This is the most comprehensive study yet written of the dynamics that underlie information processing in foreign policy decision-making, the resultant biases and errors, and the implications for the quality of decisions.

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Review

“The World in Their Minds (meaning the perception of those national decisionmakers whose actions affect us all) is a very good title; it is also a very good book... More than anything, this is a compendium of the manifold ways that misperception and, hence, miscalculation can enter into seemingly rational policy choice... The cases of Vietnam for the Americans and the Yom Kippur War for the Israelis constitute the primary data base for the wealth of illustrations cited, but numerous and apt examples are drawn from other pertinent events.”

Canadian Public Policy

“An ambitious and virtually encyclopedic... survey of the existing psychological and organizational information-processing literature as it applies to foreign policy decisionmaking. Vertzberger has illustrated it amply with historical examples. For those unfamiliar with the literature, it would make a splendid introductions; for those who are familiar with it, the book provides a useful review and reference.”

American Political Science Review

“Excellent... Strongly recommended to political communication students, students and practitioners of foreign policy analysis, and, of course, to critical readers in the White House.”

Journal of Communication
These terms refer to the tendency people have to try to maintain mental models of the world that are logically consistent (this seldom succeeds entirely). FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS 8 Vertzberger, Yaacov Y. I. The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking. Stanford, 1990. Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making. Cambridge, 1998. One implication of cognitive balance is that decision makers place greater value on goals that they have put much effort into achieving—the justification of effort. This is especially true in a democracy, in which politicians must face their citizens' judgment at the polls and so do not want to admit failures.