

The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter:
Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter

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Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Does Entropy Rule, Really? Things just seem to be running down. Systems seem to be coming apart. One might have to agree with W.B. Yeats, who expressed the kind of general disorder we see today so well in an earlier time of great turmoil, 1919, in the wake of World War I.

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

The close fit of Yeats' words with conditions we experience today is nothing short of astounding. It seems that the center cannot hold in much deeper ways, as massive Earth System changes call upon us to work in diligent concert for our collective survival. Yet, we do no such thing. Instead, so called 'world leaders' spout empty promises and proclamations that have no real-world referents.

As my readers all know by now, the climate deniers would call me an alarmist if they read this newsletter, my blog, or my eBook, *Hopeful Realism: A Climate Manifesto*. Well, I *am* alarmed. Any honest reading of the data trends and the scientific analyses of Earth System changes happening now, call for alarm, and for extreme action. Just watching the news of extreme weather should do so. The increasingly obvious acceleration of frequency and intensity of extreme weather events is a 'clue' that cannot be denied other than by willful ignorance. And the extremity of societal action that is made necessary by the facts of anthropogenic Earth System destabilization is exactly where the biggest obstacle to a rational response to climate chaos lies.

I am also alarmed by the proliferation and escalation of indiscriminate violence around the world, amplified by the funding of high tech weaponry and its easy access by both nation-states

and non-state actors. These developments cause not only vastly more efficient and prolific killing, which makes genocide much easier to commit, as long as a nation-state has the funding to obtain and deploy the destructive power of technological ‘progress.’

Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, the list goes on. In addition to the vast numbers of people killed around the world by those who pretend to have the right to enforce their dominance by killing innocents, modern military violence is one of the most polluting of human actions ever.

So, this is the essence of human induced global entropy in an increasingly entropic world—a world made so by the trajectory of the industrial age itself. I have been working with several highly educated and very smart people who are dedicated to digging humanity out of the mess we are in. Most of them have been working for decades in technical fields like, evolutionary ecology, demography, climate science, field biology, and social change, etc. Yet, sadly, their work may come to nothing unless some larger form of social mobilization for societal transformation is initiated very soon.

One very big cause of the political failure to take major climate action, of course, is the resistance by financial and political elites, whose interests in retaining and gaining ever more power would be threatened by the societal changes that serious climate action would entail. A transformation to a new ecological civilization will require major financial as well as political democratization.

The other important cause of failure to initiate systemic change for carbon emissions reduction and restraint on extractive (mining, drilling, industrial agriculture, etc.) and industrial (production, transportation, consumption, and waste) *ecocide* is the lack of a material plan. We are still very short on the kinds of complex systems thinking on the part of those who see the dangers confronting us but focus only on symptoms rather than the central cause.

A transition to a livable world will require an even earlier end to the industrial age than is projected by the rapid depletion of the ‘resources’ it needs to continue. That means massive societal reorganization for operations to use vastly less energy. Upscaling of ‘renewable’ will not work unless combined with massive conservation of energy, the elephant in the room that nobody seems willing to talk about. After all, restraint is not a profit center.

The Latest Updated Update of the Publishing Plan: On Track. The first volume of *The Edge of Illusion Trilogy* is going out to some pre-publication reviewers, who will receive ‘ARCs,’ that is, ‘Advance Reader Copies’ of ***Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation***. Our award-winning book designer, Nick Zelinger has produced several book-cover design options, and we have narrowed it down to one. The tentative publication target date is April 10, 2024. By publishing the book independently, we control almost everything, which of course takes more work.

My eBook **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto** remains available as a **free** download from [Kindle Unlimited](#). The regular eBook price is \$6.99. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](#). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on Amazon. Do so by clicking the button on the lower left of the book's Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about the issues and how I frame them.

Note: Past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

It's All the Same. Have you ever gotten that old feeling of 'déjà vu' all over again? Well, lately, I have been getting it a lot. Whether it is climate, politics, workers' woes, the acts of dictators and the wimpy hypocrisy of the "defenders of democracy," it just seems like same ol', same ol' cold war mentality to me.

It is hard to criticize Joe Biden when the looming prospect of narcissistic sociopathic pretender to 'great-man' autocracy rises as the only 'alternative.' The same old American imperialism and attempts to dictate the 'world order' are a big turn-off for many of the new young voters—and why not? It is not unusual for voters to vote *against* what irritates them most than to vote *for* something else, even when that something else is entirely unappealing. Yet, each vote counts in relation to both. It is important to understand that most voting reflects far more particular and personal interests and attitudes than some global principle of the American role in international governance—such as it is.

People all over the world, including Europeans and Arabs alike, nearly universally condemned the U.S. response to Netanyahu's genocidal assault on the Palestinian population in Gaza, as an extremely disproportionate reaction to the brutal Hamas massacre of October 7. Collective punishment of civilians for the evil deeds of political elites is immoral as well as illegal. Netanyahu seems hell-bent to comply with the demands of the outright theocratic extreme right, since he seems to have no moral compass of any kind. Israel's "right to defend itself" simply does not fly as an excuse for slaughtering over 30,000 civilians over 70% of whom are children and women.

We need not go into the history of Israeli confiscation of Palestinian lands and homes, the demolition of orchards, and all the human rights violations in forming the state of Israel and expanding it ever since 1948. The U.S. has steadfastly supported Israel all those decades against real threats from the Arab states of the region. And the arms sales and economic exchanges were profitable for both. Any objection to the growing disproportionate brutality in response to Hamas rocket harassment was immediately accused of antisemitism—no discussion allowed on the merits of any position that did not automatically support Israeli occupation and the abuses it has entailed.

But now that some moves for reconciliation with Arab states have emerged, Israel's extreme right government actions clash with Israeli citizens' wishes for peace. Netanyahu had blatantly set up Hamas as a willful dupe, funding it for years as it built a capacity for military and terrorist action as well as some civilian infrastructure. The Palestinian population of Gaza consisted almost entirely of refugees from Israeli expropriation of land and homes, and now consists predominantly of their heirs.

The Israeli government's own highly skilled and respected intelligence professionals warned of the impending October 7 attack, but the Netanyahu war machine ignored the threat. It was almost as if they were looking for an excuse to destroy Palestinian Gaza in "self defense." However, killing 30,000+ and wounding over 70,000 more, while destroying as much life-supporting infrastructure as possible is about as Offensive as any military operation can get.

And Joe Biden automatically handed over billions of dollars of weapons and ammunition in support of all that—without conditions, such as minimizing civilian deaths and dismemberments—while claiming to run for re-election on a policy of the U.S. defending democracy around the world. In contrast, defending democracy is a real goal in supporting the Ukrainians against genocidal Putin.

But who is counting? It is all politics in the U.S. House of Representatives. Trump would demolish Ukraine aid, as he is pressuring his agent in the House, weak but strident MAGA adherent, Speaker Mike Johnson to refuse to let the aid package that would surely pass, reach the floor for a vote.

And so it goes. Now, the CEO of Exxon Mobil Corp., Darren Woods told editors from Fortune that it is the public's fault that we have waited too long to respond effectively to climate chaos. Never mind that his corporation and others have engaged in a propaganda war for decades to undercut the science that has provided clear evidence of the imminent climate collapse due to carbon emissions and other industrial waste and damage to the entire Earth System.

As I have said before, we are well overdue for a monumental world-wide paradigm shift!
It's all the same.

For more Hopeful Realist discussions of these and related matters, go to various blog posts at:
<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

Today's Featured Image:

Industrial civilization is inherently entropic. It takes materials from the Earth, processes them into products with short lifespans, sells them to consumers who either wear them out or tire of them and toss them into bins headed for landfills. Whether the material is silver, timber, petroleum, or lithium ions, little of what makes up a

circuit board, a car, or a building is retained. Most is scattered and unrecoverable. All the resources in the Earth are limited; once gone, they are gone forever.



The perpetual economic growth paradigm for society simply denies the existence of entropy. But entropy is an immutable law of Nature. No imaginary endless supply of innovation or 'new' materials can change the facts of physical existence. The image above may not be the most exact expression of entropy, but it does show dispersion, and it is pretty. Source: freepik.com

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

A good number of empires have succumbed to entropy in one way or another. As described by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, to Tainter's *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, to Diamond's *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, and others as well, certain patterns of entropy emerge. We might summarize them as 'social entropy,' and wonder how close to collapse the empire of industrial modernism has really come. However, entropy is a variable; in stable ecosystems, for example, entropy can be slow or delayed for a long time. But when fundamental components of a complex adaptive living system are destabilized, ruin can be rapid, as Ugo Bardi has explained in *The Seneca Effect*. Entropy can happen more or less quickly in human societies, especially when humans deploy significant interventions to stabilize systems gone wild (not in a good 'rewilding' way).

Stable Planet Alliance. <https://www.stableplanetalliance.org/>

The Stable Planet Alliance is as the name suggests, an alliance of some twenty-four organizations and institutions. They work in one way or another to mitigate some of the worst conditions of humans experience, most of which result from the bad behavior of corporations and governments, as they overshoot the capacity of the Earth to carry the load of their plunder and detritus. Perspectives may vary and strategies as well, but we need much more of the kinds of efforts made by these and other groups working for a livable planet.

Quotable Quotes

It is not simply that societies are subject to the decline implied by the natural physical forces of entropy. It is much more complicated than that. The trajectory of particular societies has reflected diverse conditions throughout history, with diverse results. But Seneca was right. When things begin to fall apart, they tend to do so more rapidly with each unit of time.

It would be some consolation for the feebleness of ourselves and our works if all things should perish as slowly as they come into being; but as it is, increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid.

~ ~ Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE), Letters to Lucius

There is a clear reason for this phenomenon of rapid decline. As the functions of a component of a large complex system begins to break down, its dysfunction spills over into other components with which it operates in coordination, thereby affecting the function of other sub-systems. It is sort of like compound interest, only in reverse. Failure breeds more failure, which proliferates throughout the system. In human systems, when such decline begins, elites tend to ‘circle the wagons’ and try to salvage their own power, thereby adding to the dysfunction. If ever there was a need for application of that lesson to societies, it is now.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe, say hello to a neighbor or stranger, check out my blog posts at The Hopeful Realist.com and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).