

In Memoriam

Richards J. Heuer Jr. (1927–2018): Searcher for Truth and the Means to Recognize It CIA Operations Officer (1951–1975), Directorate of Intelligence Methodologist (1975–1979), Methodology Consultant/Contractor (1979–2016)

In February 2016, with the death of Jack Davis, the community of American intelligence professionals lost a giant in the field of intelligence analysis. Jack was a senior CIA analyst and in 2013 was awarded a Trailblazer Award for his work in shaping and refining CIA's analytical practices.

This past August, the community lost another giant in the field of analysis, Richards (Dick) J. Heuer Jr. In reflecting on Dick's contributions, it is almost (but not nearly quite enough) to remind readers of the importance Jack Davis had personally placed on Dick's teaching and mentorship, a subject Jack addressed in 1999 in his introduction to Dick's most famous work, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*.

Intelligence analysts, in seeking to make sound judgments, are always under challenge from the complexities of the issues they address and from the demands made on them for timeliness and volume of production. . . .

My short list of the people who have had the greatest positive impact on CIA analysis consists of Sherman Kent, Robert Gates, Douglas MacEachin, and Richards Heuer. My selection methodology was simple. I asked myself: Whose insights have influenced me the most during my four decades of practicing, teaching, and writing about analysis? (Emphasis added.)

Jack would continue:

Dick Heuer was—and is—much less well known within the CIA than Kent, Gates, and MacEachin. He has not received the wide acclaim that Kent enjoyed as the father of professional analysis, and he has lacked the bureaucratic powers that Gates and MacEachin could wield as DDIs. But his impact on the quality of Agency analysis arguably has been at least as important as theirs.

Heuer received a degree in philosophy in 1950 from Williams College, where, he notes, he became fasci-

nated with the fundamental epistemological question, "What is truth and how can we know it?" In 1951, while a graduate student at the University of California's Berkeley campus, he was recruited [into operations] as part of the CIA's buildup during the Korean War. . . .

In 1975, after 24 years in the Directorate of Operations (DO), Heuer moved to the DI. His earlier academic interest in how we know the truth was re-kindled by two experiences. One was his involvement in the controversial case of Soviet KGB defector Yuriy Nosenko. The other was learning new approaches to social science methodology while earning a Master's degree in international relations at the University of Southern California's European campus.^a

Dick echoed the same themes in a memoir published digitally last year. He credited Williams College and a faculty mentor in the Philosophy Department for kindling his lifelong quest for understanding "truth" and the means to discern it. The quest drove his continuing education, even though he was fully engaged in a major overseas assignment. Dick also noted that a senior CIA contact put him en route to the fame he would have been highly unlikely to find in the DO. He wrote that with his European assignment nearing an end in 1975 and fearing that his position in the exceedingly contentious Nosenko affair was likely to prevent him from further advancing in operations, he contemplated retirement and entry into a PhD program at the University of Southern California. After returning from an exploratory visit to USC, he overnights with a neighbor who was leading the Office of Political Research in the Directorate of Intelligence (DI). The neighbor suggested Dick join the Analytic Techniques Group, a unit in the manager's office dedicated to the development of methodologies for political analysis and forecasting.

a. Jack Davis in "Introduction" to Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999), xiii and xix.

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The pitch landed in Dick's wheelhouse, and one might say he hit it out of the park! Dick began with a quantitative content analysis of Soviet speeches to attempt to discern political divisions in the Soviet Union. Had he stopped there, Dick's contributions would have been relatively modest, as the field was already crowded with such applications. But he quickly moved from that demonstration of methodological and statistical prowess to thinking about deeper processes, including the role of cognitive bias, the question of how much data is needed to come to judgment, and determining strategies to reach judgments.

It would not take Dick long to become the chief of the unit, renamed the Methods and Forecasting Division in 1976. In that capacity, he participated in academic conferences and in 1978 edited a collection of essays published under the title *Quantitative Approaches to Political Intelligence: The CIA Experience*. Dick's work on content analysis appeared in that book. Perhaps as importantly, in his preface, he outlined the purpose of his life's work from 1975 on:

The common ground between scientist and government analyst has not been well developed. The studies collected together here are the fruits of a concerted effort by the CIA to apply modern social science methods to problems of concern to political intelligence analysts. By bringing together a number of examples of our work under one cover, I hope to demonstrate to the government analyst that systematic methods can be relevant to his needs, and to encourage the scientist to apply his skills to problems of direct interest to the foreign policy community.^a

While most of Dick's work was initially intended for use internally within the DI, much of it readily found its way into *Studies in Intelligence* and into the public domain (a bibliography follows). That work only continued with his retirement in 1979, after which he moved to the Monterey and Carmel Valley area of California. There he became engaged in local government, but he continued to work on a contract basis for a defense security firm for which he produced analyses on counterintelligence issues and insider threats. He would also continue work as a consultant in the field with the Center for the Study of Intelligence, the Defense Department, and the private sector. That work

a. Richards J. Heuer Jr. (ed.), *Quantitative Approaches to Political Intelligence: The CIA Experience* (Westview Press, 1978), ix.

in 1999 led, as is now well known, to his groundbreaking book, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*. He would follow up in 2010 as the coauthor of *Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis*.^b

One unintended consequence of the reputation Dick acquired as a result of this book is that now nearly forgotten is Dick's 24 years as a CIA operations officer. It was a period he spent largely abroad in traditional operational assignments. One of his last assignments in the States, however had him researching and teaching counterintelligence and the deception practices of opposition services, topics central to his later dissection of the Nosenko case.

Perhaps this forgetfulness is a reflection of a fading (hopefully) cultural perspective which placed "analysis" solely into the purview of the DI. The body of Dick's work proves, I think conclusively, that methodical and orderly thinking and the thoughtful application of analytical methods has no single organizational home. In no work of Dick's is that more evident than in the detailed and thoughtful discussion of the Nosenko case, the controversial espionage case that drove Dick from operations to the DI. This study, "Nosenko: Five Paths to Judgment," first appeared publicly in H. Bradford Westerfield's collection of declassified *Studies in Intelligence* articles, *Inside CIA's Private World*. As Westerfield introduced the article, he noted that the "Homeric" story had been told many times, "but never, I think, so well as in this meticulous logical and empirical exercise." Heuer, he added, "has been one of CIA's finest intellects."^c

Indeed!

Thousands of intelligence officers are indebted to Dick for the growth he fostered in the profession.

Thank you, Dick.

—Andres Vaart
Managing Editor

b. Richards J. Heuer Jr. and Randolph H. Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis* (CQ Press, 2010).

c. H. Bradford Westerfield (ed.), *Inside CIA's Private World: Declassified Articles from the Agency's Internal Journal, 1955–1992* (Yale University Press, 1995), 379.

Remembering Richards J. Heuer Jr.: A Brief Intellectual History

James B. Bruce

Before I came to CIA in 1982, I knew Dick Heuer only by reputation, having read some of his writings on quantitative methodologies and other ways to improve rigor and accuracy in intelligence analysis, including his insights on intelligence deception. While planning a major conference for CIA's Directorate of Intelligence on deception in 1984, I invited Dick, then retired in California, to participate. There he made a solid contribution to the discussions that paved the way for some of his later work on the subject.

As both Director of Central Intelligence William Casey and the Deputy Director for Intelligence Robert Gates had attended the conference, Casey directed several follow-up items, and Gates took the action on a key one, namely to initiate a new CIA course on deception analysis. I invited Dick back to Langley on contract to help develop the course and, along with OTE's Tom Murray and myself, Dick became a course co-director and instructor for the inaugural running of the week-long deception analysis training course held at an off-site location. Dick taught it for several years afterwards. It was open to students from throughout the Intelligence Community as well as from CIA.

Early in the course, Dick alerted me to an unplanned two-hour gap in the syllabus and suggested that he could use that time to give a lecture on the deception aspects of the case of KGB officer Yuri Nosenko, the CIA's most controversial Soviet defector. I readily concurred, and Dick's lecture revealed how a savvy career Directorate of Operations officer could bring significant contributions to analysis. The Nosenko case turned out to be an important catalyst in Dick's later intellectual development.

The controversy over Nosenko's bona fides (too complex to elaborate here) had polarized the DO for a decade starting in the mid-1960s. Key issues that hinged on the call were related to a possible Soviet mole alleged to have penetrated CIA and to the credibility of the Soviet claim of non-involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy. Nosenko claimed to have insider knowledge of

both issues. The "master plot" theory of Soviet strategic deception was at stake.

Nosenko's case officer Tennent (Pete) Bagley believed Nosenko was a dispatched defector, sent to CIA by the KGB to support Soviet deception objectives. Bagley was joined in this assessment by other senior officers, Chief of the Counterintelligence Staff James Angleton. The opposing school argued that Nosenko was a bona fide defector with only self-serving but no nefarious aims. This side included the influential Bruce Solie from the Office of Security (which later took responsibility for vindicating Nosenko following DCI Colby's guidance). Having returned from his posting abroad, Dick later read in to the major internal documents on the Nosenko case. At first, he found Pete Bagley's "Thousand Pager" of evidence against Nosenko persuasive. But he was later persuaded by Bruce Solie's exculpatory interpretation that the case for Nosenko's bona fides was the better argument.

Dick began to wonder what was wrong with this picture, and why two such strongly opposing arguments—each seemingly evidenced-based—could seem so convincing. Surely one of them must be wrong. A philosophy major in college, he began to re-examine his own assumptions about the case and reflected on his own reasoning processes, including his susceptibility to cognitive bias. He decided that the key to unpacking the Nosenko controversy and to explaining the puzzling contradictory conclusions one could reach about it was fundamentally an epistemological problem. And that the most promising practical approach to resolution was, at heart, a methodological one.

On re-examining the key arguments, he concluded that both sides were merely polemical, each built like a lawyer's argument, cherry-picking the evidence and "card stacking" the case to reach a desired conclusion. Bagley's case, he decided, was nothing more than a prosecutor's brief, while Solie's major paper had produced a seeming defense attorney's rebuttal. While fine for the courts, Dick found this approach to "analysis" fundamentally flawed, and much too weak for intelligence applications.

He reasoned that a better and more reliable approach would require both a repudiation of polemics and a more science-based understanding of how the human mind processes information to reach inferences. That is the foundation for what he later termed—and developed—the methodology of Analysis of Competing Hypotheses.

The power of ACH, as it is commonly abbreviated, was demonstrated shortly after the first running of the deception analysis course by a fresh alumnus of the course from the Office of Scientific and Weapons Research in the Directorate of Intelligence. Applying this new approach to analysis, the analyst revealed that a multi-INT deception attempted by Libya had succeeded in fooling IC analysts into believing Libya had suffered the loss of a WMD capability in an accidental fire at its Rabta CW plant.

ACH emerged as a core methodology in post-9/11 and post-Iraq WMD failure-inspired emergence of Structured Analytical Techniques (SATs) and it became a staple in the deception course and in counter-deception analysis

long before its inclusion in the SAT inventory as a core technique for tough analytic issues extending beyond the unmasking of deception.

Dick Heuer’s significant contributions to understanding analysis is exemplified in his most notable work, *The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* and in his original contributions to counter-deception analysis. Foundational to his later stature as a seminal contributor to the analytic profession, Dick’s own intellectual growth inspired by the Nosenko controversy illustrates the genius of a successful intelligence officer in two directorates whose training began in philosophy and was refined in intelligence operations but whose biggest and most durable impact was in analysis.

A note on sources: Largely from personal recollections; apart from *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Dick’s personal memoir, *Rethinking Intelligence: Richards J. Heuer Jr.’s Life of Public Service* (Reston, VA: Pherson Associates, 2018) is of particular interest.



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