GroupThink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascos. Irving L. Janis. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.

Pg. vii – poor decision-making performance of the men at those White House meetings … who became more concerned with retaining the approval of the fellow members of their group than with coming up with good solutions to the tasks at hand.

Occurs "particularly when a "we-feeling" of solidarity is running high."

Pg. viii – in each instance, the members of the policy-making group made incredibly gross miscalculations about both the practical and moral consequences of their decisions.

Pg. ix – "group dynamics"

Pg. 4 – William Graham Sumner postulated that in-group solidarity increases when clashes arise with out-groups.

the importance of group cohesiveness – that is, members' positive valuation of the group and their motivation to continue to belong to it. When group cohesiveness is high, all the members express solidarity, mutual liking, and positive feelings about attending meetings and carrying out the routine tasks of the group.

Bion: "the preconscious myths and misconceptions of their mutually dependent members – that is, shared basic assumptions that tend to preserve the group without regard for the work at hand.

Cartwright: The greater a group's cohesiveness the more power it has to bring about conformity to its norms and to gain acceptance of its goals and assignment to tasks and roles. … highly cohesive groups provide a source of security for members which serve to reduce anxiety and to heighten self-esteem.

Pg. 5 – 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, in order to restore the unity of the group.

… two detrimental tendencies arising under certain conditions not yet adequately understood – the tendency of groups to develop stereotyped images that dehumanize out-groups against whom they are engaged in competitive struggles and the tendency for the collective judgments arising out of group discussions to becomes polarized …

Pg. 7 - … members tend to evolve informal norms to preserve friendly intragroup relations and these become part of the hidden agenda at their meetings.

Pg. 11 - … a dominant characteristic appears to be remaining loyal to the group by sticking with the decisions to which the group has committed itself, even when the policy is working badly and has unintended consequences that disturb the conscience of the members. In a sense, **members consider**

loyalty to the group the highest form of morality. That loyalty requires each member to avoid raising issues, questioning weak arguments, or calling a halt to softheaded thinking.

Paradoxically, softheaded groups are likely to be extremely hardhearted toward out-groups and enemies. In dealing with a rival nation, policy-makers comprising an amiable group find it relatively easy to authorize dehumanizing solutions such as large-scale bombings. … Nor are the members inclined to raise ethical issues that imply that this "fine groups of ours, with its humanitarianism and its high-minded principles, might be capable of adopting a course of action that is inhumane and immoral."

Pg. 12 – 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 out-groups.

Pg. 13 – 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, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing action directed against out-groups.

Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs
Pgs 35-47 – According to the groupthink hypothesis, members of any … cohesive group tend to maintain *esprit de corps* by unconsciously developing a number of shared illusions and related norms that interfere with critical thinking and reality testing.

1. The illusion of invulnerability – Schlesinger (on Kennedy's team): "buoyant optimism"; the "promise of hope"; "Euphoria reigned; we thought for a moment that the world was plastic and the future unlimited." … they share a sense of belonging to a powerful, protective group that in some vague way opens up new potentials for each of them.

    When a cohesive group … is planning a campaign directed against a rival or enemy group, their discussions are likely to contain two themes … (1) "We are a strong group of good guys who will win in the end." (2) "Our opponents are stupid, weak, bad guys."

    Castro was regarded as a weak "hysteric" leader whose army was ready to defect; he was considered so stupid that "although warned by air strikes, he would do nothing to neutralize the Cuban underground."

    One of the symptoms of groupthink is the members' persistence in conveying to each other the cliché and oversimplified images of … enemies embodied in long-standing ideological stereotypes.

    … the members of concurrence-seeking group tend to view any antagonistic out-group against whom they are plotting not only as immoral but as weak and stupid.

2. The illusion of unanimity – consensual validation, a shared illusion of unanimity: When a group of people who respect each other's opinions arrive at a unanimous view, each member is likely to feel that the belief must be true. … prevent latent disagreements from surfacing …   … silence gives consent …

3. <u>Suppression of personal doubts</u> - … self-censorship of misgivings … partly out of a fear of being labelled 'soft' or undaring in the eyes of their colleagues. Schlesinger: "… a course of objection would have accomplished little save to *gain me a name as a nuisance*."

4. <u>Self-appointed mindguards</u> – Among the well-known phenomena of group dynamics is the alacrity with which members of a cohesive group suppress deviational points of view by putting social pressure on any member who begins to express a view that deviates from dominant beliefs of the group … (Robert Kennedy (AG) played this role, acting against Schlesinger. Dean Rusk (Secr of State) did similarly, suppressing questions being raised in State (Chester Bowles) and the U.S. Information Agency.)

5. <u>Docility fostered by suave leadership</u> – Kennedy actively suppressed dissenting views, when they did occur. When he learned, after the fact, that Bowles (whom Rusk had suppressed) had before the fact identified many of the failures that eventually did occur, Kennedy fired him – because it "embarrassed the White House."

6. <u>The taboo against antagonizing valuable new members</u>

<u>Truman attacking North Korea</u>

Pg. 49 – Paige: "one of the most striking aspects [of the set of decisions that committed the United States to fight in Korea] is the high degree of satisfaction and sense of moral rightness shared by the decision makers."

Pg. 58 - …a more general pattern of concurrence-seeking behavior, which also fosters uncritical acceptance of stereotypes of out-groups and a sense of unanimity about the wisdom and morality of past decisions."

McClellan: "is a prime example of an American propensity to take the righteousness of its actions for granted and to ignore the objective reality which its behavior represents to others."

Points out that it is driven primarily by underlying, unexamined, ideology … (Pg. 59) "They tend to retain all the platitudinous stereotypes that fit in beautifully with the long-standing ideology of the political elite to which they belong."

Pg. 60 – "Secretary (of State) Acheson had adopted the role of a self-appointed mindguard, making sure that Kennan and those who shared his critical views of the risk of provoking Communist China were always kept at a safe distance from the men who had the power …"

Pg. 60 – "To an outside observer, one of the most incomprehensible characteristics of a cohesive group that is sharing stereotypes and manifesting other symptoms of groupthink is the tenacity with which the members adhere to erroneous assumptions despite the mounting evidence to challenge them."

Pg. 64 – Deflection of anger away from the group – "Against whom did he (Truman) direct his anger? … Did he blame his military experts … ? Did he single out Acheson or any of his other political advisers … ? He did not. Truman concentrated his vindictiveness solely against Republican newspaper publishers and other Republican 'vilifiers.'"

"Then, in an open display of 'anguish,' together with 'irritability and disgust,' Truman excitedly blurted out his hostile diatribe against the domestic enemies on whom he bitterly cast the blame:

> Well the liars have accomplished their purpose. The whole campaign of lies we have been seeing in this country has brought about this result. I'm talking about the crowd of vilifiers who have been trying to tear us apart in the country. Pravda had an article just the other day crowing about how the American government is divided, in hatred. Don't worry, they keep a close eye on our dissensions. We can blame the liars for the fix we are in this morning. It's at least partly the result of their vicious, lying campaign. …

Here we have what appears to be a typical example of displaced hostility in response to unexpected frustration. Truman's anger apparently was deflected away from those in his administration who had misinformed and misled him. He directed it toward a substitute target, his political opponents within the United States …

Deflection of anger away from the group members is typical behavior for a frustrated leader who is loyal to his in-group. … The domestic 'vilifiers' of the administration were a target close to home, a fifth column that could be seen as inflicting a 'stab in the back' and 'playing into the hands of the enemy.'

Pg. 71 – The most prominent symptoms were excessive risk-taking based on a shared illusion of invulnerability, stereotypes of the enemy, collective reliance on ideological rationalizations that supported the belligerent escalation to which the group became committed, and mindguarding to exclude the dissident views of experts who questioned the group's unwarranted assumptions.

<71 of 276 page – watch this space – more to come!>