



Britain, America, and the Vietnam War (International History)

Sylvia Ellis

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Isolated by much of the world for its conduct of the war in Vietnam, the United States saw British support as a key component of its efforts to sway public opinion. This is the first serious examination of the impact of the Vietnam War on the Anglo-American special relationship during the years of the Johnson presidency. Using recently released government papers, oral interviews, and transcripts of presidential phone conversations, Ellis discusses the discord between the United Kingdom and the United States over the war in Southeast Asia. She focuses on the pressures placed on Prime Minister Harold Wilson's Labor Government to provide material aid to the war and to remain squarely behind the U.S. war effort in public.

Britain's refusal to send troops to Vietnam and Wilson's insistence on trying to mediate the conflict were both sources of tension between the allies. This study explores the extent to which the United Kingdom was pressured to send troops to the combat zone, the part that the personal relationship between Wilson and Johnson played in the tensions, and the evidence that a deal was done to link the maintenance of British defenses East of Suez with U.S. support for the pound sterling. It concludes that Wilson managed to walk a political tightrope on Vietnam, providing just enough diplomatic support for the Americans to keep Washington satisfied and putting just enough limits on that support to keep an increasingly vociferous domestic anti-war movement at bay.

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