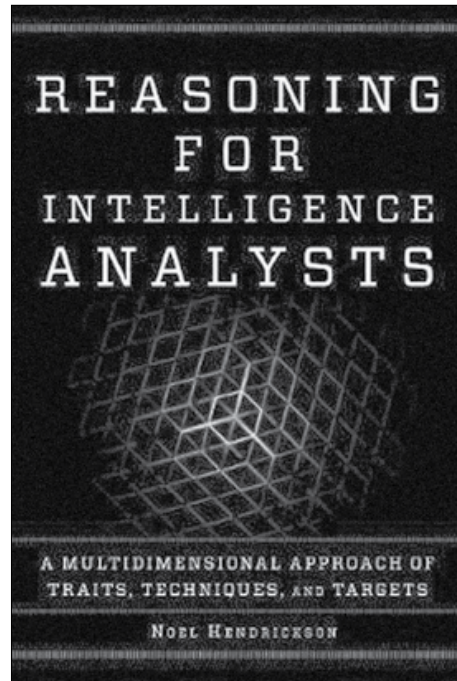


Reasoning  
for Intelligence  
Analysts:  
A Multidimensional  
Approach of Traits,  
Techniques,  
and Targets



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Noel Hendrickson

*Reasoning for Intelligence Analysts:  
A Multidimensional Approach of Traits, Techniques, and Targets*

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Noel Hendrickson's *Reasoning for Intelligence Analysis* is a divergence in analytical methodological thought from the current standard of Structured Analytic Techniques (SATs). Hendrickson takes a philosophical angle to the question of ensuring rigorous and effective analysis, with the book attempting to walk the fine line between theory and tradecraft, as he indicates in the introduction. The book can be broken down into the basic theory, the analytical

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qualities needed in an analyst, and the four areas or types of analysis that his methods facilitate. Through this, he generates a “multidimensional” approach to reasoning. The most interesting contributions would be identified as the analytical qualities, his variant of hypothesis testing’s Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH), and his work on “Counterfactual Analysis,” or Futures Analysis.

The author’s split from orthodoxy is seen at the beginning through his theoretical approach; while the typical mentality around the SATs is to minimize bias, Hendrickson takes it a step further by providing philosophical theory to serve as the foundation of his methods as the epistemology. This entails delving into the history of critical thinking and explaining how reasoning is accomplished. He does this by going through the types of analysis and building to how intelligence analysis functions provides the parameters for the book. By explaining what exactly intelligence analysis serves to accomplish, Hendrickson gives a direction for the goals of the book to support this. He identifies the competing problems of self, target, and methodology which come together as the challenges an intelligence analyst must overcome. This creates his vision of “*reasoning for intelligence analysts will have to guide them with a multidimensional approach of traits, techniques, and targets.*” From this, he goes into how the information age will affect intelligence analysis and proceeds into a deeper dive into reasoning before launching into the traits of an analyst.

The analytic qualities diverge from the idea that analysis can be a mechanical action taught to almost anyone. The author lays out key qualities that analysts should seek to embody, with some correlating to particular methods, and how these help to bring out the best analysis. These are then shown in conjunction with the types of problems or targets to further maximize the value added. This is part of the unique contribution of Noel Hendrickson as he lays out the “multidimensional” aspects of intelligence analysis. This serves as an enumeration of the biases that the SATs seek to minimize with tips on how to adjust for them, and puts a further onus on the aspects beyond the analysts’ personal biases. Instead of a simple plug and play for the analyst, this system requires the analyst to understand the types of problems, what methods are ideal for approaching the problems, and how analysts can best adapt and balance their own strengths and weaknesses to increase analytic value. This combination of factors allows for a more rounded paradigm of intelligence analysis reasoning. Beyond the theoretical and abstract ideas, the actual methodologies offer new pathways for the analyst.

The methods outlined in the book provide interesting new ideas on the methodology of intelligence analysis. Beginning with the hypothesis testing and development, Noel Hendrickson’s more interesting contribution is his “Triadic Hypothesis Development” (THD) which is his version of the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH). The new take on ACH is intriguing as it allows for a more rigorous application of analytic standards; according to his

model, ACH has the possibility of being skewed by the analyst and used as a universal method for intelligence. THD functions in a similar manner as ACH, but it requires assumptions for evidence points that do not support a hypothesis to be explained. This forces the analyst to explain their reasoning for evidence allocation to a far greater extent than ACH does, and helps increase the objectivity of the analysis. Beyond the hypothesis testing contributions, the book provides causal analysis methods. These should be of interest to organizations that lack formal causal analytic methods, as causal analysis in conjunction with hypothesis testing provides the starting point of futures analysis.

Hendrickson makes his most notable methodological contribution in future analysis that he refers to as Counterfactual Reasoning. This method provides a fully-fledged exploration of a particular future. The process has three different aspects: Convergent Scenario Development, Ripple Effect Analysis, and Divergent Scenario Development. The first and last methods are capable of being adapted for different uses; for example, the Divergent Scenario Development is comparable to CIA future methods and can be used as such, but when used collectively, it provides a means to fully explore the plausible scenarios of the future. This provides the possibility of adding decision advantage by reducing uncertainty over the future by offering plausible futures for consideration. But the book's effectiveness is influenced by the writing and visuals provided by the author.

Noel Hendrickson's writing hampers his message, and his visuals throughout the book can be a double-edged sword. The writing can be obfuscating and overly complex at points which somewhat reduces the ability of the author to effectively argue his points. While the ideas are solid, the conveyance could be better. The visuals of the book are a mixed bag in terms of increasing or reducing clarity. Some visuals are less effective than others, with one of the worst offenders being the Multidimensional Chart that maps out all the various aspects that goes into intelligence analysis. While this may be necessary and unavoidable, the graphic nonetheless can be confusing. Positive examples include the actual methodology charts, such as the Comparative Influence Taxonomy that clearly shows how the method should be executed. Despite these challenges, the book still has much to offer.

Overall, Noel Hendrickson's book provides a new direction for the reasoning or methodology of the analyst with interesting new ideas, but will ultimately leave everyone dissatisfied in at least one manner. The author is self-aware of this problem, and it can arguably be considered the purpose of the book. It is not designed to fully satisfy any particular audience as it deliberately sought a path to allow both academics and practitioners to derive something; therefore, fully committing to either camp would negate the benefits for the other. The practitioner can gain new methods and the academic some new thought, with the interesting aspect being the application of theory. An undergraduate student

or a reader new to this field may also benefit from the book, but will have to overcome the language and occasional confusing graphic. Yet, if they can survive it, the benefits will be instrumental in preparing them for a career in analytics, as a foundation is provided to their abilities that can be expanded upon with time and experience.

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