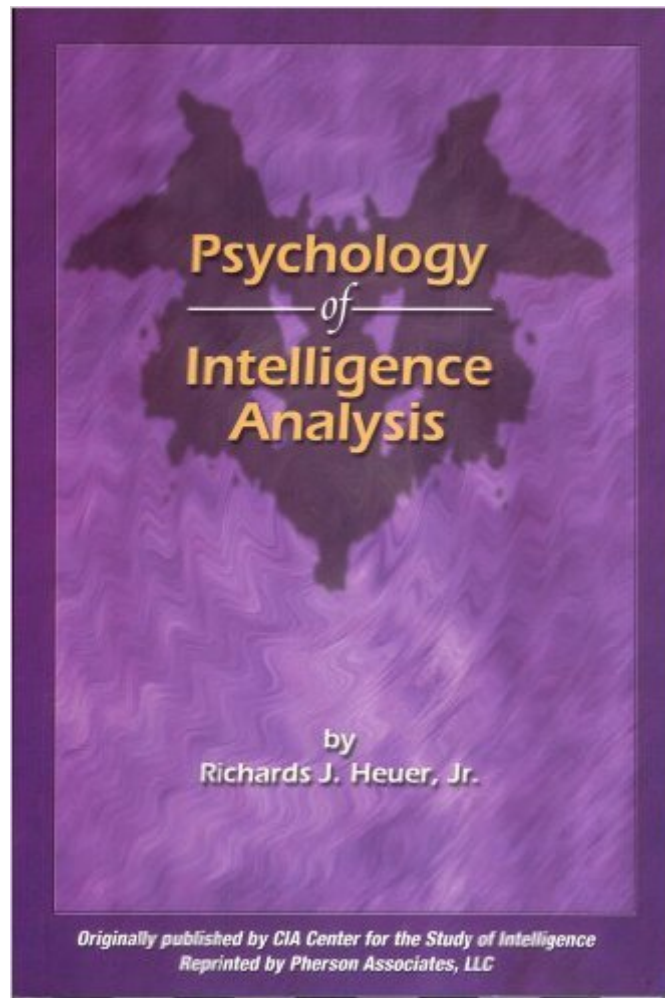


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Psychology Of Intelligence Analysis



Synopsis

The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis has been required reading for intelligence officers studying the art and science of intelligence analysis for decades. Richards Heuer, Jr. discusses in the book how fundamental limitations in human mental processes can prompt people to jump to conclusions and employ other simplifying strategies that lead to predictably faulty judgments known as cognitive biases. These analytic mindsets cannot be avoided, but they can be overcome through the application of more structured and rigorous analytic techniques including the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses.

Book Information

Paperback

Publisher: Pherson Associates Llc; 2nd Edition edition (2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 097988800X

ISBN-13: 978-0979888007

ASIN: B0016OST3O

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 5.9 x 0.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #406,306 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #143 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Dramas & Plays > Anthologies](#)

Customer Reviews

I've been in the Intelligence Community for almost nine years. This was a great book for beginners and seasoned analysts alike. This book has great examples, great stories on experiments in analysis, practical tips, and good advice on how to improve intelligence. Even college professors who teach analysis cite from this book, and one even cited the method used in this book as the best one out there (reference [...]) Read this book and you'll get something great out of it that will make you a better analyst.

Interesting study of how analysts dissect and attempt to create a coherent picture out of incomplete information, how they identify and correct for personal bias, etc. There is a very interesting description of study of horse racing 'touts' (handicappers) and how important the various tidbits of info are (such as jockey weight, horse race record, etc.). The study started with the touts using a

small subset of the big data picture to bet on races, and gradually were given more and more information and continued to bet. Turns out that about 5 bits of data were all the touts needed, and that adding more data DID NOT improve their betting performance--it really was possible for the touts to have too much data. While this book is specifically written for the intelligence community, it has quite a few good ideas for anyone who needs to make critical decisions with incomplete information.

Clearly written book providing a useful method for hashing out the truth in the face of hazy information and conflicting theories. The author's "Analysis of Competing Hypothesis" would, if widely adopted, improve results in a range of fields that are prone to common human mental errors. Doctors, criminal investigators, and anyone needing to wrangle with important, complex, multi-pronged problems take note: this book may greatly improve your results.

While this is technically a book on Intelligence Analysis, as someone who works as a Security Analyst, this book was extremely valuable in pointing out my own blind spots and ways to avoid them. I found the writing compelling, and the information eye opening.

Richards Heuer's "Psychology of Intelligence Analysis" should be required reading for anyone in any form of intelligence analysis. This is the seminal discussion of analytical biases, and this alone is enough reason to read it. Heuer also lays out an analytical methodology, the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH). This is a specialized form of scientific method, adapted for intelligence analysis. The discussion of biases is very thorough, and based on a systematic understanding of cognitive processes and organizational behavior. Heuer also takes the next step and makes some recommendations on approaches to minimizing the effects of biases. This stuff is pure gold, and is the principles behind some of the techniques of analysis (and if you don't understand the principles, techniques are double-edged razors with no handle). Where Heuer really steps bravely out of the crowd is in his discussion of organizational biases in analysis. He calls the ugly baby ugly, and states that experience and tenure do not automatically equal good analysis. This is monumental heresy in a bureaucracy. Good on him. And grad students, especially in history and other qualitative disciplines could benefit from this. I wish I had read it as an undergrad. Great book, I can't recommend it highly enough. E.M. Van Court

If you have read Robert Cialdini's polymath classic "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion", then

you will like this great additional contribution to the social sciences of human tendencies and misinterpretations of the mind. The book is basically divided into three (3) parts with Part 1 - Our Mental Machinery Part 2 - Tools for Thinking Part 3 - Cognitive Biases This is truly a hidden gem and I call it a "hidden hidden gem" as it really is off the radar screen since it was originally published by the government printing office but is now in broader distribution since Nova Science published the paperback version in 2005. This review however is based on my second reading of the original obtained from the U.S. Government Bookstore. I could go on about the wonderful truths this book provides but several of the other reviewers do a fine job. On the other hand, I will recommend a few gems on this same theme. If you have previously not read Influence, you should still like this book as it is a good introductory start on the subject matter of social influences. If one really likes this subject and wants to pursue it in more depth, please also refer to other fine books on the subject such as, How We Know What Isn't So (very good), Mean Markets and Lizard Brains (Hidden Gem), The Psychology of Judgment & Decision Making (Classic), or Poor Charlie's Almanack (Charlie's Insights). Good reading and enjoy :) As a side note: the author Richards J. Heuer, Jr. prefers this Pherson Associates reprint.

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