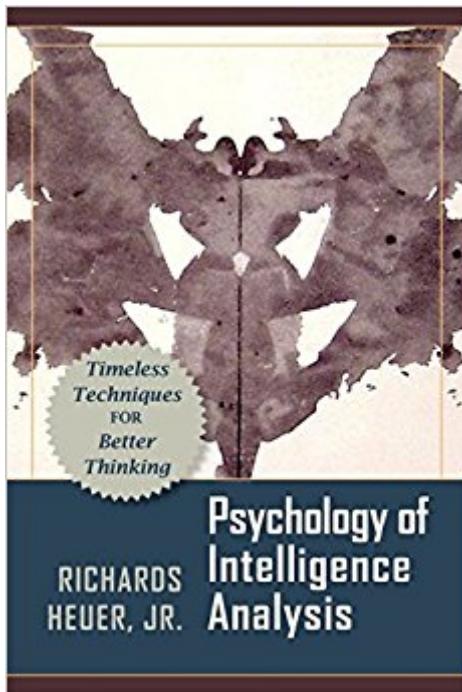


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# Psychology Of Intelligence Analysis



## **Synopsis**

First commissioned by the CIA, this book offers a fascinating look at the never-ending quest for better intelligence analysis. At the fundamental core of this work are the cognitive challenges that any analyst faces, and how critical thinking can significantly improve our understanding and outcomes for complex issues. This book explains how the mind is poorly wired to deal with information that is vague, convoluted, or that has been deliberately distorted. Our mental processes can lead us to jump to conclusions or employ other simplifying strategies that create faulty judgments, known as cognitive biases. However, critical thinking can substantially improve analysis when dealing with these types of complex issues. Techniques for better understanding include structuring information, challenging assumptions and exploring different interpretations. The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis features articles consolidated by CIA veteran Richards J. Heuer. These timelessly relevant articles focus on how people process information and make judgments on incomplete and ambiguous material. Translating the technical reports into accessible language, Heuer equates the relevance of these findings to the problems all analysts must overcome.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Richards J. Heuer, Jr., worked for the CIA for nearly 45 years-first as a staff officer from 1951 until his retirement in 1979, and then as a contractor on a variety of projects until 1995. He began his career in the Directorate of Operations and later transferred to the Directorate of Intelligence, where he headed the unit working on analytic methods in the Office of Political Analysis. He went on to

work as a consultant for the Department of Defense Personnel Security Research Center in Monterey, California. Mr. Heuer was awarded the Agency Seal Medallion in 1987 for developing and teaching an innovative methodology for addressing complex and challenging problems facing the intelligence community. He was recognized in 1988 for his "outstanding contribution to the literature of intelligence," and again in 1996 for "superior accomplishment." In addition to his work on the psychology of intelligence analysis, Mr. Heuer is a published author on counterintelligence, deception, analytical methodology, and personnel security issues.

The information is great.....HOWEVER, page 143 & 144 are out of sequence, which makes for a challenge in keeping the flow. The 143 & 144 pages are inserted between pages 154 & 155!! Not sure if all these books are misprinted, but I would caution anyone considering making this purchase to be forewarned.

Outstanding.

Fascinating read... Highly recommended to scholars and analysts across all academic and intellectual disciplines.

An excellent composition of non-fiction information. It presents very good details about the foreign policy and current information. This book is a great read for the layman and the global security reader. Author of THE SHEQEL

to see a world in a grain of sand lies the complex ocean of sand grains of different angles of the brain

This book is a must read for anyone wishing to understand how the human brain can organize massive amounts of data despite having finite capacity and capability. Originally written for intel analysts at CIA, the principles found in this book are applicable to the conduct of all types of analysis. Buyer beware, this book is also published on CIA's website, and can be printed as a word document.

Richards Heuer's Psychology of Intelligence Analysis is based on a compilation of declassified articles from the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence, prepared for intelligence analysts and

management. However, this book will benefit anyone conducting analyses of complex scenarios in a structured way, including health care professionals, financial and market analysts from all industry verticals, law enforcement and security staff, auditors and fraud investigators, and many others. Heuer's point is that 'analysts should be self-conscious about their reasoning processes. They should think about how they make judgments and reach conclusions, not just about the judgments and conclusions themselves'. The book presents a discussion of how mental models and subconscious cognitive processes can limit our reasoning capabilities (especially when coping with uncertainty and doubt), as well as an introduction on how we can try to understand and negate these effects. In his analysis, Heuer presents data from internal and external cognitive studies, scrutinizes past CIA success and failure cases, and proposes a re-evaluation of the way we generally look at problems. The author brilliantly makes his point in Chapter 13 by showing scenarios in which the reader is invited to review previous statements and 'evidence' from the text, look at the discussion from different angles, methodically apply or remove certain models, and then compare his/her own conclusions as a professional analyst would be expected to do. The outcomes are disturbing, but not surprising. Disturbing because it is alarming to see how our judgments are normally biased by previous experiences, pre-conceptions and mental models; also because it is extremely hard to change or even notice this fact by ourselves. Not surprising because we can see the same analytical problems happening over time; even when talented, trained professionals are warned about the dangers of cognitive biases, such as 'events that people experience personally are more memorable than those they only read about. Concrete words are easier to remember than abstract words, and words of all types are easier to recall than numbers. [Information having the qualities cited] is more likely to be stored and remembered than abstract reasoning or statistical summaries, and therefore can be expected to have a greater immediate effect as well as a continuing impact on our thinking in the future'. Heuer's presentation of the subject is very pleasant to read, fluid and rich in real-life examples from psychological research, political and military intelligence, and other domains. The author clearly differentiates empirical data from his own assumptions and opinions, even when his conclusions are naturally drawn from research data (i.e. following his own advice). The book leaves the reader with some unanswered questions as to how one can change his/her own biased mental models to improve the outcomes of an analytical process, as many issues simply have no known remediation and are deeply rooted in the way humans reason. That being said, the greatest value of this book comes from Heuer's recommendations and logical steps to be followed in order to improve the accuracy of verdicts and conclusions, and avoid known cognitive traps that can ruin even an expert's assessment. Heuer

also points out that by knowing about the existence and understanding the nature of the problem, we can further research ways to identify and isolate negative effects of cognitive limitations on our forecasts, plans, and professional judgements.

Human beings, as Steven Pinker rightly asserts in *How the Mind Works*, are not equipped to handle statistics or large amounts of information. The author illustrates the importance of these seemingly trivial quirks by examining the successes and failures of American foreign policy. Minor faults with our wiring, like placing ourselves in another's shoes without trying to understand their mindset or cultural background, can create international incidents. Some of the experiment mentioned, like people's estimates after being primed with different figures, is fascinating. Businessmen and marketers will find this useful. Texts on cognitive neuroscience long, dense and do not always offer very much practical information to busy people. Students of foreign policy and aspiring intelligence analysts, of course, will find this book useful.

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