

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics

Robert Jervis Perception and Misperception in International Politics:
Understanding the Complex Dynamics of State Behavior

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics is a cornerstone concept that reshaped how scholars and practitioners comprehend the behavior of states on the global stage. In an arena often marked by uncertainty, mistrust, and strategic maneuvering, Jervis's insights provide a crucial lens through which to analyze why nations sometimes act in seemingly irrational or counterproductive ways. His seminal work delves into the cognitive processes that influence decision-makers, highlighting how perceptions—accurate or flawed—can dramatically alter the course of international relations.

If you're intrigued by the subtle psychological underpinnings of diplomacy, conflict, and alliance formation, exploring Robert Jervis's ideas offers a richer understanding of the complexities behind global politics. This article unpacks the core themes of perception and misperception, explains their impact on international decision-making, and explores their relevance in today's geopolitical landscape.

The Foundations of Robert Jervis's Theory on Perception and Misperception

Robert Jervis's scholarship emerged during the Cold War, a period rife with suspicion and high-stakes brinkmanship. His book, **Perception and Misperception in International Politics** (1976), is widely regarded as a pioneering effort to apply insights from psychology to international relations theory. Jervis argued that the way leaders perceive their adversaries—and the misperceptions that often arise—can lead to strategic mistakes, unnecessary conflicts, or missed opportunities for cooperation.

At its core, Jervis's theory rests on the idea that states are not always rational actors with perfect information. Instead, decision-makers operate under cognitive biases, incomplete data, and emotional influences. These factors shape how they interpret signals, intentions, and threats from other states, often leading to miscalculations.

Key Concepts in Jervis's Framework

To appreciate the depths of Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics, it helps to understand several foundational concepts he introduced:

- **Offense-Defense Balance:** Jervis highlighted how the relative ease of offense or defense in military strategy influences state behavior. When defense has the advantage, states are less likely to initiate conflict, because attacking is costly and risky. Misperceiving this balance can lead to unnecessary arms races or wars.
- **Security Dilemma:** This concept explains how defensive measures by one state can be perceived as offensive threats by others, sparking cycles of mistrust and escalation. Jervis demonstrated that misperceptions intensify this dilemma, making peaceful intentions appear hostile.
- **Mirror Imaging:** Leaders tend to assume others will behave as they themselves would in similar situations. This cognitive bias can distort interpretations of rival states' motives and actions.
- **Attribution Errors:** Decision-makers often attribute hostile intent to ambiguous or even benign actions by others, exacerbating tensions.

Understanding these concepts is essential for grasping why states sometimes stumble into conflict despite shared interests in avoiding war.

The Role of Perception in International Decision-Making

Perception acts as a filter through which states interpret the international environment. Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics emphasize that what leaders *think* about their adversaries can be just as important as the adversaries' actual capabilities or intentions.

How Perception Shapes Foreign Policy

When leaders believe another country is threatening or aggressive, they may adopt defensive or preemptive strategies, even if the threat is exaggerated or misunderstood. Conversely, underestimating a competitor's resolve or misreading their intentions can result in complacency and strategic surprise.

For example, misperceptions about nuclear intentions during the Cold War nearly pushed the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of catastrophic conflict. Both sides' inability to fully trust the other's

signals and intentions heightened suspicion, prompting costly arms buildups and risky brinkmanship.

Psychological Biases and Cognitive Limitations

Jervis's insights also bring psychological realism into the analysis of international politics. Leaders are not dispassionate calculators; they are subject to:

- **Confirmation Bias:** Seeking information that supports pre-existing beliefs about rivals.
- **Selective Perception:** Noticing hostile actions while ignoring cooperative gestures.
- **Overconfidence:** Overestimating one's ability to control events or predict adversary behavior.

Recognizing these biases helps explain why even highly rational actors can fall prey to misperception, fueling conflicts that might have been avoided with clearer communication and better understanding.

Implications of Misperception for International Conflict and Cooperation

Misperception, as Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics elucidate, is often a root cause of conflict escalation. But it can also impede cooperation, even when it serves all parties' interests.

Misperception Leading to Conflict

When states misinterpret others' intentions or overestimate threats, they may engage in preemptive strikes, build up arms unnecessarily, or form antagonistic alliances. These actions can create self-fulfilling prophecies where fear and mistrust generate the very conflicts they seek to avoid.

A historical example is the outbreak of World War I, where a complex web of alliances and misperceptions about other countries' intentions contributed to a rapid escalation from a regional crisis to a global war.

Challenges to Building Trust and Cooperation

Even in peacetime, misperception can hinder diplomatic efforts. States may doubt the sincerity of peace offers or economic agreements, suspecting hidden motives. This distrust can stall negotiations or cause deals to unravel, perpetuating cycles of rivalry.

Jervis's work encourages policymakers to invest in better communication channels, transparency measures, and confidence-building initiatives to reduce misunderstandings. These tools can help break down barriers created by misperceptions and foster more stable international relations.

Applying Jervis's Insights in Contemporary Geopolitics

In today's multipolar world, Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics remain profoundly relevant. From U.S.-China rivalry to tensions in the Middle East and beyond, leaders must navigate an environment where misjudgments can have serious consequences.

The U.S.-China Relationship

One of the most dynamic and complex relationships of the 21st century involves managing perceptions of strategic intent between Washington and Beijing. Both powers grapple with concerns about military modernization, economic competition, and regional influence.

Misreading each other's actions—such as naval exercises or trade policies—as aggressive posturing rather than defensive measures risks escalating tensions unnecessarily. Jervis's framework suggests that improving mutual understanding and clarifying intentions through dialogue can reduce the chances of conflict rooted in misperception.

Technology and Information Warfare

The digital age introduces new challenges for perception management. Cyber operations, misinformation campaigns, and rapid information flows can distort realities and amplify biases. Political leaders and analysts must be vigilant in discerning genuine signals from noise.

Robert Jervis's emphasis on perception reminds us that even with advanced technology, human cognition and interpretation remain central to international politics. Robust intelligence analysis and critical thinking are crucial to avoid pitfalls of misperception.

Tips for Policymakers: Navigating Perception and Misperception

Drawing from Jervis's insights, here are practical tips for policymakers and diplomats seeking to manage perception challenges in international relations:

- **Enhance Communication:** Establish regular, transparent dialogue channels to clarify intentions and reduce ambiguity.
- **Invest in Cultural Understanding:** Recognize the historical, ideological, and cultural contexts shaping other states' perspectives.
- **Encourage Analytical Diversity:** Incorporate multiple viewpoints to counteract groupthink and cognitive biases.
- **Focus on Signal Interpretation:** Develop expertise in reading and contextualizing signals accurately, avoiding overreactions to ambiguous actions.
- **Promote Confidence-Building Measures:** Use treaties, verification protocols, and joint exercises to build trust and lower suspicion.

By applying these strategies, nations can better manage the delicate interplay of perception and misperception that influences global stability.

Why Robert Jervis's Work Continues to Matter

More than four decades after its publication, Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics remains a vital framework for scholars and practitioners alike. It bridges the gap between political science and psychology, emphasizing that understanding the human element in international relations is indispensable.

As global affairs grow ever more complex, the lessons from Jervis's work remind us that preventing conflict often starts with seeing the world through others' eyes—and being mindful of the limits of our own perceptions. This approach not only enriches academic discourse but also equips leaders with the tools necessary to navigate a world full of uncertainties and risks.

Exploring Robert Jervis's ideas invites us to think critically about how misperceptions arise and how they might be mitigated, ultimately fostering a more peaceful and cooperative international order.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central thesis of Robert Jervis's 'Perception and Misperception in International Politics'?

The central thesis of Robert Jervis's 'Perception and Misperception in International Politics' is that decision-makers' perceptions, cognitive biases, and psychological factors significantly influence international relations and can lead to misunderstandings, miscalculations, and conflict.

How does Jervis explain the role of cognitive biases in international politics?

Jervis explains that cognitive biases such as confirmation bias, mirror imaging, and attribution errors affect how leaders interpret information and the intentions of other states, often causing them to misperceive threats and intentions.

What is 'mirror imaging' according to Jervis, and why is it important?

'Mirror imaging' is a concept introduced by Jervis where decision-makers assume that other actors will behave as they themselves would in similar situations. This can lead to inaccurate judgments about the motives and likely actions of other states.

How does Jervis's work contribute to understanding the causes of war?

Jervis's work highlights that misperceptions and misunderstandings among states can escalate tensions unnecessarily, making conflict more likely. Recognizing these psychological factors helps explain why rational actors sometimes make seemingly irrational decisions leading to war.

What role does communication play in Jervis's analysis of international relations?

Jervis emphasizes that communication failures and ambiguous signals between states can exacerbate misperceptions, making it harder for states to accurately assess each other's intentions and increasing the risk of conflict.

How has Jervis's 'Perception and Misperception in

International Politics' influenced policy-making?

Jervis's insights have encouraged policymakers to consider psychological factors in decision-making, promote better intelligence analysis, and improve diplomatic communication to reduce misunderstandings and avoid unintended conflicts.

Can Jervis's theories be applied to contemporary international crises?

Yes, Jervis's theories remain highly relevant in analyzing contemporary international crises by helping to explain how misperceptions and cognitive biases among leaders can shape responses to conflicts, negotiations, and strategic interactions.

Additional Resources

Robert Jervis Perception and Misperception in International Politics: An Analytical Review

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics remains one of the seminal works in political science and international relations. Published in 1976, Jervis's book delves into the cognitive processes and errors that influence decision-making among states and their leaders. His insights continue to shape how scholars and policymakers understand the complexities of international conflict, cooperation, and diplomacy. This article examines the core arguments of Jervis's work, explores its relevance in contemporary global affairs, and analyzes the interplay between perception, misperception, and international politics through a professional lens.

Understanding Robert Jervis's Core Thesis

At its heart, Robert Jervis's analysis centers on the idea that international politics is frequently shaped by how leaders perceive other states' intentions, capabilities, and actions. Misperceptions—systematic errors in interpretation—can lead to conflict escalation or missed opportunities for peace. Jervis challenges the assumption that states act solely on objective realities, emphasizing instead the subjective nature of international interactions.

By investigating psychological factors and informational constraints, Jervis offers a nuanced explanation of why rational actors sometimes behave irrationally on the global stage. His analysis draws heavily on cognitive psychology, incorporating concepts such as confirmation bias, mirror imaging, and selective perception, all of which contribute to distorted understandings of adversaries and allies alike.

The Role of Perception in Foreign Policy Decisions

Perception acts as the filter through which leaders process external stimuli in the international system. Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics underscores that even when accurate information is available, decision-makers may interpret it in ways that conform to pre-existing beliefs or fears. For example, during the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet leaders often misread each other's defensive postures as offensive threats, exacerbating tensions unnecessarily.

Jervis's insights reveal that perception influences the calculation of threats and opportunities. Leaders' mental models, shaped by history, ideology, and national experience, determine whether they view an opponent as hostile or benign. This perceptual lens has profound effects on diplomatic negotiations, military strategies, and alliance formations.

Common Cognitive Biases Highlighted by Jervis

Jervis identifies several cognitive biases that contribute to misperceptions in international politics:

- **Mirror Imaging:** Assuming others think and behave like oneself, leading to incorrect assumptions about intentions.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Favoring information that confirms pre-existing beliefs while disregarding contradictory evidence.
- **Overattribution of Hostility:** Interpreting ambiguous actions as hostile, especially under conditions of fear or mistrust.
- **Wishful Thinking:** Seeing threats as less severe or opponents as more conciliatory than they are.

These biases, individually or combined, can distort foreign policy decision-making and contribute to international crises. Jervis's framework helps explain why even intelligent, well-informed leaders may fall victim to flawed perceptions.

Implications for International Relations Theory and Practice

Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics has influenced various schools of thought within international relations.

Realists acknowledge the potential for misperception but emphasize material power and strategic interests. Constructivists, meanwhile, draw on Jervis's work to highlight how identities and beliefs shape state behavior.

Impact on Conflict and Cooperation

Misperceptions can escalate conflicts by creating security dilemmas—situations where defensive measures are perceived as offensive threats, prompting arms races or preemptive strikes. Jervis's analysis of the security dilemma remains influential in understanding Cold War dynamics and contemporary rivalries, such as those between the United States and China.

Conversely, improved communication and transparency can reduce misperceptions and foster cooperation. Confidence-building measures, diplomatic signaling, and multilateral institutions help mitigate misunderstandings. Robert Jervis's work underscores the importance of addressing perceptual gaps to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Case Studies Illustrating Perception and Misperception

Several historical incidents exemplify the principles outlined by Jervis:

1. **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962):** Both the U.S. and USSR initially misperceived the other's intentions, nearly leading to nuclear war. Jervis's theories explain how close communication and crisis management helped avert disaster.
2. **Vietnam War:** U.S. policymakers' overconfidence and misreading of North Vietnamese resolve contributed to prolonged conflict and misjudged strategies.
3. **Post-Cold War NATO Expansion:** Russian leadership's perception of NATO's enlargement as a threat, despite Western assurances, has fueled ongoing tensions.

These examples reinforce the real-world significance of Jervis's insights on perception, misperception, and their consequences.

Critiques and Limitations of Jervis's Framework

While Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics

provides a pioneering approach, it is not without critique. Some scholars argue that the focus on individual cognitive biases underestimates structural factors like economic dependencies, domestic politics, and institutional constraints. Others suggest that not all misperceptions are equally consequential, and some may be deliberately employed as strategic tools.

Moreover, advances in communication technologies and intelligence capabilities challenge the assumption that states operate under severe informational limitations, although ambiguity and uncertainty persist. The rise of misinformation and disinformation campaigns in the digital age adds a new dimension to the study of perception in international affairs.

Balancing Psychological and Structural Factors

Integrating Jervis's psychological insights with broader systemic analyses offers a more comprehensive understanding of international politics. This synthesis helps explain why certain misperceptions persist despite available information and how structural incentives can either exacerbate or attenuate perceptual errors.

Continuing Relevance in Contemporary Global Politics

In an era marked by renewed great power competition, cyber warfare, and complex multilateral challenges, Robert Jervis perception and misperception in international politics remains profoundly relevant. Leaders today grapple with interpreting ambiguous signals amid a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

Understanding the cognitive pitfalls identified by Jervis can improve diplomatic strategies, crisis management, and conflict prevention. For policymakers, awareness of perceptual biases is vital for crafting responses that avoid escalation and promote stable international relations.

As emerging powers assert themselves and alliances shift, the lessons from Jervis's analysis provide crucial guidance for navigating uncertainty and fostering mutual understanding.

Robert Jervis's contribution continues to serve as a foundational reference for scholars, analysts, and practitioners seeking to unravel the intricate interplay between perception, misperception, and state behavior in the international arena.

Robert Jervis Perception And Misperception In International Politics

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robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Perception and Misperception in International Politics Robert Jervis, 2017-05-02 Since its original publication in 1976, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* has become a landmark book in its field, hailed by the New York Times as the seminal statement of principles underlying political psychology. This new edition includes an extensive preface by the author reflecting on the book's lasting impact and legacy, particularly in the application of cognitive psychology to political decision making, and brings that analysis up to date by discussing the relevant psychological research over the past forty years. Jervis describes the process of perception (for example, how decision makers learn from history) and then explores common forms of misperception (such as overestimating one's influence). He then tests his ideas through a number of important events in international relations from nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* is essential for understanding international relations today.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* Robert Jervis, 2017-04-21 With a new preface by the author Since its original publication in 1976, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* has become a landmark book in its field, hailed by the New York Times as the seminal statement of principles underlying political psychology. This new edition includes an extensive preface by the author reflecting on the book's lasting impact and legacy, particularly in the application of cognitive psychology to political decision making, and brings that analysis up to date by discussing the relevant psychological research over the past forty years. Jervis describes the process of perception (for example, how decision makers learn from history) and then explores common forms of misperception (such as overestimating one's influence). He then tests his ideas through a number of important events in international relations from nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* is essential for understanding international relations today.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 1976 This study of perception and misperception in foreign policy was a landmark in the application of cognitive psychology to political decision making. The New York Times called it, in an article published nearly ten years after the book's appearance, the seminal statement of principles underlying political psychology. The perspective established by Jervis remains an important counterpoint to structural explanations of international politics, and from it has developed a large literature on the psychology of leaders and the problems of decision making under conditions of incomplete information, stress, and cognitive bias. Jervis begins by describing the process of perception (for example, how decision makers learn from history) and then explores common forms of misperception (such as overestimating one's influence). Finally, he tests his ideas through a number of important events in international relations from nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Progress in International Relations Theory* Colin Elman, Miriam Fendius Elman, 2003-08-29 All academic disciplines periodically appraise their effectiveness, evaluating the progress of previous scholarship

and judging which approaches are useful and which are not. Although no field could survive if it did nothing but appraise its progress, occasional appraisals are important and if done well can help advance the field. This book investigates how international relations theorists can better equip themselves to determine the state of scholarly work in their field. It takes as its starting point Imre Lakatos's influential theory of scientific change, and in particular his methodology of scientific research programs (MSRP). It uses MSRP to organize its analysis of major research programs over the last several decades and uses MSRP's criteria for theoretical progress to evaluate these programs. The contributors appraise the progress of institutional theory, varieties of realist and liberal theory, operational code analysis, and other research programs in international relations. Their analyses reveal the strengths and limits of Lakatosian criteria and the need for metatheoretical metrics for evaluating scientific progress.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Peace Studies

Matthew Evangelista, 2005 The academic field of Peace Studies emerged during the Cold War to address the nature and sources of interstate and internal conflict and methods to prevent it and deal with its consequences.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Realistische Perspektiven internationaler Politik Alexander Siedschlag, 2001

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Zwischen*

Propaganda und Realpolitik Anjana Buckow, 2003 Nicht nur der Atlantik - nein: Welten trennten nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg den sowjetisch besetzten Teil Deutschlands von den USA. Nahmen die amerikanischen Politiker und Diplomaten die SBZ/DDR ueberhaupt wahr? Und wenn ja, was interessierte sie? Das Ausma und die Art der sowjetischen Kontrolle? Die moegliche militaerische Gefaehrung fuer Westdeutschland oder die Anziehungskraft des kommunistischen Systems auf die ostdeutsche Bevaelkerung? Diese und weitere Fragen werden in der vorliegenden Studie beantwortet. Treffende Zitate aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz veranschaulichen die Analyse. Daraus ergibt sich detailliert und farbig das Bild, das sich die amerikanischen Beobachter von der SBZ/DDR machten. Gleichzeitig loest sich damit die Politik der USA gegenueber Ostdeutschland erklaren, lassen sich die strikte Nichtanerkennung und die Versuche, auf die ostdeutsche Bevaelkerung einzuwirken, verstehen. Die Autorin zeigt die Voraussetzungen auf, welche die amerikanische DDR-Politik bestimmten, und ordnet diese Politik in den Kontext der globalen Systemauseinandersetzung im beginnenden Kalten Krieg ein. any scholar or student of American policy towards Germany in the post-World War II era will find this an extremely valuable contribution to understanding U.S. perceptions and policy towards East Germany. H-Net Review .

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Geschichte in Zeiten der Unsicherheit* Peter Geiss, 2025-09-10 In Zeiten der Krisen und des Krieges ist der Wunsch besonders stark, aus der Geschichte zu lernen. Je überfordernder und dynamischer sich die Gegenwart präsentiert, desto ausgeprägter die Sehnsucht des Menschen, in der Vergangenheit Analogien und Orientierung zu finden. Doch (was) lässt sich überhaupt aus der Geschichte lernen? In 14 spannenden Fallskizzen von der Antike bis in die jüngste Zeitgeschichte präsentiert Peter Geiss historische Personen mit Entscheidungsverantwortung und zeigt, wie sie in ihrer konkreten Situation versuchten, ihr Handeln von Erkenntnissen aus der Vergangenheit abzuleiten. Augustus war bei seinem Aufstieg zum ersten römischen Kaiser genauso bemüht, aus dem Mord an Cäsar zu lernen, wie US-Präsident Kennedy während der Kubakrise aus der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* William Bloom, 1990 Drawing on Freud, Mead, Erikson, Parsons and Habermas, William Bloom relates mass psychological processes to international relations.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Perceptions of China and White House Decision-Making, 1941-1963* Adam S.R. Bartley, 2019-11-26 This book assesses and evaluates the decision-making behavior of United States presidents and their chief

advisers from Roosevelt to Kennedy pertaining to China. Seeking to dispel with the notion that each administration sought policy outcomes on the basis of a rational decision-making model, Bartley highlights the contradictions of adopted presidential decision-making processes and the nature of domestic politics as playing prejudicial and debilitating roles. The book demonstrates that elite decision-making processes interacted with assumptions made about Chinese behavior, interests, and attitudes only superficially and in some cases not at all. Misinformation and misperception were the natural outcomes. Reinforced by the politics of McCarthyism at home, intellectual debate on China policy was squashed, parochialism and nuance were shunned, and information was closed off. Ultimately, a divorce between the norm of behavior and the search for rational policy was registered in each administration. The net result was a lasting and destructive cognitive dissonance: to fit expectations of a China reality constructed, information was ignored, overlooked, and distorted. Offering new insights into the China policies of consecutive administrations from 1941 to 1963, this volume will be of great interest to scholars and students of American foreign policy, security studies, and international relations.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: *Classics of International Relations* Henrik Bliddal, Casper Sylvest, Peter Wilson, 2013-07-24 *Classics of International Relations* introduces, contextualises and assesses 24 of the most important works on international relations of the last 100 years. Providing an indispensable guide for all students of IR theory, from advanced undergraduates to academic specialists, it asks why are these works considered classics? Is their status deserved? Will it endure? It takes as its starting point Norman Angell's best-selling *The Great Illusion* (1909) and concludes with Daniel Deudney's award winning *Bounding Power* (2006). The volume does not ignore established classics such as Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* and Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, but seeks to expand the 'IR canon' beyond its core realist and liberal texts. It thus considers emerging classics such as Linklater's critical sociology of moral boundaries, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, and Enloe's pioneering gender analysis, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*. It also innovatively considers certain 'alternative format' classics such as Kubrick's satire on the nuclear arms race, *Dr Strangelove*, and Errol Morris's powerful documentary on war and US foreign policy, *The Fog of War*. With an international cast of contributors, many of them leading authorities on their subject, *Classics of International Relations* will become a standard reference for all those wishing to make sense of a rapidly developing and diversifying field. *Classics of International Relations* is designed to become a standard reference text for advanced undergraduates, post-graduates and lecturers in the field of IR.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Knowing the Adversary Keren Yarhi-Milo, 2014-07-21 States are more likely to engage in risky and destabilizing actions such as military buildups and preemptive strikes if they believe their adversaries pose a tangible threat. Yet despite the crucial importance of this issue, we don't know enough about how states and their leaders draw inferences about their adversaries' long-term intentions. *Knowing the Adversary* draws on a wealth of historical archival evidence to shed new light on how world leaders and intelligence organizations actually make these assessments. Keren Yarhi-Milo examines three cases: Britain's assessments of Nazi Germany's intentions in the 1930s, America's assessments of the Soviet Union's intentions during the Carter administration, and the Reagan administration's assessments of Soviet intentions near the end of the Cold War. She advances a new theoretical framework—called selective attention—that emphasizes organizational dynamics, personal diplomatic interactions, and cognitive and affective factors. Yarhi-Milo finds that decision makers don't pay as much attention to those aspects of state behavior that major theories of international politics claim they do. Instead, they tend to determine the intentions of adversaries on the basis of preexisting beliefs, theories, and personal impressions. Yarhi-Milo also shows how intelligence organizations rely on very different indicators than decision makers, focusing more on changes in the military capabilities of adversaries. *Knowing the Adversary* provides a clearer picture of the historical validity of existing theories, and broadens our understanding of the important role that

diplomacy plays in international security.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Coercion, Cooperation, and Ethics in International Relations Richard Ned Lebow, 2007-05-07 This volume brings together the recent essays of Richard Ned Lebow, one of the leading scholars of international relations and US foreign policy. Lebow's work has centred on the instrumental value of ethics in foreign policy decision making and the disastrous consequences which follow when ethical standards are flouted. Unlike most realists who have considered ethical considerations irrelevant in states' calculations of their national interest, Lebow has argued that self interest, and hence, national interest can only be formulated intelligently within a language of justice and morality. The essays here build on this pervasive theme in Lebow's work by presenting his substantive and compelling critique of strategies of deterrence and compellence, illustrating empirically and normatively how these strategies often produce results counter to those that are intended. The last section of the book, on counterfactuals, brings together another set of related articles which continue to probe the relationship between ethics and policy. They do so by exploring the contingency of events to suggest the subjective, and often self-fulfilling, nature of the frameworks we use to evaluate policy choices.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: State Responses to Nuclear Proliferation Brian K. Chappell, 2021-01-07 Contemporary fears of rogue state nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism pose unique challenges for the global community. This book offers a unique approach by examining why states that have the military capability to severely damage a proliferating state's nuclear program instead choose to pursue coercive diplomacy. The author argues cognitive psychological influences, including the trauma derived from national tragedies like the September 11th attacks and the Holocaust, and a history of armed conflict increase the threat perceptions of foreign policy decision-makers when confronting a state perceived to be challenging the existing power structure by pursuing a nuclear weapon. The powerful state's degree of perceived threat, combined with its national security policies, military power projection capabilities, and public support then influence whether it will take no action, use coercive diplomacy/sanctions, or employ military force to address the weaker state's nuclear ambitions.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: Psychology, Strategy and Conflict James W. Davis, 2013-02-11 This volume examines the explanatory nesting approach in the analysis of international relations and its continuing relevance in the 21st century. International relations theory urgently needs strategies for coping with the growing complexity of the international system following the collapse of the US-Soviet bipolar stalemate, the multiple challenges to US unipolar hegemony, and the rise of powerful non-Western actors. Over the course of this book, leading scholars of international relations and diplomatic history return to an approach to explanation pioneered in the writings of the late Robert Jervis. The approach calls for nesting multiple layers of explanation--systemic, strategic, and perceptual--in an integrated causal account that is simultaneously parsimonious and nuanced. Highlighting the logic of strategic interactions under uncertainty, it also integrates the effects of psychological biases and the unintended consequences of acting in complex systems to provide explanations that are at once theoretically rigorous and rich in empirical detail. Analyzing the current state of Realist theory, signaling under conditions of uncertainty and anarchy, the role of nuclear weapons in international politics, the role of cognition and emotions in economic and foreign policy decision making, and questions of responsibility in international affairs, the authors provide a compelling guide for the future of international relations theory. This book will be of much interest to students of international relations, foreign policy, and security studies.

robert jervis perception and misperception in international politics: The US Versus the North Korean Nuclear Threat Er-Win Tan, 2013-11-26 Although the current world order is still dominated by the US, there is increasing international concern over the possibility of regional security dilemmas arising from smaller powers' attempts to develop Weapons of Mass Destruction. A study of US-North Korean interaction using the security dilemma as a conceptual frame of analysis is

thus not only hugely topical, but also particularly relevant for the 21st century on theoretical as well as empirical grounds. Is there the prospect of a security dilemma contagion if North Korea acquire nuclear weapons capability leading to an Asia Pacific wide nuclear arms race? This book examines this contentious issue in-depth and explores the difficult choices policymakers face as a result of the uncertainty in international politics.

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