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Title: The Psychological Training of Intelligence Analysts: Self-Change and Changes in the World

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Abstract: The author considers the prospects of self-change of analysts in the context of intelligence analysis, and the possibility of the analysts' gaining better insights into the actual state of global affairs in the process.

One could easily posit that the more an analyst knows about a topic, the more accurate analysis about that topic would be. A caveat to this generalization might focus on the type of knowing about which one is positing. Only a plethora of facts might leave the analyst stranded in a wilderness with little clue as to where one was, how one got in, and how one could get out. Answers to questions about where and how might only reflect patterns among the facts that are largely dependent on a myriad of conscious cognitive heuristics such as which facts and patterns were most cognitively available at any moment and unconscious cognitive-emotional heuristics based on unperceived psychodynamics.

In fact, analyst goals of understanding, explaining, and predicting are notoriously difficult to validate. Right answers may be given for wrong reasons, as well as wrong for right. One might even argue that the very validity of what is right and wrong are subject to disagreement the more questions veer from easily observable behavior.

Within the above context, a recent study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* identifies two psychological phenomena that contribute to the many difficulties of the intelligence analyst. Eibach et al. (2003) provide data supporting the hypothesis that changes in the self lead to mistaken assessments that the world has changed. For example, survey data reveal that: personal changes—e.g., parenthood and finances—can be positively correlated with assessments of associated social changes—e.g., crime rates and freedom).

In addition, experimental data can provide converging validation of the hypothesis. For example, an experimentally induced change in knowledge can influence one's perceptions of change in an author's writing style from one decade to the next. Both through survey and experimental data, one could consider it likely that the very sorts of things most germane to intelligence analysts—viz., elements of the social world—can be influenced by the personal aspect of these very analysts. Analytic product would be hopelessly yoked to personal fate.

But before one might start bemoaning the Sisyphean fate of the analyst, one should also note that there is a hopeful corollary. Eibach et al. also provide data supporting the hypothesis that bringing self-change to one's attention can attenuate what otherwise would be judgments of change in the world that might not be warranted by other facts outside those associated with self-change. This attenuation seems to occur when one seems to possess sufficient cognitive resources to consider how such self-changes might affect one's social perceptions and judgments.

The above findings point to a serendipitous convergence of two benefits from the same mode of data collection. The very sorts of self-change studied by Eibach et al. are those of interest to personnel security authorities. As described in personnel security manuals—e.g., (DCID 6/9, 2002)—changes in

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parenthood, financial status, and the like are considered indicative of psychological phenomena bearing on whether one should be awarded or maintain a security clearance, special access to information, or authorization to engage in sensitive activity.

Self-change data of an analyst could be crafted into periodic analyst training wherein new sensitivities and proclivities to arrive at conclusions based on personal data could be identified, explicated, and processed with the analyst. Such training could be part of ongoing analytic training that already focus on the impact of other generic heuristics of a cognitive and cognitive-emotional nature and how these heuristics can be attenuated—or maximized if they contribute to analytic accuracy.

Psychologically based analytic training is becoming ever more important as intelligence analysis continues to be recognized as a huge weapon in the war against terrorism with global reach and to confront the security implications of a globalized world. In the face of these challenges, it is no wonder that perceptions of and judgments about the world can become a prisoner of the self. And it can be wondrous if self-change applied to self-change can free the analyst to better meet these challenges. (See Dhami, M.K. (2003). Psychological models of professional decision-making. *Psychological Science*, 14, 175-180; Director of Central Intelligence Directive 6/9. (November 18, 2002). Physical Security Standards for Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities. <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/dcid6-9.htm>; Eibach, R., Libby, L.K., & Gilovich, T. D. (2003). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 917–931; Fisk, J.E. (2002). Judgements under uncertainty: Representativeness or potential surprise? *British Journal of Psychology*, 93, 431-449; Johnson, P. E., Grazioli, S., Jamal, K., & Berryman, R. G. (2001). Detecting deception: Adversarial problem solving in a low base-rate world. *Cognitive Science*, 25355-392.)