



# Groupthink Versus High-Quality Decision Making in International Relations

*Mark Schafer, Scott Crichlow*

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Are good and bad outcomes significantly affected by the decision-making process itself? Indeed they are, in that certain decision-making techniques and practices limit the ability of policymakers to achieve their goals and advance the national interest.

The success of policy often turns on the quality of the decision-making process. Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow identify the factors that contribute to good and bad policymaking, such as the personalities of political leaders, the structure of decision-making groups, and the nature of the exchange between participating individuals. Analyzing thirty-nine foreign-policy cases across nine administrations and incorporating both statistical analyses and case studies, including a detailed examination of the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the authors pinpoint the factors that are likely to lead to successful or failed decision making, and they suggest ways to improve the process. Schafer and Crichlow show how the staffing of key offices and the structure of central decision-making bodies determine the path of an administration even before topics are introduced. Additionally, they link the psychological characteristics of leaders to the quality of their decision processing. There is no greater work available on understanding and improving the dynamics of contemporary decision making.



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