



# The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West

*Niall Ferguson*

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**The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West** Niall Ferguson  
Niall Ferguson's most important book to date—a revolutionary reinterpretation of the modern era that resolves its central paradox: why unprecedented progress coincided with unprecedented violence and why the seeming triumph of the West bore the seeds of its undoing.

From the conflicts that presaged the First World War to the aftershocks of the cold war, the twentieth century was by far the bloodiest in all of human history. How can we explain the astonishing scale and intensity of its violence when, thanks to the advances of science and economics, most people were better off than ever before—eating better, growing taller, and living longer? Wherever one looked, the world in 1900 offered the happy prospect of ever-greater interconnection. Why, then, did global progress descend into internecine war and genocide? Drawing on a pioneering combination of history, economics, and evolutionary theory, Niall Ferguson—one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People"—masterfully examines what he calls the age of hatred and sets out to explain what went wrong with modernity.

On a quest that takes him from the Siberian steppe to the plains of Poland, from the streets of Sarajevo to the beaches of Okinawa, Ferguson reveals an age turned upside down by economic volatility, multicultural communities torn apart by the irregularities of boom and bust, an era poisoned by the idea of irreconcilable racial differences, and a struggle between decaying old empires and predatory new states. Who won the war of the world? We tend to assume it was the West. Some even talk of the American century. But for Ferguson, the biggest upshot of twentieth-century upheaval was the decline of Western dominance over Asia.

A work of revelatory interpretive power, *The War of the World* is Niall Ferguson's masterwork.

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