Comparative Analysis of Autonomous Vehicle Regulation in the USA and South Korea

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments

Advisor

Kent Wayland, Department of Engineering and Society

Introduction

The rise of Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) is a big step forward in how we get around, offering the chance for safer and more efficient travel. However, making these cars a normal part of our everyday lives is not just about coming up with better technology. It also requires us to consider how people in different societies view this change and how laws need to adapt. This is especially interesting when we look at countries like South Korea and the USA, which are both leading in tech but are very different in their cultures and legal environments (Hong et al., 2022).

This project aims to explore the different approaches South Korea and the USA are taking towards the legal framework for AVs, with a special focus on how their unique cultural values influence these legal structures. For instance, South Korea's collectivist culture, which emphasizes communal harmony and group consensus, may manifest in legal frameworks that prioritize collective safety and data sharing for the greater good. In contrast, the individualistic culture of the USA, valuing personal freedom and autonomy, might reflect in legal structures that focus more on individual rights and privacy concerns, even in the context of AV regulation (Kim et al., 2012).

The goal is to understand how different cultural perspectives on things like community (South Korea) versus individuality (USA) can influence the rules and regulations for AVs. This exploration will help us see the bigger picture of how culture, law, and technology interact in the world of autonomous vehicles, laying the groundwork for policies that align with what's most important to people in each society (Taeihagh & Lim, 2019).

Background

Mutual Shaping Framework

The concept of Mutual Shaping, significant in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), proposes that societal factors and technology shape each other reciprocally. This perspective is crucial for understanding the deployment of AVs, as it acknowledges that the technology's development is shaped by societal needs, values, and regulations, while the technology itself can reshape societal norms and expectations (Pinch and Bijker, 1984). The application of this framework to AVs reveals the dynamic interplay between evolving AV technologies and the shifting societal and cultural norms in different contexts, such as South Korea and the USA.

Cultural Context of AVs in South Korea and USA

The cultural backdrop against which AVs are being introduced in South Korea and the USA provides a complex landscape for examining their sociotechnical integration. South Korea's strong emphasis on community and hierarchy significantly shapes its approach to technological integration, including AVs. The Korean cultural context is heavily influenced by values of harmony and collective welfare, which are pivotal in understanding the societal acceptance and regulatory frameworks surrounding new technologies. The study by Kim et al. (2012) highlights that Koreans exhibit strong moral intuitions related to purity and respect for authority, which could translate into a more cautious and structured approach to deploying AVs. The notion of “purity” can be linked to moral and social order, and purity is not only about cleanliness, but also

often associated with maintaining societal norms and moral integrity. It suggests a stringent adherence to safety and reliability standards that align with societal expectations for harmless and seamless technologies. And so this such attitudes ensure that technologies align with societal norms and are likely to favor regulatory frameworks that emphasize safety and communal benefits over individual preferences. Their cultural trait also emphasizes compliance and deference to established rules and hierarchies. In the regulatory context, this could translate into a structured and cautious approach to introducing new technologies like AVs, ensuring they strictly comply with all existing safety and operational norms set by authorities.

In contrast, the cultural landscape in the USA is marked by a higher valuation of individual rights and autonomy, a reflection of its individualistic orientation. American moral and political orientations, as discussed in Kim et al. (2012), show a stronger emphasis on harm and fairness, which align with liberal ideologies favoring personal freedom and privacy. This could influence how AVs are regulated and adopted, with a possible preference for less restrictive regulations that promote innovation and personal choice. The decentralized nature of the US regulatory approach allows for a variety of AV technologies to be tested and adopted based on individual or local preferences, reflecting the broader American ethos of personal freedom and market-driven solutions (Fanelli & Stoddard, 2022).

Moreover, the differences in moral intuitions between South Koreans and Americans particularly regarding authority and fairness, suggest that AV policies and public acceptance could be shaped by these underlying values (Kim et al., 2012). For instance, the U.S. focus on fairness and preventing harm might lead to policies that prioritize the safety and rights of

individual users. There may be less emphasis on enforcing strict adherence to traffic laws if they are seen as overly burdensome on personal freedoms. The American context may foster a diverse ecosystem of AV solutions tailored to different user preferences. These cultural distinctions are crucial for policymakers and businesses as they develop and implement AV technology. Understanding that South Koreans may prioritize communal harmony and respect for authority can lead to AV systems designed to be more integrated, cooperative, and compliant with government regulations, whereas in the U.S., the emphasis on individual rights and market choice might result in a wider range of AV options that cater to personal preferences, even if it means a less uniform transportation landscape (Taeihagh & Lim, 2019).

In summary, the integration of AVs in South Korea and the USA reflects deeper cultural and moral dynamics that influence both public acceptance and regulatory approaches. By aligning AV development with these cultural values, technology developers and policymakers can facilitate smoother adoption and acceptance of AV technologies in different societies. A nuanced understanding of these cultural factors is essential for designing effective and culturally resonant AV policies.

Comparative Regulatory Landscapes

The United States and South Korea represent two distinct paradigms in the realm of AV regulation and deployment.

United States:

In the United States, the regulatory approach is characterized by a combination of state and federal guidelines. At the state level, California and Nevada have been frontrunners in setting specific requirements for AV testing on public roads. Nevada was the first state to authorize the operation of autonomous vehicles in 2011. Nevada's regulations mandate that companies must submit a detailed testing plan, obtain a special license, and carry $1-5 million in insurance depending on the number of vehicles being tested. These regulations ensure a structured and monitored development environment, reflecting a proactive approach to both fostering innovation and ensuring public safety (Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles). Similarly, California's regulations require that manufacturers obtain a testing permit, submit detailed reports of any accidents, and provide annual disengagement reports that outline every instance the autonomous system was disengaged during tests (California Department of Motor Vehicles).

At the federal level, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has progressed through several versions of its automated vehicle (AV) guidance, culminating in "Automated Vehicles 4.0" (AV 4.0). This iteration emphasizes fostering safety and promoting innovation while providing flexibility for technological advancements. The guidance encourages manufacturers to conduct voluntary safety self-assessments, promoting the design of AVs with safety as a priority. This approach avoids stringent regulatory barriers that might hinder technological development, ensuring a balance between safety oversight and innovation in the AV sector (NHTSA).

South Korea:

In contrast, South Korea's approach is more centralized and prescriptive. The Korean government, through the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, has enacted the "Act on Promotion and Support of Commercialization of Autonomous Vehicles," It establishes a clear legal and regulatory framework aimed at accelerating the development and integration of AV technology within the national infrastructure (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, n.d.). The act reflects a top-down approach, focusing on fostering a supportive environment for AV innovation while ensuring public safety and compliance with rigorous standards. It includes provisions for a designated testing facility known as "K-City," where companies can thoroughly test their AV technology in a controlled environment that simulates real-world urban conditions (Kim, J.-T., 2022). This facility includes various road settings such as highways, downtown areas, and residential zones, complete with traffic signals, crosswalks, and bus lanes. The purpose of such a comprehensive setup is to expose AVs to a wide array of potential scenarios and challenges they would encounter in actual operation (Kim, J.-T.). The government also supports these initiatives with substantial funding and infrastructure, reflecting a coordinated national strategy to advance AV technology (Ministry of Land).

Additionally, South Korea's focus on integrating AV technology with smart city projects can be seen in the government's collaboration with private companies to deploy AV buses and shuttles in specific urban areas (Kim, J.-T., 2022).

Comparative Insights:

The regulatory differences between the U.S. and South Korea can be attributed to their differing cultural attitudes towards technology and governance. The U.S. model, with its state-

by-state regulatory framework, reflects the American emphasis on innovation and market-driven solutions, allowing for a flexible adaptation to emerging technologies. This decentralized approach facilitates diverse applications of AV technology and caters to a wide range of consumer preferences and local conditions (Fanelli & Stoddard, 2022).

In contrast, South Korea's centralized regulatory framework ensures that AV technology aligns with national infrastructure goals and societal welfare. This model not only prioritizes public safety and efficiency but also ensures that the technology supports broader governmental objectives such as urban modernization (Hong et al., 2022).

In future AVs development, understanding these nuanced regulatory frameworks provides valuable insights for stakeholders in both countries and highlights the importance of tailoring AV policies to fit national priorities and cultural contexts.

Method

In this research, there are uses of a comparative analytical method, grounded in the Mutual Shaping Framework (Pinch & Bijker, 1984) to explore how cultural, technological, and regulatory dynamics influence AV policies in South Korea and the USA.

Literature Review:

Academic journals, government reports, and legal documents were systematically reviewed. Selection criteria included relevance to AV technology regulation, publication date (to ensure currency), and citations (to gauge impact and scholarly discussion). And also, key sources

include peer-reviewed articles from transport and policy journals, official government publications detailing AV regulations, and legal texts outlining national and international standards.

Case Study Analysis:

South Korea: Examination of South Korea's centralized regulatory framework was conducted through a detailed case study of K-City and the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Master Plan. This involved analyzing how these initiatives align with broader societal and technological objectives, supported by government documents and secondary analyses from scholarly articles.

United States: The varied state-by-state regulatory approach in the U.S. was analyzed by reviewing state legislation, federal guidelines, and case studies of specific state implementations, such as California and Nevada's AV testing regulations.

Comparative Analysis:

The Mutual Shaping Framework was applied to compare and contrast how societal values influenced regulatory approaches in both countries. This involved mapping cultural attitudes towards technology and individualism/collectivism to the decentralized and centralized regulatory frameworks of each country.

Data from the literature review and case studies were integrated to identify patterns, differences, and similarities in AV regulation between the two countries. This integration was used to develop a nuanced understanding of how cultural influences shape the governance of

self-driving technologies. The comparative analysis provides insights into the complex interplay between societal values, technological development, and legal structures in the context of AVs.

Results

The analysis of regulatory approaches to autonomous vehicles (AVs) in South Korea and the United States reveals distinct outcomes shaped by each country's unique cultural values and legal frameworks.

South Korea's centralized approach has led to a structured and coordinated implementation of AV technologies. The K-City testing facility has enabled systematic evaluation of self-driving systems under diverse road and environmental conditions (Kim, J.-T., 2022). By establishing uniform safety protocols and government oversight, the "Act on Promotion and Support of Commercialization of Autonomous Vehicles" ensures all AVs meet rigorous testing requirements before public deployment (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, n.d.). This reduces accident risks and instills public confidence.

The controlled yet comprehensive testing environment at K-City allows developers to thoroughly vet AV technologies and rectify any issues in a safe setting prior to real-world operation. Scenario-based assessments, from interactions with pedestrians to navigating adverse weather, confirm AVs can handle unexpected situations safely - a crucial factor for both regulatory approval and societal acceptance.

Furthermore, the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Master Plan integrates AVs into the broader transportation infrastructure, aiming to enhance traffic efficiency and safety. This top-

down approach, enabled by the centralized regulatory system, demonstrates a high degree of government planning and involvement. It aligns with collectivist cultural values that prioritize societal welfare and a harmonious adoption of new technologies (Kim et al., 2012).

In contrast, the decentralized nature of AV regulation in the United States has fostered a dynamic environment for diverse pilot projects and experimentation. States like California, Nevada, and Arizona have developed their own regulatory guidelines, tailored to the innovative goals of local industries and adapted to regional geographic and demographic considerations (Fanelli & Stoddard, 2022).

This flexibility has spurred a robust landscape for technological competition and creative AV applications, reflecting the individualistic American culture that values freedom, personal choice, and market-driven innovation. The state-by-state approach allows for AV technologies to evolve in response to consumer preferences and localized transportation needs.

However, the lack of uniform national standards has also led to a patchwork of varying regulations and a complex terrain for AV companies to navigate. Safety and privacy concerns are addressed differently in each jurisdiction, at times leading to convoluted legal and ethical debates. While this decentralized system encourages innovation, it can also result in uncertainties and inconsistencies that may slow the widespread adoption of AVs (Taeihagh & Lim, 2019).

The regulatory differences between South Korea and the United States reflect their contrasting cultural attitudes towards technology governance. South Korea's centralized approach, grounded in values of societal harmony and deference to authority, ensures AV

development proceeds in a measured, coordinated manner that prioritizes collective safety (Hong et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2012). Public trust is higher in government-led initiatives that promise a orderly integration of self- driving technologies.

In contrast, the United States' decentralized framework, rooted in principles of individual liberty and free market competition, creates a dynamic but fragmented landscape for AV innovation Fanelli & Stoddard, 2022). The openness to diverse experimentation aligns with American individualism, but the lack of cohesive national policies can lead to regulatory uncertainties and uneven safeguards (Taeihagh & Lim, 2019).

These cultural underpinnings shape how AVs are perceived and integrated within each society. South Koreans may be more accepting of government-sanctioned AV programs that guarantee public welfare, while Americans might be warier of top-down control and place greater value on personal freedoms and choice in adopting self-driving technologies.

Understanding these nuanced cultural and regulatory dynamics provides important lessons for AV stakeholders globally. It highlights the need to design policies and deployment strategies that resonate with societal values and expectations. A balanced approach, one that harnesses the strengths of both centralized coordination and decentralized innovation, may offer a path forward.

By encouraging public-private collaboration, establishing baseline safety and ethics standards, and allowing for flexibility based on local needs, policymakers can craft AV governance models that promote responsible development while remaining adaptable to cultural

contexts (Hong et al., 2022; Taeihagh & Lim, 2019). Continued international dialogue and mutual learning will be essential as societies navigate the complex cultural and legal landscapes of our autonomous future.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of autonomous vehicle regulation in South Korea and the United States reveals the significant influence of cultural values on legal frameworks and technological governance. As the technology of autonomous vehicles continues to evolve, it is crucial for stakeholders to recognize and adapt to the cultural factors shaping public attitudes and regulatory responses. By designing policies and deployment strategies that resonate with societal values and expectations, we can foster the responsible development and acceptance of AVs across diverse cultural contexts. This comparative study also underscores the importance of international collaboration and mutual learning in the governance of autonomous vehicles. By sharing best practices, exploring hybrid regulatory models, and working towards harmonized safety and ethics standards, the global community can collectively navigate the challenges and opportunities of AV future.

Ultimately, the successful integration of AV into our societies will require not only technological progress but also a deep understanding of the cultural dynamics that shape our legal frameworks and public attitudes. By bringing together insights from technology, policy, and cultural studies, we can craft governance models that balance innovation, safety, and societal well-being, establishing the foundation for more equitable and culturally aligned autonomous future.

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