Transition of Power

*Britain’s Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930–1945*

This book addresses one of the least understood issues in modern international history: how, between 1930 and 1945, Britain lost its global pre-eminence to the United States.

The crucial years are 1930 to 1940, for which until now no comprehensive examination of Anglo-American relations exists. *Transition of Power* analyses these relations in the pivotal decade, with an epilogue dealing with the Second World War after 1941. Britain and the United States, and their intertwined fates, were fundamental to the course of international history in these years. Professor McKercher’s book dissects the various strands of the two Powers’ relationship in the fifteen years after 1930 from a British perspective – economic, diplomatic, naval, and strategic: security and disarmament in Europe; economic diplomacy during the Great Depression, especially the introduction of the Ottawa system of tariffs and the Roosevelt Administration’s determination to get freer trade after 1933; threats to the Far Eastern balance of power between 1931 and 1941 and the British and American responses; growing American interests in the British Empire and their impact upon Imperial unity; and strategic thinking and planning at London and Washington revolving around naval power and armed strength in the wider world, from the London naval conference through such events as the 1935 Anglo-German naval agreement to the response to Axis and Japanese aggression after September 1939.

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B. J. C. McKercher
For my son, Asa
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Abbreviations

ADM  Admiralty
AHR  American Historical Review
AJPH  Australian Journal of Politics and History
B DFA  British Documents on Foreign Affairs
BIS  Bank for International Settlements
BJIS  British Journal of International Studies
C-in-C  Commander-in-Chief
CAB  Cabinet
CC  Cabinet Conclusion
CCS  Combined Chiefs of Staff
CEH  Central European History
CID  Committee of Imperial Defence
CJH  Canadian Journal of History
CNO  Chief of Naval Operations
COS  Chiefs of Staff Committee
CP  Cabinet Paper
CR  Contemporary Review
DBFP  Documents on British Foreign Policy
DBPO  Documents on British Policy Overseas
DCNS  Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
DH  Diplomatic History
DOT  Department of Overseas Trade
DPR  Defence Policy and Requirements Sub-Committee
DPR(DR)  Defence Policy and Requirements (Defence Requirements) Sub-Committee
DRC  Defence Requirements Sub-Committee
DS  Diplomacy and Statecraft
EcoHR  Economic History Review
EHR  English Historical Review
FA  Foreign Affairs
FDRFA  Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs
FO  Foreign Office
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FRUS  Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States
GB    Great Britain
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
HJ    Historical Journal
HZ    Historische Zeitschrift
LA    Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs
IHR   International History Review
IJ    International Journal
IJN   Imperial Japanese Navy
INS   Intelligence and National Security
JAH   Journal of American History
JBS   Journal of British Studies
JCH   Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History
JEEH  Journal of European Economic History
JEH   Journal of Economic History
JRUSI Journal of the Royal United Services Institution
JSS   Journal of Strategic Studies
LND   League of Nations Published Document
LNU   League of Nations Union
LNP   League of Nations Private Papers
LNR   League of Nations Registered Files
LNS   League of Nations Section Files
NCM   Naval Conference Ministerial Committee
PCIJ  Permanent Court of International Justice
PRO   Public Record Office
PSF   Private Secretaries File
RAF   Royal Air Force
Reparation Official Documents of the Allied Reparations Commission
RIIA  Royal Institute of International Affairs
RN    Royal Navy
RP    Review of Politics
SAQ   South Atlantic Quarterly
SSDF  State Department Decimal Files
SWC   Supreme War Council
T     Treasury
UCC   Union of Democratic Control
USN   United States Navy
USNGB United States Navy General Board
VJZ   Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte
WCP   War Cabinet Paper