

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

News is Not News, when it is Not New, even if It is Crazy.

Consider the following ‘news’ items. Are they really news at all? Well, they happened just recently, so they are not episodically old. Hence, they are new. But what has really changed? Lipstick on a pig does not make the pig a fashion model. Some recent headlines from [U.S. News & World Report](#):

- More Than Half the US Threatened With Ice, Snow and Cold in Massive Winter Storm. [Those “polar vortexes” never happened in the first seven decades of my life...]
- Climate Change Worsened Rains and Floods Which Killed Dozens in Southern Africa, Study Shows. [What? Does climate change actually affect people’s lives? Duh...]
- Congress keeps government open, momentarily, while ‘deciding’ whether to let ICE run wild or require it to operate within the constraints of the U.S. Constitution. [What is there to debate? Whether the president should have a private army to attack cities where he lost the vote?]
- Chile Fights Wildfires That Killed 19 and Forced Massive Evacuations. [If the recent New Mexico and California firestorms are any measure, these are not normal either.]
- More Than 100 Dead in Torrential Rains and Floods Across Southern Africa. [And, what does that mean for the regular seasonal rains and crops that depend on them?]
- Flash Floods in Indonesia Kill at Least 16 People and Sweep Away Homes. [How normal is that?]

Some other factoids in recent days:

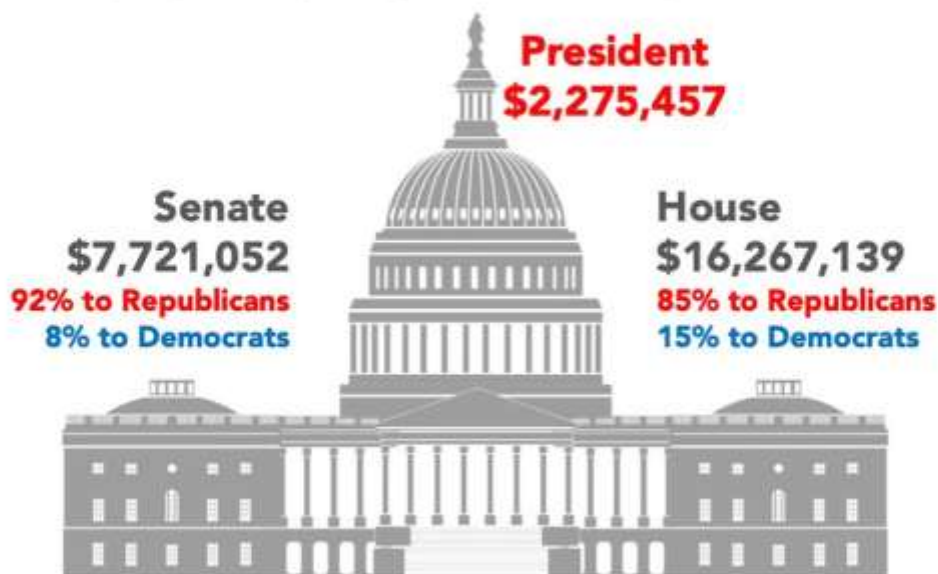
- SCOTUS declares that Trump must restore the funding of USAID. [Was there an issue, other than saving money to put toward those billionaire tax breaks?]
- The “Barron of Family Separation,” [my term for his character] Tom Homan, Trump’s so-called “border tsar,” is sent to ‘de-escalate’ ICE/Border Patrol brutality in Minnesota. [What is wrong with this picture? Remember that fox in the hen house?]

- Tesla is losing sales in Europe. [Why not? Musk's pal in the White House has been denigrating our European allies in the extreme, and violating longstanding agreements with our allies, as he cozies up to Vlad.]

Well, obviously, as we all know, life is becoming much more complicated these days. While any one of the above events may not directly touch you personally, yet, they definitely add to the chaos and confusion of modern life and to the insecurity of many nations. Which of these events are really new? Or, are they just amplifications of trends that have been emerging for a while? The point here, is that while these events may seem unrelated, they are actually fragments of an overall pattern of destabilization in just about every system or subsystem in the world, whether economic, societal, political, or even the Earth System itself

Bonus Image today: it captures the essence of the financial ruination of democracy:

The oil and gas industry contributed \$26 million to the campaigns of policymakers taking office in 2025



Source: Open Secrets. Data from 2023-2024 election cycle only. Does not include outside spending or soft money.
Data compilation and image by Karin Kirk for Yale Climate Connections

Image credit: Yale Climate Communications Program

This image captures the financial control of national policy decisions. The news events mentioned above, and many others, are either consequences of policies enacted by Congress and/or the president, or they are the consequences of Congressional or presidential inaction.

Now, in the case of climate, no policy decision directly causes a 'natural' disaster, but policies or the lack thereof, and now even anti-environment policies, do influence the causes of climate chaos, which refers to the sum of all anomalous disasters caused by unprecedented changes in climate resulting from human-sourced pollution and ecological damage. Remember, large

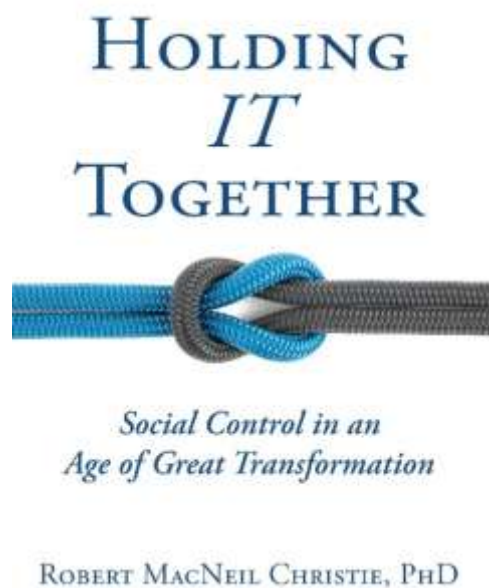
ecosystems play an important role in regional climate patterns. The destruction of the Amazon ecosystem is already disrupting climate.

Mostly, lack of policy action, or direct denial and cancelling of policies, as in the case of Trump, contribute to the further deterioration of climate and degraded ecological conditions. Each negative gambit, from Minneapolis to Caracas and from Greenland to Iran, distract both the public and mass and social media, as well as the politicians, from considering actions to take to deal with the greatest global emergency humanity has ever faced. Each grift constitutes a crisis in itself, thereby effectively neutralizing effective policy formation.

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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 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 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 as well as from independent bookstores via Bookshop.org. It is now also 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. 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

Sustaining Democracy Requires Much More than Voting.

The problem with American Democracy is that it operates not on widespread citizen engagement and participation, but on the pressures of financial interests capable of 'donating' large sums of money to candidates for, and incumbents in office. For most politicians, political decisions are made mostly on the basis of who paid how much for what.

Political scientists who surveyed legislation over time, found that most legislation favored powerful financial interests, and rarely did it serve civic or public interests. Sure, getting government contracts for corporations in one's district or state has some indirect benefits for employment in that jurisdiction. But that is quite different from legislation that directly serves the public interest.

It has been said that too often, politicians choose their voters rather than voters choosing their representatives or senators. Through several mechanisms, from gerrymandering to huge untraced political donations from the super-rich and mega corporations, the political interests of the top of the economic hierarchy are served, while the needs of the people for legislation aimed at improving wellbeing of people and their environments, is cut or never passed.

Currently, of course, that is blatantly obvious in this regime's massive tax cuts for the super-rich and giant corporations, while programs that serve the public and especially those at the bottom of the hierarchy are abolished or slashed in the extreme. Even the U.S. weather service, which is a service to everyone (weather is itself politically neutral) is cut along with countless others. Tariffs in effect collect extra sales taxes from the people ("consumers") to help offset the tax cuts for the rich.

None of this is about to change without massive participation of the people in the increasingly threatened democratic process of elections. But it may take massive social mobilization—the efficacy of which the people of Minneapolis have recently demonstrated. Civic action must be expanded in terms of greater participation in exerting pressure on government, and seeking alliances with those in government who still can take actions in the public interest.

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Today's Featured Image:

The distinctions between police and federal enforcement agents and military institutions are increasingly vague in the U.S. today—intentionally. Federal military institutions are forbidden by the posse comitatus law from domestic enforcement actions. Yet, ICE and Border Patrol agents, without proper identification, vetting, or training, and without court warrants, are detaining and imprisoning citizens and immigrants alike, wherever and whenever they please, without so much as identifying themselves or offering a reason for their actions.



Photo Credit: fox9.com

The regime is attempting to ‘extend the border’ to the entire nation, in order to circumvent constitutional requirements to follow due process, including proper warrants, nonviolent arrests, the right to communicate with a lawyer, etc., etc. In effect, these gangs of untrained unhindered marauders, selected for aggressiveness, are trampling human rights in ‘blue cities’ across the nation. Acting as secret police, they embody a classic tactic of dictators throughout history.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

Virtually unknown to the American public, Gene Sharp dedicated his life to figuring out how oppressed peoples could overcome dictators and achieve true democracy through nonviolent means. His work has influenced liberation movements across the globe, from Burma to Ukraine to the Arab Spring and numerous others.

Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*. Boston: The Einstein Institute.
How to Start a Revolution. (film) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7HVLuzQ8uo>

From Serbia to Syria, and beyond, his books have impacted people looking for nonviolent ways to achieve freedom from tyranny. His methods work; but every situation is different. Nevertheless, the principles are always the same. Where movements at first succeed and then fail, such as in Egypt, where the military autocrats suppressed the nonviolent revolution with violent force, the failure was caused by the fact that the spontaneous uprising had no viable strategy for after Mubarak fell. Each case is complex, and while the principles Gene Sharp outlined remain valid, every case must be considered for its unique qualities. Only when the

powerless organize and execute a strategy, do they have the power they need to move from dictatorship to democracy.

Quotable Quotes

The power of violent actors can be overestimated. More than physical force is involved. The violence, as in the case of Minneapolis, can be self-defeating, especially when the people organize nonviolent action.

Dictators are never as strong as they tell you they are...

People are never as weak as they think they are.

The People without guns are winning...

~ Gene Sharp

The people without guns *can* win, but not necessarily. To win, their strategy must take into account the particularities of the situation. In many, mostly not well known cases, nonviolent action has resulted in victory. In the present case of the autocratic attempt to turn a faltering American democracy into a one-man dictatorship, the people of Minneapolis have demonstrated the power of Gene Sharp's theory and methods. That is only the beginning.

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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](#).