

INTL401: Identifying Biases/Analytical Errors

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Instructions

1. Identify the type of bias/analytical error, then prepare a two paragraph summary describing the selection of a particular bias/analytic error along with a “compare and contrast” with two other choices being considered. Because each question contains multiple answers, students should “compare and contrast” the next two “best answers.” Short, substantive responses are required.

2. Because each question contains multiple answers, the degree to which you support your choice will determine your score. Simply identifying the correct response without sufficiently explaining how you arrived at your conclusion/compare and contrast will not automatically result in a passing score. The key to supporting your response is incorporating multiple examples from Psychology of Intelligence Analysis.

#1. Situation: After reviewing the public statements issued by the Xinhua news agency, a junior analyst assigned to U.S. Forces Japan briefs her leadership that such statements are “quite routine” and “shouldn’t be cause for concern.” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#2. Situation: During a meeting to assess the significance of the test firing of two CSS-6 missiles (40 days prior), an analyst from the Defense Intelligence Agency concludes the event was associated with a test and is unrelated to the current tensions. When pressed to explain his assessment, he responds by saying “A year ago, I was selected to participate in a week long Department of Defense sponsored symposium with representatives the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). One member of the PLA delegation was a senior maintenance office for the CSS-6 system. During one of our working group sessions, he explained how CSS-6’s are flight tested every other month in order to ensure they are fully missions capable. Based on this discussion, I believe the dual missile launch was a part of this pre-planned testing cycle.” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#3. Situation: When asked to assess the significance of events from day 90 to day 40, a new analyst working the Pentagon Watch states “Based on what I’ve seen thus far, it doesn’t appear as though the situation is going to escalate into an armed conflict. If the PLA was going to attack Taiwan, we’d have seen more military and political activity.” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#4. Situation: During a video teleconference to discuss the significance of the PLA's 25th and 79th Airborne Divisions, an intelligence analyst from the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division states "I've been tracking the PLA's airborne capabilities for three years now and I've never seen both the 25th and 79th divisions placed on alert at the same time. This suggests that something big is going to happen and we need to start thinking how we're going to respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan." What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#5. Situation: When asked to explain if there's a relationship between the PLAN's order to "prepare for extended operations" (day 40) and the mobilization of the PLA's 1st, 2nd, and 4th Infantry Divisions, (day 45), a junior analyst from DIA states "it's tough to say with any degree of certainty. Given the PLAN and PLA don't regularly conduct in joint operations, it's probably just a random coincidence." What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#6. Situation: When asked to comment of the departure of anti-ship submarines from Ningbo (day 45), an assistant to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff states “It’s obvious Beijing is determined to blockade Taiwan rather than seek a peaceful solution. This is all part of a well-orchestrated plan to attack Taiwan.” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#7. Situation: As two junior analysts are discussing the PRC-Taiwan conflict, one ask the other if the PRC will attack Taiwan? The analyst responds by stating “I just don’t see it happening. The PRC has to understand if they attack Taiwan, the U.S. will respond and we’d turn China into a giant parking lot. Why would China risk annihilation over a silly little island no one really cares about?” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#8. Situation: When asked to assess the significance of Hu Jintao's appeal to the United Nation's Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (day 30), a political pundit on CNN states "given the stakes of a PRC-Taiwan conflict, I'm sure both nation's are fully engaged in trying to diffuse this crisis before both sides drift into an accidental war. This almost happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis when a Soviet missile commander ordered the firing of a Surface to Air Missile and shot down a U-2 piloted by Major Rudolph Anderson, killing him. I'm sure both sides are deep into negotiations right now and I wouldn't be surprised if they agree to take a series of small confidence building measures to walk back from what many perceive is a march towards war." What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#9. Situation: As a result of the increased flight activity at Shantou, Fuzhou, and Luqiao airfields (day 55), a U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft detects an unusually large number of PLAAF fighters operating off the coast of Canton Naval Base. As part of their post mission debrief, an U.S. Navy intelligence analyst concludes the fighters are probably operating from Shantou airfield as their flight operations have increased significantly. What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

#10. Situation: After assessing events from day 90 to day 40 a senior analyst from the Joint Intelligence Center in Hawaii states “Based on what we’ve seen so far, it’s obvious the PRC is going to use their military to intimidate Taiwan. This is the exact same thing that happened in 1996 so this shouldn’t come as a surprise to anyone.” What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?

---Extra Question---

#11. Situation: Taiwan's intelligence service confirmed the PLA has ordered the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Infantry divisions to begin mobilizing (day 45). When asked to identify the significance of this, a junior analyst states: “The 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions routinely go on alert so this isn’t something to get overly concerned about. Off the top of my head, I remember this happening at least twice in the last four months. What type of bias/analytical error did the analyst display?”