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THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST

SUCCEEDING JOHN BULL

America in Britain's Place
1900–1975

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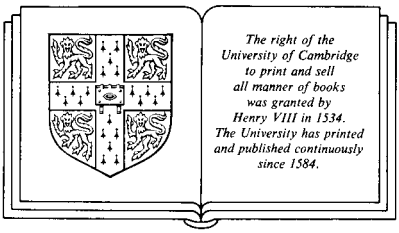
America in Britain's Place 1900–1975

A study of the Anglo-American relationship and world politics in the context of British and American foreign-policy-making in the twentieth century

D. CAMERON WATT

Stevenson Professor of International History in the University of London



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Preface

This book, it should be clear, is not a history of Anglo-American relations since 1900. It is not even a straightforward history of how the United States came to take the place Britain occupied for most of the nineteenth century, that of the primary world and oceanic power confronting a grouping of largely land-based continental powers. It is rather a study of how this process was perceived and understood (or misconceived and misunderstood) by those whose decisions and activities in the conduct of British or American relations with the external world comprise the historical reality of British or American 'foreign policy' in this century. It is a study of the rôle perceptions of Britain played in the decisions and actions of those who were responsible for formulating and executing American 'foreign policy' and of the rôle perceptions of America played in the parallel activities of the foreign-policy-makers in Britain. It is not a particularly happy story; indeed it has tragic elements in it – no doubt to balance the more hilariously absurd and ironic elements that equally tend to occur occasionally. It is a story of a relationship which from time to time went deeper than that of mere friends or allies even though its 'special' character usually disappointed those who tried to build on it. It is a relationship too that has changed with the new generations, the new entrants who, every decade or so, arrive at positions of responsibility and decision in sufficient numbers to alter the balance, the emphasis and the flavour of activity on each side of the Atlantic. This book propounds a hypothesis; to prove or disprove it will require a great deal more work than has been done so far.

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This book could not have been written without the stimulus comprised in the invitation to give the 1981 Wiles Lectures in History at Queen's University, Belfast: I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Lewis Warren for extending to me the invitation to give these lectures and to Mrs Janet Boyd without whose generosity in establishing the Wiles Trust the invitation would not have been possible. I should also like to express my thanks to Professor A. E. Campbell of Birmingham University, to Dr John Thompson of Cambridge, Dr Callum Macdonald of Warwick, and Dr Peter Blair of Queen's University, Belfast, who led the discussion on each of the four lectures on which this book is based and from whose comments I have greatly benefited. I am also very grateful to Dr Robert Boyce, Dr David Reynolds, Dr Brian McKercher, Dr Ritchie Ovendale, Professor Roger Louis, Dr Tony McCulloch and Dr Peter Boyle, all of whom helped me with material, and early sight of their own work in the field over the last two years. I have been greatly helped by the staff of the British Library of Politics and Economic Science, of the Senate House Library of the University of London, of the Institute of Historical Research of the University of London and of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. My own research in the State and Navy Department archives, and into numerous private papers in the United States and in the Canadian National Archives conducted in the years 1960–1, was made possible by a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. I learnt a great deal about American foreign policy under the Kennedy administration while attending the weekly 'round-table' sessions on current American foreign policy conducted

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by the late Professor Arnold Wolfers at the Washington Center for Foreign Policy Research in the months October 1960 to June 1961, when I was allowed to sit in on the deliberations of such eminent figures as Charles Burton Marshall, Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Tucker, Ernest Le Feber, Robert Good, the Hon. Christian Herter, Roger Hilsman, and many others. Finally I have benefited greatly from reading and reflecting on the work done by my own students, at both the M.A. and Ph.D. level in the Department of International History at the London School of Economics, especially Miss Caroline Anstey, Mr John Nelson, Dr James Compton and Mr Sean Greenwood.

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