

Doomsday Addiction: 50 Years Of Fear

The apocalypse is tomorrow and, if not, the day after will do.

Declarations of the world’s demise are a dime a dozen, the fare of dignitaries, politicians, scientists, and celebs: The end is nigh—and getting nigher. Coupled to the certainty of doomsday is the fall of farming. Hand in hand, armaged-don and agriculture are bedmates. On March 20, 2023, the United Nations warned of humanity’s ticking ‘time-bomb’, and released a ‘report of reports’ highlighting a multi-trillion-dollar plan to implement climate policies across the world. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres proclaimed the report ‘a survival guide for humanity’ and called for the phase-out of natural fuels: “Dear friends, humanity is on thin ice—and that ice is melting fast.”

Too Many People

With world population at 3.5 billion (7.9 billion as of 2023), Paul Erlich penned **The Population Bomb** and lobbed an incendiary grenade in the opening lines of his prologue: ‘the battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate...’

August 1969

Erlich in the *New York Times*: ‘We must realise that unless we are extremely lucky, everybody will disappear in a cloud of blue steam in 20 years.’

April 1970

Erlich in *Mademoiselle* magazine: “Population will inevitably and completely outstrip whatever small increases in food supplies we make. The death rate will increase until at least 100-200 million people per year will be starving to death during the next ten years.”

Too Many People

Aug 1969 Everybody will disappear in a blue steam cloud

Apr 1970 100 million people per year will be starving to death

Nov 1970 Civilisation will end within 15 or 30 years

November 1970 Harvard biologist and Nobel Prize winner George Wald, speaking at the University of Rhode Island: “Civilisation will end within 15 or 30 years unless immediate action is taken against problems facing mankind.”

Spring 1970

Dennis Hayes, key organiser of Earth Day, in *The Living Wilderness*: ‘It is already too late to avoid mass starvation.’ Kenneth Watt, University of California, Davis ecologist: ‘At the present rate of nitrogen build-up, it’s only a matter of time before light will be filtered out of the atmosphere and none of our land will be usable.’

Spring 1970 At the present rate of nitrogen build-up, it's only a matter of time before light will be filtered out of the atmosphere and none of our land will be usable

Big Cold

1968 As greenhouse theorists pushed a rise in average temperature, plenty of ‘forecasters’ asserted a big freeze

1970 Scientist predicts a new ice

Jan 1974 Spy satellites show new ice age is coming fast

Jun 1974 Time magazine joined the cooling trend

1975 Earth's climate seems to be cooling down

1976 Demise, global cooling

1978 Global cooling ‘No End’ fact

1979 North pole might melt

Baking and Burning

1982 Environmental catastrophe ...irreversible

1989 Rising seas could obliterate nations

1990 Climate struggle in the first years of the 1990s

1993 By the next century it will be too late

Modern Failed Predictions

2006 Al Gore projected the planet would hit ‘point of no return’ by 2016

Apr 2008 Consequences of climate inaction: “Not doing it will be catastrophic”

Jun 2008 We’re toast if we don’t get on a very different path. This is the last chance

Jul 2009 Irretrievable climate and ecosystem collapse, and all that goes with it

Oct 2009 Once the damage from unchecked emissions growth is done... it will be irretrievably too late

2014 We have 500 days to avoid climate chaos

Jan 2019 The world is going to end in 12 years if we don’t address climate

Mar 2019 Declared an 11-year window to escape catastrophe

Jun 2019 The next 12 years will determine the very liveability of our planet

Mar 2023 Humanity still has a chance to prevent the worst of climate change's future harms... the climate time-bomb is ticking

What's Next?!

from the unexpected persistence and thickness of pack ice in the waters around Iceland to the southward migration of a warmth-loving creature like the armadillo from the Midwest. Since the 1940s the mean global temperature has dropped about 2.7 F.’

April 1975

Newsweek weighed in on warning that global cooling would significantly impact agriculture: ‘There are ominous signs that the Earth’s weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production.’

‘The central fact is that after three quarters of a century of extraordinarily mild conditions, the Earth’s climate seems to be cooling down,’ the *Newsweek* article continued. ‘Meteorologists disagree about the cause and extent of the cooling trend, as well as over its specific impact on local weather conditions. But they are almost unanimous in the view that the trend will reduce agricultural productivity for the rest of the century. If the climatic change is as profound as some of the pessimists fear, the resulting famines could be catastrophic.’

January 1974 *The Guardian* echoed the *Globe*: ‘Spy satellites show new ice age is coming fast.’

June 1974 *Time* magazine joined the cooling trend: ‘Telltale signs are everywhere,

Following *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* piped in, with additional gloom on agriculture’s demise attributed to global cooling. ‘... the news for the future is not all good. The climate is going to get unreliable. It is going to get cold. Harvest failures and

regional famines will be more frequent. Weather will probably make history— again.’

‘The relationship of global climate to food supplies is a case in point: climatic researchers are becoming alarmed that in the next 10 to 100 years humanity will be unable to feed itself—not through technological insufficiency or political mischief— but because of climatic changes that it can barely understand or control.’

1978

Global cooling was a ‘No End’ fact, according to another *New York Times* article: ‘An international team of specialists has concluded from eight indexes of climate that there is no end in sight to the cooling trend of the last 30 years, at least in the Northern Hemisphere.’

February 1979

Just a year after the global cooling article, the *New York Times* predicted catastrophe via global warming in a story: ‘Climatologists are warned north pole might melt,’ featuring a jarring opening paragraph: ‘There is a real possibility that some people now in their infancy will live to a time when the ice at the North Pole will have melted, a change that would cause swift and perhaps catastrophic changes in climate.’

1982

Mostafa Tolba, executive director of the UN’s Environment Program, pointed to the possibility of widespread devastation in less than 20 years. He cited ‘an environmental catastrophe which will witness devastation as complete, as irreversible as any nuclear holocaust.’

June 1989

The Associated Press squeezed decimation into a tight, 11-year window, with an ominous article, ‘Rising seas could obliterate nations,’ containing a jaw-dropping opener: ‘A senior UN environmental official (Noel Brown) says entire nations could be wiped off the face of the Earth by rising sea levels if the global warming trend is not reversed by the year 2000.’

1990

Aware that the apocalypse was stalled, Mostafa Tolba doubled down: “We shall win or lose the climate struggle in the first years of the 1990s. The issue is as urgent as that.”

February 1993 Thomas Lovejoy, assistant secretary for Environmental and External Affairs at the Smithsonian Institution, stressed the world had one remaining decade of opportunity to avoid calamity. “I am utterly convinced that most of the great environmental struggles will be either won or lost in the 1990s and by the next century it will be too late.”

2006

Former vice-president Al Gore projected that unless drastic measures were implemented, the planet would hit an irreversible ‘point of no return’ by 2016. Game over.

April 2008

Media mogul Ted Turner provided far more detail than Gore, emphasising the consequences of climate inaction: “Not doing it will be catastrophic. We’ll be eight degrees hotter in not 10, but 30 or 40 years, and basically none of the crops will grow. Most of the people will have died and the rest of us will be cannibals. Civilisation will have broken down. The few people left will be living in a failed state like Somalia or Sudan, and living conditions will be intolerable. The droughts will be so bad there’ll be no more corn growing.”

June 2008

The acclaimed godfather of global warming, James Hansen, drew a line in the sand testifying before Congress on the dangers of greenhouse gases: “We’re toast if we don’t get on a very different path. This is the last chance.”

July 2009

Then-Prince Charles chimed in, asserting the Earth had 96 months to avoid decimation: “... irretrievable climate and ecosystem collapse, and all that goes with it.”

October 2009

UK prime minister Gordon Brown urged nations to pull a historical handbrake ahead of a climate conference: “There are now fewer than 50 days to set the course of the next 50 years and more. If we do not reach a deal at this time, let us be in no doubt: once the damage from unchecked emissions growth is done, no retrospective global agreement, in some future period, can undo that choice. By then, it will be irretrievably too late.”

2014

French foreign minister Laurent Fabius upped Brown’s 50 days to 500. “We have 500 days to avoid climate chaos.”

January 2019

Twelve years to 2031: U.S. politician Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez put her chips on 2031 as the potential end of days: “Millennials and people, you know, Gen Z and all these folks that will come after us are looking up and we’re like: ‘The world is going to end in 12 years if we don’t address climate change and your biggest issue is how are we gonna pay for it?’ And, like, this is the war—this is our World War II.”

March 2019

Eleven years to 2030. Echoing Ocasio-Cortez, but shaving off a year, UN General Assembly, President Maria Garcés, declared an 11-year window to escape catastrophe: “We are the last generation that can prevent irreparable damage to our planet.”

June 2019

Then-presidential candidate Joe Biden threw his support behind Ocasio-Cortez’s dozen-year projection: “Science tells us that how we act or fail to act in the next 12 years will determine the very liveability of our planet.”

March 2023

The UN’s latest ‘time-bomb’, as described by *The Associated Press*: ‘Humanity still has a chance close to the last to prevent the worst of climate change’s future harms...’ In step with near annual UN declarations from the past 50 years, Secretary-General Guterres once again sounded the alarm: ‘The climate time-bomb is ticking.

In The Year 2525

Zager And Evans' pop song:

In the year 2525
If man is still alive
If woman can survive

But therein lies the beauty of doomsday predictions: When one fails, make another.