



## J Bradford DeLong

### AUTHOR

The global economic order that delivered fifty years of relatively stable growth is visibly under strain, and organisations are making long-term decisions without a reliable framework for understanding why. Conventional economic forecasting tells leaders what might happen next quarter; it does not explain why inequality, political dysfunction, and declining trust in institutions are now structural features rather than passing disruptions. Without a coherent account of how we arrived here, strategy defaults to scenario-planning around symptoms rather than causes

J. Bradford DeLong, Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley and former US Treasury official, helps organisations understand the structural forces behind today's economic instability - drawing on the historical argument developed in his bestselling *Slouching Towards Utopia*.

## J Bradford DeLong's 2026 Biography

### AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

## Why organisations work with J Bradford DeLong

### J BRADFORD'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Economic Trends & Global Markets
- Political Risk & Policy
- Scenario Planning & Strategic Foresight

### LANGUAGES: English

- His "long twentieth century" thesis - the argument that humanity's technological leap from 1870 produced unprecedented wealth but not stability, and that this tension is still unresolved - gives boards and strategy teams a historically grounded framework for understanding current inequality, political volatility, and stalling growth, rather than treating them as separate problems.
- As Deputy Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury under Clinton, he was directly involved in NAFTA, the Uruguay Round, and the 1993 federal budget - trade and fiscal decisions whose consequences are still shaping today's policy environment. Few economic historians have that level of direct institutional access.
- *Concrete Economics* (co-authored with Stephen Cohen) makes a specific, evidence-based case that every major US growth episode was driven by deliberate government direction of investment, not free-market spontaneity - a framework that directly challenges assumptions many organisations have about industrial policy and the role of the state.
- *Slouching Towards Utopia* was named a Best Book of 2022 by the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, and *Fast Company*, and endorsed by Paul Krugman, Martin Wolf, and the former Chief Economist of the Bank of England - giving his arguments a cross-disciplinary credibility that translates directly into senior executive and board conversations.
- His dual role as academic economist and active public commentator - via Project Syndicate and the "Grasping Reality" Substack - means his frameworks are continuously applied to live events, not confined to

historical analysis.

## Biography highlights

- Professor of Economics, University of California, Berkeley – faculty since 1993, full professor 1997
- Author of *Slouching Towards Utopia: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century* (Basic Books, 2022) – instant *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller; Best Book of 2022, *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *Fast Company*
- Deputy Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury for Economic Policy, Clinton Administration, 1993–1995
- Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER); Fellow, Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET)
- Co-author, *Concrete Economics: The Hamilton Approach to Economic Growth and Policy* (2016); co-editor, *After Piketty: The Agenda for Economics and Inequality* (Harvard University Press, 2017)
- Regular contributor, Project Syndicate; author, “Grasping Reality” Substack; BA and PhD, Harvard University

## Biography

Brad DeLong spent twenty years working on a question that most economists consider settled: why did the most sustained period of technological and material progress in human history end in political dysfunction, rising inequality, and widespread loss of confidence in the institutions that produced it? His answer, developed in *Slouching Towards Utopia: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century*, is that the period from 1870 to 2010 – what he calls the “long twentieth century” – delivered more economic progress than all previous human eras combined, yet consistently failed to convert that progress into stable, broadly shared prosperity. The book was an instant *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, named a Best Book of 2022 by the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, and *Fast Company*.

That argument matters to organisations because it reframes current instability. The political volatility, slowing productivity growth, and distributional conflict that leaders are navigating are not surprises or aberrations – they are the unresolved inheritance of the same forces that created modern economic life. DeLong’s contribution is to show how this happened, which forces were decisive, and which policy choices made outcomes better or worse than they needed to be.

His policy experience is direct. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury under the Clinton Administration, DeLong worked on the 1993 federal budget, NAFTA, the Uruguay Round, and macroeconomic policy. That institutional experience underpins *Concrete Economics* (2016), co-authored with Stephen Cohen, which argues that the United States has achieved its most significant growth periods through deliberate, pragmatic direction of investment – not ideological commitment to free markets. For executive audiences, the implication is concrete: industrial policy, trade architecture, and fiscal choices are not background noise; they are the environment in which long-term strategy either succeeds or fails.

DeLong holds a PhD from Harvard and has been Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley since 1993. He writes regularly for Project Syndicate and his “Grasping Reality” Substack, where his analysis engages with current events directly and accessibly. He is also a Fellow of the Institute for New Economic Thinking and a Research Associate at the National Bureau of

Economic Research.

## Key speaking topics

- Long-run economic growth and structural inequality
- Macroeconomic policy and fiscal strategy
- Trade, globalisation, and industrial policy
- The political economy of the liberal economic order
- Economic history as a strategic framework
- Government, markets, and the future of growth
- Scenario planning under structural uncertainty

## Ideal for

- Chief Strategy Officers and boards navigating sustained political and economic volatility
- CFOs and finance leaders seeking a macro-level historical framework for long-term capital allocation and planning
- Government affairs, public policy, and regulatory teams in large organisations
- Executive education programmes requiring rigorous economic context for senior leadership cohorts

## Audience outcomes

- A historically grounded framework for understanding current economic volatility as a structural pattern – not a temporary disruption – enabling more durable strategic responses
- A clearer account of how trade policy, industrial policy, and fiscal choices are actually made, based on direct government experience at a senior level
- A practical corrective to standard free-market assumptions about growth, including a well-evidenced alternative drawn from *Concrete Economics*
- Sharper questions for stress-testing long-term strategy against macro scenarios – particularly around inequality, political instability, and the changing role of the state
- Familiarity with the “long twentieth century” thesis as a shared analytical reference point for ongoing internal strategic discussion

## J Bradford DeLong's 2026 talks & topics

### Slouching Towards Utopia: What the Long Twentieth Century Tells Us About Now

Draws on DeLong's bestselling 2022 book to explain why the forces that created modern prosperity also produced today's inequality and political instability – and what that means for organisations planning in the current environment.

#### Key takeaways:

- Why standard economic forecasting fails to explain structural political and distributional breakdown

- How the interplay between technology, markets, and government has driven every major growth episode since 1870
- The specific policy and strategic lessons that follow from a historically grounded reading of the current moment

### The Hamilton Approach: What Concrete Economics Tells Us About Growth and Industrial Policy

Based on DeLong's 2016 book with Stephen Cohen, this talk examines the evidence that deliberate government direction of investment - not free-market ideology - has historically driven the United States' most successful growth periods, and what that means for organisations engaging with the current industrial policy environment.

#### Key takeaways:

- Why the US economy has never grown its way to leadership through markets alone
- How Silicon Valley, New England manufacturing, and other growth episodes depended on deliberate public-private coordination
- How to engage productively with a policy environment increasingly defined by active industrial strategy

## J Bradford DeLong's Videos

