

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**War and Peace: Well, maybe not peace.**

As the *War Against Iran* continues, off and on, the prospects for *Peace* recede into the dim indeterminate future of the *War*. So, why do I capitalize these two conditions and italicize them too? Just to get your attention? Well, it's more than just an allusion to Leo Tolstoy's famous novel, *War and Peace*, which challenged the myth that "great men" determine history.

War and peace are conditions that increasingly blur into one another today, with peace sometimes seeming like war, and war becoming inconsistently defined, even as munition stocks are depleted by bombing without purpose except to bomb. One self-anointed "great man" has failed dismally to realize his imaginary ranking among Genghis Khan, Adolph Hitler, and Joseph Stalin, all of whom history eventually defeated, as he is repeatedly outsmarted by the strategically aware fanatics he thought he could defeat as if they were Nicolás Maduro.

The new conditions in the nearly six months since the joint Israeli-US attack on January 29, 2026, of jockeying for position continue, both militarily and in terms of international geopolitics. One Iranians evolved a strategy that the other side did not even contemplate as a possibility. The imaginary dictator ignored or demoted the expert military men and women who could have explained the limiting parameters of the geography and the political infrastructure.

So, the aspiring autocrat's imaginary quick victory vanished, confronted by a steadfastly committed and deeply entrenched Revolutionary Guard. Meanwhile, the The [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) implements its strategy of bait and switch, and carefully selected targeting of installations on the soil of US allies in the region, demonstrating their vulnerability and the incapacity of the US to protect them. The incompetent civilian head of the US military continues to lop off the top professional leadership, replacing it with a brace of sycophants or at least pretenders to sycophancy, in severe denial of his own incompetency, while he calls for a check of testosterone among the troops.

Let's see. An unjust war (nobody attacked the U.S. or Israel—yes, numerous terrorist attacks and

opposing counterinsurgency black operations over decades, but nothing new there. Led by a certified narcissistic sociopath Commander in Chief with zero military experience beyond dodging the draft with a “bone spur,” and a “Secretary of War” whose military experience was distinguished by only inebriated failure, and whose sense of military strategy consists of little more than the desire to make things go bang and punish as many people as possible.

John Adams said, “There is no greater guilt than the unnecessary war.”

The trajectory of the so-called leaders of “modern civilization” is sometimes hard to distinguish from the barbarity of theocratic regimes who chant “death to the infidels!” That is not so surprising when we consider the key behavioral and mental components of the promoters of a fascism in which they, of course, are to be the authorities over everyone’s lives and fortunes.

[Imprisoned by the Nazis](#), [German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) concluded stupidity to be “a more dangerous enemy of the good than evil” because there is no defense: “Neither protest nor force can touch it. Reasoning is of no use. Facts that contradict personal prejudices can simply be disbelieved.” (Thanks for reminding me of Bonhoeffer, Jack Arnold.) Does that sound MAGA familiar?

Meanwhile, life sputters on. As I fill up my gas tank in California at nearly \$6.00 per gallon, I am bemused by the complaints on the news that the national average is now over \$4.00. I remember my teenage days in the Los Angeles metro area when “gas wars” drove down the price to 20-30¢ per gallon. Well, back to the present future...

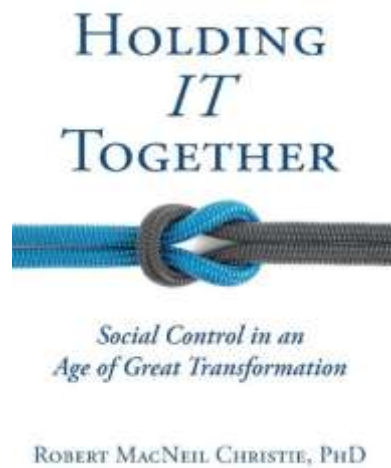
It’s not just a matter of “un-affordability” of life in general; of course, that is the direct consequence of most people. Unfortunately, the underlying problem is much bigger than that. By which, I do not mean to trivialize current suffering by growing numbers of Americans. But if major transformative action does not begin very soon, the growing “multi-crisis” will result in far more destruction than we are seeing today.

We live and participate in a very complex system of complex systems, and making the change we need is far more difficult than anything climate scientists, ecologists, energy specialists, or, especially economists have been able to express. We do have numerous brilliant thinkers and scientists who recognize the nature of our terminal system, especially in relation to how complex living systems evolve and operate effectively in the natural world. We have, in that sense, “gone off the rails.”

Despite our cultural illusions of omnipotence over Nature, there are parameters that must be respected if we expect to forge a livable future. And, that does not mean somehow creating “sustainable” ways of going on with the terminal system we have created, which will collapse unless we are able to transform our destructive culture into an ecological civilization that allows us to re-harmonize with the Earth System that constitutes the only home we will ever have—Gaia.

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Here is a shorter promo for *Holding IT Together* which, in every issue of this newsletters may seem redundant, but, hey, it costs me nothing.



Can Modern Civilization Transform Itself in Order to Survive?

In *Holding IT Together*, Dr. Robert MacNeil Christie explains how we got into this mess and what it will take to come out alive. Despite its many benefits, industrial civilization has become an existential threat to itself and our Earth System. It may even threaten our survival, along with many other species. We must transform ourselves, our communities, and our societies into responsible members of the ecosystems of which we are a part. We must 'hold it together' to find a place of our own within the living Earth system, Gaia.

Libraries seeking treatises on the major dilemmas of modern society and living, who look for well-researched blends of and contrasts between different viewpoints...will find Holding IT Together especially relevant... ~ Midwest Book Review

Christie's writing is sharp and thought-provoking, making complex ideas accessible...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**

"Buy it!" says the author.

My eBook **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto** is available on Amazon.com. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4185414.Hopeful-Realism). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page.

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

Resilience is Not Robustness.

We have seen a good deal of discussion in recent years over the importance of resilience in dealing with the trajectory of the converging crises of modern civilization, which appear to be leading to catastrophic collapse, barring urgent global intervention to create an ecological civilizations. Opinions vary, of course, as to the severity and immediacy of what I have been calling the New Great Transformation of human societies and the very Earth System itself.

However, anyone who pays attention to the trends in data on changing climates, disrupted agriculture, depleted soils, and even geopolitical destabilization, knows that ‘the center will not hold.’ One website in particular, hosted by the Post-Carbon Institute, has offered many insightful articles. They have graciously allowed me to post a few essays there myself. Nevertheless, when we think about it, resilience—the capacity to ‘bounce back’ and recover from traumatic events—is inherently reactive, not proactive. Preparing for how to respond to a crisis is not the same as preventing or mitigating it before it becomes unstoppable.

As I have said elsewhere, the best adaptation to risky change is mitigation of whatever threaten life and/or living systems—you included. Neither is easy, but adaptation does not threaten the powers that be so much as does mitigation, which tends to go to the root of the problem. When headed toward conditions intolerable for living, adaptation is not nearly enough.

Robustness, on the other hand, is the capacity to avoid traumatic experiences by being prepared and taking action in order to prevent the damage that would require great resilience to overcome. Robustness is a characteristic of a system, which results in strength and stability. It even contributes to resilience. That’s a win-win. Systems that are not robust are subject to failures of often unpredictable nature.

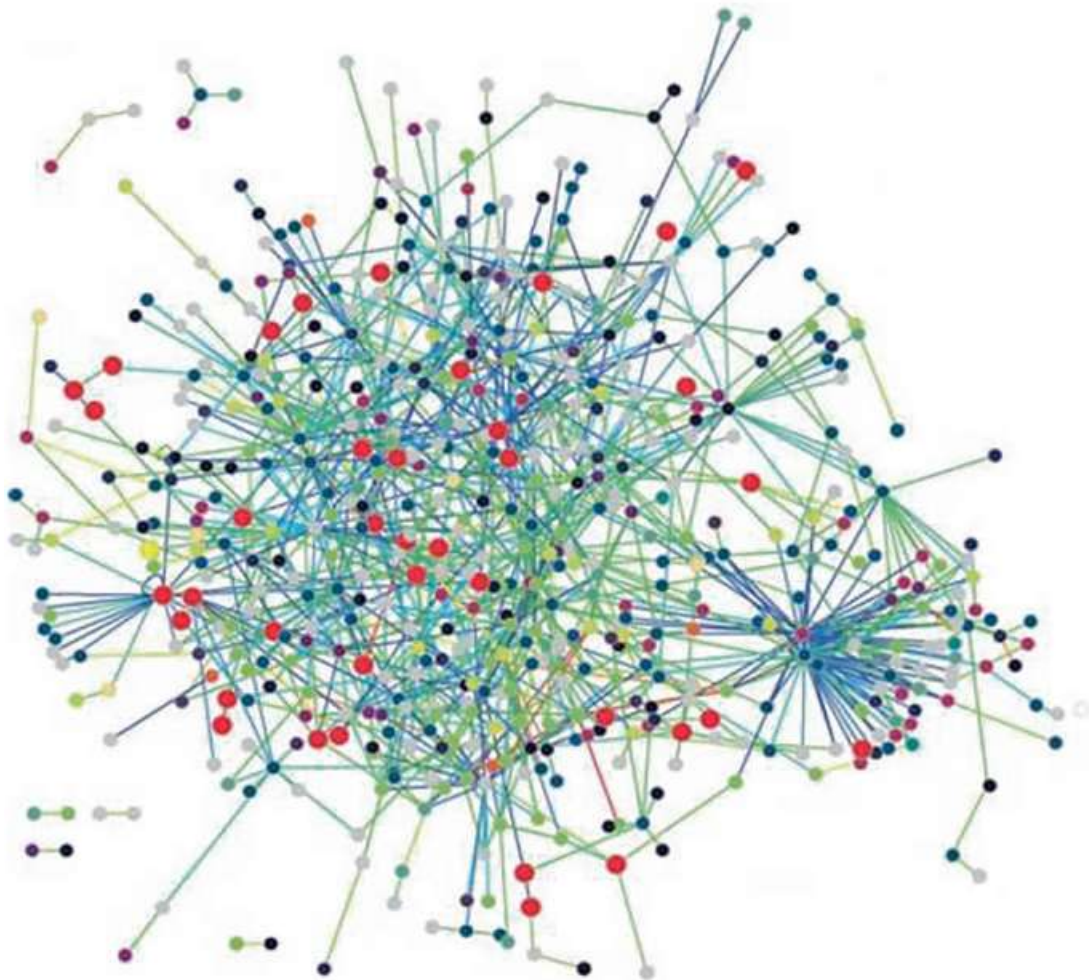
In fact, some system failures can spiral into unrecoverable conditions, from which no level of resilience could recover. A robust system is one that maintains a healthy relationship with its environment, eliminating the need to deploy strategies of resilience to overcome threats of destabilization.

As far as our current multi-crises are concerned—climate chaos, ecological destruction, political destabilization, economic distortion (concentration of wealth with corresponding increase in poverty), etc.—governmental and corporate recognition and response have been far from robust—mostly the opposite. Denial, deflection, and disinterest dominate, and any feigned response focuses on feeble attempts to implement “business as unusual” actions such as advocating “green growth.” Growth has become the enemy we don’t want to face; it is not the same as development, which implies improvement instead of getting bigger.

But some biologists and ecological activists recognize these distinctions directly in relation to their scientific expertise and are clarifying these issues. But too many don’t notice in the context of corporate-controlled mass media. Some fascinating work is being done, which should help transform the way we frame our modern problems. In particular, I would recommend the work of Olivier Hamant, the French biologist cited in the *Books and other Sources* section of today’s newsletter. Robustness, by the way, is the exact opposite of the monocultural mania of fascism and all dictatorial systems.

Today’s Featured Image:

Complex systems are complex to the extent that the results of some interventions cannot be fully predicted. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify 'points of intervention' that are most likely to mitigate a particular systemic problem. While weather is notoriously hard to predict for a particular location on a given day, broader climate trends have been well documented by observation over time.



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A robust social system would assess trends that are caused by human-system action—ecological destruction and carbon emissions—and take counter actions to prevent catastrophic collapse. Political and economic elites have prevented such rational action because their selfish short-term interests render political systems less robust.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

The current global condition and the catastrophic change it portends, require a new intellectual framing in order to take into account factors that were never considered by the framers or practitioners of the global industrial system. We live with consequences that they neither understand nor have any interest in learning. Olivier Hamant sees a deep fundamental flaw in modern culture that if not fixed, may be terminal.

Olivier Hamant, *Antidote to the cult of performance. Robustness from nature*

Also see the [interview](#) with Nate Hagen on his *The Great Simplification* podcast, which provides a great summary of Hamant's ideas.

The risks to humanity, as well as to the stability of the entire earth system, inherent in the trajectory of industrial civilization are increasingly obvious and still misunderstood, or conveniently misinterpreted. We are at the cusp of a *New Great Transformation* of our own societies, forced by the damage we are doing to the ecosystems we inhabit. We are increasingly at great risk as less stable, as we become less and less robust societies, even as various measures of performance improve. We must either recognize the risks, create the robustness we need, and act on our knowledge, or let the transformation happen in a far more dangerous way and with a far less tolerable outcome for humans and almost all other life forms.

Quotable Quotes

Our civilization's focus on optimal performance and maximum efficiency is great for the individual or corporate operation seeking a profit. However, from the perspective of the wellbeing of the society in which the efficient operation occurs, it may involve some form of damage at a larger scale. Efficient performance is not the same as robustness, which is a characteristic of the larger system, but not always.

"Most importantly, could balancing our focus on performance and robustness be the key to reframing our relationship with the entire Earth, bringing more stability, rest, and meaning to our lives?"

~ Olivier Hamant, August 5, 2026. YouTube interview summary, [The Great Simplification - with Nate Hagens](#)

Olivier Hamant cuts to the chase in terms of how operational efficiency becomes the opposite of effectiveness for the social system in which it occurs. A robust system does not necessarily run at full throttle; it attends to the effectiveness of its components in supporting the viability of the whole system and the wellbeing of its members. Modern societies must re-frame our relationship with the Earth System and each other to become robust and stable.

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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 recent book, [Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#).