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### China's AI and data protection frameworks get a jump start

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China was able to contain the new coronavirus<sup>[1]</sup> in part due to the use of artificial intelligence (AI). The Chinese government has access to data, including locational data, that even the permissible United States data protection framework can only dream of. In the case of a national emergency, the Chinese government can set aside any civil right enjoyed by the individual Chinese citizen in order to fulfill what it sees as a critical, collective goal.

China used several big data, AI and machine learning applications to combat and contain the new coronavirus.<sup>[2]</sup>  
Below are a few examples:

- Robots that clean segregated wards to reduce infection rates.
- Drones equipped with loudspeakers that monitor citizens seen in open areas without face masks.
- AI temperature checkpoints at railway stations that reduce waiting time and lessen the risk of contagion.
- A platform that lets users check if they have recently traveled with someone who contracted the coronavirus.
- AI voice assistants calling people to give advice on home quarantine.
- Tracking citizens' phones in order to trace transmission paths and collect other critical data points.

The coronavirus crisis in China presented the country with an opportunity to jump-start AI capabilities and test systems in a real-world setting. In a 2017 document outlining the country's strategic goals for the development of AI, A Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan,<sup>[3]</sup> China's State Council declared several goals for 2020:

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