

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

The Chances for an Actual Climate Emergency Action Plan Remain Dim?

“This year we’ve seen little of the climate action governments promised at the end of Glasgow, amid a deluge of new science telling us that we have to move faster, and that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is still entirely possible. We need governments to set strong targets that drive emissions down, and decarbonize their economies.” So said Niklas Höhne, founder of the NewClimate Institute in Cologne, Germany, in a *New York Times* [article](#) on October 26. But it is not pledges and ‘targets’ that we need; it is to take immediate **action**, which, of course, is exactly what those in power do not want to do.

In a LinkedIn posting, Edmund Carlevalle [reported](#) that in addition to the dire article, “Climate Pledges Are Falling Short, and a Chaotic Future Looks More Like Reality,” in the same issue of the *NYT* in which the above quote appeared, another article titled, “Beyond Catastrophe: A New Climate Reality Is Coming Into View,” also appeared. Its author, David Wallace-Wells, had written *The Uninhabitable Earth*, a book that listed all the catastrophic developments that we humans have still failed to face, without any discussion of *how* we might take the emergency action needed. In his new *Times* article, he quotes Kate Marvel of NASA, a lead chapter author on the fifth U.S. government National Climate Assessment, as saying, “The world will be what we make it.” Well, David, so far we have mostly made quite a mess of it. For all the emissions-reduction pledges and temperature targets, carbon enters the atmosphere at ever-increasing rates.

Despite the dismal record of inaction (with lots of meaningless ‘pledges’ and ‘targets’) Wallace-Wells now takes the optimistic stance that “humanity retains an enormous amount of control — over just how hot it will get and how much we will do to protect one another. How nice, but no *significant actual* climate action is happening—significant, that is, in relation to the enormity of the crisis. Control does not exist unless you exercise it; otherwise it is lost opportunity. We do not ‘have’ control unless we ‘*take control*,’ which we have not.

Then there was President Biden’s Energy Envoy, John Kerry, interviewed by Christiane Amanpour on her PBS show last week, claiming great progress, ebullient after having met with Bill Gates and his billionaire cohort he calls the Energy Breakthrough Coalition, which Gates founded in 2015. Kerry appeared quite certain that by bringing in the private sector to invest in new technology—how convenient for the

billionaire-investors—we could eat our cake and have it too. That is, he continues to hold to the fiction that we can continue the global corporate economy of growth by investing in billionaire schemes to invent new technologies to clean up the mess that we continue to make of this, our only planet. Do you smell something fishy in this?

I wouldn't hold out much hope for the institutions that caused the Earth System to destabilize, to come to the rescue with the same financialized-development mentality. The highest point in John Kerry's public career was in 1972, when he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee against the absurdities of the Viet Nam War. Since then, he joined 'the system' both financially and politically, and never looked back. For these guys it is all about 'reform' within the system that they fail to recognize has no future.

As I have said more than once, in concert with experts far more knowledgeable than I, the accelerating climate/ecological emergency will not wait for research and development of as yet unproven, complicated, financially leveraged, and highly dubious carbon capture technologies or other new technologies for treating the symptom instead of the disease. They are a diversion from recognizing the fundamental nature of the predicament of industrial civilization. The disease is our addiction to consuming large quantities of fossil fuels and all the mobility and power that offers, until the high wears off. The symptoms will not go away until we treat the disease. That is obvious to anyone who recognizes the scope of the 21st century's fundamental human predicament.

Those who refuse to give up their addiction to the doomed but comfortable industrial-consumer 'lifestyle' keep seeking 'solutions' within the paradigm of the industrial economy of endless growth of consumption and waste. The attention they get is just another delay in implementing the only strategy that has a chance: robust energy conservation and full-on conversion to clean energy sources while steeply cutting use of fossil fuels until they are no longer burned at all.

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto***. Is 'selling' well, mostly downloaded free from Kindle Unlimited. The 'free book' contest on Good Reads is almost over and some readers have written reviews. Please read, [review and rate](#) it on Amazon 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. If you don't do Kindle, email me and I will send you a .pdf version directly.

Note: You can find past issues of The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter archived on my web site:

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

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

Sadly, I was, not surprised when an apparently deranged man entered Nancy Pelosi's home in San Francisco, demanding of her husband, "Where's Nancy." House of Representatives Speaker Pelosi has been a target of extreme right derision, conspiracy theories, and violent threats for years. The assailant beat Paul Pelosi severely with a hammer, just as the police arrived, leaving Mr. Pelosi hospitalized and in surgery for hours with a skull fracture and other injuries. So, what shall we call such behavior?

Too many are already commenting on the 'lone wolf assailant' in the assumption that 'he acted alone.' Well, yes, no other assailant was present, but plenty were in the congressional peanut gallery and on social media. The same cowardly congress persons who demanded that Vice President Mike Pence

violate the constitution by refusing to accept the Electoral College ballots to formalize the heavily audited election of Joe Biden, have promoted political violence ever since 'their' president escalated his own incitement to violence long before January 6, 2021.

All the elements of a new American fascism are present in the antics of Marjorie Taylor Green, Matt Gaetz, and the rest of the 'MAGA Squad' in Congress. Other Republicans, fearing they will be 'primaried' if they dissent, go along with the pure fiction of the 'stop the steal' mantra. It all operates much like the mass hysteria that has trampled fans at some British soccer games, except that the rioters in this case know exactly what they are doing. The conscious effort to unseat veteran election workers and administrators, blaming them for political defeat, is a direct threat to our increasingly tenuous democracy.

However, the much larger problem is that the organized promotion of the Big Lie has mobilized masses of disenchanting, dispossessed, and disoriented Americans who are victims of the very same power elites that foment, fund, and encourage the conspiracy theories that currently agitate the political right to commit violence. The idea that if the candidates supported by white racist reactionary voters don't win, then the election must have been stolen by corrupt election administrators, just as they claimed in the 2020 election that Trump lost.

But, here's the thing: Social bonds in industrial civilization are 'not what they used to be.' In other words, interpersonal ties and family ties are weaker, since the bonds we have with larger institutions such as corporations and governments, formalistic not personal, have the power to make or break us. It all began with the *clearances* of traditional small agrarian tracts of land and the *enclosures* of the *commons* in Scotland and England to implement early industrial agriculture at the beginning of the industrial revolution, which in various forms have been going on ever since.

Mass incarceration is one of the latest forms of the powerful taking the last bit of power available to the destitute. So, many people in all walks of life experience status as well as material anxiety, and they wonder why they cannot succeed, or why they lost their economic standing, no matter how hard they work. Along comes "Q" and the world becomes a bit more understandable by accepting some conspiracy theory, which also gives them an outlet to express their fear and fury. That, of course amplifies their fear and anger, resulting in increased political violence. It is happening all over the world. Power elites encourage and try to manipulate these fascist tendencies to enhance their already excessive power. They thought they could control Hitler too...

The pattern of increasingly turning to political violence is all too clear. The 'incidents' like that in San Francisco result from the growth of a culture of political violence among the followers of 'The Donald,' as he was called when his ego was still tied primarily to the private sector. It didn't take much to achieve in a popular culture already steeped in the glorification of personal weapons and violence by 'heroes' from John Wayne to the Terminator.

American democracy is now at high risk of being overthrown by a ragtag bunch of narcissists and sociopaths masquerading as righteous political leaders seeking to protect 'real Americans,' amplifying and exploiting the tendencies toward expressing rage through violence. As the candidates race to the final leg of the Midterm elections, American democracy teeters in the balance. Political violence seems likely to play an increasingly influential role in the efforts of corporate plutocrats to further secure their grip on the nation by releasing the hounds of political violence.

For more discussions of various related matters, go to:

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

Today's Featured Image:

***The Consequences of Political Violence:
We are All Ukrainians Now.***



For Authoritarian Politicians, Violence is the Preferred Tactic of Power.

Actually, the violent atrocities that Putin has perpetrated in Ukraine are not unique. Similar patterns of political violence are evident all over the world. Yet, Putin's blatant crimes against humanity remain iconic in their publicly vicious calculated indifference to human life. Nor is he without peers in that regard. The Saudi attacks on Yemeni civilians are equally outrageous, though almost never covered in the news. The U.S. still sells arms to the brutal Saudi regime, even as they commit genocide, and violate agreements with the U.S. by restricting the flow of oil, which supports Putin's petroleum prices and cash flow from Russian oil sales.

Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation

Timothy Snyder is a brilliant historian; he has written several books focused on democracy and on the history of the twentieth century. His grasp of the nature and dangers of tyranny and fascism is virtually unparalleled. This small book, *On Tyranny*, says it all in the most compact and clear way I can imagine:

Snyder, Timothy. 2017. ***On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century***. New York: Crown Books.

Quotable Quote

If you tell a great lie and repeat it often enough, the people will eventually come to believe it.”

~ Joseph Goebbels

Despite all that graduate training in social psychology, all the theories and research on human behavior, I still found it hard to believe the extent to which ‘the big lie’ could engulf a large population in a culture of illusion. Yet, I know that is exactly what has happened to the followers of the man I prefer to call ‘The Fake President.’

When I look back at various forms of collective behavior—the 17th century witch trials in Salem and in parts of Scotland, cults proclaiming alien invasions and the end of the world, even ordinary fads and fashions, etc.—it makes more sense, even though the beliefs and behavior themselves are nonsensical.

Brain science has shown how amazingly complex the relationship between perception and meaning are. Considering the vast numbers of bits of sensory data that we must filter just to perceive meaningful patterns in the world—the sensory input filtered by experience and pattern recognition—it makes sense that something could go wrong in our attempts to align observations and beliefs. On the other hand, it is not exactly an individual process.

Fads, crazes, conspiracy theories, and beliefs in lizard-people, all emerge from intense interactions among people who often have little solid grounding in family or other traditional institutions. The alienation of individuals within an industrial economy that is increasingly hierarchically controlled and uncaring of its victims breeds mental as well as social instability and political violence.

Without decisive and powerful action to make our society more humane and inclusive, we will suffer even more as the victims of our own system and culture. Extreme danger requires extreme action. Only a *New Great Transformation* of society to achieve a compassionate culture will allow us to survive the industrial age.

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