

CASE #3: AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES



HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

Imagine you are an employee at a company that announces a new DoD contract to develop AI technologies for military applications; these are not weapons systems but, rather, use AI for image recognition and data analysis.

- Would you support or oppose your company working on this project?
- As a company leader, how would you weigh the concerns of vocal employees in the decision about whether or not to do this work?
- As a company based in the U.S., what obligations does the company have to the country?

ADOPTING AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Here are two possible standards that might be used to determine the adoption of AVs:

1. Improved safety over the status quo of human drivers; minimize risk relative to the status quo.
 2. Nearly perfect safety where any accident is treated as a major problem and liability (as with air travel); eliminate risk as much as possible.
- Which standard should we use?
 - If (1), then must every subpopulation (passengers, bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.) be on average better off?
 - Who should be responsible for accidents involving AVs: the end-vehicle manufacturers, the producer of the navigation software, the vehicle owners, or someone else?

TESTING

You are in charge of public policy for Uber. Your engineering team is making terrific progress in designing a fully automated vehicle. The key question is where you should test this technology. Knowing that California is over-regulating the industry, the governor of Arizona has reached out and invited you to test in the state without restrictions.

- Would you accept this offer? Why or why not?
- Would your decision change if you knew the governor made this decision on his own vs. had the formal support of the legislature?
- Would you self-impose any restrictions on your testing of the technology?
- What steps would you take to mitigate any risks associated with testing the technology in the real world?

SECOND- AND THIRD-ORDER EFFECTS

Studies show that the advance of AVs will save lives but will also displace many truck and taxi drivers. Consider two perspectives:

1. Several of your family members work as truck/taxi drivers and are highly likely to be victims of “technological unemployment.” What obligations, if any, does (a) an AV company or (b) a local/state/federal government have to your newly unemployed family members?
2. If the AV company is publicly traded, how should company leaders weigh their financial obligations to shareholders against the obligations you identified (by either the company or local/state/federal government) to displaced workers?

System Error: Where Big Tech Went Wrong and How We Can Reboot

by Rob Reich, Mehran Sahami, and Jeremy M. Weinstein

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