

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

NOTE: *This will be a slightly shorter newsletter edition. I am on my way to an “undisclosed secure location,” [at least, I hope it is] south of the border, and will be ‘off line’ for a couple of days.*

The Warfare State: Impulse, Ambiguity, and Destructive Adventurism.

The long history of U.S. attempts to control the nation of Iran involves numerous illusions of gaining power where no foundation for that power existed. The imposition of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was then overthrown during the 1979 Islamic Revolution, had failed to provide a foundation for U.S. influence over the oil-rich nation. The beat goes on...

Ever since the return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from exile accompanying a popular uprising, the Islamic Revolutionary State has consolidated its power, especially in building the primary source of violent domination, the Revolutionary Guard. The U.S.-Israeli attack on multiple targets, which killed Khomeini's successor, Iran's Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), and several other top officials, is not likely to result in some simple “regime change,” since the state hierarchical infrastructure is deeply embedded and organized for succession. It is no simple matter for the people to just rise up and take over the government.

The history of negotiations with Iran over the issue of constraining its nuclear program to only serve civilian purposes, was difficult but finally resulted in an agreement, which the present U.S. regime promptly trashed when Trump took control. Now, aided by a brace of sycophants with little to no competence in either diplomacy or military strategy, the president and the joint chiefs of the military branches who replaced those professionals who he had fired, have now embarked on an assault without clear purpose, viable strategy, or exit plan.

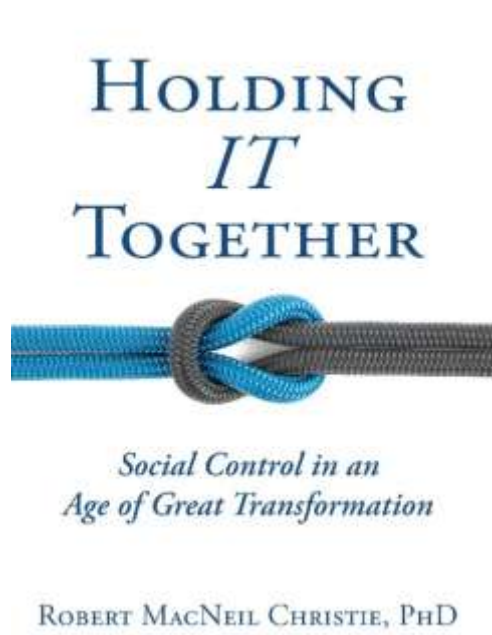
If inflicting pain and suffering on the Iranian people as well as the ruling elites is the purpose, then the latest adventure in violence from he who would demand a peace prize, is a certain success. However, what is in it for the American people? An opportunity to witness a demonstration of autocratic entitlement to punish at will, akin to that visited upon Minneapolis, but on a much larger scale.

Renowned historian Timothy Snyder got is so right again in his recent Substack post, "[Losing the War on Truth](#)." Read it to fully understand.

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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/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

What to Do so They Won't Come for You

I continue to be struck by the prescience of Vaclav Havel's classic 1978 essay, "[The Power of the Powerless](#)." It was written nearly a half century ago, yet as I read through the arguments, centered on the struggles of Eastern European nations to free themselves from Soviet oppression and the national autocratic structures of control, it kept reminding me of the present. It has a lot to do with illusions of freedom under systems of social domination.

If you just extract the 1978 Czechoslovakian context of his analysis and allow for the fact that the configuration of autocratic rule and the human response, is the central topic, he will seem to be writing today. In particular, he writes in relation to the use of violence or its threat under

classic dictatorships, in contrast to the socio-cultural enforcement of conforming to the regime's demand that people suppress their desire to "live within the truth" of expressing the "aims of life," and instead "live within the lie" of complying with the "aims of the system." What are the aims of your life? Are they yours or are they the aims of the system internalized from the industrial-consumer culture driven by 'the system'?

In some respects and to some degree, the U.S. and all of industrial-consumer societies today, can be seen as similar to what Havel refers to as "post-totalitarian" societies. The term seems a bit odd when you think of how totalistic the East European regimes were during the time of Soviet domination. But Havel uses the term, "post-totalitarian" to refer to oppressive regimes that have moved from using mere violence as their primary tool of control, by instilling in the people a sort of automatic social compliance with the demands of the system, a sort of "automatism" that rather unconvincingly conforms with the ideological framework that the regime insists is the only real way of living allowed.

The classic example of a person "living within the lie" that Havel cites is the shopkeeper who complies by putting the sign in the store window proclaiming, "Workers of the world, unite!" It does not really mean anything to him, except for the fact that it is required if he is to avoid social ostracism. He conforms, having abandoned any sense of personal independence or dissent, yet the slogan itself has no personal meaning for him or for others who see it. Passersby and customers see the sign, but mostly as an inevitable feature of the landscape of "post-totalitarian" limits on their expression of the "aims of life."

Fast forward to the U.S. today. Look at the language of Kristy Noem, Pete Hegseth, or Steven Miller. They use and insist that truth is found in words and phrases that history reveals as Nazi tropes, as they struggle to shape the American popular culture into a replica of their racist lie. Any deviation from their ideological framing, including denial of their racist memes, is subject to rejection, expulsion, indictment, and prosecution.

Oh, what was that about some "Epstein files"?

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Today's Featured Image:

Here are the two old authoritarians who drove the Middle East to its current multi-nation war. Why? Each thinks—well, one thought, but was killed by the other—that the world should comply with and live within their own particular lies. Neither of the religions each proclaims (whether honestly or as a mere political tool) calls for war against others if you read the original sources.



Image Credit: ABC News

But we live in a world in which both religion and culture have become political weapons in the struggle among sociopaths seeking ever greater control over people and wealth. They are allowed to dominate political discourse and action. Nothing good can come of that, except for its ending.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

I again recommend the work of historian Timothy Snyder, whose book *Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, is a handbook on liberating ourselves from autocratic attempts to destroy democracy and enslave people. This time, I urge you to read his latest posts on his Substack platform, “Thinking about...”.

Timothy Snyder, “Why Attack Iran?” “Making Sense of the Iran War” and “Losing the War on Truth.” <https://snyder.substack.com/>

These essays are the powerful equivalents to Vaclav Havel’s writings when his country struggled to escape the bounds of tyranny in the 1970s. Freedom is always at risk, as long as sociopaths are allowed to climb to the top of the societal hierarchy.

Quotable Quotes

Freedom is not a condition one is given. It must be asserted—as exemplified so well by the people of Minneapolis when it was directly threatened by ICE and the Border Patrol marauders. We either earn it or someone will take it away. As I have quoted Greta Thunberg more than

once, "Hope is an action." We will not keep our freedom by simply expecting to have it. We must live it, or it will die.

Poles will want you to know that Poland was more important than East Germany in the history of the end of communism. And that is very true. But the crucial thing to remember is [what Poles did](#). In the face of dictatorship they found concepts of cooperation and lived them.

~ Timothy Snyder, "Thinking about..." *Substack* 11/5/2024 <https://snyder.substack.com/>

Freedom is not simple an attribute of a person; it is the configuration of possibility found in living a life of cooperation with others, thereby enhancing the lives of each in the absence of domination.

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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](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](#).