

Rage Against Machine Learning

by Aaron Mannes

The current turmoil and frenzy characterizing American politics is in reaction to current events, but also a manifestation of Creedal Passion, an effort by the American people to address the gap between the founding ideals of the United States and American reality. These eras (the most recent past era was the 1960s) bring major reforms as Americans seek to break up concentrations of power and rectify longstanding sources of inequality. Technology has played an important role in past eras of Creedal Passion, but advances in robotics and artificial intelligence have become increasingly central to the social issues facing the United States today.

In his 1981 book *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, political scientist Samuel Huntington posited that every six or seven decades the United States goes through an era of Creedal Passion. Eras of Creedal Passion, which besides 1960s and 1970s, include the Progressive Era of the early 20th century, the Jacksonian era, and the American Revolution.

Huntington stated that if the last era was during the 1960s and 1970s, the next era would be the first and second decades of the 21st century. The current focus on institutional racism and other forms of inequality, the questioning of traditional sources of authority, and the emergence of a new form of media that enables the exposure of injustices are all characteristics of an era of Creedal Passion.

Examining the reforms of past eras of Creedal Passion can provide insight into how social forces might shape the development of technology and technology policy. Past eras of Creedal Passion brought the first regulation of a new technology (steamboats during the Jacksonian Era) and the establishment of powerful new regulatory agencies (the FDA and FTC during the Progressive Era. Eras of Creedal Passion also saw the explosive growth of new social movements and norms (such as Abolitionism or Women's Suffrage).

There are several ways in which AI, robotics, and related technological innovations could become targets of Creedal Passion. These rationales may overlap with one another.

- AI could be seen as a tool that gives additional advantages to powerful organizations, increasing concentrations of power. This could include government agencies as well as businesses.
- The creators of AI could be seen as a concentration of power in their own right.
- AI could be seen as exacerbating inequality or discrimination.
- AI could threaten individual freedom and privacy.
- AI could be seen as reducing individual autonomy, placing people at the mercy of AI when they deal with the government or businesses.
- Overshadowing all of these issues are the potential for AI to displace workers.

Looking back to look forward can help to understand how the Creedal Passion will shape technology policy in the coming decade.