant

professor at the University of Connecticut, also took issue with her work being mentioned in the letter. She last year co-authored a research paper arguing the widespread use of AI already posed serious risks.

Her research argued the present-day use of AI systems could influence decision-making in relation to climate change, nuclear war, and other existential threats.

She told Reuters: “AI does not need to reach human-level intelligence to exacerbate those risks.”

“There are non-existential risks that are really, really important, but don’t receive the same kind of Hollywood-level attention.”

Asked to comment on the criticism, FLI’s Tegmark said both short-term and long-term risks of AI should be taken seriously.

“If we cite someone, it just means we claim they’re endorsing that sentence. It doesn’t mean they’re endorsing the letter, or we en-

dorse everything they think,” he told Reuters.

Dan Hendrycks, director of the California-based Center for AI Safety, who was also cited in the letter, stood by its contents, telling Reuters it was sensible to consider black swan events - those which appear unlikely, but would have devastating consequences.

The open letter also warned that generative AI tools could be used to flood the internet with “propaganda and untruth”.

Dori-Hacohen said it was “pretty rich” for Musk to have signed it, citing a reported rise in misinformation on Twitter following his acquisition of the platform, documented by civil society group Common Cause and others.

Twitter will soon launch a new fee structure for access to its research data, potentially hindering research on the subject.

Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk attends the World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) in Shanghai, China August 29, 2019. REUTERS/Aly Song/File Photo



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# Munitions, anti-tank rockets in next \$2.6 bln US pledge for Ukraine -sources

WASHINGTON, March 31 (Reuters) - A new \$2.6 billion U.S. military aid package that could include air surveillance radars, anti-tank rockets and fuel trucks for Ukraine's fight against Russia is expected to be announced as soon as Monday, three U.S. officials said on Friday.

A half a dozen types of munitions, including tank munitions, are also expected to be on the list of equipment that could be finalized over this weekend, the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said, adding that the dollar amount and specific equipment in the package could change.

Also slated for inclusion were precision aerial munitions, bridging equipment Ukraine would use to assault Russian positions, recovery vehicles to help disabled heavy equipment like tanks and additional rounds for NASAMS air defenses that the U.S. and allies have given to Kyiv.

The aid was comprised of \$2.1 billion in weapons aid coming

from Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funding that allows President Joe Biden's administration to buy weapons from industry rather than from U.S. weapons stocks.

The remaining \$500 million, mainly comprised of munitions to help Kyiv push a spring offensive against Russia's invasion, was expected to come from Presidential Drawdown Authority funds, which allow the president to take from current U.S. stocks in an emergency.

The U.S. has now pledged more than \$30 billion worth of security assistance to Ukraine since the invasion



Military aid, delivered as part of the United States' security assistance to Ukraine, is unloaded from a plane at the Boryspil International Airport outside Kyiv, Ukraine February 13, 2022. REUTERS/Serhiy

## Editor's Choice



Graves of unidentified people killed by Russian soldiers during the occupation of Bucha are seen at the town's cemetery in Bucha, Ukraine, March 30. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich



People attend a vigil marking the first anniversary of the liberation of the town of Bucha, outside Kyiv, Ukraine, March 31. Residents in Bucha speak of the deep psychological wounds left by the occupation and say it would take generations to get over it. Some buildings remain battered in the town and a scrapyard is full of cars and military vehicles destroyed during last year's fighting. REUTERS/Kai



A mourner reacts as Brazilian soccer legend Pele is transported by the fire department, from his former club Santos' Vila Belmiro stadium, in Santos, Brazil. REUTERS/Ueslei Marcelino



Pillars of light, which are optical atmospheric phenomena, beam up from the ground into the sky behind residential buildings in Omsk, Russia. REUTERS/Alexey Malgavko



Ukrainian service members and relatives of the fallen defenders react as they attend a ceremony to mark the first anniversary of the liberation of Bucha, outside Kyiv, Ukraine, March 31. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich



Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Moldovan President Maia Sandu, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic and Slovakian Prime Minister Eduard Heger visit the town of Bucha marking the first anniversary of its liberation, March 31. Ukrainian Presidential Press Service/Handout



### Opinion: Ending The Ukraine War

Moscow And Kiev Have Tentatively Welcomed China's Peace Plan, But  
Kiev's Chief Supporters Are Bitterly Opposed To It

## The Chinese Ukraine Peace Plan: Can Beijing Find A Way To End The Ongoing Conflict, Despite Lack Of Support/Hostility From The U.S. And NATO?

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



China's President Xi Jinping/Photo: © Feng Li / Getty Images. Throughout the latter half of February, China was increasingly active diplomatically. Its highest-ranking diplomat, the Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party Wang Yi, made a European tour. After attending the Munich Security Conference, he traveled to Hungary and Russia. In Moscow, he held talks with Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and finally, Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yi assured Putin that China is ready to strengthen strategic cooperation with Russia. He stressed that Russian-Chinese relations are not directed against third countries, and will not yield to outside pressure.

The Russian President confirmed that he is looking forward to the state visit of his "friend Xi Jinping" after the session of the National People's Congress (NPC) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), an event where key government officials will be appointed. According to The Wall Street Journal, this visit may take place in April or at the beginning of May, when Russia celebrates WWII Victory Day.



Ukrainian Troops Engaged In Battle.

WSJ sources also reported that Beijing wishes to play a greater role in the settlement of the Ukraine conflict, and Xi plans to discuss multilateral peace talks. Soon afterwards, China proposed its peace initiative for the conflict. However, for many observers, Beijing's proposals generate far more questions than answers.

#### The Chinese document

While Yi was touring Europe, China published two documents expressing its position on a new global security architecture. On February 21, the Foreign Ministry released the concept of a global security initiative based on six main principles. The document mostly restated Beijing's neutral rhetoric regarding the conflict in Ukraine. For example, the principle of the sovereignty of all countries

stands next to that of a "serious attitude" towards legitimate security concerns. While the first thesis is occasionally interpreted as China's rejection of the Russian offensive in Ukraine, the second point refers to the Western leaders' decision to ignore Moscow's concerns about the expansion of NATO to the East. At the same time, China has particularly stressed that it remains committed to resolving differences and disputes through dialogue and consultations, not wars and sanctions.



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Chinese Central Foreign Affairs Commission Office Director Wang Yi during their meeting, in Moscow, Russia. © Sputnik / Anton Novoderezhkin.

On February 24, the anniversary of the Russian offensive in Ukraine, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published another document, widely referred to in the media as China's "peace plan". In fact, Beijing never offered its text, titled "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis", as a roadmap. The document contains only vague formulations tinged with an air of philosophy.

#### Here's the outline of China's twelve points:

- respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and the norms of international law;
  - rejection of the "cold war mentality" (including the expansion of military blocs);
  - a ceasefire and an end to hostilities ("in war, no one wins");
  - a return to peace negotiations;
  - the settlement of the humanitarian crisis;
  - the protection of civilians and prisoners of war;
  - ensuring the safety of nuclear power plants;
  - the reduction of strategic risks and prevention of the use of nuclear weapons;
  - the export of food within the grain corridor;
  - an end to unilateral sanctions;
  - securing the stability of production and supply chains;
  - the involvement of the international community in post-war reconstruction.
- 'Too much' peace**  
China's peacemaking proposal didn't spark a positive reaction from all key players. Russia's reception was polite, but tepid – Vladimir Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov said that Moscow will pay great attention to the "plan of our Chinese friends" but added that so far it does not see any prerequisites for a return to a peaceful course. He added that the military operation would continue, and Russia is moving towards achieving its goals



(L) Dmitry Peskov; (R) Maria Zakharova © Sputnik / Press Service of the Russian Foreign Ministry

Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova earlier said that Moscow shares Beijing's core ideas and remains committed to the principles of compliance with international law and indivisible security. Russia is ready to achieve its objectives through political and diplomatic means, but a peace agreement should imply "a stop to supplies of Western weapons and mercenaries to Ukraine, the end of hostilities, the return of the country to a neutral non-aligned status, and the recognition of new territorial realities."

Beijing's initiative provoked an outburst of criticism against China on behalf of US authorities, who wrongly assessed Moscow's enthusiasm for the proposals. "Putin's applauding it, so how could it [the peace plan] be any good? I've seen nothing in the plan that would indicate that there is something that would be beneficial to anyone other than Russia, if the Chinese plan were followed. The idea that China is going to be negotiating the outcome of a war that's a totally unjust war for Ukraine is just not rational," US President Joe Biden said in an interview with ABC. Adding to the rhetoric, Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan suggested that Beijing stick to the first point about respecting the sovereignty of all countries. Commenting on China's plan, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that Beijing "doesn't inspire much trust." He went so far to state that his bloc suspects Chinese weapons may be supplied to Russia, even though "there is no such evidence yet." Meanwhile, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said that the EU will study China's document, but only in the light of the "friendship between Beijing and Moscow".

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, spoke out about China's "reflections" in a more neutral way. Zelensky noted that while he doesn't share all the ideas outlined in Beijing's proposals, some are quite suitable for Ukraine – for example, the support of the territorial integrity of all countries. However, Zelensky stressed that unless China's plan includes a proposal on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine's territory, it will be unachievable. At the same time, Zelensky said that he also wishes to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky addresses a joint meeting of Congress in the House Chamber of the US Capitol on December 21, 2022 in Washington, DC. © Win McNamee / Getty Images.

Zelensky's advisor, Mikhail Podolyak, reacted more strongly. He indicated that any proposals should include "a return to 1991 borders". The head of the the president's "Servant of the People" faction, David Arakhamiya, dubbed Beijing's suggestion for both parties to immediately start negotiations "unacceptable" due to the current realities. Against this background, the position of Poland, one of the closest allies of the US in Europe, came as a surprise. Polish President Andrzej Duda stated that the initiative might become a way towards peace, and that one "should not underestimate a great power like China". These words may indicate his desire to maintain beneficial economic ties with Beijing.

#### What China meant

So why did China's "peace plan" remain so vague and why did its appeal to "the good of mankind" provoke such a strong reaction from the West?

"What we have seen is by no means an action plan or a peace-making appeal. Rather, it is a declaration of China's position. It is important for the world community to see what China has called for and what it wants. It has been rumored that China wants to supply lethal weapons or otherwise intervene in the conflict. With this document, China has demonstrated that it has different intentions, and it stands on the side of peace," Alexey Maslov, director of the Institute of Asian and African Countries at the Moscow State University, told RT. According to Maslov, China's proposal is insufficiently radical for the West and is too mild for Russia since it doesn't directly condemn Western actions.



Russian Troops Celebrate Veterans Day.

"But if you closely examine the text, you'll see that it includes some anti-Western statements – for example, a call for the non-proliferation of military blocs. We may call this the kind of neutrality that favors Russia," the expert says.

Vasily Kashin, director of the Higher School of Economics Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, agreed that for Russia, the Chinese "peace plan" is mostly acceptable, but will likely be rejected by the West and Ukraine. At the same time, he believes the document was originally created with a different purpose in mind.

"China wanted to show everyone that it can come up with good peace proposals which may act as an alternative to the West's bellicose rhetoric. A number of developing countries that remain neutral may support this initiative," the Kashin stated.

China's initiatives directly proceed from the foreign policy concepts of the Communist Party and Xi himself – viewing the world as a community involved in shaping the common destiny of mankind. Only uninformed observers could expect China to take a different standpoint, Alexander Lomanov, head of the Center for Asia-Pacific Studies of the IMEMO RAS, told RT. In his opinion, the negative reception that the proposal received from Europeans and Americans are a result of the general tensions between the West and Beijing.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a signing ceremony in Beijing's Great Hall of the People on June 25, 2016 in Beijing, China. © Greg Baker-Pool / Getty Images.

"China believes that in the future, humanity should solve serious problems together. Xi's initiatives are indisputable – they talk about joint prosperity, the support of production chains, etc. However, in the modern world, which has apparently lost all mutual trust, it remains unclear how all of this can be implemented. Especially in the context of the current confrontation with the West, which sides against Beijing. Are America and its satellites ready to form such a community, based on the Chinese model? No. Even some third world countries are not ready for it," the expert said.

Lomanov added that the West has ignored Russia's concerns

about NATO expansion over the past 25 years, and neither will it listen to Beijing's appeal.

"China is a powerful country. But it can hardly become a broker that all sides of the conflict will trust. For example, the cessation of fire is hardly possible as long as the idea of a military victory over Russia dominates in the West," he explained. The experts added that historically, China has never been a mediator and it is not interested in becoming one in the context of the Ukrainian conflict. According to Kashin, the US suggested that China take on such a role at the start of Russia's military offensive, but there entreaties were refused.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (Front Center) attends the fifth plenary meeting of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People on March 15, 2013 in Beijing, China. © Lintao Zhang / Getty Images.

#### We are allowed to, but you're not

At the same time as Beijing delivered peace initiative, there was increasing talk concerning possible weapons supplies from China to Russia. Sullivan declared that the US sent Beijing a clear warning regarding any such steps. CIA Director William Burns claimed to CBS News that US intelligence has evidence that China is seriously considering the possibility of supplying weapons to Russia, but has not made a final decision yet. Both Beijing and Moscow deny the existence of such plans.

Previously, Secretary of State Antony Blinken had asserted that Chinese companies were already helping Russia fight Ukraine by providing non-lethal military assistance and assisting Moscow in avoiding Western economic sanctions. Some Chinese organizations have already fallen under US sanctions, as a result. For example, on January 26, the US Treasury imposed restrictions against the Tianyi Research Institution (Changsha) and its subsidiary in Luxembourg for supposedly providing the Russian company Terra Tech with images of Ukraine from satellites equipped with synthetic-aperture radars (SAR). Terra Tech, in turn, allegedly transmitted the images to PMC Wagner.

Consequently, China reacted sharply to the West's attempt to interfere in its policy towards Moscow. While in Russia, Wang Yi said that Chinese-Russian relations are rock solid and will withstand any test proposed by the evolving international situation.



"I had to explain the big difference, telling him what a big threat the war in Ukraine poses to us," Borrell said.

According to Lomanov, this is China's way of showing its weariness with the West's double standards, and its dwindling hope in cooperating with the European Union on equal footing.

"For a long time, China has believed in the strategic autonomy of Europe. But Europe is increasingly becoming an appendage of the American policy in containing China.

That's how it was with the sanctions: The EU imposed restrictions because of the situation in Xinjiang, but was very surprised to face countermeasures. And now Beijing is demonstrating that theoretically, it is able to take symmetrical action regarding the situation in Ukraine. However, I think that in the matter of weapons supplies to Russia, China won't go past rhetoric statements," Lomanov concluded. (Courtesy rt.com)

#### About The Author

**Maxim Hyatkov** is a Russian journalist focusing on international security, China's politics and soft-power tools.

## “Give Peace A Chance”

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

