
Institute for National Security Analysis

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Institute for National Security Analysis

Mission

The Institute for National Security Analysis (INSA) seeks to engage the security and analytical communities in government and private industry with the most relevant analytic methods through original research, curriculum development, presentations and publications, and placement of aspiring analysts into positions in the intelligence field. INSA partners include government agencies and private corporations seeking to improve the breadth and depth of their analytic methods and the rigor of their analytical workforce.

Overview

Our nation's greatest national security asset is also its most neglected: the reasoning methods of our analysts, strategists and decision makers. The fundamental purpose of the Institute for National Security Analysis is to help transform our national reasoning so it can more adeptly engage unexplored, complex and multidimensional challenges with innovative, rigorous and cross disciplinary methods to produce proactive, reliable and integrated solutions.

Most external support for the defense, homeland security and intelligence communities (from academia or business) offer one of three types of assistance:

- New technologies to improve the collection and/or exploitation of data,
- Policy-making support through high-level strategic proposals, or
- Complete analysis on specialized topics.

By contrast, INSA offers support for the most central element of defense, homeland security and intelligence analysis: the cognitive process by which analysts reason to well-justified conclusions for their decision makers. The majority of intelligence failures evolve from errors in the reasoning process of analysts. That reasoning process is

typically taken for granted in favor of technology, policy, or specialized subject matter expertise. Hence, most external organizations operate by telling analysts what to think, but INSA seeks to support them by educating analysts how to think.

Activities

Discovering Analytic Methods

- **Multidimensional thinking:** A systematic approach to advanced critical thinking and reasoning designed specifically to meet the unique challenges of intelligence analysis.
- **Counterfactual reasoning:** A comprehensive approach to analysis of possible future events that considers how they come to be, how they related to other causal forces and what their ultimate outcome might be.
- **Perspectival thinking:** A strategy for understanding a controversial issue from the point of view of another person in another culture or context.
- **Forming effective visualizations:** A strategy for analysts to use in representing their conclusions clearly and concisely for others.
- **Taking a systems perspective:** A guide for analysts to follow in exploring the interconnectedness of problems and the potential for feedback and unintended consequences.
- **Assessing analytic confidence:** A way to teach analysts to evaluate and to explain the degree that their conclusions are justified.
- **Presentations and publications:** Disseminating research through speaking and writing in traditional academic venues.
- **Workshops and conferences:** Unique events geared specifically for INSA partners in intelligence and national security on both INSA methods and other major topics.
- **Recruiting and placement of future analysts:** Connecting agencies and organizations seeking uniquely qualified future analysts with students with first-hand education and training in rigorous analytical approaches available.

Developing Analytic Methods

- **Forming effective visualizations:** A strategy for analysts to use in representing their conclusions clearly and concisely for others.
- **Taking a systems perspective:** A guide for analysts to follow in exploring the interconnectedness of problems and the potential for feedback and unintended consequences.
- **Assessing analytic confidence:** A way to teach analysts to evaluate and to explain the degree that their conclusions are justified.

Delivering Analytic Methods

- **Presentations and publications:** Disseminating research through speaking and writing in traditional academic venues.
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