The origins of the conflict seemed obvious: the dark ambitions of one man, Adolf Hitler, and the failure to thwart his aim of overturning the Versailles Settlement. Taylor's famous coat-trailing comments, that Hitler was "just an ordinary German politician", and that Mein Kampf was just one of his "daydreams", gave his book an immediate notoriety, but encapsulated its main thesis - that Hitler's ambitions in the 1930s were essentially those of traditional German foreign policy. Few historians swallowed the whole Taylor thesis but the book had a tremendous impact. It reconnected the First and Second World Wars and drew attention back to Versailles. They were the victors of the first World war. They had the decision in their hands. It was perfectly obvious that Germany would seek to become a Great Power again; obvious after 1938 that her domination would be of a peculiarly barbaric sort. According to the only book which has looked at what happened instead of repeating what Hitler and others said was happening, German recovery was caused by the return of private consumption and nonwar types of investment to the prosperity levels of 1928 and 1929. Rearmament had little to do with it. Until the spring of 1936, rearmament was largely a myth. Hitler in fact did not apply any prepared economic plans. He did the nearest thing that came to hand. The same point is illustrated in the story of the Reichstag fire. A Pity of Peace: The Origins of the Second World War Revisited — Niall Ferguson. THE GERMAN THREAT Not all of the judgements in A. J. P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War, published forty-five years ago, have stood the test of time. Where Taylor erred profoundly was when he sought to liken Hitler's foreign policy to that of his predecessors, of the professional diplomats at the foreign ministry, and indeed of virtually all Germans, and when he argued that the Second World War was a repeat performance of the First. Nothing could be more remote from the truth. Exploring the reasons why the Second World War broke out in September 1939 and why a European conflict developed into a war that spanned the globe, The Origins of the Second World War argues that this was not just Hitler's War but one that had its roots and origins in the decline of the old empires of Britain and France and the rise of ambitious new powers in Germany, Italy and Japan who wanted large empires of their own. This fourth edition has been revised throughout, covering the origins of the war from its background in the First World War to its expansion to embrace the Soviet Union. Ja... Â Richard Overy is Professor of History at the University of Exeter. He has authored and edited more than 30 books on the European