

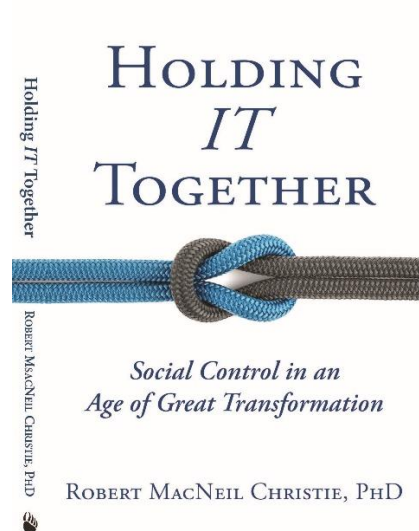
## The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter: *Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter*

Robert MacNeil Christie, PhD

*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*

*Holding IT Together* will soon be available online directly from the publisher, Bear Claw Press, as well as from your favorite independent bookstore via Bookshop.org, and of course, Amazon, as well as by ordering it from your favorite local bookstore.



Published July 26, 2024, and the product of decades of research and reflection, [\*Holding IT Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation\*](#) explains the global changes that have resulted in the catastrophic convergence of the crises of climate, ecosystems, economies, and politics, which we see intensifying every day. In it, I also describe the deep changes that are now necessary in order to effectively head off societal collapse so we can more comfortably shape the New Great Transformation of our institutions and our ways of living necessary in a world of less intensive energy consumption. We *will* transition away from fossil fuels, the sooner and more intentionally the better. Later would be catastrophic. Petroleum products provided great affluence for some for a while, yet are already causing chaos and environmental destruction for everyone.

[“Buy it!”](#) says the author.

Here are some excerpts from prominent editorial reviews:

*A dense and sweeping call to change the direction of human society before it's too late. Still, his core message is strikingly direct and forceful. It's hard to imagine any reader not being convinced that just such a massive change is necessary. ~ Kirkus Reviews*

*Christie embeds history surrounding social deconstruction and construction with the kinds of modern references that readers will relish...[He] offers an unprecedented opportunity for readers to apply the basics of economic understanding to the major issues facing humanity's survival today... Hope is embedded throughout his approach. ~ Midwest Book Review*

*Both a wake-up call and a guide, this book calls for decisive action toward a sustainable, equitable future, making it an essential resource for policymakers, activists, and concerned citizens alike. ~ The Prairies Book Review*

### **When Serious News Is No Longer News.**

Yes, the insanity of the run-up to the presidential election is worse than ever. Unfortunately, some of the most outrageous behavior, and speech, just keeps getting worse. Yet, 'Comma-La' seems able to keep her head about her and rise above the name-calling campaign of hatred to illuminate her own policy proposals and core values. The best leaders are good listeners.

Meanwhile, the growing range of news that reflects the most urgent existential threat to humanity—even perhaps more urgent (I know, hard to believe) than defeating the rise of neo-fascism in America—remains mostly underreported and largely unnoticed. I refer here to numerous increasingly gloomy reports on the climate/ecological emergency and the utter failure of most governments to take even the most modest actions to curb climate catastrophe. Trump never mentions climate chaos; Harris only mentions its importance in passing.

The latest report by the *New York Times*, describing the United Nations report, [\*\*"Emissions Gap Report 2024: No more hot air ... please!"\*\*](#) issued Thursday, concluded that essentially **no progress** had been made on carbon emissions reductions even since the Paris Accords in 2015—almost a decade ago. One might argue that ten years of intergovernmental **hot air** has produced **no wind**. Or, put differently, another decade of global institutional inaction has produced hot oceans, which produce a great deal more winds of destruction. As other 'political matters' have taken front stage, it is as if the march of climate/ecological destruction has become remarkably **normalized**.

Speaking of normalized destruction, as they get worse and worse, Trump's vitriol, racism, demeaning ad hominem lies, and blathering speech patterns, have been normalized, even to the extent of reporters reconstructing his ramblings to propose what they surmise might be meanings that could be attributed to his incoherent ramblings—as if he had actually said something meaningful. Is that post-factum speech writing the normalization of perverse babble?

It is something like a week before the American voters choose, or, rather, the undemocratic Electoral College chooses between inadequate representative democracy and catastrophic autocratic attempts at absolute power along the lines of the tyrants of the twentieth century, who Timothy Snyder so clearly warns us against. It could very well be less than eight years before the warnings of the world's top climate and Earth System scientists will be heeded too late, after the tipping points toward climate-ecological chaos and consequent global die-offs become irreversible.

It could very well be that both these forms of normalization of the unthinkable will be our undoing.

With the publication of [\*Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation\*](#), by Bear Claw Press, I keep discovering more complexities of bringing a book 'to market.'

While some have suggested that *Holding it Together* should be released as an **Audiobook**, others have asked whether a video '**book trailer**' is available. I guess 'multimedia' projects rule. Who now reads?

Meanwhile, please buy, read, and offer a customer rating-review for ***Holding IT Together***. Without a significant number of customer reviews, good or bad, the Amazon algorithm will ignore a book into oblivion. Some estimate that Amazon.com sells around seventy percent of all books sold. Nevertheless, I hope many who buy ***Holding IT Together*** will do so at their local independent bookstore. Of course, both paper and eBook versions are available on [Amazon](#).as well as from the publisher's website and [Bookshop.org](#). It will shortly be available at a discount directly from the publisher, BearClawPress.com

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*** remains available as a **free** download from [Kindle Unlimited](#). The regular Kindle eBook price is \$6.99. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](#). Also, please [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page. You can 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:** As always, 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***

**What are the Limits to Societal Transformation?** For quite a while now, I have been contemplating what it would be like for our faltering industrial civilization to transform itself into a viable ecological civilization. As I have said elsewhere, and more than once, we have only two choices. Both are extremely perilous. In other words, the peril is there, whatever we choose to do or not do about it. But only one has a chance for a happy ending.

First, our global condition of 'rapid ruin' is well fixed into the current trajectory of humanity. That is what 'globalization' has done for us. The endless-growth global political economy, which is the endpoint of the industrial age, has brought us (those of us allowed to participate not just as wage-slaves but as full modern consumers) precisely what is taking us ever more quickly to what Ugo Bardi calls, the Seneca Effect: "rapid ruin."

Climate science, ecological science, and every branch of Earth System Science—all grounded firmly in physics, chemistry, and biology—have consistently demonstrated the singular trend

toward the collapse of each of the Earth System's subsystems, and thereby the collapse of industrial modernity itself.

That is 'controversial' only to those who refuse to apply simple logic to the rapidly accelerating changes to those systems and the inevitable implications of that large body of Earth System facts about system destabilization for the potential to retain a livable habitat for humans and other living systems.

Of course, some people think they can argue with the facts of physics—even to the extent of believing that the Democrats control the weather! Despite understanding the workings of conspiracy-theory psychology, more or less, it is nevertheless astounding to hear that some crazy folks have taken on the belief that somehow the Democrats caused hurricanes Helene and Milton to punish the people of America's Southeast region. Nobody seemed surprised that Ron DeSantis, the Republican governor of Florida considers global warming "[leftwing stuff](#)." Are hurricanes really political tools? Or, did the 'devil make them do it'?

History may not exactly repeat itself, but as someone said, it often rhymes. I would urge again anyone who has not yet read Timothy Snyder's prescient book, [On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century](#). Mass mania, at the hands of skilled demagogues, can be very contagious. [The Cult of Trump](#), by [Steven Hassan](#), helps us understand the psychopathology of cultists who are able to block out facts to retain their fantasy obedience to the 'maximal leader' and the conspiracy theories he promotes.

In some discussions with colleagues in the climate action movement—which is itself so fragmented that it has yet to muster the necessary mobilization to have much of any effect on public policy or practice—I have recently argued that we are not likely to 'move the needle' much until some form of "shock treatment" is visited upon both political-financial elites and citizenry. In my readings about people who survive catastrophic natural disasters, and disasters caused by human folly, the survivors are those who immediately, or very quickly, recognize that they are now in an entirely 'non-ordinary reality,' and that they must therefore respond in terms not of their ordinary assumptions about the world around them. Survivors are typically those who early on realize that they must now operate on assumptions that are very different from those that drive their normal everyday behavior. Normalizing either climate chaos or Trumpist autocratic movement will take us to a very bad place where survival is less likely. We are out of time to entertain these *illusions of normalcy*.

### ***Today's Featured Image:***

***I have come to a place where it seems reasonable to characterize Kamala Harris as an 'ordinary politician,' but not in a demeaning or dismissive way. She operates with a certain respect for the ordinary norms of political campaigning. This is entirely separate from any assessment I have for her policies or whether I agree or***

***disagree with them. Regardless of such issues, Kamala exudes an empathy for the people and an effort to hear them.***



--Image credit: Salon.com

***Most politicians have some, if not much in too many cases, empathy for their constituents. Donald Trump has absolutely NO EMPATHY or COMPASSION WHATSOEVER. That is simply built into his personal pathology. The scary part is that his lack of compassion and his unbounded hatred and fear of others is so closely aligned with his autocratic intentions. And he tells us exactly how he intends to realize his will to power. Everything is transactional in relation to his hunger for power. Listen to Mary Trump; she knows as well as anyone his pathological personality and the dangers it poses for America.***

### ***Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation***

Much of what we observe these days in the so-called 'public discourse' is not just irrational and counter-factual; it often involves an element of social contagion. In a strikingly comprehensive assessment of epidemics in both disease and in human belief systems, Adam Kucharski writes an illuminating book well worth reading in the present political context.

Kucharski, Adam. 2021. *The Rules of Contagion: Why Things Spread—and Why They Stop*. New York: Basic Books.

Disease spread is a form of contagion. So are social movements. Today, we experience the rise of some very dangerous overlapping social movements: American neo-fascism, white racism, and the MAGA extremism that has taken over the Republican Party. We await with increasing anxiety and impatience the social movement we really need: a new *contagious* movement for global climate/ecological action to avoid total Earth System and societal collapse.

### ***Quotable Quotes***

At the center of every authoritarian movement is a so-called 'strongman.' As I see it, these guys are not really strong at all. They seek absolute power out of their own psychological weakness. That is as true of Donald Trump as it was of Hitler or Mussolini. Their narcissism forces them to appear as the only important person in the room, projecting the illusion that they are here to help you.

*Strongman rule is a fantasy. Essential to it is the idea that a strongman will be your strongman. He won't.*

~ Timothy Snyder

The illusions that allow the autocratic attempt to succeed is that the bluster and meanness is actually an indicator of strength. The grifter who believes himself to be strong, becomes strong only because of the illusion of strength he instills in his follower-victims, who he always betrays.

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](https://TheHopefulRealist.com), read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto.](#), and, buy my new book, [Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#).