Short Takes: Intelligence-Service Psychology: A German Perspective

Sven Max Litzcke
Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Helmut Müller-Enbergs
University of Southern Denmark

Short Takes: Intelligence-Service Psychology: A German Perspective

Author Biography

Litzcke, Sven Max, Prof., Dr., Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Faculty 4—Business and Computer Science, Postfach 92 02 51, 30441 Hannover, Germany, web: www.fh-hannover.de.

Müller-Enbergs, Helmut, Prof., Dr., Diplom-Politologe, Syddansk Universitet (University of Southern Denmark) Institut vor Historie, Kultur og Samfundsbeskrivelse (Institute of History and Civilization), Campusvej 55DK 5230 Odense M, Denmark, web: www.bstu.de.

Abstract

To date, four German volumes in the series "Intelligence-Service Psychology" (Nachrichtendienstpsychologie) have been published. These volumes generated interest in both the German and non-German speaking communities. It was therefore decided to translate some of the basic articles of the series into English (Litzcke, Müller-Enbergs & Ungerer, 2008), making them accessible to a wider range of readers. This article contains abbreviated versions of the articles in the book.

Short Takes

Intelligence-Service Psychology: A German Perspective

Sven Max Litzcke
Helmut Müller-Enbergs

Abstract: To date, four German volumes in the series "Intelligence-Service Psychology" (Nachrichtendienstpsychologie) have been published. These volumes generated interest in both the German and non-German speaking communities. It was therefore decided to translate some of the basic articles of the series into English (Litzcke, Müller-Enbergs & Ungerer, 2008), making them accessible to a wider range of readers. This article contains abbreviated versions of the articles in the book.

Intelligence-Service Psychology is a recent development in the field, which arose from the specific conditions of intelligence work and the demands it made on the science of psychology. Intelligence services acquire and analyze information in order to create a basis on which Governments can make decisions. Specifically, Intelligence Services are involved in gaining information that was intended to remain secret, and that would otherwise be unattainable. The more that other, potentially hostile, parties wish to keep information secret, the more relevant the work of the Intelligence Services becomes. The goal of Intelligence Services is the same in times of both peace and conflict; namely to create predictability, be it by building confidence in times of cooperation or by using means of espionage in times of disagreement.

The first chapter of the edition by Litzcke, Müller-Enbergs and Ungerer (2008) asks whether intelligence work can be the subject of scientific research. Intelligence work covers a range of topics that are linked by sharing a single core element: viewing information as a strategic factor. This perspective links all academic disciplines that are involved in intelligence work, and structures, selects and specifies the range of topics that are included.

53

Journal of Strategic Security

The second chapter examines the origins of the Training Center of the State-Security of the German Democratic Republic. In 1951, the Institute for Economy-Scientific Research (IWF), which would later develop into the major governmental department A (HVA), developed the idea of a school for training junior information officials. The first course, of which about a dozen were to follow, earned special attention when some of its participants later became members of the HVA, which would in turn shape the history of espionage within the GDR. These courses, particularly the first, were one of the key factors in the "success" of this new agency, which undoubtedly succeeded in gaining considerable insights into the decisions of the Federal Republic of Germany. The morality of the former leaders of the HVA, which is still in existence today, long after German reunification rendered system-dependent factors irrelevant, needs an explanation. The question remains as to whether the leading officials of the HVA were so conditioned by their service and, more specifically, by attending the Training Center, which isolated them sufficiently both intellectually and emotionally from counter-influences, that they have continued to think in the same manner throughout their working lives.

The third chapter explores the reasons why people become involved in Intelligence Services. Although there is much interest in the motivation behind intelligence work, hardly any empirical investigations have been published in this area. This may be because the subject itself is difficult to research. Intelligence Services hardly report openly on such matters, not least through a reluctance to expose their operational staff to academic investigations. The findings published by "experts" have mostly included testimonials and evaluations from criminal proceedings involving informers, and from an empirical perspective, this hardly leads to valid results. This group of subjects represents only an exposed minority, and they are probably aware of the advantages to them under criminal law of offering more sophisticated motives for their actions. The majority of testimonials, which mostly consist of communist and post-communist memoirs, are similarly unhelpful since the former agents, messengers or spies emphasize their ideals as motivation, while confidants who tend towards materialism tend to report less candidly on the sources of their motivations.

The fourth chapter deals with gathering information and evaluating high-risk situations and human behavior. It discusses the causes of weaknesses in these areas, and also shows that both of these cognitive processes are used in filtering a person's conceptualization of human beings, and in revealing subversive behaviour. The procedures for doing this are presented, along with an algorithm that demonstrates a methodology for ascertaining a subject's ideological views, and identifying subversive language.

54

The fifth chapter describes how language governs a person's behavior, disposition, and means of expressing knowledge, and how it acts as a sophisticated indicator of conditions of mental and physiological stress. Important factors include the process of exchanging information between the speaker and the listener, the processing of information, and the production of language. This chapter describes the fundamental factors of linguistic comprehension: the duration of presence, the speed of memory, and semantic fields. Central themes also include the subject's sensitivity to mental and physiological duress during the production and comprehension of language, and linguistic regression under such stress.

Finally, the closing chapter examines lies, focusing on non-verbal aspects. It presents a condensed version of existing results on credibility diagnosis, and focuses on discovering which nonverbal warning signals can help us to distinguish between truth and lies. Police officers' assumptions about credibility characteristics are presented. These assumptions influence their behaviour in a communication situation, and therefore its course. In order to distinguish between truth and lies, people rely on those characteristics that they believe to be useful, independently of whether these characteristics are in fact suitable for this purpose.

References

Litzcke, S.M. (2003). *Nachrichtendienstpsychologie 1*. Brühl/Germany: Federal University of Applied Adminstrative Sciences.
URL: http://psydok.sulb.uni-saarland.de/volltexte/2004/153/

Litzcke, S.M., Müller-Enbergs, H. & Ungerer, D. (2008). *Intelligence-Service Psychology*. Studies in Intelligence Collection and Intelligence Analysis—Volume 1. Frankfurt/Germany: Verlag fuer Polizeiwissenschaft.

Litzcke, S.M. & Schwan, S. (2005). *Nachrichtendienstpsychologie 3*. Brühl/Germany: Federal University of Applied Adminstrative Sciences.
URL: http://psydok.sulb.uni-saarland.de/volltexte/2005/506/

Schwan, S. (2004). *Nachrichtendienstpsychologie 2*. Brühl/Germany: Federal University of Applied Adminstrative Sciences.
URL: http://psydok.sulb.uni-saarland.de/volltexte/2004/205/

Schwan, S. & Litzcke, S.M. (2006). *Nachrichtendienstpsychologie 4*. Brühl/Germany: Federal University of Applied Adminstrative Sciences.
URL: http://psydok.sulb.uni-saarland.de/volltexte/2007/965/

Journal of Strategic Security

About the Authors

Litzcke, Sven Max, Prof., Dr., Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Faculty 4—Business and Computer Science, Postfach 92 02 51, 30441 Hannover, Germany, web: www.fh-hannover.de.

Müller-Enbergs, Helmut, Prof., Dr., Diplom-Politologe, Syddansk Universitet (University of Southern Denmark) Institut vor Historie, Kultur og Samfundsbeskrivelse (Institute of History and Civilization), Campusvej 55DK 5230 Odense M, Denmark, web: www.bstu.de.