

SUBJECT LINE: LOOK UP! The facts are in The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter, 5th issue

The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter

Wednesday August 24, 2022

Vol. 1 No. 5

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

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Survey Results Soon: The survey on climate change I did on Face Book had 376 responses. After some effort to get the data from FB, we began clearing the rather odd formatting, and now we are cleaning extraneous characters and coding the data consistently for analysis. Preliminary results should be ready to report in the next newsletter.

The New Occasional Feature: Hopeful realism in this world depends on people striving for a better future. Many voices must be heard to make progress. So, last issue, I invited readers to submit their ideas on specific topics for the **LOOK UP! Biweekly Featured Commentary**.

The challenge for readers was to submit 300-words or less on the question: What kind of social change is necessary to bring carbon emissions down to zero (not the 'net-zero' of the green-washers, but actual zero)? Preliminary results indicate that some readers missed the point. The question wasn't about the technical carbon reducing actions one might take. It was about how society would have to change in order to accomplish the massive carbon emissions reductions we need. When we publish the top ranked mini-essay as a **Featured Commentary**, I will comment on it and the range of other responses.

My new eBook, **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto**, continues to be downloaded at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). It had risen to #1 several times in the New Releases category "Science and Math Short Reads." Now it is ranked among all those not new, a much larger group, and the rank fluctuates daily. Nevertheless, you can still download it **FREE** via Kindle Unlimited. 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.

Note: Past issues of The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter are now available on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

Continuing revelations about how the former Fake President absconded with top secret and other documents when he left office. All presidential documents are the property of the U.S. government and

have been turned over to the National Archive as each previous president left office, except him. The orange narcissist was rumored to have shown some to guests at Mara-Lago as a boost to his delicate ego. Who knows?

On the one hand, such a serious breach of national security as removing top-secret documents meant only to be read in a secure room, then storing them in an insecure resort in Florida is not only a crime but a severe risk to the lives of some unknown number of persons in the intelligence agencies and/or their foreign associates. On the other hand, some argue that classification of documents in the U.S. government has gotten excessive. That of course is no justification for the egomaniacal mishandling of such materials.

In any case, much more severe risks to everyone are growing rapidly on a global scale. The so-called Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—that does have some anti-inflation provisions—is touted as a historic first in fighting ‘climate change.’ It does provide for some actions to slow global warming, which is already way out of control, but they are far from a sufficient start. Despite its limitations, it offers more than we have come to expect from the U.S. Congress.

As usual with the Congress, the IRA contains a mix of ‘demonstration projects,’ and various economic carrots and sticks, intended to encourage environmentally responsible economic behavior by various institutions, along with incentives for individuals and families to buy electric vehicles and heat pumps for their homes, and so on.

Here’s the problem. We are in a climate/ecological emergency. These are far from emergency actions. We are not surprised, given the corporate/federal cooperation in sustaining the neoliberal model of endless economic growth. Yet, a true emergency response would take extreme action to transform the economy to stop it from destroying whatever stability remains in the Earth System upon which we rely for survival. The political culture retains the paradigm of the victim. We need a severe paradigm shift.

I say again, if we can’t get a grip on the climate/ecosystem emergency, nothing else will matter. As climate and ecosystems deteriorate, other issues will fade in the chaos to come. Economic and climate justice, human rights, and just plain civility in everyday life will succumb to growing violent conflict over whatever we need to survive. For discussions of various related matters, go to:

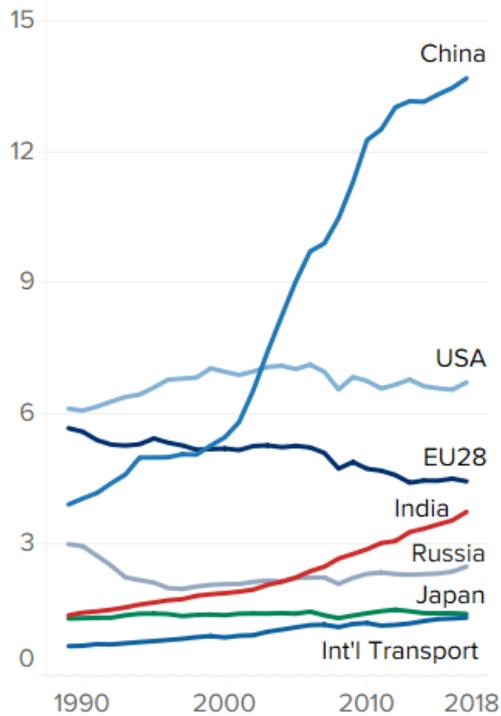
<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

Featured Image:

Top greenhouse gas emitters

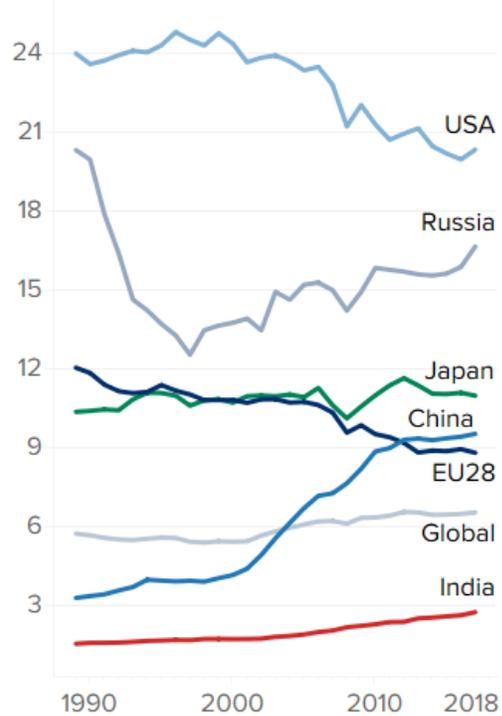
Absolute Basis

Gigatonnes of CO₂ Emissions



Per Capita Basis

Territorial CO₂ Emissions Per Capita



SOURCE: UN Environment Programme. Excluding land-use change emissions due to lack of reliable country-level data.



Nations and Emissions: Absolute Numbers vs. Industrial Modernity

When I hear about the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) just signed into law in the U.S., some of the talk is about America becoming the 'role model' for other nations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in response to 'climate change,' getting them to do what we have so miserably failed to do. Really? So called 'American Exceptionalism' may be a thing, but not such a good one.

Look at the chart above. We are the largest emitter of CO₂ in the world, by far. Of course, China now emits more *total* CO₂ than any nation, but that is because it is so large. Also, a significant amount of China's emissions result from the goods it produces for the American market. Americans are by far the most profligate consumers of energy and products in the world. Some of China's emissions are really ours.

The IRA is little more than a grain of sand on all the world's beaches. It is a triumph in relation to the Republican intransigence and denialism. But that makes little difference to the deteriorating climate. What we must all understand, but few do yet, is that the future of humanity will remain on the other side of dire unless humans—Americans more so than anyone—take hold of our destiny by recognizing the emergency that confronts us and taking action accordingly.

As I have said before, survivors see the world differently than do victims. They recognize the new reality of the emergency-situation they are in. They abandon their paradigm of 'ordinary reality' and accept the new reality facing them. They assess the situation that confronts them and quickly plot a plan to survive. In relation to the rapidly growing climate/ecological emergency now confronting the entire planet, very few humans have shifted to *survivor mode*. (Think island nations.) To do so requires that we abandon our notions of maintaining the conveniences of industrial modernity and face the necessity of becoming very creative in fashioning strategies for individual and group survival under the emerging condition of the Anthropocene, even as we try to mitigate those dire conditions.

That means thinking and doing things in very different ways, as well as doing some very different things. So far, most are wallowing in the false comfort of the social illusions of endless economic growth. Think of it this way: The greatest challenge humanity has ever faced awaits our sense of adventure to overcome the stagnation of our modern lives.

Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation

I have never read much science fiction. Of course, I read a few classics like Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. But recently I have been thinking of the new genre some call 'cli-sci' or the related post-apocalyptic novels, such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, depicting an escape from post-apocalyptic Los Angeles, or Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, in which a father and son struggle to survive traveling through a devastated East Coast. Lately, I have sought out novels that depict more specifically life after climate collapse. I just finished the first of these:

Kim Stanley Robinson. 2017. ***New York 2140***. New York: Orbit Books.

Now, 2140 is over a hundred years from today. Popular sci-fi writer Robinson depicts an interweaving of several very interesting situations and characters in a half-underwater New York City, with the political complications of that situation woven into the drama. Yet, I wonder whether New York City might more likely be entirely underwater in a hundred years from now, unless we take some rather miraculous climate actions within the next few years.

Robinson characterizes New York and its inhabitants in 2140 a bit too much like they are today. Some of the technology is inserted arbitrarily for effect and to assist the story line, as are the politics, which are much like today's. I understand that his more recent book, the *Ministry of the Future* is more germane to an near-term severe climate crisis than *New York 2140*; he explores the details of an overheated world and some geoengineering attempts to counter climate chaos. Some say it is overly optimistic. I am tempted to read it, but I must choose carefully. So many books so little time.

Quotable Quote

The optimist is a fool.

The pessimist is boring.

It's good to be a hopeful realist.

~ Arioano Suassuna,
Brazilian Poet.

A Facebook friend posted Mr. Suassuna's ode to hopeful realism on my Facebook feed, back in November, 2021. Mr. Suasuna died in 2014. His assessment of optimists and pessimists is a bit harsh, but not at all far off. After all, believing that all will work out fine no matter what is rather foolish, because such a belief is not tempered by the facts. And, always assuming that all is lost and nothing is to be done is rather boring, since always predicting failure is nothing if not hopeless. Taking up a challenge whatever the difficulty is the opposite of boring; it is *adventure*!

To take up the challenge of finding solutions to economic and climate injustice, racism, white nationalism, the attack on human rights, the assault on democracy by [autocratic attempts](#), and the excesses of the culture of consumerism, is neither foolish nor boring. The challenge of seeking a new way to live that accepts the responsibilities of being *members* of the biosphere may be the greatest adventure humanity has ever pursued.

We cannot remain mere predators upon the Earth; we must form a global network of ecologically harmonious communities. No small task, neither optimistic nor pessimistic! Hopeful realism calls for action, not certainty.

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