



Six Moments of Crisis: Inside British Foreign Policy

By Gill Bennett



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Former Whitehall insider Gill Bennett unravels the story of six crucial British foreign policy challenges since the Second World War, from the Korean War to the Falklands conflict, offering an inside account of episodes that shaped Britain's position in the world for decades to come - and in some cases still arouse controversy to this day.

Lifting the lid on the making of British foreign policy from Clement Attlee to Margaret Thatcher, Bennett reveals each decision in a way that has never been done before: telling the story from the inside out and without hindsight. The result is a book that explains not just why these controversial decisions were taken, but one that shows us how history is actually made - and also just how difficult these big decisions really were.

Gill Bennett considers exactly what ministers knew at the time; how personal experience, relationships, past events and prevailing circumstance influenced the decision-making process; and how the balance of history was tipped in each case: by argument, moral imperative, obligation - or even sheer force of personality.

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Editorial Review

Review

Gill Bennett possesses a very special gift. She can make old documents live and breathe. In this fine study she takes us into Number 10 and the Cabinet room and we are literally transported - we can see and hear the people, feel the tension, and hear the arguments. Peter Hennessy Well informed and deeply researched. International Affairs Concisely written, authoritative and gripping. The Tablet ...impressive. This is a portrait of a formerly great power wrestling with decline. Douglas Hurd, the New Statesman Bennett's book is a living example of the importance of history, not just in the context of how and why these decisions were made, but in providing a guide to the complex, and at times misleading phrase: 'lessons of history'. Keith Simpson, Total Politics Fascinating. Philip Stephens, the Financial Times [A] masterly study... Besides providing many insights into leading policy-makers, Gill Bennett covers six major 'moments of crisis' spread over a period of more than 30 years in only 175 pages of text without ever oversimplifying. Her book is both a very good read and admirably succinct. Christopher Andrew, Literary Review A wonderful text for the student of international relations, whom it will immunise against infection by arcane concepts and theories that bear little relation to the real world. It is, moreover, beautifully written and an object lesson for academics in history and the social sciences. Vernon Bogdanor, Times Higher Education Supplement Understanding, and learning from, history can sometimes mean the awareness of long-term trends and patterns. Yet there is also value in looking at the specific circumstances in which particular decisions were taken: the assumptions on which they were based, the arguments that were used, and the concerns of the individual people involved in taking them. For this, Gill Bennett's book is a unique and valuable tool. Sir Paul Lever, RUSI Journal [T]his book successfully plunges readers into the historical moment and reminds them that foreign policy is, as Attlee noted, about human beings making important decisions on imperfect knowledge in a limited time (p. 21). Jamie Gaskarth, University of Plymouth

About the Author

Gill Bennett, MA, OBE was Chief Historian of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office from 1995-2005, and Senior Editor of the UK's official history of British foreign policy, *Documents on British Policy Overseas*. As a historian working in government for over thirty years, she offered historical advice to twelve Foreign Secretaries under six Prime Ministers. A specialist in the history of secret intelligence, she was part of the research team working on the official history of the Secret Intelligence Service, written by Professor Keith Jeffery and published in 2010. She is now involved in a range of research, writing and training projects for various government departments.

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