

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

NOTE: *This will be a shorter newsletter, since I remain in the hospital recovering from a bout with pneumonia.* With an apparent major speech set to emanate from the Oval Office at 9:00 PM Eastern Time tonight, I am tempted to utter some sarcastic remark about “April Fool!” I just don’t have the energy, besides, I anticipate it with trepidation, and “April Fools” are jokes. But none of it is funny. After all, with reference to any path to an exit strategy from the clearly foolish war on Iran, has only two options, as Malcolm Nance explained today in a Substack podcast. [I watched it from my hospital bed recovering from pneumonia, and just now in the late afternoon felt the energy to write.] Neither option seems viable on several counts. One, declare “Victory” and extract the U.S. military assets from the field. Two, Invade Iran with “boots on the ground,” which some have observed preparations for, and also certain strategic islands near the strait of Hormuz. The first option would leave all those Middle East allies who host our military and intelligence bases, holding the bag. The second option would be militarily self-defeating for several reasons (cf. [Malcolm Nance Substack](#)). So, it’s a fool’s game, as it has been from the start.

Sometimes it seems that whatever I write here will be out of date by the time you read it. As I write this, it is only a few hours before that Oval Office address. Let’s see if Malcolm Nance is right; he is one of the most knowledgeable intelligence experts when it comes to the Middle East. However, having also reviewed the assessments of some other very smart people with extensive experience in military intelligence and direct experience in the Middle East, I feel certain (unfortunately) that the U.S. will be even more entangled in its war on Iran, for too long to contemplate, unless we get a TACO announcement tonight.

Aside from the absolute immorality of an unconstitutional war on another nation (however we despise its regime) the bungling incompetent MAGA sycophants directing this assault on Iran will, along with their gleeful infliction of violence and pain with no exit strategy, have as the saying goes, “painted themselves into a corner.” Numerous facts of geography, deployment of assets, the positioning and size of the enemy forces, etc., suggest an impossible path forward. Malcolm Nance, Steve Schmidt, and Denver Rigglesman explain the perilous strategic nonsense,

the grotesque corruption, and existential danger deeply rooted in the counterproductive attack on Iran. Their expert [assessment](#) is required to fully understand the depth of depravity upon which this undeclared war is based.

The Heat Goes On: This Is Not a Drill.

In the heat of the battle and the controversy over it, a grotesque distraction from the Epstein Scandal, the incredible environmental damage of the war on Iran is generally overlooked. With climate chaos, as with war, there is no do over. As someone recently pointed out, in video war games, you never run out of ammunition and you can continue killing monsters and terrorists as long as your mother does not demand that you come to the dinner table. Not so with war, and not so with climate. War is an immense destroyer of ecosystems and disrupter of climate. What is done is done and any ideas about recovery or restoration are an entirely different matter.

The history of societal collapses is checkered, at best. Outcomes vary considerably. But certain patterns do arise if you look at the big picture. This is both a warning and a glimmer of hope. While many societal crises in the past have led to collapse, sometimes the collapse resulted in changes that allowed ordinary people to have better lives (eg., after the collapse of a brutal dictatorship). And, sometimes, strategic and smart policy changes have let to the avoidance of a societal collapse.

A *real* reality check would indicate the necessity for rapid assessments and decision making over how to minimize the damage of accelerating climate/ecological chaos, followed by immediate collective action. Instead, we have pointless wars, which don't even make strictly military sense, domestic destabilization, and political corruption on a scale never before contemplated. As I have said before, the only source of viable action to correct the self-destructive path of industrial modernity (amplified by political/economic corruption) is social mobilization to create sufficient societal pressure for change.

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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](#) 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

The Impermanence of Everything, and What to Do About It

Maybe it is just the fact that this pneumonia attack was such a disruption in my plans for the last few days. Or, maybe it is just the realization that old age indicates impermanence itself. But I have, for whatever reason, been more cognizant of impermanence lately.

Oddly it seems, there is a certain freedom that comes with the recognition of impermanence. That shiny new car is going to wear out if it isn't abolished in a traffic sooner. But, so what? Let it go; it is gone. I have long noticed the obsession some folks exhibit over their car, their complexion, or their status among thieves. Really, it's not healthy.

None of it *really* matters, but it does. In certainty we have comfort. In things that we value, and possess, we feel some sort of elevated sense of identity. We might want to question that one. I always remember George Carlin's riff on our "stuff." It's a classic; google it.

In some things we value impermanence. We may wish for a quick victory in war, making it both positive and very impermanent. But more often than not, that is a fool's game. Anyone familiar with warfare knows that no matter how good the intelligence as to the enemy's resources, assets, and willing to fight, once the first shot is fired, or first missile is launched, all bets are off.

But then, the 'intervening variables' of human emotion, will to power, and ego-driven overconfidence, especially when no clear objective or motive or expectation is in the mind of

the war-maker, except to make war, then 'wars of choice' become at best pathological, and very likely genocidal.

In some ways, it is good that nothing is permanent.

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Today's Featured Image:

War is started by people who never have to do the actual fighting. That is no different today than in the past, when the many fought to protect the fortunes of the few, except that for medieval kings and knights, and leaders of ancient empires, it would have been dishonorable to not participate, indeed, not to lead in battle. They often 'led the charge.' Today the battles of so-called 'leaders' is usually ideological—but based on material greed in one form or another—which becomes their excuse for sending others off to the killing fields, for they would not condescend to face a fire fight or drone swarm in person.



Source: Aljazeera

These three sociopaths fall into that latter category. In each case we see an extreme. One, a narcissistic sociopath who enjoys other people's suffering and his power over them, the second, a religious fanatic who would easily kill to avenge his delusions of godliness, and a third, whose will to power and to keep out of jail spur him on to commit genocide in the name of a "greater Israel." Each, of course, has enemies just as ruthless and brutally self-righteous. Studies have

shown a tendency for sociopaths to rise to the top of organizations, and, I would add, that includes nation states.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

The Epstein files have so far revealed only the tip of the iceberg of global-elite depravity, corruption, and the peculiar forms of status climbing and wealth insecurity of the richest and most powerfully placed individuals on the planet. We have much more to learn about the people who control the institutions that control our lives.

Anand Giridharadas *The Inc.*

<https://the.ink/>.

Investigative reporter, Anand Giridharadas, is the only person I know of who has actually read the entire 'Epstein files' that have so far been released (though heavily as well as illegally redacted by the Justice Department). His conversation with Ezra Klein on Klein's podcast was enlightening. Now, Giridharadas is publishing on his 'The Ink' Substack platform, a series of 'chapters' on different aspects of the diverse global elites who comprise the "Epstein Class." For anyone who wants to understand the power elites who control the institutions that control our lives, this may be a very good place to start.

Quotable Quotes

Anti-Intellectualism in American Life by Richard Hofstadter received a Pulitzer Prize in 1964. In it he not only described the character of those who scorn intellectuals, but the various aspects of the American character that put action and practical success above all else, especially ideas, and how it all plays out in the context of sustaining a democracy.

Forty percent of Americans [did not read a single book](#) in 2025.

~ Paul Elie

https://newrepublic.com/article/207659/non-fiction-publishing-threat-important-ever?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=critical_mass

Ever since, but especially since the advent of the many forms of "devices" with screens that connect with the internet, the skills of critical thinking and reasoning have declined. Meanwhile, loneliness has most recently increased rapidly. This has left many vulnerable to the irrationalities of conspiracy theories amid psychological instability. The result is a cultural mess. As Paul Elie pointed out in the New Republic article cited above, more and more people get their "nonfiction" reading from social media. I put nonfiction in quotes because, unlike the diligent research and editing that go into most nonfiction books, social media offers far more "information" that is imaginary if not counter-factual at best. But without critical thinking skills, emotional distress can be easily manipulated with 'fact-like' claims that generate fear and hate.

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