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Coercive Persuasion

Edgar H. Schein

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believes that to know the people of a foreign country and to formulate an intelligent foreign policy, it is necessary to go beyond the statistics and to judge them by their nature, their capabilities and their limitations. He feels that the intelligence community has neglected national character—an intangible but vital factor—as a basic factor towards good international relations in peacetime as well as in war. The volume contains an outstanding bibliography for more detailed study of the national character of each of the leading nations.

Schein, Edgar H. *Coercive Persuasion*. New York: Norton, 1961. 320 p.

Dr. Edgar H. Schein conceived his idea for *Coercive Persuasion* during the period in 1953 in which he was sent to the Far East as one of a number of Army research psychologists to debrief the civilian repatriates of the Korean conflict. Although one of the major conclusions that came out of those interviews in the debriefings was that the much-feared "brainwashing" process of the Chinese communists was really more of an intensive indoctrination program combined with very sophisticated techniques of undermining the social structure of the prisoner groups, he points out in his book that "brainwashing" is better understood by using the term "coercive persuasion." According to the author, this is a more accurate descriptive concept because basically what happened to the prisoners was that they were subjected to unusually intense and prolonged persuasion in a situation from which they could not escape. If a reader is willing to approach the book with a spirit of psychological inquiry rather than the hope of finding final answers, then the data, assertions and conclusions made by Dr. Schein and his colleagues will convey the complexity of the coercive persuasion phenomenon.