

## **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***

#### **Trajectories: Speculation or Fact.**

For too many decades now, the IPCC has written watered down reports on climate change. Those reports resulted from contributions of dozens of climate scientists, but were always overly optimistic. The reports also contained forecasts of expected increases in average surface temperature as well as many details including a wealth of data of various kinds. The reports were useful if only to see how far they underestimated new increases in temperature as well as carbon in the atmosphere in their projections.

Now, I'm no climate scientist. I am a social psychologist who has followed the findings of climate science since before Jim Hansen presented to the U.S. Congress his research findings and his concerns about the existential threat that the continued heating of the Earth would pose to humanity. He went before Congress way back in 1988 with lots of evidence, and Congress ignored his science. That was almost four decades ago, and things have steadily gotten worse ever since. Now, the politics of the neo-fascist autocratic attempt to overtake American democracy, such as it is, have been completely unwinding most of the meager progress the U.S. has achieved in those many years.

All that time right up to today, I kept reading increasingly sophisticated reports of new findings of scientific research on climate and related changes in the Earth System. The newest findings on the trajectory of environmental degradation of our planet portend a dire outcome, barring quick and massive human intervention. The irony is that humans have been massively intervening in the operation of natural systems ever since the industrial revolution accelerated around the turn of the twentieth century when fossil fuels began to energize all sorts of industrial and transportation processes. It all went ahead for over a century, but in recent decades everything accelerated at much higher rates. That was reflected in the data on carbon in the atmosphere, average surface temperatures, and many other effects.

But here is the thing. When you observe a consistent pattern of change over time in a variable, such as average global temperature, for example, it is pretty reasonable to assume that "all other things being equal," that trend is likely to continue. Well, in the case of 'climate change,' that has been the case. But the *rate* of change over time can change too. That is what exponential

acceleration is all about. And that is what has been happening, especially in the last couple of decades. Most measures show increasing rates of increase. When exponential change occurs, it is not long before numbers have doubled, and as it continues the total change becomes huge.

The politics of climate change are simply crazy. But here are the most recent facts I have found.

The systematic downplaying of the climate threat is a particularly disturbing trend. See George Monbiot's assessment of the British government's suppression of its internal report, *Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security: A national security assessment* (HM Government nd), which was deemed "too negative." (George Monbiot, 27 January 2026 in the [Guardian](#)).

Even after decades of following climate science findings closely, on reading the recent report, [The risk of a hothouse Earth trajectory](#), by William J. Ripple, Christopher Wolf, Johan Rockström, Katherine Richardson, Nico Wunderling, Jillian W. Gregg, Thomas Westerhold, and Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, I found the findings on planetary scale self-reinforcing feedbacks and tipping dynamics to be quite chilling. Then I read Jim Hansen's recent report (2026) indicating an even stronger role of El Nino in temperature rise for 2027. Different approach, same feeling.

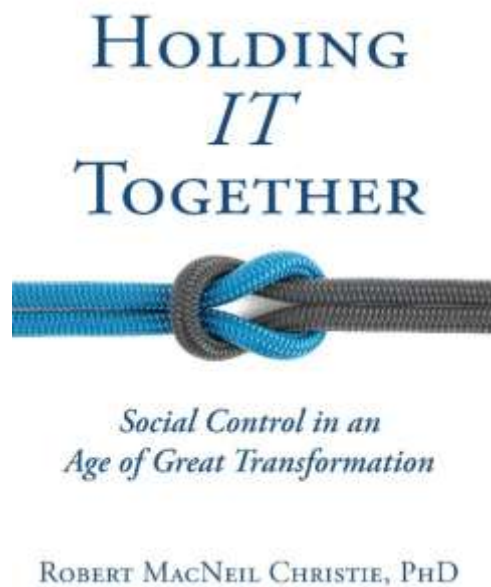
Hansen has consistently predicted stronger trends than the IPCC, and usually he has been right. Each IPCC report I read over the years made me feel it underestimated trends in its forecasts (and they did, partly because they included undeveloped technological mitigation *imaginaries* in their calculations, and because the reports were constrained by the researchers' governments), and I was right too. The trends seem so clear and their acceleration does as well, except that predicting specific timing of expected tipping points is very difficult. While we may wish for the best, we must prepare for the worst, which remains widely unacknowledged.

The Ripple report concludes: "Are we now at risk of crossing planetary tipping points and triggering a hothouse Earth trajectory? Science doesn't have a precise answer, but this question requires urgent research, including exploring other hypotheses involving glacial/interglacial cycling and Holocene stability, and working to better understand climate dynamics." Ripple, et al, state their findings as if they were a question.

But their research findings do have an implicit answer, which is clearly *yes we are definitely at risk of experiencing the existential threat of a hothouse trajectory*, even if the precision of exact timing is not extremely high. The answer is also that the risk is extreme and not really subject to serious question, based on these scientists' own findings. Why don't they just say that the risk is unquestionably real and severe? The obvious follow-on question that rings out without their asking it, is 'what is to be done?' Yet, almost nobody talks about that.

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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?



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](#) 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***

### **What Ya Gonna Do When They Come for You?**

I recently read Vaclav Havel's 1978 essay, "The Power of the Powerless." I had vaguely remembered reading some excerpts many years ago. Havel's essay focused on what he called the "post-totalitarian state" in Czechoslovakia a decade before the Velvet Revolution overthrew the communist government in a peaceful uprising of the population in 1989. Reading it now, I was struck by the parallels to the emerging autocratic attempts in the U.S. and elsewhere today.

Havel focused on how the people responded to the post-totalitarian state's domination of every aspect of life by succumbing to the state's demand that they "live within the lie." At the time, the Czechoslovakian government ruled, not by the terror of violence or its threat, but by requiring rigid ideological conformity enforced by self-censorship. That was the distinction Havel made in comparing his current regime with classic dictatorships that rule by violence alone. Yet, even under extreme oppression, people think, and some speak the truth. Havel spoke of the conflict between "the aims of life" versus "the aims of the system." He gave examples of individuals who simply tried to "live within the truth" by speaking what they believed, such as the skilled brewer who tried to get his masters, who had close connections to

the communist party, to change their methods to improve the quality of the beer. As a result, he was ostracized. Anyone who spoke the truth in opposition to the party line would not survive socially or economically.

What that brought to my mind is the current U.S. regime and the big lies it tells, as well as the demand that the lies be accepted. This includes firings and prosecutions of any federal employee or public figure who disagrees with the regime's actions, or who simply tells the truth. Also important are its attacks on the nation's communications media and its attempts to suppress any reporting that may put it into a bad light, as well as its attempts to suppress even talk show comedians.

Think reporter Don Lemon, Late Night's Steven Colbert, Jimmy Kimmel, and the pressures by the new chairman of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) to censor network talk shows. As a result, cowardly pandering CBS refused to allow Steven Colbert to interview Texas state senate candidate James Talarico, an articulate Christian progressive. So, Colbert posted the interview on YouTube, generating millions of views. Then to his immense credit he blasted CBS lawyers and executives on the air for allowing themselves to be cowed by the FCC. Colbert lives in truth.

We have seen major law firms, high-end universities, and corporations abandon the truth to seek favor with the bullies of the new autocratic attempt to define their lies as ritual truth. Without self-censorship of people and leaders of major institutions autocratic regimes fall.

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

***The critical trends in climate are undeniable, given the overwhelming information provided by climate science research, Yet, they are labeled a "hoax" by the emerging autocratic regime that demands we live in their lies. Jim Hansen has been at the forefront of climate research and communication for decades. Here is his latest assessment of the projected impact of the next El Niño cycle on accelerating temperature anomalies.***

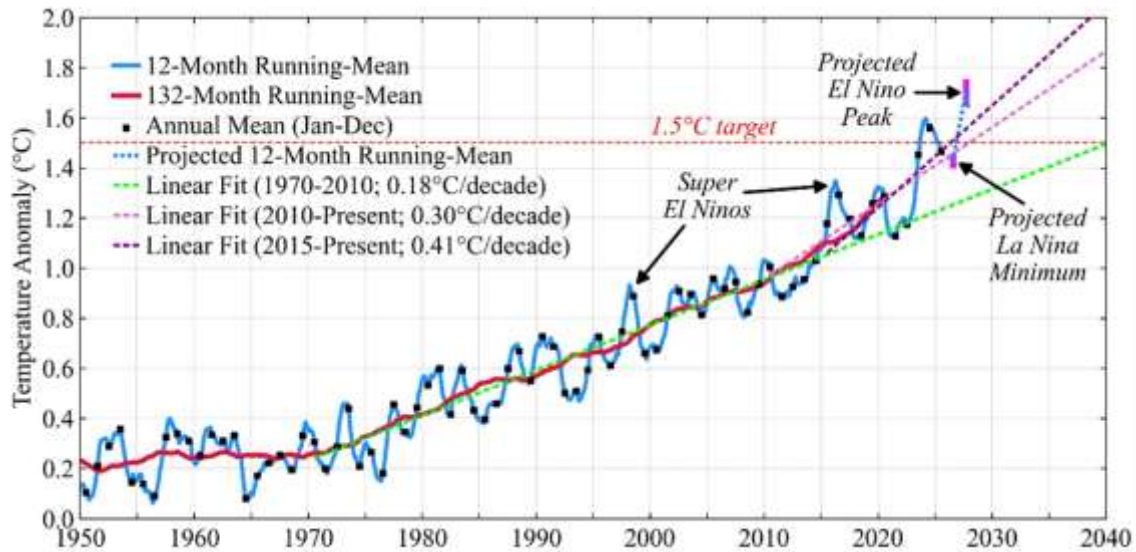


Image Credit: James Hansen

***Supposedly serious people in the ‘climate consensus’ majority still talk seriously about the 1.5°C global average temperature target. We are already passing that mark, and the increasingly extreme weather events that follow, likely will be amplified by a more powerful El Niño peak in 2027. El Niños are cycles of naturally occurring warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific. However, with increased heat in the process due to global warming, the next El Niño will have more energy, leading to more extreme weather.***

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

In these times, Vaclav Havel’s famous 1978 essay is more relevant to the emerging human condition than ever. Despite his focus on the ideological absolutism and self-censorship imposed by the Czechoslovakian regime of that time, Havel’s essay is timeless in its classic perspective on human freedom, political oppression, and living in truth.

Havel, Vaclav. October 1978. *The Power of the Powerless*. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>

The essay is available in books with accompanied commentaries. But it is also available as a pdf so you can download it and read it at no cost. Havel was instrumental in setting the tone for Czechoslovakian “Velvet Revolution” of 1989. We should contemplate why his 1978 essay seems so relevant today.

### ***Quotable Quotes***

We live in a system from which there seems no practical personal escape. Most of us do not want to escape anyway. The industrial-consumer political economy penetrates our lives in countless ways. When we act, it is usually in some way consistent with or implicitly supports that system. It is very difficult not to. After all, it is the source of our survival and whatever comfort it allows us...for now.

*We are all compromised and implicated.*

~ Chisom Udeze

In the words of Vaclav Havel, we are “living in the lie.” Why? Because, deep down, many of us live with the knowledge that the system of which we are a part, cannot last, but we do not speak the difficult truth. Dana Meadows and her colleagues at MIT, showed us in 1972 why the system of industrial modernism cannot be sustained beyond the first decades of the twenty-first century—we are there now. Runaway consumerism since has only amplified her warnings. And now, the current acceleration of both climate/ecological chaos and the rise of anti-democratic forces portend the collapse of our living in the lie of endless “progress” through technological innovation and economic growth. Small acts of courage matter, and can grow into collective living in truth.

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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.](#)