

## *Piercing the Veil of Darkness? Deception and Intelligence in Warfare*

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### **Introduction**

This article examines the complex and often nonreciprocal relationship between deception and intelligence in warfare. Throughout the history of war, the success of one inevitably is contingent on failure by the other.<sup>1</sup> As a result, since antiquity, commanders use subterfuge to mask their capabilities, maneuver, and intent and deny their adversaries situational awareness to help achieve battlefield success.<sup>2</sup> For example, circa 386 CE, St. John Chrysostom observed: “One who has been able to gain victory by

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<sup>1</sup> John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Hutchinson, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> See Thucydides, *How to Think about War: An Ancient Guide to Foreign Policy*, selected, translated, and introduced by Johanna Hanink (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); Xenophon, *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, translated and annotated, Wayne Ambler with an introduction by Eric Buzzetti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); and Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

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stratagem involves the enemy in ridicule as well as disaster.”<sup>3</sup> Acceptance or rejection of subterfuge – regardless of how deception and intelligence operations are conducted – ultimately involves human judgment and poses a unique problem because both sets of adversaries can, but do not necessarily, combine strategic intent and adaptive behaviour to thwart the adversary’s objectives. The implications of this statement – while perhaps obvious – nonetheless are significant because intelligence error or success can mean the difference between defeat or victory depending on the plausibility of the deception operation.

Moreover, in a world of growing geopolitical conflict between liberal democracies and autocracies,<sup>4</sup> the likelihood of disaster – if not catastrophic defeat – which always is possible in warfare is amplified by failure to accurately differentiate between deception and reality if a full spectrum, multi-domain conflict happens. The emergence of grey zone, cyber, net-centric, hybrid, or asymmetric warfare<sup>5</sup> as preferred

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<sup>3</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Treatise on the Priesthood*, trans. Rev. William Richard Wood Stephens (1886) and edited by D.P. Curtin (Philadelphia: Dalcassian Publishing, 2018), p. 13. This mirrors the precept offered by Abraham de Wicquefort in *L’Ambassadeur et ses Fonctions* [The Ambassador and His Functions] (1681) to ‘make it believed that one neglects those things which one most desires’ to conceal true aims quoted in Charles E. Lathrop, *The Literary Spy: The Ultimate Source for Quotations on Espionage & Intelligence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China’s Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Dan Blumenthal, *The China Nightmare: The Grand Ambitions of a Decaying State* (Washington: AEI Press, 2020); Michael Kimmage, *The Abandonment of the West: The History of an Idea in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018); Robert Kagan, *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World* (New York: Knopf, 2018); and Charles Kupchan, *No One’s World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines between War and Peace* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2019); Ofer Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare: Resurgence and Politicization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Nadia Schadlow, “Peace and War: The Space Between,” *War on the Rocks* (August 18, 2014), [warontherocks.com/2014/08/peace-and-war-the-space-between/](http://warontherocks.com/2014/08/peace-and-war-the-space-between/); Colonel Sergey G. Chekinov and Lieutenant General Sergey A. Bogdanov, “The Nature and Content of a New-Generation Warfare,” *Voyennaya Mysl’* [Military Thought] 4 (2013), 12–23; Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Max G. Manwaring, *The Complexity of Modern Asymmetric Warfare* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Stephen J. Blank, “Web War I: In Europe’s First Information War a New Kind of War,” *Comparative Strategy* 27, 3 (2007), 227–247; Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies,

modalities starting in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents a fundamental shift in the character of war from earlier periods in the modern era thereby enhancing the difficulty of detecting and exposing a deception operation prior to it impacting a target.

In fact, deception *per se* practiced as information operations can be conceptualized as waging war – even if that conflict does not become kinetic – in the cognitive domain.<sup>6</sup> New technologies for information dissemination, especially social media, expand the traditional concept of the understood battlespace literally re-inventing reality and making it easier for state and non-state actors to generate effects.<sup>7</sup> The increasing sophistication of targeted misinformation campaigns, accelerating volume and velocity of information, and truncated timelines for decision-making further complicate the problem of differentiating subterfuges from genuine capabilities

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2007); Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London, Phoenix Books, 2005); Ivan Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict,” *International Security* 26, 1 (2001), 93-128; Donald Wogaman, *Network Centric Warfare: An Emerging Warfighting Capability* (Quantico, VA: US Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 1998); and Max G. Manwaring, ed., *Grey Area Phenomena: Confronting the New World Disorder* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> For example, disinformation and political warfare are cornerstones of Russian information operations. Going beyond uncoordinated lies and schemes, active measures – *aktivnye meropriyatiya* – are grounded in deceit, coordinated, and designed to affect the minds and actions of the target audience to achieve a specific end state – generally weakening the adversary. See Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020); Timothy Thomas, *The Chekinov-Bogdanov Commentaries of 2010-2017: What Did They Teach Us About Russia’s New Way of War?* (McLean, VA: MITRE Corporation, 2020); Mark Galeotti, “Active Measures: Russia’s Covert Geopolitical Operations,” *Marshall Center Security Insight* no. 31 (2019), [www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/active-measures-russias-covert-geopolitical-operations-0/](http://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/active-measures-russias-covert-geopolitical-operations-0/); Jovana Marović, “Wars of Ideas: Hybrid Warfare,” in Tomáš Valášek, *Political Interference, and Disinformation* (Brussels: Carnegie Europe, 2019), pp. 27-30; Ivo Jurvee, “The Resurrection of ‘Active Measures’: Intelligence Services as a Part of Russia’s Influencing Toolbox,” *Hybrid CoE Strategic Analysis* (2018), [hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Strategic-Analysis-2018-4-Juurvee.pdf](http://hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Strategic-Analysis-2018-4-Juurvee.pdf); Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (New York: Penguin, 2000), p. 316.

<sup>7</sup> Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms play dominant roles in targeting perception in current conflicts. For example, Twitter is the primary source of information in the Russia-Ukrainian conflict, with vastly different reports from the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian sides. See Jolanta Darczewska, “The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare: The Crimean Operation, A Case Study,” *Centre for Eastern Studies Point of View* No. 42 (May 2014), [www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/the\\_anatomy\\_of\\_russian\\_information\\_warfare.pdf](http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/the_anatomy_of_russian_information_warfare.pdf); and David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters: How Social Media Is Reshaping Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

and intentions. Ignoring these realities inevitably has a high likelihood of creating significant obstacles to developing valid and reliable situational awareness to inform action. As a result, the risk of either suffering disaster or catastrophic defeat is particularly of concern where great power rivals clash militarily (e.g., the US and its allies with a rising China or resurgent Russia which pose interrelated threats because of collaboration).<sup>8</sup> It also is a distinct risk if regional adversaries such as Israel and Iran engage in rapidly escalating kinetic action.

### Waging Deception

Deception, at some level, is a logical consideration of any military conflict because it offers the possibility of an economy of force by achieving victory at a lower cost in terms of casualties and resources expended (i.e., function as a force multiplier).<sup>9</sup> The importance and versatility of deception as a key military stratagem for commanders to employ in warfare is demonstrated by their reliance on an array of subterfuges encompassing disinformation, covert or clandestine actions, false flags, ruses, and feints designed to deceive an adversary and degrade situational awareness of genuine intent. Hence, the first principle of deception – sometimes referred to as the Magruder principle<sup>10</sup> – regardless of the specific stratagem employed is to link it to some truth that is either observable or plausibly conforms with expectations. As Charles Cruickshank noted in *Deception in World War II*:

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<sup>8</sup> See UK Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a competitive age* CP411 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2021); Australian Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2020); and US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: US Department of Defense, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Michael I. Handel, "Intelligence and Deception," in John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, eds. *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> The Magruder principle, which is the first maxim in the CIA handbook on deception, stipulates the centrality of exploiting preconceptions: 'Maxim 1: Magruder's Principle--the Exploitation of Preconceptions "It is generally easier to induce an opponent to maintain a pre-existing belief than to present notional evidence to change that belief. Thus, it may be more fruitful to examine how an opponent's existing beliefs can be turned to advantage than to attempt to alter these views.' US Central Intelligence Agency, *Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore* (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1980), p. 5.

The perfect deception is like a jigsaw puzzle. Pieces of information are allowed to reach the enemy in such a way as to convince him that he has discovered them by accident. If he puts them together himself, he is far more likely to believe that the intended picture is a true one.<sup>11</sup>

Operation Mincemeat conducted by the Allies during World War II is one of the most famous examples of deception in modern warfare. The May 1943 surrender of Germany and Italy's forces in North Africa shifted Axis intelligence attention to answering the question of whether the Allies' next attack would be launched against Italy or in Greece or the Balkans. Operation Mincemeat was part of the overall Allied *BARCLAY* deception plan for the Mediterranean theatre of operations designed to mislead German intelligence about the center of gravity and focus for Allied efforts. Mincemeat was conducted by the British prior to the Allies' summer 1943 invasion of Sicily. A key element of the operation included planting false documents in a briefcase handcuffed to the wrist of a corpse notionally known as *Major Martin* dressed in a Royal Marines officer's uniform to deceive the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, the German military high command (OKW), into believing the major landing operation would be in Greece is a classic example.<sup>12</sup> The deception worked with the OKW failing to identify Sicily, not Greece, as the true invasion target for American and British forces.

In essence, by emulating the truth, deception operations take advantage of the normal human tendency to rely on mental models and interpret information in a way that confirms or supports prior judgments, expectations, beliefs, or values.<sup>13</sup> Leveraging inaccurate confirmation bias becomes a powerful tool for creating false positives and false negatives in the mind of the adversary (i.e., creating a *veil of darkness*) thereby increasing the probability of serious error and accelerating the velocity of wrong decisions. Cognitive bias, however, does not inevitably produce flawed outcomes

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. i.

<sup>12</sup> See Ben Macintyre, *Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010); and Ewen Montagu, *The Man Who Never Was* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1953) for discussions of the impact of deception on Abwehr (German military intelligence service) reporting to the OKW.

<sup>13</sup> See Daniel T. Gilbert, "How Mental Systems Believe," *American Psychologist* 46, 2 (1991): pp. 107-119. See also Raymond S. Nickerson, "Confirmation Bias: A Ubiquitous Phenomenon in Many Guises," *Review of General Psychology* 2, 2 (1998), 175-220; and Joshua Klayman, "Varieties of Confirmation Bias," in Jerome Busemeyer, Reid Hastie, and Douglas L. Medin, eds., *Decision Making from a Cognitive Perspective* Vol. 32 Psychology of Learning and Motivation Series (Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, 1995), pp. 385-418.

leading to failure or disaster. In fact, under the right conditions, it functions as an adaptive heuristic that lends a competitive edge if they evolve from evidence and experience.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, generating self-deception stemming from overly positive and optimistic images is the actual objective, not cognitive bias *per se*.

As a result, a deception operation seeks to deceive, not just propagate a lie, but to manage subterfuge to gain the advantage. It consists of three discrete elements: (1) simulate an alternative reality, (2) affect the cognitive processes of an adversary, and (3) cause a desired response by the targeted audience.<sup>15</sup> Each element is linked to the preceding ones, with the first two necessary but not sufficient to cause the third element to occur since the target is an individual or group of humans who have agency.<sup>16</sup> Ignoring this fact, as history demonstrates, inevitably constrains the likelihood of achieving the desired response even if the first two elements are satisfied.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that the target of deception operations poses a unique problem because they can combine intent and adaptive behaviour to thwart deception by failing to succumb to the veil of darkness.

When successful, deception – reflecting the fundamental importance of the enduring nature of the human element in warfare – works because it induces the enemy to do something that actively assists one’s own plans and undermines their plans at the

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<sup>14</sup> For example, see Dominic D.P. Johnson, *Strategic Instincts: The Adaptive Advantages of Cognitive Biases in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020); and Dominic D.P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> See US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), III-23; Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004); and US Central Intelligence Agency, *Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore* (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1980).

<sup>16</sup> Agency implies that the adversary has the capacity to act independently and attempt to exert their own will to shape outcomes. See Albert Bandura, “Toward a Psychology of Human Agency,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, 2 (2006): pp. 164-180. For a treatise on the application of the concept of will to strategy see Wayne Michael Hall, *The Power of Will in International Conflict: How to Think Critically in Complex Environments* (West Westport, CT: Praeger, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> See Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Hutchinson, 1993); and John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin, 1978).

tactical, operational, or strategic level.<sup>18</sup> At the tactical level, the execution of surprise militarily is the responsibility of lower and middle-echelon commanders. The execution of surprise at the operational level is the responsibility of theatre or combatant commanders at the divisional or higher echelons. The execution of surprise at the strategic level spans the full spectrum of national security and is the responsibility of the most senior military leadership and their political counterparts. As a result, the enduring nature of this axiom has been recognized and employed by commanders throughout history.<sup>19</sup>

### Countering Deception

Intelligence has long been a core component of warfare, especially as a means for determining a potential opponent's capabilities and getting indicators and warnings of an adversary's intent.<sup>20</sup> And, because deception operations explicitly attempt to mask capabilities and intent, detecting deception presents a daunting challenge to military intelligence and counterintelligence operations.

In essence, the goal of intelligence *vis a vis* deception is to *spy the lie* by ferreting out the falsehood (e.g., detect ruses and feints). Despite recognizing the importance of attaining that goal, failure to detect a variety of subterfuges has facilitated military victory across millennia. The Trojan Horse, according to classical accounts of a war between Troy and Mycenaean Greece, is the prototypical forefather of deception.<sup>21</sup> In perhaps the most famous battle of the Middle Ages, deception similarly was central to

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<sup>18</sup> See Christopher M. Rein, ed., *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> For example, Sun Tzu writing circa 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE noted in *The Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (London: Luzac & Company, 1910), Section I, p. 19: 'All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when suing our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away, we must make him believe we are near.' See also David G. Chandler, *The Military Maxims of Napoleon*, trans. Lieutenant General Sir George C. D'Aguilar (London: Greenhill Books, 2006); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, trans. Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> John A. Gentry and Joseph S. Gordon, *Strategic Warning Intelligence: History, Challenges, and Prospects* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2019); and John Keegan, *Intelligence in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> See Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Shadi Bartsch (New York: Random House, 2021).

King Henry V's ability to lead an exhausted English Army to victory against the French at the 1415 Battle of Agincourt on St. Crispin's Day. Henry V used a series of tactical moves that provoked the French cavalry into charging across a relatively narrow, water-soaked field to attack massed longbowmen arrayed on the English flanks between two sets of woods. The heavily armoured French bogged down in the mud where they were slaughtered by the English archers.<sup>22</sup> Four centuries later, deception favoured an exhausted French army and almost altered the outcome of the Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon concealed the condition of his troops and the direction of retreat after the defeat at Brienne. The French unexpectedly reappeared first at Champaubert, defeated the divided Prussian corps under Blücher in detail during the three battles, and narrowly missed forcing the entire Prussian army to surrender prior to Waterloo.<sup>23</sup> Subterfuge, hubris, and failure to obtain accurate situational awareness transformed presumptive victors into vanquished in each case.

Moreover, avoiding such intelligence failure is essential regardless of the relative parity between combatants. Simply put, to do otherwise places one's own forces and objectives in peril while empowering the adversary. This ought to be cause for alarm about current intelligence performance vis a vis detecting subterfuge and accuracy in determining an adversary's genuine intent. One of the enduring challenges is that intelligence is both the conduit for deception as well as a critical means to detect that same deception.<sup>24</sup> In the case of a deception operation, the target of deception is the mind of the opposing commander with the conduit of the adversary's intelligence services and increasingly any means of information collection.<sup>25</sup>

Attempting to counter deception appears difficult both because intelligence agencies are deliberately targeted with the deception as well as how humans comprehend and understand information. Daniel Gilbert, drawing on Spinoza, argues that humans comprehend and accept information before we reject it, meaning that our default position to information is acceptance, making humans potentially primed to be

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<sup>22</sup> Juliet Barker, *Agincourt: Henry V and the Battle that Made England* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> See Alan Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-13.4, Army Support to Military Deception* (Washington: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2019), p. I-5.

<sup>25</sup> Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), pp. 50-51.



deceived.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, intelligence agencies appear to be primed to fall prey to, not just engage in deception because they are actively collecting and analyzing information to uncover indicators of presumed but not necessarily genuine enemy intentions. Simply put, as history demonstrates, there is no guarantee that intelligence agencies will succeed in rejecting false information or narratives once they have been considered. Although the challenges in conducting a successful deception campaign are significant, intelligence agencies are, according to Daniel and Herbig, readily deceived:

Targets, after all, are normally searching eagerly for indicators of enemy intent and, if the enemy is a deceiver, he is just as eager to provide his foe with indicators, albeit false ones. Hence it should not be surprising that, if properly transmitted and designed to be highly salient to a target's concerns, many signals reach the target largely unscathed. Unless his intelligence organization is inept, they are monitored and evaluated for their significance as indicators, and their underlying story (or variant of it) usually rises to the surface. In the end the story may be dismissed, but only after it has at least been considered.<sup>27</sup>

Given the human desire for certainty over continued uncertainty, the offer of a seemingly consistent story could well be difficult for intelligence agencies and military commanders to reject, further underscoring why deception can succeed and remains difficult to counter. The human predilection for self-deception and over-confidence also offers opportunities for deception.<sup>28</sup> The point is that countering deception is difficult given that intelligence agencies are information-seeking entities, actively collecting the type of details on enemy strength, movement and intentions that an adversary might be deliberately making available as part of a deception operation. Deception information provides answers to the questions that intelligence agencies are seeking and occurs along the same vectors that intelligence agencies are seeking information from.

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel T. Gilbert, "How Mental Systems Believe," *American Psychologist* 46, 2 (February 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Donald C. Daniel and Katharine L. Herbig, "Propositions on Military Deception," in *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, ed. John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 163.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Vandepuer, "Self-deception and the 'Conspiracy of Optimism'," *War on the Rocks*, 31 January 2019. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/self-deception-and-the-conspiracy-of-optimism/>.

## Deception in the Modern Era

This section summarizes a series of attempts between 1940 and 2021 from World War II through Afghanistan involving deception as a stratagem. In each case, when the subterfuge was successful, intelligence failed, continuing a long legacy of military deception to deceive their adversary as to the size, timing, or location of an attack to gain a decisive advantage. Moreover, in some instances, erroneous intelligence was used to varying degrees as a conduit for transmitting the deception to the target.

### *World War II*

Reliance on deception and intelligence efforts aimed at thwarting deception were key features of large-scale combat during World War II. The Allies and their Axis opponents invested in efforts to break codes, plant misinformation, intercept enemy communications, and stage elaborate ruses. The Western powers (i.e., America and Britain) and their Russian allies ultimately proved more adept at deception and intelligence, which contributed to the defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan.<sup>29</sup>

A series of Allied naval and ground theatre operations – often reliant upon signals intelligence (SIGINT) to monitor enemy communications – from 1942 to 1944 in which deception contributed to creating the initial foundation for victory include the Battle of Midway<sup>30</sup> and the invasions of North Africa,<sup>31</sup> Sicily,<sup>32</sup> and Normandy.<sup>33</sup> For

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<sup>29</sup> See Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Richard J. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency* (London: HarperPress, 2010); Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004); David Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1989); and Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972).

<sup>30</sup> Craig L. Symonds, *The Battle of Midway* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Michael Smith, *The Emperor's Codes* (New York: Bantam, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> David Stafford, *Churchill and Secret Service* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Ewen Montagu, *The Man Who Never Was* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1953).

<sup>33</sup> James Holland, *Normandy '44: D-Day and the Epic 77-Day Battle for France* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2019); Peter Caddick-Adams, *Sand and Steel: The D-Day Invasions and the Liberation of France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); and Mary Katherine Barbier, *D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2007).

example, Hitler and his generals believed strongly that the Pas de Calais would be the invasion site so an elaborate plan was created that reinforced this preconception and successfully exploited it to assist the actual landings in Normandy, over 200 miles from the Pas de Calais. Each of those operations succeeded because Japanese or German intelligence failed to pierce the veil of darkness created by American and British subterfuge in the critical early stages of those campaigns.

Not surprisingly, just as the Allies had major intelligence successes throughout World War II, they also had significant intelligence failures. The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 has become one of the foremost examples of American intelligence failure.<sup>34</sup>

The Japanese certainly were successful in their deliberate efforts to conceal the location of the carrier strike force, thwarting American efforts to identify its location. Although the US Navy was monitoring Japanese naval radio communications, its radio communications intelligence failed to detect the location of Japanese carriers after 17 November. And, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, commander of the US Pacific Fleet, did not notify his US Army counterpart, Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short who commanded Army forces in Hawaii, that the Japanese fleet's location was unknown. Kimmel focused on intelligence about external threats while Short focused on intelligence about internal threats; Washington issued *War Warning* messages separately to Short and Kimmel at the end of November but failed to redirect the Army's attention to preparedness for war including operating an effective air defence radar network and information center. These strategic shortcomings, rather than ignoring instead of exploiting tactical warnings on 7 December, immediately prior to the 7:55 am Hawaii time attack (e.g., failure to sound a general alarm when USS Ward [DD-139] broadcast it had attacked a submarine at 6:37 a.m. operating in the Defensive Sea Area after the reported sighting of its conning tower at 6:30 a.m. by lookouts on the USS Antares [AKS-3] approaching the entrance to Pearl Harbor, failure to react to two unidentified aircraft identified by radar around 6:45 a.m., and failure shortly after 7:00 am to recognize that the radar signal detected by the Opana site on Oahu's north shore was the first wave of the

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<sup>34</sup> See Gordon W. Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin, 1991); David Kahn, "The Intelligence Failure of Pearl Harbor," *Foreign Affairs* 70, 5 (Winter 1991): pp. 138-152; and Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

Japanese attack not a flight of American B-17 bombers) were the serious intelligence flaws. As a result, the conventional wisdom typically fails to recognize the complexities embedded in the notion that the American defeat at Pearl Harbor was attributable solely to intelligence failure. The reality was a mixture of failing to connect the proverbial dots, compartmentalizing rather than sharing information, and a lack of unified command decision-making.

Examples of successful German deception include those against the French on the Meuse in May 1940,<sup>35</sup> the Russians on the Eastern Front in 1941,<sup>36</sup> and the Americans in the Ardennes in December 1944.<sup>37</sup> For instance, *Operation Kreml* was a German Army plan that deceived Stalin and the Soviet high command into believing that the renewed summer offensive in 1942 would be directed against Moscow instead of further south towards the Caucasus, which was the offensive's real target.<sup>38</sup>

### *Korea*

Both the United Nations (UN) and the Communist forces engaged in successful deception early in the Korean War. General Douglas MacArthur's amphibious landing of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division at Seoul's port of Inchon approximately 150 miles behind the North Korean forces' main lines outside Pusan on South Korea's west coast in September 1950 is the most prominent example of deception as a stratagem used successfully by the UN forces. With *Operation Chromite*, MacArthur used deception by continuing to hit targets up and down the west coast of South Korea as a ploy to keep the North Koreans from identifying where the landing would occur. That deception was combined with audacity. MacArthur chose to weaken defences at the Pusan Perimeter largely along the Naktong River and risk a surprise attack at a location that

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<sup>35</sup> John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> David Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: William Morrow, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> Alan Donohue, "Operation Kreml: German Strategic Deception on the Eastern Front in 1942," in Christopher M. Rein, ed. *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), pp. 79-96. See also: Robert Citino, *Death of the Wehrmacht: The German Campaigns of 1942* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

physically and militarily was extremely unfavourable for amphibious operations.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, because the invasion was staged from Japan where North Korean and other Communist intelligence services operated, it was impossible to keep the staging preparations concealed making it essential to ensure the intended landing point remained unidentified. MacArthur's gamble to land at Inchon was successful in balancing risk with reward through bold action.<sup>40</sup> It allowed the UN forces to sever North Korea's communication and supply paths, prevented them from being able to seize the Pusan Perimeter, and was followed by a rapid advance across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel bringing forward elements of American forces to the Yalu River border with Manchuria by early October.

In parallel, starting in October 1950, Mao Tsedong launched a stealthy deployment of massive Chinese Communist Forces (approximately 300,000 troops) across the Yalu to envelop MacArthur's command. Although some People's Liberation Army (PLA) troop movements were detected by the Army Security Agency (ASA) and the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) using communications intelligence (COMINT) including plain text intercepts and traffic analysis (i.e., examination of message externals),<sup>41</sup> the Chinese military went to great lengths to disguise its

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<sup>39</sup> Multiple physical and military factors underscore the risk posed to success: (1) high oceanic tides ranging from an average of approximately 7 meters [23 feet] to a maximum of approximately 10 meters [33 feet] that turn the landing beaches into mud banks when the tide ebbs, (2) timing of the tides on 15 September 1950 offered less than two hours of daylight for the Marines to land and secure a toehold during the first night, (2) significant mining of the harbor and emplaced coastal artillery, (3) the heavily fortified island of Wolmi-Do rising to a height of 351 feet dominated the narrow, shallow Flying Fish channel leading to the port, (4) Wolmi-Do was connected to Inchon by a man-made, approximately 823 meter (900 yard) long cause way, and (5) a twelve foot stone seawall at the port of Inchon. See Robert D. Heinl, "The Inchon Landing: A Case Study in Amphibious Planning," *Naval War College Review* 51, 2 (Spring 1998): pp. 117-134.

<sup>40</sup> See Jeremy Blascak, "Risk vs. Reward: The Operational Art at Inchon," *Small Wars Journal* (8 November 2019), [smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/risk-vs-reward-operational-art-inchon](http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/risk-vs-reward-operational-art-inchon).

<sup>41</sup> For example, in a July 1950 report, the AFSA relied on translation and analysis of Chinese civil communications to report in July 1950 that elements of the Chinese Fourth Field Army had moved from Central China to Manchuria in April and May. This was not an isolated report. A message datelined Shanghai in mid-July identified General Lin Piao as the commander of PLA forces which would intervene in Korea. In early September, AFSA reporting based on Chinese civil communications stated that China had continued to deploy major PLA units from southern or central China to Manchuria. AFSA noted continued movement of these and additional military units toward the Sino-Korean border areas throughout September and October 1950. See David A. Hatch with Robert Louis Benson, *The Korean War: The SIGINT Background* (Ft. Meade, MD: Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 2000).

movements and US intelligence and military commanders failed to correctly interpret the size or the intention of the PLA forces assembled along the Yalu River border between Manchuria and North Korea. Direct combat between CCF *volunteers* and UN forces also failed to trigger heightened readiness. For example, PLA forces already in North Korea attacked American units of the Eight Army at Unsan on 25 October and then broke off contact. As a result, on 30 October 1950, the US Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division reported "there are no indications at this time to confirm the existence of a CCF organization or unit, of any size, on Korean soil."<sup>42</sup> Consequently, despite initial fighting and warning from non-COMINT collateral sources, the likelihood of Mao's intervention was discounted. It is worth noting that American intelligence failure and operational failure were, in no small part, the direct result of human factors and a disconnect between operational intelligence and strategic intelligence. Hubris and a determination by Major General Willoughby, MacArthur's intelligence chief (G2), and his superior, General MacArthur, that intelligence support their preconceived views caused them to filter out conflicting views.<sup>43</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) also bears some responsibility for the intelligence failure because it was incapable of providing the intelligence needed to predict Chinese intervention in Korea, although it was nonetheless the CIA's mission and responsibility to generate strategic intelligence to support President Truman's decision-making.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the CCF attack in November 1950 brought American and other UN forces to the brink of disastrous defeat, signalled the end of maneuver warfare, forced Washington to confront the reality that political decisions were beyond the purview of the military, and bookended the ultimate stalemate in Korea.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Roy Edgar Appleman, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, Center of Military History, 1992), p. 752.

<sup>43</sup> See Uri Bar-Joseph and Rose McDermott, *Intelligence Success and Failure: The Human Factor* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 123–183.

<sup>44</sup> See US Central Intelligence Agency, "Communist China's Role," (14 July 1950), [cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-07-14a.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-07-14a.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> See Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); and Thomas R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

*Vietnam*

Although it was a military defeat for the Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army, the ability of those communist forces to launch the 1968 Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War was a major US and South Vietnamese intelligence failure.<sup>46</sup> In part, the NVA's 77-day-long siege of the US Marines' combat base at Khe Sanh – strategically located in northwestern Quảng Trị Province close to the Laotian border and the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam – in the early phase of the Battle of Khe Sanh (21 January - 9 July 1968) diverted the focus of American intelligence away from South Vietnam's major urban areas allowing preparations for the Tet offensive to go undetected. The results of the 1968 Tet Offensive – not unlike Chinese intervention in Korea – had significant psychological impacts on the US, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam: eroded American political will and public support to remain engaged indefinitely in South Vietnam, motivated the Saigon government to order a general mobilization, decimated the VC as a viable military force, and reinforced North Vietnam's will to pursue its political aim (i.e., unification).<sup>47</sup>

*Yom Kippur War*

The daring Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal in the opening days of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, sometimes called the October War (6 - 25 October 1973), provides an example of successful tactical deception that advanced a strategic aim. The Egyptian military succeeded in masking its intentions from Israeli intelligence aided, in no small measure, by the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) false conformity of judgment about its presumed invulnerability.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly enough, it also is worth noting that the US Intelligence Community reached a parallel consensus opinion that there was a low likelihood of hostilities happening in the immediate future prior to Egypt and Syria launching their coordinated attack:

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<sup>46</sup> Mark Bowden, *Huê 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam* (New York: Grove Press, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> See General Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1984); and Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking, 1983).

<sup>48</sup> See David Wallsh, "Timeless Lessons from the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War" *Modern War Institute at West Point* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 4 October 2017), [mwi.usma.edu/timeless-lessons-october-1973-arab-israeli-war/](http://mwi.usma.edu/timeless-lessons-october-1973-arab-israeli-war/); and Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed The Middle East* (New York: Schocken, 2005).

... for months before the war, the US Intelligence Community had received reports pointing to escalating Egyptian and Syrian hostilities. Contrary to conventional wisdom that analysts had not properly considered the evidence that war might be approaching, the archives show that the Intelligence Community received these reports—debated them and wrote about them. Analysts did consider that the Egyptian and Syrian military maneuvers might be more than just posturing. Analysts did entertain the idea that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat might initiate a conflict that he knew he would lose militarily. But ultimately, the analysts judged that there would be no attack.<sup>49</sup>

Although Egypt's offensive – accompanied by a coordinated Syrian attack across the Golan Heights – produced an initial IDF defeat in the Sinai, it failed to be decisive militarily. Israel was able to mobilize, re-group, and sequentially launch counter-offensives that defeated the Syrians and Egyptians at the cost of heavy casualties to both sides. Egypt, however, by shattering Israel's sense of invulnerability, was able to achieve its aim to negotiate the full return of the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula starting with the 1974 *Sinai Separation of Forces Agreement* and culminating with the 1978 *Camp David Accords*.

### *1991 Gulf War*

Iraqi military forces attacked Kuwait on 2 August 1990, quickly took control of the small state on the Persian Gulf, and consolidated defensive positions along the Kuwaiti and Iraqi border with Saudi Arabia by late September 1990. Starting in mid-September 1990, the US shifted its focus under *Operation Desert Shield* from the defence of Saudi Arabia to offensive air-land combat operations using US and coalition forces to liberate Kuwait (i.e., *Operation Desert Storm*). Initial planning under the leadership of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) envisioned a traditional, three-pronged frontal assault – commonly called the *One Corps* concept – without a surprise attack on the middle of the Iraqi defences.

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<sup>49</sup> Matthew T. Penney, *Intelligence and the 1973 Arab-Israeli War* (Langley, VA: CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence), p. 1, [cia.gov/readingroom/docs/2012-12-10E.pdf](http://cia.gov/readingroom/docs/2012-12-10E.pdf).



Following an 11 October 1990 briefing of the approach, President George H. W. Bush and his national security team encouraged General Norman Schwarzkopf – the theatre commander – and the CENTCOM planning staff to consider deception to reinforce Saddam Hussein’s preconception of the Coalition offensive campaign. The new CENTCOM plan – labelled the *Two Corps* concept and commonly referred to as the *Left Hook* – involved a direct ground attack and an amphibious assault as a feint to hold the Iraqi forces in place on the left flank while the main force enveloped the exposed Iraqi right flank after air superiority was achieved. All Coalition deployments, actions, and announcements were designed to mask Coalition operational and tactical intent. The objective of CENTCOM’s deception operation – grounded in Magruder’s principle of exploiting preconceptions – was to create a narrative conforming to Iraqi expectations that a ground offensive featuring amphibious landings from the Persian Gulf and attacks from the south toward Kuwait City and up the Wadi al Batin would occur. For over five months, CENTCOM’s dispositions and actions reinforced the Iraqi assumption about how the American-led Coalition forces would try to liberate Kuwait.<sup>50</sup>

*Operation Desert Storm’s* deception plan proved to be a tremendous success on both the operational and tactical levels contributing to a swift and decisive victory. Following a brief air campaign that devastated Iraqi forces, the ground offensive started on 24 February 1991 and achieved all its objectives in less than 100 hours.<sup>51</sup>

### *Afghanistan*

America’s direct military involvement started on 7 October 2001, when the US invaded Afghanistan to avenge al-Qa’ida’s September 11 terrorist attacks and remove Afghanistan’s Taliban government from power. A combination of air power, CIA special mission units, and special operations teams working with local Afghan forces –

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<sup>50</sup> Donald P. Wright, “Deception in the Desert: Deceiving Iraq in Operation Desert Storm,” in Christopher M. Rein, ed. *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), pp. 215-230.

<sup>51</sup> Brigadier General Robert H. Scales, Jr., *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 1998); and Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, “How Kuwait Was Won: Strategy in the Gulf War,” *International Security* 16, 2 (1991): pp. 5-41.

especially the Northern Alliance – defeated the combined al-Qa’ida and Taliban forces in one of the shortest and least costly US military victories lasting just two months. That victory proved short-lived. It is no small irony that Bing West writing in 2011 noted:

... When the American Army encountered the towering mountains of northeast Afghanistan, they came to appreciate the Sisyphean task. Each time American soldiers trekked up the mountains, the insurgents fled, returning after the Americans left. Like ocean waves, the Americans rolled in, and out, and in again.<sup>52</sup>

Over the next 20 years, as Wesley Morgan observed in 2021, Afghanistan morphed into America’s longest war without resolving “... the essential question that still hung over the U.S. military enterprise in Afghanistan” since the Bush administration (i.e., what was the national security threat posed by the Taliban or Afghanistan?).<sup>53</sup> And, with the essential question still unresolved, US involvement ended on 30 August 2021 with a chaotic withdrawal and political debacle as the Taliban outlasted their opponents, seized Kabul as the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan under President Ashraf Ghani collapsed, and assumed total control over the entire country re-establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Although multiple factors played a role in the collapse of the US-supported Afghan government, the Taliban’s ability to simultaneously pursue diplomatic negotiations, solidify gains on the battlefield, and penetrate the Afghan government and society at multiple levels required a sophisticated deception campaign involving strategic patience to execute. In parallel, the Taliban’s ability to play the long game was critical to sustaining its insurgency and ultimately emerging triumphant in August 2021. The Taliban used diplomatic negotiations – especially the negotiations in Doha – to signal openness to power-sharing in a diverse and inclusive government creating a narrative aligned with the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations’ expectations and intent to advance their core aim: total withdrawal of American forces.

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<sup>52</sup> Bing West, *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Wesley Morgan, *The Hardest Place: The American Military Adrift in Afghanistan’s Pech Valley* (New York: Random House, 2021), p. 496. See also Carter Malkasian, *The American War in Afghanistan: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

The narrative was buttressed by excessive optimism and miscalculation in intelligence estimates that the Afghan republic's own military strength – particularly the Air Force and Special Forces units – would provide a decent interval between a withdrawal and possible collapse of Ghani's government thereby avoiding political embarrassment. In parallel, the Taliban shifted from attacks against American troops to focus on the Afghan National Army (ANA) and their ISIS rival. This allowed the Taliban, after 2018, to consolidate territorial gains, signal that the conflict no longer was against the US, and degrade the capability of the ANA and ISIS consistent with their own intent to dominate Afghanistan. Third, and of major significance, clandestine penetration by the Taliban at the district and provincial levels as well as major urban areas – especially Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Ghazni – played a key role in the rapid disintegration of the former Afghan government. Individually and collectively, the inability to draw accurate inferences about the Taliban's intent behind diplomatic negotiations and solidifying military gains or discover and disrupt its penetration of the government demonstrate either ignorance of those facts (i.e., flawed intelligence) or willful disregard of them (e.g., hubris; naiveté; cognitive bias; magical thinking). Neither option is positive underscoring the need for a comprehensive examination of intelligence assessments and political leadership decision-making in the aftermath of America's involvement in Afghanistan.

## **Conclusion**

The empirical and comparative evidence presented in this article demonstrates that the nature of the relationship between deception and intelligence remains constant even as the character of deception and intelligence has changed due to technological innovations and the emergence of new domains for warfare over time.<sup>54</sup> Misunderstanding the role of deception in conflict gives rise to naive views of adversaries, unreasonable expectations for quick wins at low cost, and overly simplistic assumptions about the application of military power. In parallel, subterfuge seeks to leverage that misunderstanding and create a false reality. As Michael Handel notes:

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<sup>54</sup> This reflects the essence of Clausewitz's conception of continuity in the nature and change in the character of conflict. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Deception in war must be considered a rational and necessary type of activity because it acts as a force multiplier, that is it magnifies the strength or power of the successful deceiver. Forgoing the use of deception in war undermines one's own strength.<sup>55</sup>

The interplay between deceiving and being deceived forms the basis for the complex, nonreciprocal relationship between deception and intelligence in warfare. As a result, deception works when the consensus of unassailable truth turns out to be false (i.e., flawed intelligence) with failure to detect subterfuge exacerbating the difficulty of serious defence planning and facilitating defeat. Hence, factors related to the attributes of the subterfuge, the target of deception, and the robustness of the intelligence efforts of the contending forces systematically contribute to a greater and lesser ability to pierce the veil of darkness.

- The first precept of deception is to link it to some truth that is either observable or conforms to expectations because truth only is revealed when one gives up all preconceived notions.
- Subterfuge works at a personal and cultural level, so confirmation bias can cloud the target's judgment and result in the failure to reject subterfuges.
- If the rivalry is believed to be a peer or near-peer competition, it is more likely for intelligence to mirror image and overestimate capabilities.
- The corollary is to underestimate the capabilities of, and challenges posed by, asymmetric threats and less powerful adversaries.
- The relationship between the volume and/or velocity of information and intelligence assessment accuracy is far more complex than traditional models of cognition accommodate.
- Accelerating the flow of misinformation and truncating the time for verification prior to decision-making increases the likelihood of failure to detect deceit.

As the case studies demonstrate, the veil of darkness ultimately is either pierced or remains intact depending on the action taken or not taken by the target of deception underscoring the critical role that military intelligence services play in designing,

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<sup>55</sup> Michael I. Handel, "Intelligence and Deception," in John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, eds. *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 122.

executing, and countering deception operations in warfare.<sup>56</sup> Successful deception in warfare – regardless of choice of subterfuge – is not guaranteed. Simply put, a straightforward but not always achievable objective involving destabilizing the enemy guides deception: ‘Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy.’<sup>57</sup>

Like any military operation, deception requires careful planning, audacity, an element of fortune, and a less adept adversary (i.e., a receptive target). And – perhaps most importantly – it succeeds when the opponent suffers an intelligence failure because the adversary succumbs to the subterfuge. History demonstrates that deception, practiced successfully, frequently becomes perceived ‘truths’ thereby distorting situational awareness and triggering a desired action.<sup>58</sup> Alternatively, deception as a stratagem fails when the attempted disinformation, covert or clandestine action, ruse, or feint is detected by the adversary’s intelligence operations and identified as a false signal, which consequently does not generate the desired action. This is a consistent theme in the deception literature, namely that the focus must be on getting an adversary *to act in a certain way* (i.e., to do or not do something) rather than simply affecting the adversary’s thinking.<sup>59</sup>

The series of attempts between 1940 and 2021 from World War II through Afghanistan involving deception as a stratagem summarized in this article demonstrate that deception and intelligence each require time to succeed – the deceiver to obfuscate and the target to discover the subterfuge. Neither actor has unconstrained control over the time cycle, the time required for deception or intelligence operations to unfold is fluid rather than fixed, and the volume and velocity of information are accelerating exponentially. As a result, piecing the view of darkness by detecting duplicity is becoming more difficult in the modern multi-domain battlespace.<sup>60</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>56</sup> US Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-13.4, Army Support to Military Deception* (Washington: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Lieutenant General Thomas J. ‘Stonewall’ Jackson, one of the best-known Confederate commanders and tacticians, in the American Civil War as quoted in Colonel George Armand Furse, C.B., *Information in War: Its Acquisition and Transmission* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1895), p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Charles B. Vandeeper, “Self-deception and the ‘Conspiracy of Optimism’,” *War on the Rocks* (31 January 2019), warontherocks.com/2019/01/self-deception-and-the-conspiracy-of-optimism/.

<sup>59</sup> Barton Whaley, “Toward a General Theory of Deception,” in John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, eds. *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 179.

<sup>60</sup> James L. Regens, “Augmenting Human Cognition to Enhance Strategic, Operational, and Tactical Intelligence,” *Intelligence and National Security* 34 (2019): pp. 1-15.

truncated timeframes for decision-making make it even more imperative to generate accurate, timely and actionable intelligence allowing commanders to penetrate the veil of darkness and gain a military advantage because the reality of war is often complex and subject to dramatically changing over time.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, good intelligence capable of fostering one's own use of deception as a stratagem while thwarting its use by adversaries is a necessary condition for victory, especially against full-spectrum peer or near-peer rivals. As history shows, however, the track record of avoiding flawed intelligence and exposing deception is tenuous since intelligence is inherently imperfect and subject to uncertainty. Thus, because success or failure hinges on understanding the crucial cognitive aspect of information operations, improving intelligence performance to bridge this gap is of paramount importance as the starting point for any attempt to achieve one's aim in a conflict.<sup>62</sup> To do otherwise, creates a self-generated and potentially fatal vulnerability.

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<sup>61</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, *Mars Adapting: Military Change During War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021).

<sup>62</sup> The selection of aim is a fundamental principle of strategy, and its determination should guide action. See Elbridge A. Colby, *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021); Donald Stoker, *Why America Loses Wars: Limited War and U.S. Strategy from the Korean War to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019); and Patricia L. Sullivan, "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, 3 (2007): pp. 496-524.

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