

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. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

On July 16th, my new eBook hit **Number 1 on Amazon.com** again and stayed first for several days in a row. Ever since, it has hit the #1 spot multiple times in the New Releases category “Science and Math Short Reads.” It had launched on June 23. This eBook is more about science and social change, but I’ll take any #1 I can get. You can still download it **FREE** via Kindle Unlimited. If you read it, please [review and rate](#) it by clicking the button on the lower left of its Amazon page below “Customer Reviews,” and say a few words about what you think about it.

HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto explains the basics of our global predicament and the opportunities we have to deal with the New Great Transformation of the Earth System. As Greta Thunberg has said, “Hope is an action.” Whole societies must change if they hope to survive and thrive.

My more comprehensive book, **At the Edge of Illusion: Facing the New Great Transformation**, we hope will be released later this year. It explores the deep origins of the obstacles we face and how we might overcome them.

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

I suppose that you could say the hearings of the House Select Committee on the January 6 Insurrection, have been looking up, in the sense that the movie, “*Don’t Look Up*” implied by its title. The political meteor of seditious violence that plunged toward Earth on that day is coming into view much more clearly now.

The attempts of various players in the Fake President’s (FP) inner circle to avoid directly implicating the FP’s culpability, failed miserably. He acted directly to incite the mob; then he willfully refused to take any action to stop the violence he encouraged to violently attack the Capitol and his own vice president, Mike Pence. He appeared to enjoy watching on TV the violence against the police, and the threatened violence against the legislators who were attempting to carry out their lawful roles in a democratic transition of political authority. What else should we expect from the world’s poster-child for narcissistic sociopathy?

The prospect of indicting the *Perpetrator in Chief* and many of his henchmen and enablers is definitely looking up. Now, the evidence is overwhelming that the FP willfully refused to accept the obvious truth repeatedly explained to him by top White House officials like Pat Cipollone, the White House Council, that he had lost and that to pursue his insurrectionist impulse would get them all prosecuted for ‘every

law on the books.’ Then after the Inspector General asked for them, members of the Secret Service reportedly erased text messages from the critical period of January 5 through January 6th, 2021, when the Coup was begun, executed, and failed. More evidence that the fascist culture of MAGA has infiltrated law enforcement agencies as well as Congress. The Giuliani crowd, like a petulant gang of frat boys, just kept egging him on.

The FP willfully refused to accept what he knew was true and tried to stay in power by force. They call that a *coup*, a term many Americans are familiar with in the context of their frequent occurrence in various nations in Latin American and elsewhere, often with the assistance of the U.S. ‘intelligence’ and other clandestine forces seeking cooperative dictators to support U.S. foreign policies.

Then, on July 21, the House Select Committee revealed multiple sources of new evidence of the FP’s autocratic attempt to throttle the election process and stay in office. He pressured Vice President Pence to illegally reject the official electoral votes from the state electors. He used the insurrectionist mob he had incited to attack the nation’s capitol, then Pence himself for failing to violate the Constitution. Apparently, there will be more to come from the committee in September.

All this is sad, tragic, outrageous, and highly counterproductive for the body politic. However, it has had catastrophic effects on the very political processes that were already at the brink of failing to take anything like the immediate emergency actions necessary to stem climate and ecological chaos. MSNBC, for example, the tentatively progressive cable-TV news/commentary channel, which is heavily weighted toward favoring the Democratic Party, hardly ever mentions growing climate chaos. (I know, not much else to favor out there in the political landscape.) As it is on all the other mainstream media, it is treated as just another political issue in their reportage, despite the occasional expression of how dead serious it is. They are not looking up all that much. However dire the political situation may be, Earth System collapse ought to trump any other political crisis.

As I have said before, if we can’t get a grip on the climate/ecosystem emergency, nothing else will matter. (For more extensive discussions of this and related matters, go to

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>)

Featured Image:



Credits: NASA, ESA, CSA, and STScI

Where in the University are we? Does it matter?

Okay, this image of the Carina Nebula captured in infrared light, is probably the most widely displayed of the many new intergalactic images returned from NASA's new [James Webb Space Telescope](#) just a few days ago. Nevertheless, the great beauty it portrays just compelled me to post it here. Many others are just as exquisite in different ways. The universe is all about change; transformation is everywhere, including our own Earth System and the human systems we have (over)built upon it.

Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation

Here is a classic book that inspired much of my work in recent years. Karl Polanyi was a classical European scholar in economic history who fled the Nazi menace to London where he worked on his research, then on to the U.S. where he published *The Great Transformation*. The book became a classic on the origins, characteristics, and consequences of the industrial revolution, after it was initially ignored. Polanyi titled it *The Great Transformation* because the industrial revolution transformed societies in very fundamental ways, with lasting consequences that we have never fully faced.

Karl Polanyi. 1944 (1957, 2001, 2nd ed.). ***The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time***. Boston: Beacon press.

What does a book on the industrial revolution have to do with what we are experiencing today? Well, plenty. If we look at the big picture as the industrial era reaches its limits, it is very hard to ignore the real possibility that we are at the cusp of a ***New Great Transformation*** today. The global corporate industrial consumer economy is not sustainable beyond another decade, if that.

Either we adapt to rapidly changing global conditions while trying to mitigate them, or those conditions will force change upon us—and that will not be pretty. Times ahead are going to be

increasingly difficult. However, I would much rather do everything we can to mitigate the threats to human survival by transforming society than simply accept or deny the otherwise inevitable collapse. That is what Hopeful Realism is about.

Transforming societies to operate their economies with much lower energy inputs, and none from fossil fuels is now an unavoidable necessity. Yet, it may be the most problematic of all actions to accomplish, as I explain in [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#). Nevertheless, it is a survival requirement now, a non-negotiable prerequisite to living much longer on Planet Earth.

Quotable Quote

We are at the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of endless economic growth. How dare you!

~ [Greta Thunberg](#)

Ms. Thunberg has said many quotable things in her short career as an accidental charismatic teenage climate activist-leader. Her celebrity reflects a personal story of overcoming adversity and the consequences of being different. I guess it is quite unusual for a teenager to tell the world so eloquently that we must radically transform the present course of history for the human species to reshape a life that is compatible with the immutable principles of life on Earth. Karl Polanyi would have understood her pleas to world 'leaders' who only follow the path they were assigned. [Karl Sagan](#) would have understood too.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe and read [HOPEFUL REALISM](#).