The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931

Adam Tooze
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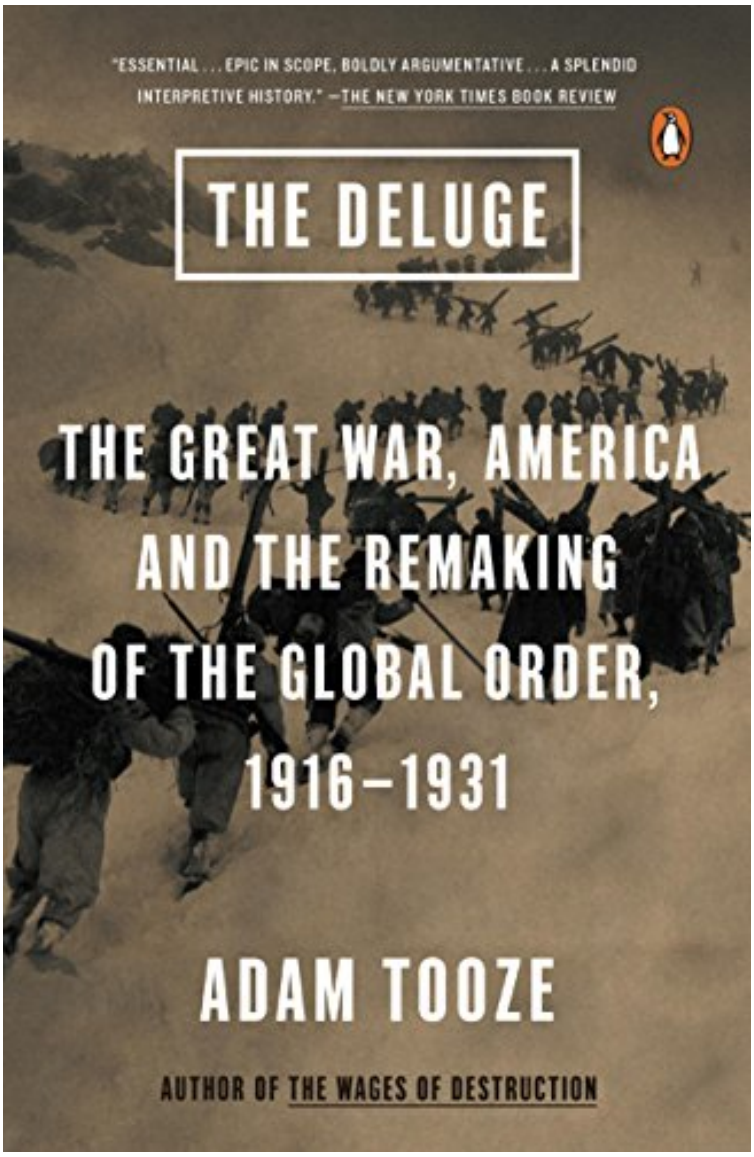

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Adam Tooze : The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931:

97 of 98 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant reframing of the early 20th centuryBy greg taylorFirst, a comment or two on the negative reviews. The negative comments have two point- first, that the book is poorly

written and edited and 2. that it is unoriginal in content.As to the first, I can only disagree. I read nothing but scholarly nonfiction and, while Tooze is not a great writer, he is a fine writer of history.I did not find that it could have been a much shorter book either. He is covering a lot of territory and he tries to do it justice. The only real problem I had with the editing occurs with Figure 3 on page 357. I have no idea what the Y axis represents. If anyone knows, please leave an explanation in the comments.As for the content, while I am no expert in this period of history, I found the content to be original and fascinating. Americans of a certain age were told that Wilson tried to change what wars were fought for and how the international community would handle conflict in the aftermath of WW1. Tooze's story is more complicated, nuanced and believable.Tooze's basic theme is the recasting of American power in the aftermath of WW1. America through its military, economic and cultural strength(by which I mean the appeal of Wilsonianism) was able to provincialize (Tooze's ugly word) Europe. America was economically able to veto or render impotent many of the governmental policies of Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, China and Russia. The fact that there was real differences of opinion between the Congress and the Presidents (Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover) which made it difficult for the other powers to know what to expect from the U.S. in terms of consistent policy made it that much harder for any of them to know what to do.I feel that Tooze tells his story with great understanding of the individual politics of each of the above countries. We read how the Irish conflict and the struggle of Indian independence limited Britain's options, of the different parties contending for power in Japan and of the struggles for control by different factions of Chinese warlords and parties. We also get a good sense on how the business and political communities in each country clashed over policy.As stated above, I am no expert. If there is a book that tells this story better and more comprehensively, I wish the critics would name it so I can read it. What I can tell you is that this book has driven me to read some of his sources. Tooze has awakened my interest in this period of history by exposing my ignorance. For that, I bow in his direction.20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. An important bookBy John KIt seems the central themes are 1) economic power and public policy shaped the course of The Great War far more than is the conventional wisdom and 2) far from being an isolationist Wilson and successors aggressively sought to achieve hegemony, particularly at the expense of Britain, by ending Imperialism and employing early twentieth century American capitalism to create the great American empire. Much of the book I found compelling, however I felt at times the author made important assertions supporting his themes that did not necessarily follow from the facts as presented. My reading of this period suggests the incredibly complex dynamics preclude attribution to the flow of this history to just these factors. Still, for me a terrific read.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. America Starts To Dominate the WorldBy David LindsayAdam Tooze is a British historian, and a professor at Columbia University. He writes a largely economic history of the 1916-1931 period. His book is not an easy read. The prose is dense and his narrative can be confusing, but there is a lot of fascinating information. By the end, Tooze leads you to conclude that Americarsquo;s disengagement from global affairs after WW1 resulted in the world becoming a more dangerous place. However, Europe went a little mad between 1918 and 1945. The U.S. probably could not have prevented the rise of fascism and communism, and it did not really want to try.In 1916 America had become the world's largest economy and it was the banker to France and Britain. Tooze starts the book in 1916 because that was the year when the GDP of the U.S. exceeded that of the British Empire for the first time. In 1914 the U.S. was not yet part of the European diplomatic conversation, but after 1916 Tooze claims that ldquo;American economic might would be the decisive factor in the shaping of the world order.rdquo;Before 1914 the European empires had usually kept the peace around the world. That world order was irrevocably shattered, firstly by the war, and secondly by the economic weakness and political instability of Europe in the 1920s. Germany was a mess. The Austrian and Ottoman Empires had been dismantled by the Allies. France ceased to be a major power, although it still had an empire. Russia succumbed to a revolution in 1917 and then fought a civil war. It became inward-looking during the 1916-1931 period as it implemented communism. Britain was the last European power standing, but it was also broke. Under the 1923 settlement of British war debt, London had to pay $4.6bn to the US at an interest rate of 3.3%. The annual payment of pound;162m was equivalent to the British national education budget. Tooze also blames Britain and France for living in the past and not realizing the days of the empire would soon be over. Britain and France took on responsibilities in the Middle East that they could no longer afford.President Wilson wanted to end imperialism and saw the Europeans as a problem. Tooze states that "the world he wanted to create was one in which the exceptional position of America at the head of world civilization would be inscribed on the gravestone of European power.rdquo; At the 1919 peace conference, he pushed for American hegemony and dominance. He also wanted ldquo;the collective humbling of all the European powers.rdquo; The departure of the Europeans from the world stage would create a power vacuum, which the U.S. was unwilling to fill. Wilson had encouraged nationalism and self-determination throughout the world and this created tensions. The IRA and Gandhi were fans of Wilson. Wilson lacked support at home and Congress was reluctant for the U.S. to assume a leadership role. It preferred isolationism. Congress did not ratify the Versailles peace treaty and refused to join the League of Nations. The U.S. also declined to underwrite collective security arrangements in Europe and contributed to its economic problems via its treatment of war debt and the Wall Street Crash.A popular assumption is that the Treaty of Versailles inflicted such cruel reparation terms on the Germans that WW2 was inevitable. Tooze does not believe that the payment of reparations necessarily turned Germany into a failed state. It did

not have much external debt. He believes what crushed Germany was the Wall Street Crash in 1929. The collapse of the world economy plunged Germany into economic and political chaos. In 1932, the unemployment rate in Germany was worse than that in the U.S. Tooze believes that the Great Depression led to Hitlerrsquo;s electoral victory in 1933.Authoritarianism began eclipsing liberal democracy across Europe in the 1920s, and by 1939 many countries were run by dictators or strongmen. For example, Poland's new democracy, created in 1921, was ended by an army coup in 1926. During the 1920s and 1930s Japan, Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, expanded their political and economic influence by force and threat. Many Europeans seemed to find fascism and communism attractive options. By the 1930s France and Britain could only deter any new German aggression with American support, and that was not forthcoming.Tooze leaves you with the nagging suspicion that had America assumed a more active role in global affairs after WW1 things might have turned have out differently. Tooze gives us the American perspective and explains the pressures and motivations behind U.S. behavior. Tooze is critical of Wilson but he also believes that pre-WW2 America was not ready to assume a leading global role. However, in 1945 the U.S. took an active role in the rebuilding of post-war Europe and we have had peace and prosperity.?

Winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize - HistoryFinalist for the Kirkus Prize - NonfictionA searing and highly original analysis of the First World War and its anguished aftermath In the depths of the Great War, with millions dead and no imaginable end to the conflict, societies around the world began to buckle. The heart of the financial systemnbsp;shifted from London to New York. The infinite demands for men and mateacute;riel reached into countries far from the front. The strain of the war ravaged all economicnbsp;and political assumptions, bringing unheard-of changes in the social and industrialorder. A century after the outbreak of fighting, Adam Tooze revisits this seismic moment in history, challenging the existing narrative of the war, its peace, and its aftereffects. From the day the United States enters the war in 1917 to the precipice of global financial ruin, Tooze delineates the world remade by American economic and military power.nbsp;Tracing the ways in which countries came to terms with Americarsquo;s centralitymdash;including the slide into fascismmdash;The Deluge is a chilling work of great originalitynbsp;that will fundamentally change how we view the legacy of World War I.From the Hardcover edition.

"Tooze's grand economic history is stimulating, persuasive, and surprisingly accessible." ---Publishers Weekly Starred About the AuthorAdam Tooze is the Barton M. Biggs Professor of History and codirector of International Security Studies at Yale University. He is the author of Statistics and the German State, 1900-1945 and The Wages of Destruction, which won the Wolfson Prize and the Longman Prize, and was an Economist book of the year.Ralph Lister is an award-winning stage and film actor whose credits include roles in Oz: The Great and Powerful, Setup, and Alleged. An Audie Award-nominated narrator, Ralph has recorded more than one hundred audiobooks and directed over a dozen others, across all genres, both fiction and nonfiction.Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Introduction On Christmas Morning 1915, David Lloyd George, the erstwhile radical liberal, now Minister of Munitions, rose to face a restless crowd of Glaswegian trade unionists. He had come to demand a further round of recruits for the war effort and his message was suitably apocalyptic. The war, he warned them, was remaking the world. lsquo;It is the deluge, it is a convulsion of Nature . . . bringing unheard-of changes in the social and industrial fabric. It is a cyclone which is tearing up by the roots the ornamental plants of modern society . . . It is an earthquake which is upheaving the very rocks of European life. It is one of those seismic disturbances in which nations leap forward or fall backward generations in a single bound.rsquo; Within four months his words were echoed from the other side of the battle-lines by the German Chancellor Theodore von Bethmann Hollweg. On 5 April 1916, six weeks into the terrible battle of Verdun, he confronted the Reichstag with the stark truth. There was no way back. lsquo;After such dramatic events history knows no status quo.rsquo; The violence of the Great War had become transformative. By 1918, World War I had shattered the old empires of Eurasia ndash; Tsarist, Habsburg and Ottoman. China was convulsed by civil war. By the early 1920s the maps of eastern Europe and the Middle East had been redrawn. But dramatic and contentious as they were, these visible changes acquired their full significance from the fact that they were coupled to another deeper, but less conspicuous shift. A new order emerged from the Great War that promised, above the bickering and nationalist grandstanding of the new states, fundamentally to restructure relations between the great powers ndash; Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Germany, Russia and the United States. It took geostrategic and historical imagination to comprehend the scale and significance of this power transition. The new order that was in the making was defined in large part by the absent presence of its most defining element ndash; the new power of the United States. But on those endowed with such vision, the prospect of this tectonic shift exerted an almost obsessive fascination. Over the winter of 1928ndash;9, ten years after the Great War had ended, three such contemporaries ndash; Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler and Leon Trotsky ndash; all had occasion to look back on what had happened. On New Yearrsquo;s Day 1929 Churchill, then serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin, found time to finish The Aftermath, the concluding volume of his epic history of World War I, The World Crisis. For those familiar with Churchillrsquo;s later histories of World War II, this last volume comes as a surprise. Whereas after 1945 Churchill would coin the phrase lsquo;a second Thirty Years

Warrsquo; to describe the long-running battle with Germany as a single historical unit, in 1929 he struck a very different note. Churchill looked forward to the future, not in a spirit of grim resignation, but with considerable optimism. Out of the violence of the Great War it seemed that a new international order had emerged. A global peace had been built on two great regional treaties: the European Peace Pact initialed at Locarno in October 1925 (signed in London in December) and the Pacific Treaties signed at the Washington Naval Conference over the winter of 1921ndash;2. These were, Churchill, wrote, lsquo;twin pyramids of peace rising solid and unshakable . . . commanding the allegiance of the leading nations of the world and of all their fleets and armiesrsquo;. These agreements gave substance to the peace that had been left unfinished at Versailles in 1919. They filled out the blank check that was the League of Nations. lsquo;The histories may be searched,rsquo; Churchill remarked, lsquo;for a parallel for such an undertaking.rsquo; lsquo;Hope,rsquo; he wrote, lsquo;now rested on a surer foundation . . . The period of repulsion from the horrors of war will be long-lasting; and in this blessed interval the great nations may take their forward steps to world organization with the conviction that the difficulties they have yet to master will not be greater than those they have already overcome.rsquo; These, unsurprisingly, were not the terms in which either Hitler or Trotsky would capture their vision of history ten years after the war. In 1928 the war veteran and failed-putschist-turned-politician, Adolf Hitler, as well as contesting and losing a general election, was negotiating with his publishers over a follow-up to his first book, Mein Kampf. The second was intended to collect his speeches and writings since 1924. But since his book sales in 1928 were as disappointing as his electoral performance, Hitlerrsquo;s manuscript never went to press. It has come down to us as his lsquo;Second Bookrsquo; (lsquo;Zweites Buchrsquo;). Leon Trotsky for his part had time to write and reflect, because after losing his struggle with Stalin, he had been deported first to Kazakhstan and then in February 1929 to Turkey, from where he continued his running commentary on the revolution that had taken such a disastrous turn since the death of Lenin in 1924. Churchill, Trotsky and Hitler make for an incongruous, not to say antipathetic, grouping. To some it will seem provocative even to place them in the same conversation. Certainly they were not each otherrsquo;s equal as writers, politicians, intellectuals or moral personalities. All the more striking is the way in which at the end of the 1920s their interpretations of world politics complemented each other.Hitler and Trotsky recognized the same reality that Churchill did. They too believed that World War I had opened a new phase of lsquo;world organizationrsquo;. But whereas Churchill took this new reality as cause for celebration, for a communist revolutionary like Trotsky or a national socialist such as Hitler it threatened nothing less than historical oblivion. Superficially, the peace settlements of 1919 might seem to advance the logic of sovereign self-determination that originated in European history in the late Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century this had inspired the formation of new nation states in the Balkans and the unification of Italy and Germany. It had now climaxed in the break-up of the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg empires. But although sovereignty was multiplied, its content was hollowed out. The Great War weakened all the European combatants irreversibly, even the strongest amongst them and even the victors. In 1919 the French Republic may have celebrated its triumph over Germany at Versailles, in the palace of the Sun King, but this could not disguise the fact that World War I confirmed the end of Francersquo;s claim to be a power of global rank. For the smaller nation states created over the previous century, the experience of the war was even more traumatic. Between 1914 and 1919, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Serbia had all faced national extinction as the fortunes of war swung back and forth. In 1900 the Kaiser had brashly claimed a place on the world stage. Twenty years later Germany was reduced to squabbling with Poland over the boundaries of Silesia, a dispute overseen by a Japanese viscount. Rather than the subject, Germany had become the object ofWeltpolitik. Italy had joined the war on the winning side, but despite solemn promises by its allies, the peace reinforced its sense of second-class status. If there was a European victor it was Britain, hence Churchillrsquo;s rather sunny assessment. However, Britain had prevailed not as a European power but as the head of a global empire. To contemporaries the sense that the British Empire had done relatively less badly out of the war only confirmed the conclusion that the age of European power had come to an end. In an age of world power, Europersquo;s position in political, military and economic terms was irreversibly provincialized.The one nation that emerged apparently unscathed and vastly more powerful from the war was the United States. Indeed, so overwhelming was its pre-eminence that it seemed to raise once more the question that had been expelled from the history of Europe in the seventeenth century. Was the United States the universal, world-encompassing empire similar to that which the Catholic Habsburgs had once threatened to establish? The question would haunt the century that followed. By the mid-1920s it seemed to Trotsky that lsquo;Balkanized Europersquo; found lsquo;herself in the same position with respect to the USrsquo; that the countries of south-eastern Europe had once occupied in relation to Paris and London in the pre-war period. They had the trappings of sovereignty but not its substance. Unless the political leaders of Europe could shake their populations out of their usual lsquo;political thoughtlessnessrsquo;, Hitler warned in 1928, the lsquo;threatened global hegemony of the North American continentrsquo; would reduce them all to the status of Switzerland or Holland. From the vantage point of Whitehall, Churchill had felt the force of this point not as a speculative historical vision, but as a practical reality of power. As we shall see, Britainrsquo;s governments in the 1920s again and again found themselves confronting the painful fact that the United States was a power unlike any other. It had emerged, quite suddenly, as a novel kind of lsquo;super-statersquo;, exercising a veto over the financial

and security concerns of the other major states of the world.Mapping the emergence of this new order of power is the central aim of this book. It requires a particular effort because of the peculiar way in which Americarsquo;s power manifested itself. In the early twentieth century, Americarsquo;s leaders were not committed to asserting themselves as a military power, beyond the ocean highways. Their sway was often exercised indirectly and in the form of a latent, potential force rather than an immediate, evident presence. But it was nonetheless real. Tracing the ways in which the world came to terms with Americarsquo;s new centrality, through the struggle to shape a new order, will be the central preoccupation of this book. It was a struggle that was always multidimensional ndash; economic, military and political. It was one that began during the war itself and stretched beyond it into the 1920s. Getting this history right matters because we need to understand the origins of the Pax Americana that still defines our world today. It is crucial too, however, to understanding the huge second spasm of the lsquo;second Thirty Years Warrsquo; that Churchill would look back upon from 1945. The spectacular escalation of violence unleashed in the 1930s and the 1940s was a testament to the kind of force that the insurgents believed themselves to be up against. It was precisely the looming potential, the future dominance of American capitalist democracy, that was the common factor impelling Hitler, Stalin, the Italian Fascists and their Japanese counterparts to such radical action. Their enemies were often invisible and intangible. They ascribed to them conspiratorial intentions that enveloped the world in a malign web of influence. Much of this was manifestly unhinged. But if we are to understand the way in which the ultra-violent politics of the interwar period was incubated in World War I and its aftermath, we need to take this dialectic of order and insurgency seriously. We grasp movements like fascism or Soviet communism only very partially if we normalize them as familiar expressions of the racist, imperialist mainstream of modern European history, or if we tell their story backwards from the dizzying moment in 1940ndash;42, when they rampaged victoriously through Europe and Asia and the future seemed to belong to them. Whatever comforting, domesticated fantasies their followers may have projected onto them, the leaders of Fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union all saw themselves as radical insurgents against an oppressive and powerful world order. For all the braggadocio of the 1930s their basic view of the Western Powers was not that they were weak, but that they were lazy and hypocritical. Behind a veneer of morality and panglossian optimism the Western Powers disguised the massive force that had crushed Imperial Germany and that threatened to enshrine a permanent status quo. To forestall that oppressive vision of an end of history would require an unprecedented effort. It would be accompanied by terrible risks. This was the terrifying lesson that the insurgents derived from the story of world politics between 1916 and 1931, the story recounted in this book.