



Opinion

Letter

Letter: In smart cities stakes, US and Europe are still ahead

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James Kynge and Nian Liu's Big Read ([October 8](#)) argues that China's progress in setting technical standards has helped it to flex its commercial and geopolitical power internationally. Smart cities projects are cited as a key area where the Chinese have gained an edge on other countries.

However, our data does not support this argument. In the largest smart cities segment, that of smart street lighting — the only one that has scaled into the millions of endpoints — the Chinese are far behind. Projects and standards are dominated by American and European vendors.

Sure, the Chinese have made progress with video surveillance and facial recognition technologies (referred to as “safe cities” in the article) but democratic countries have now wised up to their risks. Several cities have banned the use of facial recognition technology outright and more will surely follow suit.

Which leaves us with the remaining smart cities segments focused on the automation of municipal functions. It is here where the Americans and Europeans have proved their global competitive advantage. Of course, autocracies will still look to the Chinese for surveillance technology.

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