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The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy **Decision Making**

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The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy **Decision Making**

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Central to Alex George's work was a concern with the psychology of presidential decision making. Our analysis focuses on George's work at the intersection of leadership psychology and the psychology of judgment in the making of consequential foreign policy decisions, specifically those dealing with issues of war and peace. We begin with a review of the fundamental dilemmas of political decision making, focusing on the various factors that present challenges to leaders seeking to make high-quality decisions. We then move to an analysis of the nature of judgment and the ways in which it both shapes and is shaped by cognitive dynamics and conclude by examining a number of steps designed to help leaders avoid the most damaging blind spots of their own psychologies and cognitive biases.

KEY WORDS: decision making, national security, Alexander George

How accurately do world leaders and their close advisors understand both the international system in which they operate and the strategic options that are available to them? The available evidence leads to a pessimistic outlook. That is because what leaders see is, to a substantial extent, filtered through the multiple, though inconsistent, lenses of their own psychologies and beliefs, subject as well

