

TRANSCRIPT:

Governor Michael Dukakis Discusses Ethics in AI with Barry Nolan



Barry Nolan, right, discusses Ethics in AI with Governor Michael Dukakis at the 2018 AI World Conference & Expo in Boston.

BARRY NOLAN: Barry Nolan here and we have brought the morning coffee cameras to Boston, Massachusetts to attend the Artificial Intelligence World Conference. In this huge room full of interesting ideas and presentations, one of the most interesting here today is courtesy of the man who brought the internet to the country of Vietnam. Now, he's trying to bring the concept of a global framework of ethics to the world of artificial intelligence.

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: My name is Michael Dukakis, I was the governor of Massachusetts for 12 years, ran for the presidency, did not win, 1988, and I've been teaching at Northeastern University for the past 28 years and for the past 24 during the Winter quarter at UCLA. Thanks to a remarkable native Vietnam who has spent a lot of time

over these past several years here with us in Boston. Tuan Nguyen, who was the founder of the internet in Vietnam. I am the chairman of the Boston Global Forum which Tuan created which is designed to see if we can bring people together around the globe and make sure, among other things, that as we develop these wonderful technologies, we use them for peaceful purposes and ethical purposes and not war-like purposes and unethical purposes. As we all know, that's a real issue, especially when it comes to something like AI.

BARRY NOLAN: When you deal with legislation over time, you become keenly aware of the problem of unintended consequences. When you look at the issue of AI, is that one of the things you worry about?

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: Yeah, very much so because we already have the example, the internet. A remarkable technology has transformed the world in many, many ways that are good, but we're also now spending billions on cyber warfare. Why are we doing that? Well, because we have this new technology and some people want to use it in ways that are going to be pretty destructive. That's not what we want to see happen with AI. We want to see AI being used for positive, constructive purposes and not as a weapon of war and I think that's a real danger and a real risk and the international communities got to come together and put together some rules and standards that we're all going to live by so that AI does make lives better, not destroy lives.

BARRY NOLAN: We've seen the resistance to legislation for our own good about things like climate change. What will we need to do to get people to pay attention to legislation or ideas for their own good about AI?

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: Well, I'm pretty optimistic. The Paris Agreement was a remarkable example of the world coming together and countries coming together around certain common goals. That's the marvel. The international community comes together, basically agrees on what the problem is, and goes to work and puts together standards which people and countries will live by. We've done a pretty good job of achieving international agreement, not always, but most of the time when it comes to nuclear weapons and there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to do that. Soon after the atomic bomb, as we then called it, nuclear weapons began being developed. There were a lot of people who thought World War Three was right around the corner. That has not happened and it's not happened because good people from countries all over the world have decided that's unthinkable and have pulled together and that's what we've got to do when it comes to AI. One of the things that the Boston Global Forum is doing and our institute is doing is releasing a set of proposed standards

and ethical standards when it comes to the use of artificial intelligence which we hope the world will support. That's the way we can get the best of the technology and, at the same time, not run the risks of terrible consequences.

BARRY NOLAN: There's a wonderful Vietnamese play that people can view here, it was written 30 years ago, that looked at the question, "Do we have to worry that artificial intelligence will ever totally replace humans?" The play's answer was no. Do you think their prescient?

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: I think they're accurate. There are certain decisions, ethical, moral, and otherwise that only the human mind, the human spirit can make. It doesn't mean that AI isn't going to be important and can't be a constructive force for good, but it's going to take the human mind and human dignity and intelligence to make the wise, broad decisions that are going to make this world a better place. I hope we all understand that.

BARRY NOLAN: One last question. The fact that you're so right about the need for that at this particular moment, looking at 2020, do you ever think, "Maybe, I should run again?"

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: Not if I want to stay married.

BARRY NOLAN: (laughs)

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: I'm married to a great woman, but no look, I've had a wonderful political career and it isn't going away. I'm still deeply involved in lots of things that are political, but there's a lot to be said, at some point after that [career four?], continuing to be deeply and actively involved in public affairs, but being able to pick your spots and focus on them and this is one of them where I and others, I hope, can make a real contribution.

BARRY NOLAN: Please give our regards to your wonderful wife.

MICHAEL DUKAKIS: Thank you, pal. 