



National Security through a Cockeyed Lens

Steve A. Yetiv

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Yetiv draws on four decades of psychological, historical, and political science research on cognitive biases to illuminate some of the key pitfalls in our leaders' decision-making processes and some of the mental errors we make in perceiving ourselves and the world.

Tracing five U.S. national security episodes—the 1979 Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan; the Iran-Contra affair during the Reagan administration; the rise of al-Qaeda, leading to the 9/11 attacks; the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq; and the development of U.S. energy policy—Yetiv reveals how a dozen cognitive biases have been more influential in impacting U.S. national security than commonly believed or understood.

Identifying a primary bias in each episode—disconnect of perception versus reality, tunnel vision ("focus feature"), distorted perception ("cockeyed lens"), overconfidence, and short-term thinking—Yetiv explains how each bias drove the decision-making process and what the outcomes were for the various actors. His concluding chapter examines a range of debiasing techniques, exploring how they can improve decision making.]]>

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