Artificial Intelligence Is Here To Stay. What About Our Jobs, Though? Actions the United States Can Take To Navigate the Turbulent Times Ahead.

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Introduction

How should the U.S. government respond to the job displacement caused by artificial intelligence (AI)-driven automation? Finding an answer to this question has become more urgent given the rapid advances in AI and robotics, which threaten to eliminate or transform entire classes of jobs across the country. According to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, almost 40% of global employment is exposed to AI, with advanced economies having 60% exposure due to the prevalence there of knowledge-oriented jobs that are impacted even more by advancements in AI.[1] Such dire predictions emphasize the need for proactive measures by the American government to manage the potential disruption and transition to a new economy.

This is not the first time the United States has confronted fears of job displacement due to technology. Since the post-World War II automation boom, to the IT revolution of the 1980s, to the 2000s, there have been numerous occasions where the federal government has felt it necessary to intervene during mass job disruption as a result of new waves of technology-enabled automation. Governments of the time have enacted policies with varied degrees of success in mitigating the problem of job displacement.

Artificial intelligence is referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, ranking alongside revolutionary changes caused by manufacturing automation, the invention of electricity, and the computer and software revolution.[2] This truly has the potential to produce massive gains and losses at the same time. The American government must analyze this question of what must be done, given the range of impact this technology can have not only to livelihood, but also as a result to the social order and peace in this country, as an increase in inequalities might mean a further widening gap between the rich and poor, and high-skilled and low-skilled workers in today's society.

However, this technology is only the latest in a long series of technological leaps.[3] Based on lessons learned from previous eras of technological disruption to the American job market, the U.S. government can and must devise programs for workforce retraining and reskilling, ensure equity in supporting workers and communities hit hardest by automation, regulate the AI industry to control the pace of AI adoption, and guarantee availability of social safety nets like the Universal Basic Income (UBI) and job guarantees to help the country transition to the new economy powered by automation. The United States faces intense competition in the AI race from China and other nations.[4] Currently, the United States is the leader in this technology and seeks to maintain this lead, which is not guaranteed to last. This has given rise to anti-regulatory pressures that propose giving the industry the freedom to move fast. However, having the measures and programs in place to manage the disruption is precisely the safety net required to allow the United States to move faster in this race, both in the short term and long term.

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[1] Mauro Cazzaniga et al., "Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work," *Staff Discussion Notes* 2024, no. 001 (January 14, 2024), https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400262548.006.A001.

[2] "The Fourth Industrial Revolution," Engineering and Technology Management, August 30, 2023, https://etm.wsu.edu/2023/08/30/the-fourth-industrial-revolution/.

[3] "Automation, AI & Work," American Academy of Arts & Sciences, April 13, 2022, https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/automation-ai-work.

[4] Rose O. Sherman, "Nurse Leaders as Makers," *Nurse Leader*, October 2019, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2018.08.003.

Background

Job displacement as a result of automation seems contemporary. However, it is anything but new. Almost every wave of advancement in technology has resulted in job displacement and economic growth. Artificial intelligence (AI) has only now started to have a great impact on the U.S. workforce, but automation has had effects on the American job industry since times like the Industrial Revolution. The United States government has historically taken measures to prevent the negative effects of automation, but such actions have not quite had the intended impact, nor has it been able to sustain change over time, as technology continues to change drastically. It is crucial to understand the historical context of this topic, as comprehending the motives behind and the causes of past approaches taken by the federal government can only help in creating effective responses or solutions to both current and future job disruption challenges stemming from automation and extreme technological change.

After World War II, the United States went through significant changes in terms of industrial automation. The first assembly line robot was used in 1961, in New Jersey, and since then, automatic machines similar to assembly line robots have only grown more popular, replacing human labor, especially in manufacturing sectors.[5] This shift, although encouraged due to economic growth, evoked concerns regarding possible mass unemployment and economic inequality.[6]

One example of a measure the federal government took to recognize these challenges and address the problem was the establishment of the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress by President Lyndon B. Johnson on August 19, 1964.[7] This commission was designed to identify the important impacts of automation on employment and provide suggestions regarding ways to mitigate automation's negative effects.[8] Johnson stated that automation can help the United States prosper, but only if Americans can overcome ignorance and inaction by properly and wisely planning for the future.[9] The commission released a report in 1966 stating that, as automation would likely lead to job disruption, it recommended creating government jobs, guaranteeing a basic income for families, improving education for people from disadvantaged areas as a form of compensation, and transitioning from states' administration of employment services to the federal government's.[10] The commission's

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[5] "Robot, First Unimate Robot Ever Installed on an Assembly Line, 1961 - the Henry Ford," Thehenryford.org, 2015, https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/183434/.

[6] "History Research Paper Sample: How Automation Threatened America in the 1960s," Commschool.org, July 26, 2023, https://www.commschool.org/news/news-post/~board/inside-commonwealth/post/history-research-paper-sample-how-automation-threatened-america-in-the-1960s.

[7] "Remarks upon Signing Bill Creating the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress | the American Presidency Project," Ucsb.edu, 2025, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-upon-signing-bill-creating-the-national-commission-technology-automation-and.

[8] ibid

[9] ibid

[10] "1. Aspects of technological change and to recommend …," National Commission on Technology, Automation and Economic Progress https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED023803.pdf.

recommendations were similar to the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, which aimed to educate and train workers unemployed due to technological advancements and automation.[11]

Despite such initiatives, the federal government failed to match the speed of technological change, and automation continued to impact the American workforce. Many laborers, especially those without specialized skills, struggled to find stable employment.[12] The government's inability to maintain initiatives that were designed to mitigate job displacement as a result of automation highlighted the need for better strategies to address automation and technological change and protect American workers.

The surge in popularity of computers and the internet in the late 1900s also brought about more change in the job market. Automation stopped being limited to just manufacturing, but also extended into sectors such as finance and customer service. Software started to take over more and more routine tasks, which led to a decline in middle-skill jobs and an increasingly wider gap between high-skill and low-skill jobs.[13]

The federal government's response to the growth in job displacement as a result of the IT surge was to enact the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998.[14] The act aimed to expand already-existing programs while training unemployed workers, helping them get the skills they needed to survive in the modern job market.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 had mixed success. It was successful in terms of the effectiveness of WIA-funded intensive services, examples of which were job counseling and individual employment plan development, while it was less successful as evidence collected suggested that WIA-funded training programs did not have positive effects thirty months after study enrollment.[15]

Workforce displacement is not limited to the United States, as it is evident that the issue of unemployment and job disruption is a global concern as well, prompting many nations to take action by enacting policies intended to mitigate its effects. The United Kingdom has acknowledged that there are important potential risks of job displacement as a result of artificial intelligence. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) stated in a report that about eight million jobs could be taken away by AI, and that women were more vulnerable to losing their jobs to artificial intelligence, as they worked in jobs that were relatively highly exposed

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[11] "MDTA: The Origins of the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962," DOL, 2025, https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/mono-mdtatext.

[12] Kalev Leetaru, "Automation Reshaped the Workplace in the 1960'S but Will the Deep Learning Revolution Be Different?," Forbes, July 18, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2019/07/18/automation-reshaped-the-workplace-in-the-1960s-but-will-the-deep-learning-revolution-be-different/.

[13] Arvind Upreti and V. Sridhar, "Effect of Automation of Routine and Non-Routine Tasks on Labour Demand and Wages," *IIMB Management Review* 36, no. 4 (December 2024): 289–308, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2024.09.001.

[14] "Workforce Investment Act of 1998," DOL, August 7, 1998, https://www.dol.gov/node/22364.

[15] "Providing Public Workforce Services to Job Seekers: 30-Month Impact Findings on the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Final Report," DOL, 2018, https://www.dol.gov/resource-library/providing-public-workforce-services-job-seekers-30-month-impact-findings-wia-adult.

compared to men.[16] The United Kingdom government has proposed potential responses, the most important of which is to invest in co-funded retraining and upskilling programs, as well as lifelong learning for people in high-risk jobs or sectors, to better safeguard workers and prepare them for possible changes.[17] The European Union has also enacted the EU AI Act to tackle the effects of AI on society.[18] These international examples emphasize that the impacts of automation and job displacement as a result of AI are not just restricted to the United States; rather, they are a global concern. It highlights the importance and urgency of proactive government and government intervention to prepare the workforce for the future.

The current era has parallels to previous periods of disruption, but is unique and much more threatening in numerous ways. The advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), which became popular with the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, is unique because it impacts knowledge workers the most at a depth that was not matched by the IT revolution, as GenAI can do much more than computer programs did in making humans more productive, as it can write its own computer programs, complete complex tasks, and ask the questions and answer it and execute ideas if given the tools. It is also a time of other advancements, such as electric vehicles (EVs), self-driving cars, and robotics, potentially leading to a much more disruptive effect on the American economy.[19] This is also a period of a rise of populism around the world, where nations are prioritizing their interests and are adopting an anti-immigration policy posture to protect their job markets. The drying up of jobs all over the world, combined with anti-immigrant populist governments, is a recipe for large-scale disputes, trade wars, protectionist measures, nativist sentiment, and resultant conflicts that can set back humanity instead of putting it on a path to progress. It is imperative that governments act to lead the world to a better future.

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[16] Richard Partington, "AI 'Apocalypse' Could Take Away Almost 8m Jobs in UK, Says Report," the Guardian (The Guardian, March 27, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/mar/27/ai-apocalypse-could-take-away-almost-8m-jobs-in-uk-says-report.

[17] "AFW0029 - Evidence on Automation and the Future of Work," Parliament.uk, 2018, https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/92891/html/.

[18] AI Act, "EU AI Act: First Regulation on Artificial Intelligence | Topics | European Parliament," Topics | European Parliament, August 6, 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20230601STO93804/eu-ai-act-first-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence.

[19] Colato,Javier;Ice,Lindsey;Laycock,Sofia, "Industry and Occupational Employment Projections Overview and Highlights, 2023–33," Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 7, 2024, https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2024/article/industry-and-occupational-employment-projections-overview-and-highlights-2023-33.htm.

Problem Definition

The recent advancements in artificial intelligence have led to a transformation in many industries across the U.S. As AI becomes more common, especially in workplaces, it will replace more and more jobs, especially those that do not require STEM (an acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math) skills. Earlier automation waves mainly impacted routine manual jobs or clerical jobs, but today AI can draft legal documents, do research, write code, create designs, and carry on conversations. AI is now able to do what were considered "white collar" or creative professions, doing non-routine creative and knowledge-oriented tasks. There will be a new class of jobs created, particularly in STEM fields, but the net impact may end up being an overall loss of jobs. Unless the government intervenes, automation will hurt non-STEM workers the most and leave them struggling to keep up. As AI continues to grow, the distance between workers with technical skills and those without will grow as well, pushing more workers out of the job market, resulting in inequality and fewer opportunities.

This issue has already started to have a tremendous impact today. The impact will not be evenly distributed across job types or industries. According to a Pew Research Center study, one out of five Americans is exposed to AI in their jobs, and many of those jobs are likely to be replaced.[20] Jobs in the fields of sales and customer service are the most prone to being replaced because most of them do not require degrees in STEM fields, and they concern tasks that AI can easily complete.[21] However, jobs that are higher-paying, require degrees in STEM, and require computer skills are much safer from being replaced by AI. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs in sales and customer service are expected to decrease in the period 2023 to 2033, while jobs in the fields of technology and medicine are expected to grow in the same period.[22] The growing jobs require people with higher education, while the declining ones are likely to be done by people without higher education. Workers without higher education are likely to only do short-term jobs without any security or stability. Hiring trends are also changing, with companies nowadays preferring to hire workers with STEM degrees or even anyone with degrees. Companies are also hiring fewer managers and prefer degrees in STEM fields rather than those in other fields, such as social sciences. This will start to result in people being left out of the job market.

Daniel Susskind writes in his book *A World Without Work* that to replace jobs, AI does not need to be able to complete extremely complex tasks - it just needs to be able to complete simple, basic tasks, as that alone would be enough to replace workers.[23] In this era of an

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[20] Pew Research Center, July, 2023, "Which U.S. Workers Are More Exposed to AI on Their Jobs?, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/07/st_2023.07.26_ai-and-jobs.pdf.

[21] ibid

[22] Colato,Javier;Ice,Lindsey;Laycock,Sofia, "Industry and Occupational Employment Projections Overview and Highlights, 2023–33," Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 7, 2024, https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2024/article/industry-and-occupational-employment-projections-overview-and-highlights-2023-33.htm.

[23] Calum Chace, "'A World without Work' by Daniel Susskind, a Book Review," Forbes, January 30, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/cognitiveworld/2020/01/30/a-world-without-work-by-daniel-susskind-a-book-review/.

uncertain future, all stakeholders should play their roles to the benefit of the entire society and the world.

When enacting policy, there are four major stakeholders to consider. The AI technology providers play a large part. They are the ones advancing the state of the art. Companies like OpenAI and Anthropic have largely come out in favor of government regulation, and are forming their own policy positions as technology evolves.[24] For example, though they prefer targeted regulations at home to mitigate the risks of generative AI, they want stricter control export of computer chips to China to maintain the United States' domination in AI.[25] The government should consider their input in forming policy, but also consider that their motivation is to make profits and maintain their dominance, not necessarily the societal implications.

Second, the employers and industry that adopt the AI technology in their factories and offices need to consider what the impact of AI will be. In the short term, they may be able to save costs and reduce the number of workers needed and make a profit, but the very societies that are their customers, if income-deprived, will be unable to buy their products and services. They need to support both the long-term and short-term measures of the government, given that it is in their interest that the United States and the larger world economy remain healthy enough to purchase their products and services.

Third, communities and societies that are impacted play a large role in the government's policymaking. They have to make their voice heard through their representatives to provide input into policymaking. AI disruption could be uneven and might impact middle-class income a lot more than other disruptions in the past.[26] The poor and marginalized societies have borne the brunt of prior disruptions and voice their opinion through trade unions and other ways. The middle class and upper middle class have largely been content to be aligned with the employers and industry, given that their jobs were not at risk. With generative AI, the middle class needs to start thinking about the protections needed for themselves and influence government policies.

Fourth, the educational institutions that need to skill the future workforce of the country need to be aware of the change in the economy, but more importantly, the changes to the skills needed to succeed in the new economy. A large part of the higher education system in the United States is usually slow to change the curriculum in response to the industry. Generative AI is a threat because it changes so fast, but also an opportunity because it can also be used to build robust programs tailored to the needs of the industry and the learner. Institutions need to influence policy and use their funds to prepare society with education for the future. Given the increased need for retraining, educational institutions need to think about programs more accessible to older populations, or demographic groups most impacted by AI, and be prepared to change the content rapidly in response to the market need.

The United States Government and other governments across the world are moving to a more protectionist way of managing their trade and economy. There are trade and tariff wars, and an anti-immigrant sentiment all over the world. These factors will make the impending job losses even worse. Governments across the world are being voted into power now to make more efficient governments possible. The United States started the DOGE initiative to cut down

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[24] "The Case for Targeted Regulation," Anthropic.com, 2024, https://www.anthropic.com/news/the-case-for-targeted-regulation.

[25] "Re: Comment on the Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion (RIN 0694-AJ90)," 2025, https://www-cdn.anthropic.com/7449887b6715e3a35f362b1301e5b5d8a6b116e5.pdf.

[26] "Artificial Intelligence Impact on Labor Markets Literature Review P a G E | 2," n.d., https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/EDRP%20Logos/AI_Impact_on_Labor_Markets.pdf.

spending. Given the current climate, any spending on a threat that is long-term is unlikely to succeed. Governments are going to be relied on to establish educational programs while also providing financial assistance to make sure that people can adjust to the changes that AI is triggering. But political and ideological disagreements often slow down or stop efforts to pass new laws or funding. This can hinder the government's ability to intervene. Another issue is that AI changes very fast, while legislation takes much more time to get approved. To keep up, the government should be more flexible and ready to take suggestions from experts when deciding how to help workers.

Artificial intelligence should not be ignored or frowned upon. It is the future, and will change how people approach their daily lives. However, while it will create new jobs, many others, especially for non-STEM workers, will be lost or changed. The existing measures, including educational opportunities and retraining programs, efforts by AI technology providers and employers, efforts by the impacted society and population to influence policy making, and the government's thinking itself, are all rooted in the past, or they do not enjoy support from Congress. For example, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program was allowed to expire, even though it helped five million workers over time.[27] There were attempts to create a new act TAA for automation act, to continue the program, which was not passed by Congress.[28]

There is a fresh approach required now because these measures are designed for a past era of job disruption, or they are being motivated by financial motivations of companies, ideological motivations for small protectionist governments, and other motivations, without regard to the chaos that is about to be unleashed. If the government does not intervene, many Americans could be left behind and pushed out of the job market. To mitigate the effects of the automation of AI, the government should work with experts and create strong policies that support workers to make sure that everyone has a chance to succeed. The government is the last resort actor and must consider serious measures to protect the economy and society.

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[27] "TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE for WORKERS PROGRAM FY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT Employment and Training Administration," n.d., https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/tradeact/pdfs/AnnualReport19.pdf.

[28] Gary C D-MI, "Amendments - S.3034 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): TAA for Automation Act of 2019," Congress.gov, 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3034/amendments?r=72&s=1.

Recommendations

Tackling the challenges caused by AI requires a comprehensive approach that considers both long-term and short-term actions. Though the threat is looming, this technology is only the latest in a long series of technological leaps and can be managed effectively.

The government should implement a job adjustment support initiative called Trade Adjustment Assistance for Automation from AI (TAAAAI) that will support workers impacted by AI. This can be modeled after the TAA for Automation Act.[29] The funds needed for the implementation of this initiative will be paid for by a small fee imposed on companies that heavily leverage AI to save costs and make profits. The program should ensure that it covers expenses for retraining and compensation for job loss for a reasonable amount of time. The program should also guarantee that the relief is equitable and addresses all demographics, regardless of age, gender, or other attributes. Such a program has been proven to be effective. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, federal payments ensured that job losses in occupations such as restaurant workers, gym trainers, and other contact-reliant occupations did not suffer great, permanent damage to their finances, and could recover when the economy recovered.

A potential medium-term solution is to incentivize employers and entire industries to retrain and retain employees, rather than lay them off. Companies could get tax credits for employment training of impacted employees, just like bankruptcy loss allows companies that are in trouble to declare bankruptcy and negotiate repayment of loans with creditors, labor laws should be created to allow employers to declare their intent to restructure their workforce, and be allowed to negotiate a lower salary for impacted employees on the promise that they will be retrained in newer occupations such as creating training data for AI systems, maintaining AI systems, higher-skill work that uses AI, etc..

To protect the population from massive job loss in entire sections of the economy, the government should implement regulations in assessing the impact of mass automation, just like companies today are required to assess the environmental impacts of major investment decisions. This will slow down the process of layoffs as a result of AI and give stakeholders time to respond. For example, a modification could be made to the WARN Act, which mandates a 60-day notice to the Department of Labor on mass layoffs, to extend the notice period to 120 days or longer in the case of AI-automation-driven layoffs, giving all parties time to consider retraining options. If such slowdown measures are not present, entire economies, industries, and societies could suddenly collapse.

A longer-term need is to ensure our education system is responsive to the changing needs of the AI-powered economy. The education sector has not been keeping pace with technological change. AI and technical literacy should be introduced at all levels of education on an urgent basis. At K-12 level, education should include two major components - uniquely human abilities like creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, conflict resolution etc. and at the same time, introduce AI systems, training and managing AI systems, utilizing AI systems efficiently in varied fields so that AI knowledge becomes as basic as math and reading. This can then lead to even higher levels of education at the college level. Given that government spending is under scrutiny, educational institutions should also utilize AI heavily in designing and delivering the educational program and not solely depend on the state, local, or federal

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[29] Gary C D-MI, "Text - S.3034 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): TAA for Automation Act of 2019," Congress.gov, 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3034/text?s=1&r=72.

government alone for funds. Instead, governments should ensure market players like AI companies and employers bear the cost of education in return for incentives for running their business in the locations that they serve.

A bolder, longer-term approach to mitigate the impacts of AI automation is ensuring a universal basic income (UBI) where citizens derive an income to live their lives without having to work a job. This idea might be costly and hard to implement, but it has been recommended by various leaders as a way to ensure no one is left behind in the chaos of job market disruption. This could be tried out in small pilots at the city and county levels, before being rolled out more robustly. This guaranteed income ensures that workers don't fear technological change, because losing a job does not mean they lose healthcare or their house. Instead, they might embrace technological change and pursue higher complexity work through retraining themselves.

The above recommendations, although complex and varied, point to the simple fact that we, the American people, need to treat the Artificial Intelligence Revolution not as a threat, but as an opportunity and a change that needs to be managed well. This requires government intervention where market forces alone would produce unjust outcomes for a large portion of the population. If this change is managed well, the United States economy will evolve to an advanced state where artificial intelligence handles routine work, allowing humans to focus on using AI in creative, high-level, groundbreaking work.

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