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# Tomorrow's World War — Niall Ferguson's Warning

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Historian [Niall Ferguson](#) warns that the situation in the Middle East is growing more and more dangerous — especially with the development of nuclear weapons in Iran. Indeed, he sees the real possibility of nuclear catastrophe and a possible world war within the next ten years.

In "[Tomorrow's World War Today](#)," published in today's edition of *The Los Angeles Times*, Ferguson sets out his case, writing as a future historian might look back at the crisis:

*"Prior to 2007 the Islamists had seen no alternative but to wage war against their enemies by means of terrorism. From the Gaza to Manhattan, the hero of 2001 was the suicide bomber. Yet Ahmadinejad, a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war, craved a more potent weapon than strapped-on explosives. He aimed to give Iran the kind of power North Korea already wielded in East Asia. The power to defy the United States. The power to obliterate America's closest regional ally." Under different circumstances, it would not have been difficult to thwart Ahmadinejad's nuclear weapons program. The Israelis had shown themselves capable of preemptive air strikes against Iraq's nuclear facilities in 1981. Similar strikes against Iran's were urged on President Bush by neoconservative commentators throughout 2006. "But the president was advised by his secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to opt instead for diplomacy. Americans did not want to increase their military commitments overseas; they wanted to reduce them. Europeans did not want to hear that Iran was about to build its own WMD. Even if Ahmadinejad had broadcast a nuclear test live on CNN, they would have said it was a CIA trick. "So history repeated itself. As in the 1930s, an anti-Semitic demagogue broke his country's treaty obligations and armed for war. Having first tried appeasement, offering the Iranians economic incentives to desist, the West appealed to international agencies — the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Security Council. Thanks to China's veto, however, the U.N. produced nothing but empty resolutions and ineffectual sanctions."*

Ferguson's dark vision ends with a devastating nuclear exchange between Iran and Israel. The seriousness and plausibility of his scenario speak for themselves.

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