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The Analyst and the Small Group

The intelligence analyst is never a lone hand. His conceptions are inextricably interwoven with those of other people around him. His participation in a larger organization must influence his hypotheses, his way of thinking, and his conclusions. The environment within which the analyst operates, though it may have some positive impact on his judgment, is inevitably a major source of misperceptions.

In this chapter we will look at the small group within which the analyst works. Decision makers usually operate within a group made up of other decision makers, advisers, and experts. Intelligence analysts are a part of a somewhat larger group of analysts—colleagues, superiors, and subordinates—whose job it is to produce a collective assessment or warning. A strong interdependency and a close and stable relationship exist among the members of these small groups; each member depends on the others for his assumptions and conceptions in a variety of ways (Cohen, 1964, pp. 100–101). This dynamic has a considerable impact on the manner in which the enemy's behavior and the potential for war are perceived.

Working in a small group may have a positive influence on the accuracy of the analyst's judgments. The group may broaden his perspective, allow him to take into account new and formerly unfamiliar points of view and reconsider questionable hypotheses and assessments. Members of the group contribute vital knowledge, expertise, and experience to the analytical process. The group affords the individual the opportunity of looking at the same evidence from diverse viewpoints, acquiring additional evidence essential to his assessments, and testing the validity of his assumptions. Discussions within a small group may expose the weak points of arguments

presented by individual members; an analyst's erroneous judgment may even be corrected. In general it can be said that the deliberations within the small group are a vital part of the analytical and decision-making processes.

Yet membership in a group also has some inevitable and serious drawbacks. Let us consider how group dynamics may contribute to the failure to anticipate a surprise attack.

The Other Opinion

In most of our cases of surprise attack, despite the final collective assessment that war was unlikely, some dissenting opinions had in fact been voiced. Before the Chinese invasion of northern India, for instance, senior Indian officers had warned Delhi that a continuation of its "forward policy" of establishing posts and showing presence in territories claimed by China would risk a military confrontation detrimental to India (Vertzberger, 1978a, p. 123). And on the eve of the Six-Day War there were a few Egyptian officers who claimed that war was likely, but "their voice was not heard" (*Al-Ahram*, Cairo, June 21, 1968). What happened to these voices?

Some of these dissenters may have fought for their opinions, only to see them suppressed or ignored. A month before the attack on Pearl Harbor the American ambassador to Tokyo, Joseph Grew, sent a strong warning to Washington predicting that if negotiations between Japan and the United States failed, the Japanese might make "an all-out, do-or-die attempt, actually risking national Hara-kiri, to make Japan impervious to economic embargoes abroad rather than yield to foreign pressure." Such an attack, he warned, might come "with dangerous and dramatic suddenness" (Janis, 1972, p. 98). Six days before the Yom Kippur War an Israeli lieutenant in Southern Command Intelligence submitted to the intelligence officer of the command a document that assessed the Egyptian deployment as an indication of preparations to go to war. Two days later he submitted an additional document indicating that the Egyptian exercise might be a cover-up for preparations for war. His superior did not distribute the evaluation, and it was omitted from the command intelligence report (Herzog, 1975, p. 46).

Sometimes dissenters do not seriously try to challenge the existing view, although they may carry their doubts with them until the attack. After the Yom Kippur War several members of the Israeli

Cabinet and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that on the eve of the Arab attack they felt uneasy about the intelligence assessment and had a sense that war might break out (Nakdimon, 1982, pp. 53–54, 89–90). Prior to the Chinese attack on India many Indian Army officers suspected China's intentions, yet most of the senior officers hesitated to fight for their opinions. The field commanders realized that there was no chance to change the strategy dictated by the civilian policy makers without an internal confrontation; unprepared for such a confrontation, they did not make their reservations clear to the General Staff (Vertzberger, 1978b, p. 480).

The suppression of contradictory views can be partly explained by the position of their proponents. Dissenters are often low-ranking officers and officials who are less committed than their superiors to the predominant conception, and this is precisely the reason why their views can be easily ignored or rejected. Thus in 1941, in the lower, operational echelons of the U.S. Army and Navy, some officers seemed to sense the gathering crisis and even see the immediate danger to Hawaii. There is evidence indicating that at least some junior officers in the fleet believed the ships at Pearl Harbor to be far from immune; they openly discussed the danger among themselves and took active steps on their own initiative to prepare their ships for a possible air attack. Other officers tried to take steps to meet the danger but were discouraged by their superiors. On December 4 Commander Arthur McCollum, Chief of the Far Eastern Section of Naval Intelligence, was sufficiently alarmed by conditions to prepare a dispatch to fully alert the fleets in the Pacific. He sought permission to send this dispatch at a meeting attended by four senior admirals but was discouraged from doing so on the grounds that the warnings already sent to Hawaii were sufficient (U.S. Congress, 1946b, p. 46; Janis, 1972, pp. 93–95).

Sometimes opinions are rejected or ignored on the grounds that the dissenters are nonexperts, outsiders, or not responsible for issuing warnings, or that they "oppose everything" and therefore should not be taken seriously. Experts within an organization tend to reject nonexperts' warnings and opinions; the experts' argument is that they are in the best position to evaluate information and developments. John McCone, Director of Central Intelligence at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, was considered one such dissenter. McCone had argued as early as the spring of 1962 that the Soviets might install medium-range missiles in Cuba. From the French Riviera,

where he had gone for a three-week honeymoon, McCone bombarded his deputy with telegrams emphasizing his speculations, but the deputy did not distribute them outside the CIA. In McCone's absence the Board of National Estimates met in Washington on September 19. It considered the McCone hypothesis but concluded that the establishment of a Soviet missile base in Cuba was improbable. Apparently from the standpoint of the CIA McCone was considered a nonexpert because of his lack of political or intelligence experience and expertise in Soviet affairs. In addition his warnings apparently were not taken seriously "for he often played the devil's advocate in arguing with his own estimators" (Hilsman, 1964, p. 173; see also Schlesinger, 1965, p. 799; Abel, 1968, pp. 7–12).

Yet to attribute the rejection of deviating opinions to the status of their advocates is to understate the problem. In several cases of surprise attack some of the dissenters have been high-ranking officers and officials or important experts. Prior to Pearl Harbor Admiral Richmond Turner, the Chief of War Plans in the Navy Department, was the only officer in Washington in the higher echelons who held a strong belief that Hawaii would be attacked (U.S. Congress, 1946a, p. 234). Before the Chinese invasion of Korea George Kennan, a leading expert on Soviet affairs in the State Department, repeatedly made realistic predictions concerning China's probable reactions to the crossing of the Thirty-eighth Parallel. Kennan's views had some impact on the thinking of the department's policy planning staff. Yet Secretary Acheson, who was aware of these opposing views, apparently did not invite their holders to brief President Truman's advisory group or to discuss their views in depth (Janis, 1972, p. 62). In May 1962 the Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau warned that there was a possibility of a Chinese military attack in the fall (Mullik, 1971, p. 330). And in late September 1973 the Head of the Israeli Mossad intelligence service and the Deputy Chief of Staff claimed separately that the probability of war was relatively high. The latter tried, by his own account, to persuade the Director of Military Intelligence, General Zeira, to change his assessment of the likelihood of war, but Zeira refused, arguing that with regard to the enemy he was the better expert (Bartov, 1978, pp. 247, 298; Nakdimon, 1982, pp. 79–80).

It would seem, therefore, that to understand how dissent is discouraged, rejected, and ignored, we should look at the psychological pressures and group processes that act on analysts.

Groupthink

The central study analyzing the influence of group processes on the thinking of group members is Irving Janis's *Victims of Groupthink* (1972). Although this study refers mainly to decision-making processes and high-level advisory groups, many of its observations are relevant to the analytical process within small groups of intelligence analysts or policy makers.

Janis defines *groupthink* as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." The main hypothesis regarding groupthink is summarized as: "The more amiability and esprit de corps among the members of a policy-making in-group, the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink." Janis further explains: "Over and beyond all the familiar sources of human error is a powerful source of defective judgment that arises in cohesive groups—the concurrence-seeking tendency, which fosters overoptimism, lack of vigilance, and sloganistic thinking about the weakness and immorality of outgroups" (1972, pp. 9, 13).

According to Janis (1972, pp. 197–198; 1971, pp. 80–81), groupthink is characterized by eight major symptoms, four of which are relevant for our case:

> An illusion of invulnerability . . . which creates excessive optimism and encourages taking extreme risks;
>
> Collective efforts to rationalize in order to discount warnings which might lead the members to reconsider their assumptions . . .
>
> Stereotyped views of enemy leaders . . . as too weak and stupid to counter whatever risky attempts are made to defeat their purposes;
>
> Direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments . . .

Janis's groupthink theory has some obvious deficiencies. In particular it seems possible to account for many of the characteristics he attributes to groupthink by other factors. Many of the judgmental biases described in the second part of this study, especially with regard to information processing, can well explain failures in analy-

sis and decision making. Such failures can also be explained with reference to difficulties in processing information owing to organizational obstacles and communications problems (Fischhoff and Beyth-Marom, 1976).

Ben-Zvi (1977) mentions additional deficiencies of the groupthink theory. For instance, Janis minimizes the influence of the national leadership on the deliberations and conclusions of the group in cases in which the national leader does not participate in its discussions. In this sense the theory concentrates on the pressures created by the group itself and ignores pressures and influences from above. Similarly the theory ignores those national and ideological conceptions and images that influence perception in international relations. The theory also neglects organizational and bureaucratic processes that affect the way a decision is implemented.

Although the groupthink theory cannot by itself fully explain failures in assessments and decision making, it clarifies an important aspect of these failures that complements other sources of failures such as judgmental biases and organizational obstacles. Even if the cohesiveness of the group is not necessarily a central factor in creating groupthink, as Janis claims, the phenomenon of groupthink and most of its symptoms play an important role in the formation of erroneous estimates.

Here we turn to the influence of group processes on misjudgment, in particular with regard to the enemy's expected behavior. The most familiar group pressures in this context are those that directly or indirectly induce individual members to conform. These pressures explain to a large extent why dissenting voices are seldom heard. Yet at the same time group processes influence the entire way of thinking of a group's members and may distort the perception of an impending threat.

Pressures for Conformity

Differences of opinion as to the perception of threat are quite common among analysts, and their disagreements have a twofold result. An analyst who disagrees with the majority of his superiors and colleagues may fight for the adoption of his interpretation of the information to the extent that the ensuing debate prevents him from sympathetically examining opposing interpretations. Yet since the intelligence agency has to submit its collective assessment, the individual analysts eventually have to compromise and reach some

agreement. There are powerful forces within the group that help them reach that agreement.

Numerous studies note the influence that the group brings to bear on the individual. Cartwright and Zander (1960) suggest that two general kinds of forces work toward producing conformity: those that arise from conflicts within the individual as he observes that his views are different from those of others, and those induced by the members of the group who seek directly to influence the individual's opinions.

There are various explanations for an individual's willingness to change his views and accept those of others, even though no direct pressures are exerted on him. One explanation is that the individual hopes to reduce the unpleasantness generated by cognitive dissonance when his views differ from those of the group. Another maintains that pressure to conform arises from the individual's need to be accepted by the group and to be considered correct in his judgment. Indeed the individual may feel that in order to maintain his status and even his membership in a group, he must change his view to meet its standards. In this sense the individual hopes to gain the social rewards of being close to the other members of the group and to avoid the social punishments attendant on deviating from it (Deutsch and Gerard, 1960; Verba, 1961, pp. 22–24; Klineberg, 1965, p. 92). Janis describes this tendency with regard to decision-making groups: "A member of an executive in-group may feel constrained to tone down his criticisms, to present only those arguments that will be readily tolerated by the others, and to remain silent about objections that the others might regard as being beyond the pale . . . Such constraints arise at least partly because each member comes to rely upon the group to provide him with emotional support for coping with the stresses of decision-making" (1971, pp. 75–76).

The second force that induces an individual to conform is the behavior of others. Members of a group often exert pressures on one another quite consciously in order either to help the group maintain its existence and accomplish its goals or to develop validity for their opinions. A group may exert strong pressures on its members to agree with the leader or the majority even when an individual feels that the majority opinion is wrong. Group pressures may be overt and sometimes even formalized, but they may also be subtle and difficult to pinpoint (Cartwright and Zander, 1960, pp. 168–169; George, 1980, p. 93).

Organizations often display what De Rivera calls a "climate of

opinion" (1968, pp. 70–73). A feeling of what is or is not "realistic" sets the boundary of opinion and makes it a strong restrictive barrier. Thus if an analyst claims that war is imminent when the majority of the other analysts, colleagues and superiors alike, consider this assessment unrealistic, he may not be taken seriously. If the analyst wants to be taken seriously he must accept the reality in which others are operating, must begin to think in their terms, build arguments that are directed to their beliefs although they are different from what he really thinks, or else he must abstain. This is especially true of analysts who carry out the uncertain job of making assessments and predictions: they feel the need to present a good image of themselves so that their opinions will be heard and respected. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hilsman (1956, p. 99) found that in the American intelligence community intelligence officers seemed to share the attitudes of the operators and administrators.

The prevailing climate of opinion in Washington and in the Far East Command in Tokyo in 1950 was hostile to warnings of North Korean aggression. This hostility was founded on a belief that subversion was the main communist threat in the Far East and that the enemy would shrink from direct military action. The military as well as the political environment was unreceptive to intelligence pointing to China's capacity to intervene (DeWeerd, 1962, p. 452).

The willingness of a member of a group to accept the other members' views depends on several conditions. One is the quality of the incoming information. The more ambiguous the information, the stronger the tendency of the individual to accept his colleagues' view. Another condition is the division of opinion within the group. The larger the majority supporting a view within the group, the more willing is the dissenter to change his mind. He will also be more willing to accept the dominant view when the more important and authoritative members of the group, and especially its leader, support that view. Then there is the personality of the dissenters. People who are concerned about their relations with others or who are fearful of disapproval and rejection are likely to conform to others' opinions. The attractiveness of the group for the individual and the degree to which he is in communication with others in the group form another condition for conformity. Individuals with strong affiliative needs, who give priority to preserving friendly relationships, may tend to yield to the view of the majority (Cartwright and Zander, 1960, pp. 173–175; Festinger, Schachter, and Back, 1960, p. 253; Vertzberger, 1978b, pp. 141–142).

Here the cohesiveness of the group plays an important role. Small groups tend to be more cohesive than larger ones. Cohesiveness improves group performance since it provides an atmosphere in which the clash of competing views can be minimized and consensus can be reached without excessive interpersonal friction and rivalry. Yet cohesion implies conformity; the more cohesive the group, the more effectively it can influence its members. In particular, in situations in which a great deal is at stake, members of the group may regard maintaining the cohesion of the group as the overriding goal (Festinger, Schachter, and Back, 1960, p. 259; George, 1980, pp. 87, 89).

Janis (1972, p. 5) describes how members of a cohesive in-group suppress deviant opinions:

> Whenever a member says something that sounds out of line with the group's norms, the other members at first increase their communication with the deviant. Attempts to influence the nonconformist member to revise or tone down his dissident ideas continue as long as most members of the group feel hopeful about talking him into changing his mind. But if they fail after repeated attempts, the amount of communication they direct toward the deviant decreases markedly. The members begin to exclude him, often quite subtly at first and later more obviously.

Finally, conformity is fostered by the consensus approach to intelligence production. The production process is by nature consensus-oriented, be it at the organizational or interorganizational level or at the less structured analyst-to-analyst level. Such consensus is necessary and desirable for two main reasons. The formation of the complicated intelligence assessment requires coordination among various intelligence analysts and divisions, each with different expertise, approaches, and opinions. Coordinating these analysts and divisions and achieving an agreed-upon assessment consistent with their beliefs and attitudes necessitate a difficult bargaining process leading to compromise. Moreover, intelligence consumers and policy makers usually require one all-encompassing assessment in answer to their questions; this demand provides another impetus for intelligence consensus.

As the Church Committee put it, the coordination process may produce a " 'reinforcing consensus' whereby divergent views of individual analysts can become 'submerged in a sea of conventional collective wisdom,' and doubts or disagreements can simply dis-

appear in the face of mutually reinforcing agreements." The outcome is another contribution to the problem, discussed in Chapter 1, of the language of intelligence and intelligence warning. In the words of the committee:

> Finished intelligence frequently lacks clarity, especially clarity of judgment . . . it is often presented in waffly or "delphic" forms, without attribution of views. Opposing views are not always clearly articulated. Judgments on difficult subjects are sometimes hedged, or represent the outcome of compromise, and are couched in fuzzy, imprecise terms. Yet intelligence consumers increasingly maintain that they want a more clearly spelled out distinction between different interpretations, with judgments as to relative probabilities. (U.S. Congress, 1976, p. 272)

The problem is not only that of unclear and sometimes misleading wording and the consequent disappearance of disagreements. Perhaps more important is that the need to reach a consensus creates an obstacle for the individual analyst, who may cease to question basic assumptions agreed on by the group. This obstacle is described by the Subcommittee on Evaluation, which investigated the performance of U.S. intelligence prior to the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran:

> The mechanics of NIE [National Intelligence Estimate] production tend to discourage a sound intellectual process. After limited discussion of the terms of reference, various sections of the NIE are drafted by different elements of the intelligence community. From the moment when these contributions are linked together in a first draft, basic reasoning and assumptions tend not to be questioned . . . The NIE process, which should have provided a way for analysts to challenge each other's models, instead mired key personnel in a frustrating search for superficial consensus. (U.S. Congress, 1979, p. 5)

The Leader and the Expert

Pressure for conformity can be created not only by the opinion of the majority but also by the opinions of two important members of the group: the leader, whether the head of intelligence, the commander in chief, or the head of state; and the expert, whether an intelligence expert, an experienced diplomat, or a reputable senior

military commander. If they are wrong, there is a good chance that the corrective measures of the group will not be sufficient and the final assessment will be erroneous.

Group pressures toward conformity are sometimes strengthened by leadership practices that make it difficult for dissidents to suggest alternatives and to raise critical issues.

> During the group's deliberations, the leader does not deliberately try to get the group to tell him what he wants to hear but is quite sincere in asking for honest opinions. The group members . . . are not afraid to speak their minds. Nevertheless, subtle constraints, which the leader may reinforce inadvertently, prevent a member from fully exercising his critical powers and from openly expressing doubts when most others in the group appear to have reached a consensus. (Janis, 1972, p. 3)

Janis describes the impact of such pressures as manifested in the case of Pearl Harbor:

> During the week before the attack it would have been doubly difficult for any of Kimmel's advisers to voice misgivings to other members of the group. It was not simply a matter of taking the risk of being scorned for deviating from the seemingly universal consensus by questioning the cherished invulnerability myth. An even greater risk would be the disdain the dissident might encounter from his colleagues for questioning the wisdom of the group's prior decisions. For a member of the Navy group to become alarmed by the last-minute warning signals and to wonder aloud whether a partial alert was sufficient would be tantamount to asserting that the group all along had been making wrong judgments. (1972, p. 92)

The role of the leader is especially important when assessment takes place within a decision-making group that is headed by a prominent, strong leader. Extreme examples are found, quite naturally, in totalitarian regimes. Stalin viewed with grave suspicion the warnings from the British and the Americans about the forthcoming German attack. He presumably understood that the very survival of Britain depended on the German Army's becoming engaged elsewhere and that Russia was the only power left in Europe that could supply this diversion. Stalin's tendency to view all these warnings as capitalist provocations created a climate of opinion that heavily influenced Soviet intelligence's treatment of all information per-

taining to German intentions. This was described in 1966 by G. A. Deborin of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Soviet Communist party:

> Golikov [then the head of the GRU, Soviet Military Intelligence] did not so much inform the government as to lie to it. His reports were in many cases completely untrue. They were always in two parts: in the first part he reported information which he classified as *"from reliable sources"*; here, for example, he included everything that supported the forecast of Germany's invading Great Britain. In the second part of his communications he reported information *"from doubtful sources"*: for example, information from the spy Richard Sorge about the date on which Germany would attack the USSR. One must expand the criticism of the personality cult and say that certain people composed their reports in such a way as to please Stalin, at the expense of the truth. [Whaley, 1973, p. 195]

Yet strong leaders in nontotalitarian regimes can create a similar climate of opinion. Thus Norwegian Foreign Minister Koht was looked on as a virtually exclusive authority on matters pertaining to foreign relations.

> His colleagues and assistants in the Foreign Office were only seldom given ideas to work with and authority to formulate and advance opinions and suggestions. When issues of foreign affairs were debated during cabinet meetings the discussions were largely limited to the response to immediate and specific issues and did not provide any opportunity for different perspectives to be brought to bear on the intermediate and long-term trend of events or on hypothetical contingencies. [Holst, 1966, pp. 36-37]

And prior to the Chinese invasion of India in 1962 decisions were made within a small group headed by Prime Minister Nehru. The members of the group, lacking an independent power base, derived their power from him. The group's cohesion, its internal consensus, and Nehru's personal authority made it very difficult to express deviant assessments. The Director of the Intelligence Bureau, for example, received information concerning Chinese military preparations; yet he preferred to provide Nehru with assessments that supported the leader's beliefs, either because he did not want to lose

his personal access to Nehru by being the source of pessimistic evaluation or because of genuine admiration for the prime minister (Hoffman, 1972, p. 971; Vertzberger, 1978b, pp. 401, 497–498).

The role of the leader is also important within intelligence analysts' evaluation groups. This is particularly true in military intelligence organizations, which are often composed of analysts holding different ranks and positions. A study of decision-making committees composed of military men of different ranks found that low-ranking members might withhold important facts, suggestions, or negative reactions and might agree to a decision whose merit they did not recognize (George, 1980, p. 88). But even in groups where no leader has been appointed or chosen, a dominant member may have an undue impact on the group's conclusions. "He may achieve this through active participation, putting his ideas across with a great deal of vigor. Or he may have a very persuasive personality. Finally, he may get his way simply through wearing down the opposition with persistent argument" (Martino, 1972, p. 20).

When this is the case, the danger is not only that different hypotheses are not considered or that subordinates suppress their opinions in order to keep their jobs; when a leader exercises such authority his colleagues, feeling that he must understand what is going to happen, will actually relax their alertness to the possibility of war. Before the Tet offensive of January 1968, for example, two DIA analysts wrote a paper accurately outlining the likely enemy course of action. The paper was never passed on, the implicit question being: "How could you possibly know more than General Westmoreland?" (McGarvey, 1973, pp. 323–324).

The tendency toward conformity is sometimes influenced by yet another factor: the expert. When the individual faces a contradiction between his own perception and other opinions, he may weigh the evidence supporting the different opinions; but if other members of the group are for some reason considered experts, he will be more likely to accept their beliefs (Cartwright and Zander, 1960, p. 173).

The expert derives his power and influence within the group from several possible sources; the most important is the quality of the information available to the expert and the judgments he makes based on it. Psychological experiments show that the more valid the expert's information, the more influential he is in causing others to adopt his proposed solutions. Moreover, the confidence people have in an expert may also depend on the type of judgment he makes. In

some instances the expert's judgment may be based on information that is not readily available to the layman. In other cases the expert's judgment may be based not on special information but rather on his ability to interpret information already available. Confidence in an expert may be greater when his judgments are based on the special collection of data than when they are based on the interpretation of available information. In addition confidence in an expert may also be greater when his judgments are pleasing to the recipient of the information or when he has a history of success (Di Vesta, Meyer, and Mills, 1964; Kelley and Thibaut, 1969, p. 22).

Intelligence analysts are also heavily dependent on colleagues and assistants in preparing their assessments. Because of the enormous amount of incoming data, the desk officer has to rely considerably on his assistants' analyses without having the time to check their assumptions and the way they treated the information. He must also rely on colleagues' assessments regarding specialized subjects—for example technical or purely military ones—that are not within his expertise yet affect his assessment. This applies even more so to decision makers who consume intelligence assessments.

As we have seen, the power of the expert creates a high degree of uniformity and consensus within the organization, which makes it difficult for those who do not agree to voice their opinion. But experts have weaknesses; seldom do they know everything. There is no reason to believe that the thinking process of experts is significantly different from that of lay people. "When forced to go beyond the limits of the available data or convert their incomplete knowledge into judgments usable by risk assessors, they may fall back on intuitive processes, just like everyone else" (Fischhoff, Slovic, and Lichtenstein, 1980, pp. 26–27). Thus when decision makers depend on experts, a mistake in evaluation at the lower levels may be passed upward undetected, ultimately resulting in a major failure.

Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister in 1973, describes the outcome of such dependency on experts on the eve of the Yom Kippur War: "How could it be that I was still so terrified of war breaking out when the present chief-of-staff, two former chiefs-of-staff (Dayan and Chaim Bar-Lev, who was my minister of commerce and industry) and the head of intelligence were far from sure that it would? After all, they weren't just ordinary soldiers. They were all highly experienced generals, men who had fought and led other men in spectacularly victorious battles" (1975, p. 357). Such a feeling of

dependency may exist not only between persons but between organizations as well. Thus Quandt explains the failure of American intelligence to anticipate the Yom Kippur War as a result of its dependency on Israeli evaluations: "Perhaps as important as these conceptual errors was a sense that Israel had the greatest incentive and the best capabilities for determining whether war was likely or not. After all, Israel, not the United States, would be the target of any Arab military threat; Israeli intelligence had an excellent reputation, drawing on sources unavailable to the United States; therefore, if the Israelis were not overly worried, why should Americans be?" (1977, p. 169).

Group Risk Taking

In addition to exercising pressures for conformity, groups tend to be more willing than individuals to accept risky evaluations. Most studies support this assumption, although the evidence is not conclusive; indeed some studies have found that with certain types of tasks, the presence of others makes individuals more cautious (Kelley and Thibaut, 1969, p. 3; George, 1980, p. 97). With regard to evaluating an enemy threat, however, the assumption that groups on balance tend to be less cautious than individuals appears to be justified.

That assumption was defined by Wallach and Kogan: "If members of a group engage in a discussion and reach a consensus regarding the degree of risk to accept in the decisions which they make, their conclusion is to pursue a course of action more risky than that represented by the average of the prior decisions of each individual considered separately" (1965, p. 1). There are several explanations for this tendency. It is assumed that the process of group discussion is the factor producing a shift in the willingness to accept risks. The information provided about other members' opinions makes individuals move toward a position of greater risk. The presentation of information may tell the individual that other people are willing to take a higher degree of risk than he would have anticipated. As a result the individual becomes willing to accept greater risk taking (Wallach and Kogan, 1965, p. 4; Kelley and Thibaut, 1969, pp. 79–80).

Perhaps more important is the fact that in the process of group discussion the responsibility for accepting risky evaluations and decisions is shared by all the group members, though not equally.

When an analyst or decision maker presents a strategic assessment, he takes upon himself a considerable risk, especially if his opinion seems to differ radically from others'; if the assessment proves wrong, he may lose credibility—or worse, his job. During the group discussion, however, the members may come to feel that they share the responsibility for any negative consequences for risky evaluation and that blame for failure will not be imputed to any single member. The fact that other members of the group at least generally agree with his assessment makes the individual more willing to stick his neck out. Moreover, "while group discussion to consensus yields a risky shift when each of the group members is responsible only to himself, the same sort of discussion to consensus results in an even stronger shift toward enhanced risk taking when each group member has been made responsible for the others as well as for himself" (Wallach and Kogan, 1965, p. 2).

A third explanation of the risky shift can be found in what Janis calls "the illusion of invulnerability." When members of a cohesive group share a sense of belonging to a powerful, protective group, they "tend to examine each risk in black and white terms. If it does not seem overwhelmingly dangerous, they are inclined simply to forget about it" (1972, pp. 36–37).

Finally, Kelley and Thibaut (1969, pp. 81–82) suggest that those who initially present more risky evaluations may exert a stronger influence within the group than those who take conservative stands because risk takers are endowed with generalized skills of persuasiveness. Some properties associated with taking risky positions may be particularly influential. The language used by the proponent of such a position and the heightened intensity with which he states his argument may give him a disproportionate weight in open discussion (Wallach and Kogan, 1965, p. 3).

Most of these elements play a role in the group process of evaluating an enemy's intentions and likely behavior; but there are sometimes offsetting factors too. Cautious analysts and policy makers may dominate group discussions and lead the group to a conservative assessment. Among some top analysts or policy makers there is a tendency to take the middle road and avoid extreme theories or policies. (This is one of the reasons why analysts may reject "wild" theories of lower-rank analysts as irresponsible, thereby suppressing contradictory views). In particular, following a spectacular failure of estimates, analysts and policy makers may tend to be overcautious.

On balance, however, analysts and decision makers in group environments tend to drop some of their caution, feel less vulnerable, ignore warning signals, and endorse riskier assessments. Again, Golda Meir's description of the climate of opinion on the eve of the 1973 war is telling: "On Friday, 5 October, we received a report that worried me. The families of the Russian advisers in Syria were packing up and leaving in a hurry . . . That one little detail had taken root in my mind, and I couldn't shake myself free of it. But since no one around me seemed very perturbed about it, I tried not to become obsessive" (1975, p. 356).