

LOOK UP! 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

No News Is Very Bad News.

The current run on ‘information control’ being exercised by the Federal Government under a plethora of presidential executive orders is best described by that increasingly common adjective, “unprecedented.” Lifelong professionals in diverse federal agencies are being required to keep silent about facts demonstrated by scientific research, and instead spout the demonstrably false ‘party line,’ or be fired if they speak truth to power, if they do not resign out of disgust and hopelessness

The news media are carefully realigning their ‘reporting’ of the news to conform to boundaries imposed by ideological demands of the increasingly authoritarian actions emanating from the Executive branch and unchecked or affirmed by obedient congressional allies. Obvious violations of law, congressionally legislated practices, and just plain ethical principles, are ‘framed’ in subtle ways to avoid any implications that if there is a ‘controversy,’ the administrative claims are stated as if they are facts. However, the key fact is that the claim was made, not that it is true. Obvious falsity is simply ignored.

We live in a violent society. That is a fact, evidenced by the number of shootings, bombings, etc. Of course, many other societies are violent too; at least opposing groups commit regular violence in pursuit of political, genocidal, or economic goals. The latest ‘political assassination, that of Charley Kirk, by a young man of an unclear but MAGA related ideological vision, was immediately deployed by the extreme right to claim resulted from ‘radical left’ Democratic elements. Of course, these folks call liberal centrists radical left, just as they accuse peaceful protesters ‘terrorists.’ Language has little empirical meaning in American politics today.

But it is the normalization of the extremely abnormal that may be the greatest threat to the survival of the democratic republic so many treat as a given, when it exists only in the actions and constraints of both people and politicians. We tend to envision the Constitution as a ‘living document,’ a thing that determines our politics. But if anything has been clearly demonstrated by the ongoing neo-fascist coup executed before our very eyes, and in relation to which almost nobody in the other two branches of the federal government asserts a check, it is that the Constitution lives only to the extent that we enliven it. Nothing is to be taken for granted. We

will have the American republic, only, as Ben Franklin put it, “if you can keep it.” Only by taking collective action can the neo-fascist autocratic attempt be stopped. Every fascist takeover in history succeeded because most people believed it could not. So they did nothing.

There is nothing ‘normal’ about the diseases of modernity, as Gabor Maté explains in [*The Myth of Normal*](#). Most of them did not exist before the industrial revolution. Modern science and technology gave us the means to fight off many diseases while at the same time modern life generated new ones. There is also nothing normal about the deployment of army troops into the streets of Los Angeles, Washington DC, or other cities on the claim to clean up a crime crisis, especially when crime has gone down significantly in recent years.

The [Posse Comitatus Act of 1878](#) established the long standing separation of domestic law enforcement from federal military functions. That Act formalized the American tradition of separating military and civilian functions to protect democracy and individual freedom. Even without the decline in crime, the federal government is not, according to law and tradition, authorized to order troops into a city or commandeer a state’s National Guard Troops to deploy in one of its cities without a request from the governor. Well, the list goes on.

When we examine the patterns of behavior employed by fascists when they take control of a nation, one of the key elements is to normalize abnormal political behavior. They consciously violate political norms, norms of civility, and laws, as brazenly as possible. They want to both present an air of inevitability and invulnerability, while simultaneously terrorizing both officials and the population. If nobody stops them, they simply take control. That is happening today, and unless they are restrained, they will succeed. And, as according to plan, it is all increasingly defined as normal...

The news typically reports what is not normal. To normalize the elements of an autocratic attempt is to make it not news. “Move along; there is nothing to see here.”

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I know that putting the advert below for ***Holding IT Together*** in every issue of this newsletters may seem redundant, but, hey, it costs me nothing. I don’t charge myself a penny. So, it is a free reminder to buy and read the book. How could I turn that down?

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# HOLDING *IT* TOGETHER



*Social Control in an  
Age of Great Transformation*

ROBERT MACNEIL CHRISTIE, PhD

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, and the societal chaos, which we now see intensifying every day. In it, I also describe the deep changes that are 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, like it or not, and 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 excerpts from some 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**

With the publication of [Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#), by Bear Claw Press, I seek a wide span of possible readers. After all, the book’s content has important implications for the lives of everyone.

If you are a researcher or teacher and would be interested in sending me a short review (two or three paragraphs), or would consider it for use in a class you teach, please go to the [BearClawPress.com](http://BearClawPress.com) website, click on the [Review/Exam Copies](#) tab (upper right) fill in the information, and I will send you a [pdf](#) or [ePub](#) copy free. Also, copies can be bought at a nice discount from the list price at Bear Claw Press.

Otherwise, please buy, read, and offer a customer rating-review for ***Holding IT Together*** on [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com) or Amazon.com. Without a significant number of customer reviews, good or bad, the Amazon algorithm will ignore a book into oblivion, regardless of its quality.

Some have estimated 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.com](https://www.amazon.com) as well as from independent bookstores via [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org). It is now also available at a discount directly from the publisher, [BearClawPress.com](https://www.bearclawpress.com)

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*** remains available as a **free** download from [Kindle Unlimited](https://www.kindleunlimited.com). The regular Kindle eBook price is \$6.99. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](https://www.goodreads.com). Or, 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/>

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## ***LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary***

### **Everything Everywhere, All at Once.**

[Apologies to the [movie](#).]

An important conference is coming up soon. It is intended to assess where we are in the so-far failing attempt to get some human control over the heating of the planet. The title of the online conference, which is open to all, is [The Global Heating Emergency: Preventing 2d C by 3040: What's the Plan?](#). I hope many from diverse backgrounds will attend. I looked at the conference website, then signed up.

The conference program looks well organized and includes speakers who are some of the world's most important climate scientists, such as [James Hansen](#), who warned the U.S. Congress about the threat of climate chaos in 1985—that prescient warning, of course, went unheeded. [Sir David King](#), Founder and Chair of the Climate Crisis Advisory Group, will speak, as will Mr. [Antonio Guterres](#), United Nations Secretary-General, who has strongly criticized national governments for their inaction, and several other less-known important climate researchers.

The reason I titled this commentary, "Everything Everywhere, All at Once," is that in both reviewing the program for this important conference and reading some commentary on LinkedIn reminded me of how closely that movie title reflects the global climate policy

predicament that confronts us today. One might also apply the water-balloon metaphor. Squeeze here and it pops out there.

I have heard too many arguments over whether carbon emissions or direct ecological destruction by industrial-consumer processes, or overpopulation, or something else, is the “real” problem. Whether animal agriculture, overpopulation, or excessive consumer culture is the “cause” of the planetary mess humans have made is to mischaracterize the complex system of interrelated, interdependent components that contribute (in relation to one another) the process of Earth System destabilization. Or, to paraphrase James Carville’s quip about the economy in the 1992 presidential election, “It’s the system, stupid!”

Causal singularity is a conceptual failure of the very same linear thinking that characterizes the dominator culture that drives the ultimately self-defeating project of neoliberal political-economy of perpetual capital accumulation. The increasingly powerful global oligarchy will continue to chase indicators of profit growth in the next corporate quarterly report, despite the looming termination of their whole enterprise by the Earth System limits that are unaffected by human imaginaries.

The vast majority of political, cultural, and community leaders still go along with the dominant story that claims growth equals human progress. That linear mindset in a non-linear world is doomed to failure. And, it will take humanity down with it unless it is replaced with the kind of systems thinking that characterizes many indigenous cultures.

In order to achieve a systemic solution to the climate/ecological/societal emergency we are already experiencing, we must optimize a constellation of responses, including especially the transformation or replacement of the underlying driving force of destruction, the industrial-consumer political economy itself, restoration of ecosystems, carbon capture methods that are net positive (capture far more carbon than they generate), clean (not just ‘renewable’) energy, and a vast reduction in the quantity of energy produced and used—that means changing the way economies operate. Ultimately, that means we need to live as *members* of the ecosystems we inhabit, not their dominators.

Scientists and policy professionals need to be far more creative than merely developing increasingly sophisticated technologies to compensate for the destructive consequences of industrial-consumer political economies. We need to develop ‘sustainable’ political economies—sustainable because they are ecologically valid, living within the Earth System’s means.

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***Today’s Featured Image:***

***The National Guard consists of a body of soldiers under the authority of the governor of each state. It’s purpose is to be available to respond to an emergency, such as the recent climate-driven wildfires in the Malibu and nearby areas of Los Angeles. They are specifically excluded from exercising domestic law enforcement operations by the Posse Comitatus Act.’***





*Photo Credit: Al Jazeera*

***As he has in numerous other executive orders, the president who would be dictator has violated the law by ordering National Guard troops into Los Angeles and Washington, DC, on the claim that it is to quell out-of-control crime—despite significant reductions in crime in the past several years—and without any request and against the wishes of California’s governor or the Mayor of Washington, DC. The real danger in all this is that despite court rulings, he does what he wants and dares anyone to stop him. This scale of personal authoritarianism is unprecedented in American history, as he follows the fascist takeover playbook to the letter.***

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

There are quite a lot of outstanding climate scientists and important Earth System scientists out there. Most of them most of us have never heard of. One who is quite famous among climate scientists and advocates is Sir David King, former Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government, and now head of the Climate Crisis Advisory Group, experts from around the world. I recently observed a talk he gave, on YouTube.com of course. Where else can you hear/see almost anyone? Well Sir David offered one of the most clearly spoken brief statement of the state of the climate. It is well worth the 14 minutes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpvvEzlc8dg>

David King knows about as much about the climate and its current destabilization as anyone. Sir David is extremely concerned and explains why. The models the IPCC uses, do not take into account the growing rates of methane emissions, which are far more damaging than carbon dioxide. He argues for the necessity of a coherent climate strategy including technologies for reflecting more sunlight back into space, among other things.

### ***Quotable Quotes***

Industrial modernity is loaded with contradictory components. We imagine ourselves to be 'individualists,' self-sufficient and responsible for ourselves. Any commitment to others would be charity. We feign community feelings but rarely live in actual communities. We have an inherent desire for community, but the industrial-commercial economy demands that we live as a separate mobile employable worker, whether simple laborer or complex techno-executive. Understood both the ecological imperative for interdependence and the demand of capital for labor unbounded by community.

***Capitalism's grow-or-die imperative stands radically at odds with ecology's imperative of interdependence and limit. The two imperatives can no longer coexist with each other; nor can any society founded on the myth that they can be reconciled hope to survive. Either we will establish an ecological society or society will go under for everyone, irrespective of his or her status"***

***~ Ursula K. Le Guin***

We are culturally resistant to any framing of our existence in which we are 'dependent.' Whatever happens to us is seen as a result of solely our own decisions. But that is not how ecosystems work, and all living systems exist within ecosystems, large or small. Progress in responding to the multi-crises today—climate, ecosystems, politics, economy, and culture—will fail until enough of us get the necessity of organizing society around the ecological parameters within which we must live. Then we will have a chance to form an ecological civilization.

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