

Things are ‘hotting’ up ...

Editorial

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This year now has a rising 35% chance of exceeding the previous record of 2024 and becoming the hottest year ever recorded.ⁱ The prospect of a ‘Super El Niño’ exacerbates this and increases the likelihood of an even hotter 2027 that will exceed the 1.5 degree ‘safe’ rise in temperature of the 2015 ‘Paris Agreement’.

Pretty well everything that has been predicted by climate scientists from forest fires to extreme droughts and exceptional flooding is unfolding before our eyes. Europe, apparently heating at twice the rate of other areas, is at the time of writing particularly affected with unprecedented heat and drought.

The political response has been, to coin a phrase, tepid at best and hostile at worst. Procrastination in terms of resisting practical action on cost grounds and strident calls to increase drilling for oil and gas, ostensibly to remedy failing economies are in the ascendent. Leadership from the White House in America is, as ever, in the van of dismissing global warming as a hoax and ridiculing renewable energy.

Over the other side of the world in the East something surprising is happening. China, once and still to a degree, one of the world’s biggest contributors by way of carbon emissions, has been relentlessly developing renewable energy at a prodigious rate. This in terms of its own energy security and by way of becoming the largest exporter in the world of solar panels. China, the supposed pariah of industrial world emissions is well on its way to reducing its fossil fuel dependency.ⁱⁱ

With this 'good' news comes an apparent shift in the world order? Notwithstanding, the traditional (since the end of the Second World War) hegemony of the United States as the major power – often for the good and the defence of so-called Western democracy, new power blocks and alliances are in the ascendent.

It is now possible to argue that under the current regime, the United States is in a process of slow decline. Preoccupied with seemingly intractable conflicts in the Middle East and with what feels like an isolationist policy manifested in tariffs and retributive politics, opportunity has not been lost amongst other nations.

The China-centred loose alliance with India and Russia not far behind makes for a formidable nuclear armed group. In turn the, now in its fifth year Ukraine war has jolted a torpid Europe into what is increasingly a maturing political alliance to be reckoned with, including military overtones beyond its original foundational *raison d'être*. The United Kingdom is now, post Brexit, an outlier and a supplicant caught drifting aimlessly mid Atlantic.

At the same time, the old orders underpinning international order, such as NATO, a benign United States and Western democratic influence are vanishing.

Just when stability is most needed ... the planet heats up. Whether the 'new' order, whatever it is, will be capable of addressing the coming upheaval is unclear? How will unsustainable environmental changes with the inevitable, wars, struggles for finite resources such as water and food, with concomitant mass migrations of peoples, be handled?

Frankly, the situation looks biblical in an Old Testament way. No wonder across the Abrahamic Faiths types of fundamentalism are on the rise. After all clear, absolute answers to seemingly insoluble problems are seductive.ⁱⁱⁱ At this point politics and religion mingle dangerously and sometime violently.

Of course, there is nothing new as these two philosophical and practical positions have always danced to together, variously the one leading the other. The only difference today is that potentially out of control 'natural' events are increasingly driving an erratic and frightened society with weak or strong but unreliable leadership.

Democracy seems like a fragile flower nurtured in a bygone golden age but now wilting as the temperature rises inexorably.

In the meantime and greatly to her credit the titular leader of the Anglican Communion, in addition to her regular duties, has quietly been planning manoeuvres – probably exercising what is nowadays described as ‘soft power’. Starting with a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in June, Sarah Mullally included a visit to a Palestinian Christian farm and a joint letter published with Anglican Archbishop Hosam Naoum of Jerusalem.^{iv} She is moving on in late July to a ten-day visit to Ghana and Cameroon and thence in late September a planned visit to the United Nations headquarters in New York, where her interest will be health and peace. This will also include visits to the Episcopal Church jointly with the Presiding Bishop in the diocese of Texas, then later those of New York and Connecticut.

Anyone who has travelled will appreciate the toll this takes, not least in the summer heat. Still travelling or not we will all have to get used to ever rising temperatures.

Nicholas Henderson
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ⁱ **Carbon Brief** State of the climate: Rapidly developing El Niño raises chance of record-warm 2026 – See: <https://www.carbonbrief.org/state-of-the-climate-rapidly-developing-el-nino-raises-chance-of-record-warm-2026#:~:text=The%20chance%20that%202026%20beats,C%20above%20pre%2Dindustrial%20levels>.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-chinas-co2-emissions-have-now-been-flat-or-falling-for-21-months>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-03/how-fundamentalists-learned-thrive>

^{iv} <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/node/32/pastoral-letter-archbishop-sarah-mullally-and-archbishop-hosam-naoum>