

to an ends, any activity that generates some degree of fear and uncertainty provides a partial success for the terrorists.

An oft-quoted sound bite which has come out of the “War on Terrorism” is the advice to “think outside of the box.” Politicians, media experts, academics, and others have repeated this cliché. Unfortunately, it is virtually useless. “Outside the box” defines all of *infinity*—minus your “box.” Because terrorists use a wide array of deception techniques makes this problem all the more obvious.²⁴

The Ethics of Deception.

No discussion of the fundamentals of deception would be complete without a brief mention of the legal and ethical aspects of the subject. As one might expect, there has been considerable disagreement in this area for some time. Still, a few basic observations are in order.

Surprising to many, the specific legal restraints on the use of deception are relatively clear and precise. Domestic law imposes few restrictions regarding military deception. Unless one tells a falsehood while under oath in a court of law or makes a false statement in some other setting where they are legally bound to be truthful, domestic law does not apply to military deception. As one legal scholar puts it, “there is no constitutional principle that says that the President of the United States or the Executive Branch must tell the truth.”²⁵

International law provides more limitations. Generally speaking, the United States recognizes the restrictions established in the Hague and Geneva Conventions over the past 140 years. In combination, these form the “Laws of Warfare,” recognized by the U.S. military and codified by official manuals. In the U.S. Army, this information is contained in Field Manual 27-10, *The Laws of Land Warfare*.²⁶

The restrictions placed on “stratagems” or “ruses of war” include the prohibition of “treachery or perfidy.” Examples include the false use of flags of truce, wearing enemy uniforms or flying enemy colors while in combat, masquerading as international aid personnel, or using hospitals or other protected sites for military purposes. The prohibitions are explicit and specific.²⁷

When one enters the realm of ethical considerations, one encounters the complexities inherent to the justification of deception. Unfortunately (or fortunately), lawyers, philosophers, and ethicists

do not always agree as to how one sets out to judge the ethical and moral dimensions of the subject. Broadly speaking, two general approaches, to such measurement exist. These include the idealist and the realist schools. Not everyone agrees how to define these approaches and each contains a number of subsets or permutations. Nevertheless, a basic distinction is generally accepted by all.

The idealists make moral and ethical distinctions based on an absolute set of standards. If disinformation and falsehoods are wrong, all examples of such behavior are wrong. The ends do not justify the means. This is absolute. There are no exceptions.²⁸

The so-called realists, or pragmatists, argue that the question ultimately boils down to a cost-benefit analysis. Does the harm done by being deceptive outweigh the good the deception will accomplish? The nature of analysis required to answer that question and the values assigned to the various costs and benefits are subjective. In the eyes of the realists, the ethics of deception are both situational dependent and relative to the value structure of the observer.²⁹

This is closely related to the operational cost-benefit analysis that must always accompany a decision to implement deception operations. Clearly no one wishes to conduct deception operations which cost more than they contribute to success. The realist perspective on the ethical implications follows a similar path—and may, on occasion, overlap the operational considerations.³⁰

One reason nations agree to international restrictions on “treachery,” as noted above, is the realist concern that engaging in those acts could create problems out of proportion to the limited advantages such deception might provide. For example, the limitation on using hospitals or international aid symbols for military cover assumes that nations find the safety of such vital organizations more important than the limited advantages their abuse might afford.

The realist school also notes that there are potential ethical costs inherent to any deception operation. A political or military organization which indulges in disinformation loses a corresponding amount of credibility. Indeed, if one is practicing deception in order to affect public or international opinion, the “blow back” from loss of credibility can easily prove quite damaging. This consideration gained international attention when it was revealed in early 2002 that DoD had established an “Office of Strategic Influence.” While it

was quickly asserted that this organization would not be deceptive, media sources implied that foreign media might be provided with manipulated information. This set off a flurry of charges and denials and the eventual closing of the office. Even the appearance of deception can be expensive.³¹

This is especially true in nations which are democratic republics with a valued tradition of press freedom. The ability of the public to make informed decisions about all political policies, especially military policies, relies on a well-informed media. When the military serving a democratic republic misleads the public or is involved in an action which misleads the public, it is difficult to imagine that there are many advantages that would justify that cost.

This is not to say that realists would deny military organizations the right to conduct deception operations. What they would advocate is a careful cost-benefit analysis of deception operations and a recommendation to favor those deception operations where it is possible to mislead the enemy without misleading your own people.

Dealing with Deception.

A comprehensive methodology for dealing with deception will never be written. It is a nebulous and ever changing field of virtually infinite proportions. Indeed, to believe that such a methodology is possible would be to misunderstand the nature of deception.

Nevertheless, a few useful observations may be possible. Over the years, many pundits have quoted the Faber College motto from the movie *Animal House*—"Knowledge is good." Trite as it may sound, it is absolutely true regarding deception. The more that you know about your adversaries and about the events which are unfolding, the better prepared you will be to combat deception. Understanding your enemy's intentions and capabilities helps to define the general limits of their objectives and operations. Never rely on a limited number of sources of information or a limited number of collection methodologies. The more sources one has, the more cross references one can make. The more one knows, the harder it is for someone to manipulate information out of context. The more one knows, the more likely one will detect a fabrication.

Knowledge should also include knowledge about oneself. Recognize the biases and assumptions one, one's organization, and one's culture possess. Beware of "mirror imaging"—anytime one assumes that others will behave in a way similar to oneself, one is opening the door to self-deception.

The old intelligence advice to "know your enemy" must encompass advice to study your enemy's methods of deception. During the Cold War, western intelligence services studied Soviet *Dezinformatsia* and *Maskirovka* doctrines. This was quite helpful in detecting and dealing with many deceptions. Nevertheless, this familiarity never prevented the deception campaigns from posing a threat. Such study will never be fool-proof—there will always be new and unexpected techniques and approaches.

Summary.

Deception comes in many forms and "types." It has many objectives and can be accomplished by many methods. It may be active or passive. It operates on many levels. In short, there is much to know about deception.

What is known about deception in the past is of considerable, if general, use in the present. We have developed terms to describe the different methods and levels of disinformation. This is useful. We know the dangers inherent to mirror imaging and cognitive dissonance. This is important. We can appreciate the need for the synthesis of intelligence methodologies. This is vital. But, despite these realizations, we can never be confident we are not being deceived.

These observations may seem self-evident to even a casual student of deception. Therefore, one might wonder why these obvious statements need repeating. The answer is simple. In successful deception operations, the perpetrator hopes that one or several of these self-evident observations will be over looked.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATING TO DECEPTION

Strategic Deception:	Deception which disguises your <i>basic</i> objectives, intentions, strategies, and capabilities.
Operational Deception:	Deception which confuses or diverts an adversary in regard to a <i>specific</i> operation or action you are preparing to conduct.
Tactical Deception:	Deception which misleads others while they are <i>actively involved</i> in competition with you, your interests, or your forces.
“A” Type Deception:	“Ambiguity Deception” geared toward creating general confusion.
“M” Type Deception:	“Misleading Deception” designed to mislead an adversary into a specific and preconceived direction.
Fabrication:	The <i>creation</i> of false information or images to mislead an adversary as to your intentions and/ or capabilities. This is deception <i>via</i> manufactured data (e.g., forgeries).
Manipulation:	The use of true or factual data in such a way as to create a false impression. The information is not false, but through using it out of context, leaving out some of the details, or providing a false balance of emphasis, the impression is skewed (e.g., being quoted out of context).
Active Deception:	Any attempt to create the impression of intentions and capabilities which you do not, in fact, possess.
Passive Deception:	Efforts designed to prevent detection of your actual capabilities and intentions.
Denial:	Methods used to conceal state and military secrets, particularly from foreign intelligence collection.

Deception (as used in the combination “Denial and Deception”):

The manipulation of information and perceptions to induce the target of that deception to take or not take an action, thereby benefiting the deceiver.

Note: “Denial and deception are interrelated. Denial is the basis for a successful deception. One cannot manipulate or blur the truth or lie convincingly unless the truth is first concealed.” John Yurechko, Defense Intelligence Agency, “DoD Briefing on Iraqi Denial and Deception,” Tuesday, October 8, 2002, 12:58 p.m. EDT.

Dezinformatsia:

The dissemination of false or misleading information intended to confuse, discredit or embarrass the enemy. (Marshals of the Soviet Union A. A. Grechko and N. V. Ogarkov [successive Chairmen of the Main Editorial Commission], *The Soviet Military Encyclopedia; English Language Edition*, Vol. 1, William C. Green and W. Robert Reeves, ed. and trans., Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993, pp. 345-346.

Maskirovka:

“A means of securing the combat operations and daily activity of forces; a complex of measures designed to mislead the enemy as to the presence and disposition of forces and various military objects, their condition, combat readiness and operations and also the plans of the commander . . . *Maskirovka* contributes to the achievement of surprise for the actions of forces, the preservation of combat readiness and the increased survivability of objects” (Grechko and Ogarkov, pp. 277-280).

Passive Camouflage:

The disguise or cloaking of forces and/or facilities to prevent their detection by an enemy.

Active Camouflage:

The artificial creation of the image or impression that you have a force or capability that does not actually exist.

Diversion:

The intentional distraction of an enemy’s attention away from the area of interest or attack. Two basic types: feint and demonstration.

Feint:

An attack by friendly forces to distract enemy attention from your main area of interest or attack.

- Demonstration: The deployment of forces to distract an enemy, but such a deployment does not usually include actual contact or combat. The purpose of a diversion is simple—to mislead an enemy away from your real operations and objectives.
- Conditioning: The repetition of what could be preparations for a hostile action without conducting hostilities—thereby lulling the victim into a false sense of security. This is a variation of the “familiarity breeds contempt” theme.
- Cover: The use of an apparently nonthreatening activity to disguise preparation for or initiation of a hostile act. A common example is the use of a training exercise to hide preparations for an attack.

Note: Conditioning and cover may occur in combination with one another—they can be mutually supportive. A common example is a military training exercise.

ENDNOTES

1. For a general review of concepts of deception, see Colonel Michael Dewar, *The Art of Deception in Warfare*, Newton Abbot, Devon, UK: David & Charles Publishers, 1989, pp. 9-22; Jon Latimer, *Deception in War: The Art of the Bluff, the Value of Deceit, and the Most Thrilling Episodes of Cunning in Military History, from the Trojan Horse to the Gulf War*, Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2001, pp. 1-5; and James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Victory and Deceit: Deception and Trickery at War*, San Jose, CA: Writers Club Press, 2001, pp. 1-31.

2. An excellent overview of camouflage in nature is provided in Marco Ferrari, *Colors for Survival: Mimicry and Camouflage in Nature*, Charlottesville, VA: Thomasson Grant & Howell, 1993. How examples in nature have affected military deception is discussed in Guy Hartcup, *Camouflage: A History of Concealment and Deception in War*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980, pp. 9-11; and in J. Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley, *Cheating and Deception*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991, pp. 48-52.

3. The process of choosing methods of deception is examined in Latimer, pp. 71-100; while Bell and Whaley, pp. 45-74, discuss characteristics of types of deception.

4. An introduction to this crisis is available at Digital History under "Western Expansion, The Mexican War," at http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=316, accessed July 20, 2004. For a variety of opinions as to the motives of the Polk administration, see Archie P. McDonald, ed., *The Mexican War: Crisis for American Democracy*, Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1969; and Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *The Mexican War: Was it Manifest Destiny?* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

5. See President McKinley's "Report on the Findings of the Sampson Board's Inquiry into the Maine's Loss," March 28, 1898, accessed at <http://www.spanamwar.com/McKinleymaine.htm>, July 15, 2004.

6. Philip Knightley and John Pilger, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent As Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, provide a general survey of the role of the media in reporting events leading up to war and the wars themselves.

7. John F. Bratzel and Leslie B. Rout, Jr., "FDR and the 'Secret Map'," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 9, New Year's 1985, pp. 167-173.

8. This is discussed in "Ex-British Agent Says FDR's Nazi Map Faked," *Foreign Intelligence Literary Scene*, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, December 1984, pp. 1-3; "President Roosevelt's Navy Day Address on World Affairs," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1941; and Mark Weber, "Roosevelt's 'Secret Map' Speech," *The Journal for Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 1986, p. 125.

9. See Michael Beschloss, *Mayday: The U-2 Affair: The Untold Story of the Greatest US-USSR Spy Scandal*, New York, Harper Collins, 1987.

10. Robert McNamara's explanation of the "missile gap" can be accessed in his 1996 interview for the CNN series "The Cold War," at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/12/interviews/mcnamara/>.

11. *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, amended as of June 9, 2004, is available at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

12. Good background narratives discussing deception in warfare prior to the 20th century can be found in Latimer, pp. 6-36; Dewar, pp. 23-34; and Dunnigan and Nofi, pp. 32-109.

13. See Donald C. Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig, *Strategic Military Deception*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1982, pp. 5-7.

14. The importance of "noise" in the intelligence failure regarding Pearl Harbor is most clearly explained in Roberta Wohlstetter's elderly, but seminal work, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1962.

15. The D-Day deceptions are recounted in many sources, but the best analysis to date is to be found in the British official history, Michael Howard, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol. 5, *Strategic Deception*, London, HMSO, 1990; Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies*, New York, Harper & Row, 1975; and in Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War*, New York, Scribner, 2004.

16. For examples of chicanery with runway craters, see Alfred Price, *Targeting the Reich*, London: Greenhill Books, 2003, p. 86; and Seymour Reit, *Masquerade: The Amazing Camouflage Deceptions of World War II*, New York: Hawthorn, 1978, photographs following p. 90.

17. Biblical scholars will remember the accounts of Gideon in the Old Testament, and classical scholars will point to examples which range from the previously mentioned Trojan Horse to the ruses employed by Caesar in Gaul. For an overview of the origins of deception doctrines, see Everett L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988.

18. In an unsubstantiated story told to the author by a World War II U.S. Army Air Force pilot, American photo intelligence detected a number of Japanese dummy aircraft on dispersal sites on the island of Rabaul. These dummies fooled no one, and they were ignored by allied bombing raids. However, late in the war, when Rabaul had been by-passed by General MacArthur's island hopping campaign, it was used as a "seasoning" target for newly arrived allied aircrew. On one of these raids, an inexperienced bombardier struck the dummy aircraft by mistake. The result was a series of secondary explosions which went on for hours. The Japanese had placed ammunition and fuel stockpiles under their obvious "active camouflage." This story has not been confirmed by other sources to date, but, even if it is not true or is possibly embellished, the point remains valid—active camouflage *could* be used as passive camouflage.

19. Each of these terms is defined in *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, amended as of June 9, 2004, and is available at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

20. Again, each of these terms is defined in *ibid.*

21. See a collection of Johannes von Goethe's quotations in the John Petrie Collection at <http://www.arches.uga.edu/~jppetrie/goethe.html>.

22. An examination of the counterintelligence problems associated with double agents can be found in David C. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors*, New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

23. DoD provided these briefings to media audiences in Washington, DC, in 2001 and 2002, and examples are available online at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2001/g011024-D-6570C.html> and http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2002/t10082002_t1008dia.html.

24. An interesting collection of essays is to be found in John Norton Moore, ed., *Deception and Deterrence in "Wars of National Liberation," State-Sponsored Terrorism and Other Forms of Secret Warfare*, Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1997.

25. Gene R. Nichol, Jr., "US Domestic Legal Constraints on Deception" at <http://www.duke.edu/web/tiss/archives/conferencerecords/Deception/Nichol.html>.

26. FM 27-10, *The Laws of Land Warfare*, Foreword, at <http://faculty.ed.umuc.edu/~nstanton/FWD.htm>.

27. *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, Section V. at <http://faculty.ed.umuc.edu/~nstanton/Ch2.htm#s5>; and Scott L. Silliman "International Legal Constraints" at <http://www.duke.edu/web/tiss/archives/conferencerecords/Deception/Silliman.html>.

28. See the discussion in Elizabeth Kiss, "Strategic Deception in Modern Democracies: The Ethical Dimension" at <http://www.duke.edu/web/tiss/archives/conferencerecords/Deception/Kiss.pdf>; Rushworth M. Kidder, "Ethical Deception?" at <http://www.globalethics.org/newslines/members/issue.tmpl?articleid=11180122325517>; and Major John Mark Mattox, "The Moral Status of Military Deception" at <http://www.usafa.af.mil/jscope/SCOPE00/Mattox00.html>. An interesting overview of the basic issues can be found in Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.

29. Again, note the discussions to be found in Kiss and Mattox above.

30. See Walter Jajko's overview of the role of ethical considerations in deception planning in his "Deception: Appeal for Acceptance; Discourse on Doctrine; Preface to Planning" at http://www.poliscitaylorandfrancis.com/pdfs/cst/novdec02_jajko.pdf.

31. See the press coverage of this issue in CNN stories at <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/02/19/gen.strategic.influence> and <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/02/26/defense.office>.