

Intelligence in Public Media

Leading Intelligence Analysis: Lessons from the CIA's Analytic Frontlines

Bruce Pease (QC Press, 2019), 235 pp., bibliographical references and index

Reviewed by Jason U. Manosevitz

A hint runs through former senior CIA manager Bruce Pease's *Leading Intelligence Analysis: Lessons from the CIA's Analytic Frontlines*: training to develop effective managers of analysts needs improvement. This idea underpins his reason for writing and is apparent at the outset. His book starts with the premise that CIA's Directorate of Analysis (DA) produces analysts and analysis and takes a classic "What got you here, won't get you there" approach. (4) But the DA produces managers, too.

This leads Pease to his first lesson. He argues that new analytic managers must simultaneously broaden their fluency across several substantive issues while learning to articulate work standards. To do so, new managers need to back away from deep substantive expertise on a few specific issues and apply their analytic skills to assess team needs. (5–11) While *Leading Intelligence Analysis* is a good start for studying the manager's role in leading analysis, it lacks some essential elements. Pease does not address issues such as assessing analysts' performance, program evaluation, analytic conflict resolution, or working with budgets and human resources.

Pease certainly knows his subject from his vast experience leading analytic teams. In the 1990s, he led the then-Office of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Analysis in CIA's then-Directorate of Intelligence. Following the 9/11 attacks, he was among the first managers to set up the Office of Terrorism Analysis within the Counterterrorism Center (CTC). He then led the CTC as its deputy director. In the wake of the Iraq WMD analytic failure in 2002, Pease was tapped to serve as the director of CIA's largest functional office, then the Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control Center (WINPAC). As WINPAC's director, he was charged with restoring the unit's credibility, as it received the most blame for the WMD failure, according to Pease. (165)

Pease avoids debates about the qualities of general leadership and management, examining instead how to manage intelligence analysis and how to develop managers. As such, *Leading Intelligence Analysis* may appeal to only a small audience. Pease's prose also makes clear that his insights are intended mostly for IC managers.

Understanding analysts and who they are is critical to successfully managing analysis from Pease's perspective. He thankfully spends little time on the cliché about all analysts being introverts and focuses on explaining the traps of merely seeing analysts as "thinking machines." Echoing many general works on management, he argues the importance of cultivating allies among one's analysts to effect cultural change and to influence behavior in the analytic process. Similarly, Pease highlights the importance of nurturing trust, finding the right stress

level for one's team, showing one's human side, and sharing values. More specific to leading analytic teams, he argues analytic managers need to strike the right balance among imaginative and pragmatic analysis, breadth and depth of expertise, generating insights at the expense of making mistakes, and being proactive versus reactive. (37–48)

One of the most useful parts of Pease's book is his list of 10 things analysts hate. The list includes "being out of the loop," "being told how to think," "having to answer the same question over and over," and "a draft stuck" in a manager's inbox. (20–29) The list is a good reminder to managers to think about things from their analysts' perspective and underscores his point about leaders needing to know who they are leading. The list can be a useful tool for candid discussions among analysts and managers about how teams can succeed and what each person's role is in fostering success. The list also helps clarify the day-to-day rules of the road. Had Pease also offered a list of 10 things analysts love, it would have peeled back the cover of mystery surrounding "the analyst" even further. A list of things managers love and hate would have been still another nice addition, for surely there are some that come into play in managing analysis.

Analytic tradecraft is the second major focus of *Leading Intelligence Analysis*. Pease touches on familiar tradecraft issues, including identifying key intelligence questions, deploying structured analytic techniques, and addressing big-data projects by adopting new technologies, such as artificial intelligence. He offers trenchant points on how managers can cultivate (or kill) new ideas by the questions they ask their analysts and the approach they take to innovation. Pease stresses that analytic managers need to "get deep into a give-and-take over the analyst's evidence and reasoning." (98) Here he offers "framing" questions and "component" questions, which get at context and facts, for an effective dialogue. (101)

Bad questions simply convey distrust, waste analysts' time, and end as "gotcha" moves, Pease warns. These questions are akin to a lawyer's cross examination and in some cases put analysts in the impossible position of having to prove a negative. (98) Pease correctly argues that predictive questions are often the most difficult, but also the most useful questions analysts can address. He stresses the importance of carefully selecting intelligence questions and products to pursue because ultimately these are investments of time and come at the expense of working on other analytic lines.

Pease highlights the significance of self-awareness in analysis, wrapping the issue in an examination of ethics. He argues that analytic managers need to be more than comfortable expressing their values while they help analysts contend with arrogance, self-righteousness, and cynicism that stem from being steeped in the details of reporting (and being encouraged to be experts). It would have also been helpful had Pease addressed some of the ethical and self-awareness pitfalls analytic managers themselves must avoid.

Pease does hit on the biggest ethical issue in producing analysis—the consequences of policy action that analysts aim to inform. The decisions national security policymakers make drawing upon analysis can range from killing terrorists, to going to war, to leveling crippling sanctions, to putting US soldiers at risk. Analysts and their managers have to be comfortable with the actions policymakers may take based on the analytic work they produce. Pease addresses this knotty problem by reminding readers that analysts provide insight to inform decisions but do not themselves make policy. That solution will satisfy some. For others it may conjure recollections of the scene in *Good Will Hunting* in which the movie's main character rejects working for the National Security Agency after tallying up a fantastical chain of events that starts with breaking enemy codes and ends with harm to those he cares about.

Perhaps the most unsatisfying part of Pease's book is the chapter "Analysis as a Business." He uses the chapter to stress the need for analytic managers to sustain strong personal reputations with their supervisors and policymakers. All can agree on the merits of that point, nor are many likely to debate Pease's observation that change is constant and that managers have to adjust as analytic missions change.

Several issues are missing in *Leading Intelligence Analysis*, and without understanding these analytic managers have slim chance of success, either for themselves or for their analytic missions. The first is evaluating analysts' performance. Performance evaluation is an annual—in some cases quarterly—task. These reviews can serve as tools for motivating analysts because they affect promotions. Performance evaluations are fraught with difficulty, however. Evaluating analysts' performance requires understanding how to assess the subjective value of an analyst's work, individual strengths, and development areas. Performance evaluations also require analytic managers to think through how to coach analysts and how to assess analysts against either specific criteria or relative to their peer group. Evaluating the volume of work versus its impact is just one of the perennial questions that arise in performance reviews. Given Pease's vast experience, including multiple changes in the performance review process, his thoughts on performance reviews or a set of guidelines about how to address analysts' performance would have been most welcome.

The second unaddressed area is program evaluation. Much of what Pease covers is focused on managing analysts and how to execute analytic programs, but he is largely silent on how to evaluate programs. Understanding the inputs, the outputs, and the degree to which a program is aligned with client needs is critical to assessing how well an analytic program is doing, what it needs to offer its clients, and as the case may be, what it needs to cease offering. Given Pease's point about mission change being a constant, it's surprising he did not offer insights about how to evaluate analytic programs. Arguably program evaluation and the rebalancing of analytic resources will become increasingly important as budgets for intelligence change and the analytic mission gyrates from a focus on counterterrorism to renewed attention to state-based threats.

The manager's role in resolving analytic disagreements, internal team differences, as well as those the team has with other analytic units or IC elements is also missing from *Leading Intelligence Analysis*. Analytic differences are by no means rare and those that analysts cannot resolve themselves inevitably land on managers' desks. Managers must then walk minefields in supporting their own analysts, recognizing competing but valid arguments, and deciding when, or if, to escalate such differences to their own supervisors.

Lastly, *Leading Intelligence Analysis* would have further benefited readers with some discussion of engaging human resources as well as budget creation and execution. To help analysts cope with their work and non-work life, from time to time managers need to tap the expertise of human resource officers. Developing and executing spending plans for analytic teams is also an important function for managers. Appropriation legislation, continuing resolutions, government shutdowns, and furloughs complicate analytic programs, particularly since most are run on single-year budget plans. Understanding these issues, albeit far less appealing than knowing analysts, substantive issues, and tradecraft, help analytic managers recognize that not everything is on their shoulders and that many things lie beyond their control.

Some will see Pease's book as an incredible work that not only pulls back the curtain on leading analysis but also points the way toward becoming an effective manager of analysts.

Others will see a curated set of lecture notes or lessons learned that only address part of what is needed to lead analysis. However one sees the book, its value lies in framing candid conversations among analysts and their managers.

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The Reviewer. Jason U. Manosevitz is a manager in CIA's Directorate of Analysis. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of Studies in Intelligence.

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