

Intelligence in Public Media

Intelligent Analysis: How To Defeat Uncertainty in High-Stakes Decisions

Jay Grusin with Steve Lindo (Intelligent Risk Management Publications, 2021), 258 pages, graphics, appendices.

Reviewed by Joseph W. Gartin

Intelligence, once the province of governments working with unique information gathered at great risk and expense, has in the past few decades become more commonplace in the public sphere. The reasons are multiple and the subject of considerable attention in these pages, among them advances in information technology, the rise of big data and in turn market-driven analytics, and the privatization of intelligence gathering-systems like ubiquitous technical surveillance (geolocation and facial recognition, for example) and satellite reconnaissance.

Concurrent with the democratization and commodification of intelligence collection capabilities has been the emergence of nongovernmental intelligence analysis. This has spun well beyond the traditional realm of business intelligence—such as understanding a competitor’s strategy or conducting due diligence before a merger—to assessing strategic risks, identifying terrorist and insider threats, spotting supply-chain vulnerabilities, and defending against cyber attacks. A quick spin through LinkedIn, Twitter, ClearanceJobs.com, and other social media will turn up dozens of individuals or companies offering to meet the demand, including many former Intelligence Community officers ready to lend their expertise.

Intelligent Analysis takes a slightly different tack, one signaled by the change of intelligence from noun to adjective. Jay Grusin and Steve Lindo argue that beyond risk management and threat mitigation, the analytic processes that have been developed within the US IC should have wider use in the business world. “This book,” they write, “uses Intelligent Analysis to signal a change in the narrative, incorporating important changes in how some of the concepts are framed, explained, and applied in exercises, while keeping the process intact.” (12)

Grusin and Lindo make for a compelling collaboration. Grusin, the principal author, is a former CIA analyst and manager, and after retiring from CIA in 2008 he served for many years as an instructor at CIA’s Sherman

Kent School for Intelligence Analysis. Lindo is a financial risk manager with more than 30 years of experience in his field. Together they argue that the conceptual model for the intelligence cycle—requirements, collection, analysis, etc.—and the standards used to evaluate analysis can be used in many lines of work. Decision advantage, as former CIA and NSA director Michael Hayden termed it, has universal applicability where variables are many and stakes are high.

Intelligent Analysis differs from many familiar textbooks on intelligence, like *Analyzing Intelligence* or *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*,^a in its brisk presentation and focus on application rather than theory or history. Here Grusin’s experience as an intelligence educator for practitioners (and former school board member) comes through. In 11 chapters of about 20 pages each, readers are presented with main points, key takeaways, and learning objectives.

For example, in chapter 5, the discussion of key intelligence questions (KIQs) promises that at the end of the chapter analysts will be better able to explain the significance of the KIQs and understand the importance of collaborating with the intended audience to develop a precise KIQ. (89) Grusin and Lindo then walk through a bit of theory about the need for collaboration between the expert and the intended customer, establish the importance of open-ended questions, and highlight the need for analytic objectivity. Finally, a set of short exercises and worksheets guides readers through the process of getting KIQs right. (101) A helpful set of appendices explains key terms and acronyms along with an interesting case study of Target Corporation’s disastrous foray into the Canadian retail market that shows how faulty key assumptions doomed the endeavor from the beginning.

As a handy reminder of fundamentals presented in classes like CIA’s Career Analyst Program or DIA’s foundational Professional Analyst Career Education,

a. Roger George and James Bruce, eds., *Analyzing Intelligence: National Security Practitioners’ Perspectives* (Georgetown University Press, 2014, 2nd edition.); Mark Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* (CQ Press, 2021, 8th edition)

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Intelligent Analysis is a worthwhile addition to the intelligence practitioner's bookshelf. Beyond the IC—the authors' intended audience—*Intelligent Analysis* is an accessible and concise examination of tools and techniques

that could readily form the basis of an in-house training program or help busy executives think their way through hard problem.



The reviewer: Joseph W. Gartin is managing editor of *Studies in Intelligence*. He retired from active CIA service as the agency's chief learning officer.