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Doomsday, Friday November 13, 2026; Is it Really Coming?

In 1960, Dr. Heinz von Foerster et al. published a surprisingly accurate model for human population history. Using twenty-four estimates of world population gathered from the literature, and ranging temporally from 0 to 1958 A.D., von Forester best-fit them to a simple, two-parameter model of depensatory growth, $\frac{dN}{dt} = a_o N^{1+k}$. The best-fit value for k is approximately 1, and so the model predicts blow-up in finite time, resulting in what is now known as von Foerster's "doomsday equation", complete with a predicted doomsday: Friday, November 13, 2026 (*Science* **132**, Nov. 4, 1960). At half-way to "doomsday" (1994), human population was actually ahead of schedule. In 2010, as humanity enters the final quartile until "doomsday", it is fitting to revisit von Foerster's celebrated equation and the premise on which it is posited. Appending data from 1960 to the present, we first update the prediction, demonstrating (thankfully) that the data no longer supports the model. We then propose alternatives: the power law logistic and (a special case of) the hyperlogistic equation, whose solutions possess five free parameters. While no general closed form solution of the power law logistic is available, restriction of the free powers to the rationals allows a closed form solution suitable for curve-fitting. Adding a little help from Maple we are thus able to predict a carrying-capacity for the planet, thereby canceling our date with von Foerster's doomsday.