

LOOK UP! 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

The Fog of War-Mongers

The well-known term “the fog of war” expresses the complexity of military combat. Military commanders devise sophisticated strategic plans for assuring victory over their enemies in battles about to be launched. But as the saying goes, as soon as the first shot is fired, everything changes. All manner of complex and often unexpected factors come into play. A metaphorical “fog” settles over the strategic plans of commanders, and the troops in the field must improvise, adapt, and overcome the unexpected to survive.

“The fog of war” is an expression of the fact that the best laid plans often must be set aside, or at least modified to respond to the unexpected threats that are sure to arise in warfare. That is not what has happened in the recent incidents when U.S. forces demolished what appear to be small Venezuelan “go fast boats”(commonly used by smugglers) in the Caribbean,. The tactics used in these attacks precluded saving evidence as to whether they were drug smugglers or not.

The U.S. has attempted to interdict similar boats carrying illicit drugs, mostly cocaine, for years, in various parts of the Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Ocean along the coast of Central and South America. Typically, the U.S. Coast Guard has stopped such boats, ceased their illicit cargo and arrested the smugglers as they head for the U.S. or to meet an intermediary in the route to massive cartel profits. These recent interdictions have been of a distinctly different sort. The boats, their cargo, and their crews have been blown to smithereens, all simply destroyed and sunk into the depths of the sea, leaving no evidence of anything. Why?

The dominator culture of the current federal administration is not only predatory, as shown by its numerous assaults on human rights of citizens and residents regardless of their status or deeds, good or bad, within the U.S. itself. The burden of due process is something they prefer to avoid as a gross inconvenience. Due process would require detainment, inspection, and arrest and confiscation if justified by what is found. However, their goal is destruction, not justice. The juvenile alcoholic Secretary of Defense proclaims that the apparent ‘second tap’ missile launch to murder two survivors of one recent attack on a Venezuelan boat, was somehow just a result of the “fog of war.” He not only denied the nature of the attack—it was not an action in a war, but an extra-legal act designed to eliminate the vessel, its cargo, and the humans on board. It was an

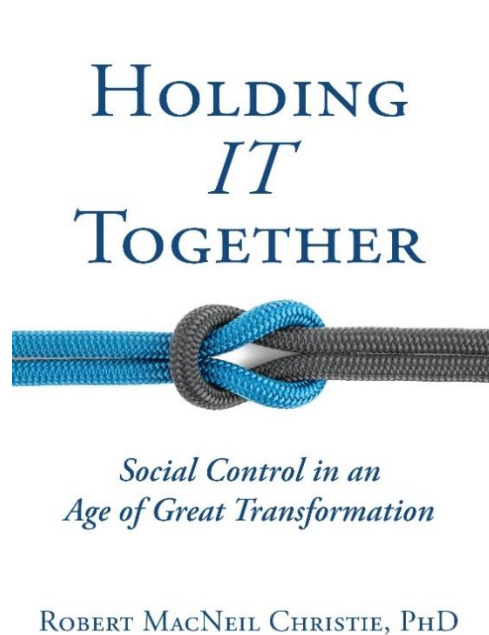
attempt to destroy not only its victims, but all evidence of what happened. Whatever ‘fog’ may have emerged from that event was intentionally generated to ‘bury at sea’ any trace of what some now call a war crime.

This entire emerging scandal is consistent with the ethos of the authoritarian regime now running roughshod over the U.S. government, citizens, and residents. It results from the belief that the perpetrators are superior to the rest of us and ought to be able to act in any way they choose, regardless of violent outcome, and without any public accountability. We shall see whether the Congress, especially the Republicans—who may recognize the rapidly declining mental condition of their president—may soon be required to remove him from office due to his growing incapacity to function. Meanwhile, will they join in the effort to stop the systemic pattern of murder on the high seas?

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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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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](http://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](http://Amazon.com) as well as from independent bookstores via [Bookshop.org](http://Bookshop.org). It is now also available at a discount directly from the publisher, [BearClawPress.com](http://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](http://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

What about this “Epstein Class”?

Democratic Congressional Representative Ro Khanna of California allied himself with the vocally disenchanted MAGA promoter, Marjory Taylor Green, to demand the release of the “Epstein Files,” that is, the massive trove of documents that had been accumulated in the Justice Department investigation of the pervert-financier-philanthropist-child-trafficker, Jeffery Epstein, before the investigation was shut down. In referring to the large number of global financial-political-societal elite men who were apparently ‘clients’ of Epstein’s child sex trafficking ring, Rep. Khanna coined the term, “the Epstein class.

We don’t yet know, whether Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Larry Summers, Elon Musk, or a host of other ‘rich and famous’ men were participants in the program of rape and abuse of underage girls, although it is confirmed that (former) Prince Andrew of the UK was involved; the Royal Family did strip him of his royal titles as a result of the exposure of his exposed perverse behavior. But the name of Epstein’s ‘closest friend of years past in New York City, now in the White House, appeared more than any others in the trove of thousands of emails released to Ro Khanna by the Epstein estate.

In answer to the age old question, “Are the rich really different?” I must answer, well, yes, some of them are. The Epstein class is different in at least one respect. It is not how much money they have, or how well connected they are; those are just baseline requirements. The essence of their difference is found in their sense of righteous personal privilege over everyone and everything, their perceived right to override any and all principles of humanity in service to their every whim and perversion. The fake president is not the only man in the global elite who is a narcissistic sociopath. Many from this ‘class’ of psychos seem to bubble up to the top of various important institutions. Some research indicates that narcissistic sociopaths, due to their ruthlessness and guile, seem able to climb to the top of corporate and government institutions more often than less mentally disturbed people do.

Well, that would make sense when we look at the bizarre dehumanized behavior of many “world leaders.” Putin, Netanyahu, Maduro, et al, et al, and, of course, past cases like Hitler and Mussolini. But many are not so famous. They are heads of various corporations, banks, and cartels. “Houston, we have a leadership problem!” When so many competent serious career government professionals, ranking general officers, diplomats, and especially inspectors general, are systematically replaced by autocratic sycophants, many of whom are incompetent and ignorant of the positions they assume, we should expect trouble in the form of illegal acts, bunglingly executed. Sadly, that expectation is being fulfilled right now.

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Today’s Featured Image:

The age-old law of the seas calls for the rescue of any seaman found overboard without means of survival. And the laws of war as well as the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice, requires that an enemy combatant who is unarmed and poses no threat, must not be killed.

We know that in the “fog of war,” and under the extreme stress of combat, these laws of human decency are sometimes violated. Even extreme cases of ruthless massacres such as that at My Lai in the Vietnam War, have occurred. The U.S. military has struggled for a half century to overcome that one by becoming as ‘professionalized’ as possible. Oops! The Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse scandal in the war on Iraq too. But those past failures were not official policies sent down from the highest authority.



Image Credit: “An image from a video released by President Donald Trump on his Truth Social account, claims to show a lethal kinetic strike on a vessel just off the Coast of Venezuela, Oct. 14, 2025.” ABC News

The United States is not at war with Venezuela. War is a state of officially declared military conflict. Of course, the U.S. has initiated various ‘military strikes’ in various places under various rubrics on a fairly regular basis, the authority for which the Congress has passively abdicated. We do not know for sure whether the recently attacked Venezuelan boats were drug smugglers or not, since the implicit ‘rules of engagement’ appear to be “kill them all,” and destroy all evidence by sinking the boat and its contents and crew. What civilized nation conducts its ‘foreign policy’ like this? Only, it seems, not so civilized authoritarian dictatorships run by incompetent inhumane autocrats.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

The 'oral essay' I am featuring today as a valuable source for understanding the New Great Transformation and its potential for a good or disastrous near future, popped up on YouTube the other day and its title caught my attention. After all, the rich and especially the ultra-rich "not paying their fair share of taxes" has been a topic of broad public concern for quite a while now. And since the trajectory of inequality is rapidly going from very bad to much worse, this source is oh so important; it hits the key financial sources of our current economic chaos and pain.

The idea of a "wealth tax" proposed by some, is appealing in its simplicity and seeming directness, but the situation these days is too complex to be fixed by such a simple but too difficult to execute 'solution.' We need to go much deeper into the fiscal morass of the complex web of financial privilege and exploitation, or we risk trying to suppress the symptom without dealing with the disease.

I was stunned by the clarity with which Ray Madoff explained the complex ways by which the wealthiest people in the nation avoid almost all income taxes by manipulating the revenue they receive. That is accomplished through a set of rules that have evolved over decades to protect them from that responsibility, by classifying their growth in wealth as "untaxable income." It doesn't matter what your political affiliation is, you will recognize the biggest rip off of the nation's wealth by its super-empowered elites, which ultimately result from their deep influence over Congress

Ray Madoff, Boston College Law School, "Why the Rich Don't Pay Taxes," New Economic Thinking Interviews. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLKacgW6YOI>.
<https://www.youtube.com/@NewEconomicThinking>

I am always amazed at claims that "we can't afford" one public good or another, from public education to feeding the poor and starving, or now, even maintaining our National Park system—except, of course, the military. Any nation is responsible for the health and wellbeing of its population for the good of the nation as a whole. Any system intent on surviving and thriving must take care of its own people and communities. But if an ultra-wealthy class is allowed to extract most revenue from the economy, then the system simply cannot operate in a way that keeps it healthy.

Creating a class of ultra-wealthy whose very existence as such, weakens the nation in numerous ways, by hoarding trillions of dollars in assets that rightly should be in circulation throughout the Real Economy. This is a MUST WATCH video. The solution is complex but imperative if we are to create a wellbeing economy, The Republicans become outraged by any talk of the 'redistribution of wealth,' but that is exactly what is needed, along with an equitable system of taxation, similar to that which the U.S. had in the 1950s, with a progressive income tax and few if any loopholes.

Quotable Quotes

The recently accelerating concentration of wealth, especially in the U.S., but also all over the world, is an increasing threat to the effective functioning of economies as well as the wellbeing of the populations whose ruling elites take almost all of the income and assets generated by economic processes. All ideologies aside, the effective functioning of any economy is determined by the extent to which money and wealth circulate widely or is mostly contained within a very small but powerful financial elite.

In the past year, the 10 richest U.S. billionaires gained nearly \$700 billion dollars (\$698 billion).

~ Oxfam report, UNEQUAL: THE RISE OF A NEW AMERICAN OLIGARCHY AND THE AGENDA WE NEED, 2025

Other studies have shown that the vast majority of new income goes to the 1% of the 1% of the richest persons and corporations, which pay far less in taxes, if any, than the rest of us. It is interesting to note that almost nobody challenges the legitimacy of an economy producing an ultra-billionaire class at the expense of everyone else's health and livelihood, and produces a growing class of destitute people. We do live in what highly respected journalist [Anand Giridharadas](#) calls a [Winners Take All](#) society. However, we do not really face what that means.

The charade of billionaire charity, is epitomized by Bill Gates and his foundation providing the means for short-term survival to some global poor, which serve his financial interests and perpetuates the increasingly hierarchic system of global power. This assures global poverty will continue in large part due to the perpetuation of the ultra-billionaire class itself, which pretends to seek solutions to global problems while furthering its own self-enrichment with the help of its agents in government. Think Davos. The extreme concentration of wealth and (mostly untaxed) income perpetuates human suffering and prevents the building of a wellbeing economy, which the tax-system reforms that Ray Madoff proposes, could help achieve.

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