

# Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog  
of Brad DeLong. Since 1999.  
Comments (mostly) welcome.

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## Is America in Decline? || Pairagraph

**Pairagraph:** *Is America in Decline?* <https://www.pairagraph.com/dialogue/fc2f8d46f10040d080d551c945e7a363>: Life expectancy at birth in the United States today is 78.6 years. Life expectancy at birth in Japan today is 84.5; in Singapore, 85.1; in Switzerland, 84.3; France, 83.1; in Germany, 80.9. U.S. life expectancy is on a par with Poland, Tunisia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Albania; below Peru, Columbia, Chile, Jordan, and Sri Lanka; and only a year greater than China.

The United States currently has ~300 deaths per hundred million people per day from the coronavirus plague. The United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, Germany, and Canada each have less than 10...

„The United States has the amazing spectacle not just of Donald Trump as president, but of a huge number of American worthies—from Mitch McConnell in the Senate and Kevin McCarthy in the House, from Paul Ryan to Chris Christie, from Dean Baquet and Maureen Dowd and James Bennet to James Comey, all of them deciding that rather than **do their proper jobs** they would work to raise the odds that Trump would obtain and maintain power and increase the likelihood that he would do major damage in order to boost their personal positions in various ways.

As one of my friends from a not-rich part of East Asia says: "Students from my country come to the U.S. these days. They see dirty cities, lousy infrastructure, and the political clown show on TV, and an insular people clinging to their guns and their gods who boast about how they are the greatest people in the world without knowing anything about what is going on outside. They come back and tell me: 'We have nothing to learn from those people! Why did you send me there?'"

This is a very different vibe from what we had twenty years ago, at the end of the Clinton-Gore years, when the U.S. was victorious in the Cold War, trying to build a freer, more integrated, more peaceful, and more prosperous world; riding the wave of the great internet boom; and had—for the first time in a generation—seen eight years in which typical Americans' wages and salaries were rising rapidly. And now it has been another generation since we have seen typical Americans' wages and salaries rise rapidly.

This is a very different vibe from 70 years ago, when we had the U.S. of the great post-WWII boom and the Marshall Plan that was also, finally, turning its attention to advancing Civil Rights.

This is a very different vibe from 100 years ago, when Leon Trotsky would talk about how he regretted leaving New York for Petrograd, for he was "leaving the furnace where the future was being forged."

This is a very different vibe from 180 years ago, when Alexis de Tocqueville was preaching to one and all that everyone needed to closely examine America, for understanding it was the key to understanding the world's democratic future.

The only argument that America is not in decline is that other countries have worse problems. That may well be true. But that strikes me as too low a bar.

.#endoftheamericancentury #highlighted #history #politicaleconomy  
#slouchingtowardsutopia #2020-09-12

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