



THE CASE FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF DECEPTION IN ROMANIAN MILITARY DOCTRINE

Lieutenant Colonel George-Ion TOROI, PhD

“Carol I” National Defence University, Bucharest
10.55535/RMT.2024.3.4

The 80th anniversary of the largest amphibious operation in history, the D-Day landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944, also brings to mind a concept critical to the success of that military operation: deception. Creating and gaining operational advantage on the battlefield by manipulating the enemy’s perception has always been a desideratum for any military force.

Although the art of deception received somewhat less attention in Western military doctrine at the beginning of this millennium, it has become increasingly important in recent years due to the heightened competition between the great powers, being considered critical to the success of current military operations.

In this context, the article aims to sensitise Romanian military decision-makers at all levels with respect to the operational necessity of deception, the need to perfect specific skills during the training process, as well as to the development of an appropriate doctrinal framework that will contribute to the consolidation of the Romanian Armed Forces’ combat power.

Keywords: deception; cognitive domain; operating environment; technology; operational advantage;



Motto:
“In wartime, truth is so precious that it should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies”.

Winston Churchill

INTRODUCTION

Recently, it has been 80 years since the greatest amphibious military operation in history – the Normandy landings of 6 June 1944 –, when the Allies succeeded in projecting a considerable military force ashore that ultimately contributed significantly to the defeat of Nazi Germany in the First World War. The remembrance of those moments, in addition to the courage and heroism of the soldiers who fought at the time, brings to the fore an extremely important aspect of the art of war, which contributed significantly to the success of the whole operation, namely the *art of deception*. Without the careful planning and execution of *Operation Bodyguard*, the Allied deception plan, the casualties suffered and even the success of the landings might have been in doubt. The role of deception was therefore crucial in ensuring favourable landing conditions for the Allied forces by manipulating the enemy’s perception to the exact place and time of the landing.

A crucial element, also part of the deception operation, was to maintain a false perception of the direction of the main Allied operational effort even after the initial landings had taken place. It ensured that the Germans kept the bulk of their forces in places of no operational importance, thus supporting the rapid and secure build-up of Allied forces on the Normandy beaches.

It can therefore be seen that the purpose of misleading actions is to materialise operational opportunities leading to decisive advantages over the enemy. This was the case in *Operation Bodyguard*, where all the actions taken led to the success of the Normandy landings. The example is not unique, however, and history is littered with instances of military commanders exploiting human nature to deceive

Without the careful planning and execution of *Operation Bodyguard*, the Allied deception plan, the casualties suffered and even the success of the landings might have been in doubt. The role of deception was therefore crucial in ensuring favourable landing conditions for the Allied forces by manipulating the enemy’s perception to the exact place and time of the landing.



their adversaries and create the conditions for operational success (Kennedy, 2022, p. 306).

However, while history has demonstrated the undeniable value of such actions, **the ability of Western militaries to plan and execute them has declined significantly in recent decades.** (Strategic Survey 2022. The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics, 2023, p. 40). I consider that the main reasons that have led to such a situation are the following:

- the unipolarity of the global system installed after the dissolution of the USSR;
- the nature of the counter-insurgency operations and the adversaries encountered in armed confrontations, without the need to find ingenious solutions in a technologically dominated battlefield;
- the misperception of deception ineffectiveness in a highly transparent operational environment.

RESEARCH GAP

However, against the backdrop of the paradigm shift of armed conflicts towards large-scale combat operations, in the context of the evolution of society towards a multipolar society characterised by an intense level of competition (Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 Competition Continuum, 2019, p. 1; Mazarr J.S., 2018, p. 1; Mazarr J.B., 2022, pp. 111-113; MCDP 1-4 Competing, 2020, pp. 1-3) as well as of an arms race between East and West, the importance of finding solutions that provide operational advantages to one side becomes crucial. For example, it is recognised that *“a return to great power competition against peer adversaries with advanced anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) capabilities will require a renewed focus on the employment of deception”*. (Hays, 2020, p. 56).

If we also take into account **the human side of the conflict**, it becomes essential to achieve effects in the opponent’s cognitive dimension, by influencing his understanding and will to fight. At the same time, although we are witnessing an extremely rapid development of technology, with implications in all branches of military science and art, I am aware that, in the short and medium term, decision-making

will continue to be based on the human factor. Therefore, exploiting the limitations of the human brain through the use of deceptive actions can make a significant contribution to the achievement of operational advantages in the tactical field, according to B.A. Friedman. (Friedman, 2017, p. 31).

Today we are also witnessing a profound transformation of society through **unprecedented technological development**. Things that not so long ago seemed to be the stuff of science fiction have become reality. The trend continues to accelerate. Identifying a legal framework to regulate the impact and use of these new technologies is extremely difficult at this stage. As one of the main pillars of any society, the military sector could not fail to be affected by these changes. Today, we are witnessing an almost total digitalisation of all branches of the military system, the implementation of artificial intelligence to facilitate the processing of the multitude of data in the information environment and thus support decision-making, the integration of robots to perform specific armed combat functions, and the development of radars and sensors for intelligence gathering. Within this framework, the **current operational environment** has become extremely complex and ambiguous (JCN1/17, 2017, p. 1; Future Leadership, 2020, pp. 1-2; TC 7-102, 2014, pp. 1-2), providing the right conditions for misleading.

However, there is a school of thought among some military theorists that deception is no longer possible due to the increased transparency of the battlefield brought about by the technological developments in the military field. However, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine shows that **this art is by no means obsolete**. More than ever, it has become critical to maintaining the operational capability of the armed forces or to achieving surprise and operational advantage on the battlefield. Its viability is also demonstrated by Australian General Mick Ryan’s observation that *“the ability to observe more on the battlefield does not necessarily ensure a greater degree of insight into what is actually happening or what the enemy is thinking”*. (Ryan, 2024). In other words, being able to observe the battlefield is not enough to understand the operational situation.



We are witnessing an almost total digitalisation of all branches of the military system, the implementation of artificial intelligence to facilitate the processing of the multitude of data in the information environment and thus support decision-making, the integration of robots to perform specific armed combat functions, and the development of radars and sensors for intelligence gathering.

“A return to great power competition against peer adversaries with advanced anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) capabilities will require a renewed focus on the employment of deception”.



The main research gap that generated this study is that the Romanian Armed Forces do not take sufficient measures, at both theoretical and practical levels, to include deception as a defining element of the Romanian operational art.

I see it as a paradox, as there is a growing awareness of the importance of this issue in contemporary military operations. The above conclusion is the result of an open-ended questionnaire that I conducted in 2023 in order to identify counter-deception solutions in the current operational environment. One of the secondary objectives of this questionnaire was to also find out *how officers in the Romanian Armed Forces perceive the concept of deception*. In this respect, of the 73 respondents who were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, their own degree of willingness to engage in deception in a potential military operation, the resulting average was extremely high, namely 8.54. I should mention that the selection of the personnel who participated in the questionnaire during the sampling process was made according to the following criteria: professional experience, which is shown in *table 1*, as well as their level of knowledge, selecting only officers enrolled in the Combined Arms Master’s Programme or graduates of this form of training, which is crucial for the preparation of future commanders within the Romanian Armed Forces structure.

Table 1: Sample analysis in terms of work experience (author’s design)

Years of experience	10-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	Over 25 years
Number of participants	29	32	10	2

As part of this questionnaire, I also wanted to find out whether deception is part of military training. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 the number of times they had participated in exercises involving deception. A score of 10 represented an extremely high number, in almost every exercise they had participated in, and a score of 1, none. The resulting extremely low average – 2.16 – shows



a very low interest in including deception in the training activities of the Romanian Armed Forces.

Moreover, in Romania there is no such training course dedicated to deception. Even post-graduate military-specific training courses do not place special emphasis on disciplines specific to this phenomenon. Most major international actors, including Romania’s main strategic ally, the United States of America, attach great importance to the concept and provide specialised courses for their own personnel. (Joint MILDEC Training Course/JMTC, 2024; Army Deception Planners’ Course/ADPC, 2024; INTL653/Deception, Propaganda and Disinformation, 2024).

Deception has long been understood in the Romanian Armed Forces as the process of masking, mainly involving passive measures of concealment and camouflage. It was implemented from Soviet doctrine in the early 1950s, replicating the concept of “*maskirovka*”. Two regulations that were published in 2015 and 2021 attempted to change the paradigm of the use of deception in the Romanian Armed Forces, ensuring that this concept would be aligned with the vision of Western armies. However, they only provide a primary framework for planning and conducting deception operations. A new mindset that includes a greater focus on disruptive and deceptive actions would go a long way towards increasing the chances of operational success for the Romanian forces, especially as the indigenous ingenuity and creativity of the Romanian people are recognised.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Thus, the research question that guided our study was: *What are the reasons why the Romanian military should place a greater emphasis on misleading operations?* Accordingly, the main objective of this paper was to sensitize the decision-makers of the Romanian military system on the need to deepen the field of deception as a combat power multiplier. I appreciate that generating an increased interest on this topic would imply substantial benefits for the Romanian Armed Forces in the defence of the national territory, having the potential to contribute significantly to the improvement of all three components of combat power: conceptual, physical and moral. (AJP-01, Allied Joint

Deception has long been understood in the Romanian Armed Forces as the process of masking, mainly involving passive measures of concealment and camouflage. It was implemented from Soviet doctrine in the early 1950s, replicating the concept of “maskirovka”.



Doctrine, Edition F, Version 1, 2022, p. 49). Thus, the answers to the main question were organised in the form of subchapters, each presenting arguments to ensure the achievement of the proposed research objective. The way in which they were presented was thematic, with several reasons grouped together under one broad theme in order to ensure the coherence of the scientific approach.

Moreover, as mentioned above, **the main target of the study** is the Romanian military decision-makers at all hierarchical levels. However, although the paper is not intended as a guide to the planning and conduct of deception operations, it may be useful to all military planners, as the motivations offered in response to the main research question have the potential to shape the way in which the deception of this type of personnel is reported during the planning process of military operations.

In relation to the proposed objective, **the study was qualitative**, attempting to capture the specific nuances of the need for greater integration of deception in the Romanian philosophy of planning and conducting military operations. Moreover, I used an **inductive approach**, attempting to draw a general conclusion based on the empirical observations made (Given, 2008, p. 429). I also emphasise the methodological coherence of the options presented above, as the literature recognises that qualitative research primarily uses inductive reasoning. (Leavy, 2023, p. 9; Creswell, 2023, p. 276).

In order to achieve the set research objective, I decided to use **both primary and secondary data**.

The **primary data** used were collected using questionnaire as the research method. In order to be consistent with the type of research, qualitative, I chose to use open-ended questions to support a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The main role of the data collected through the questionnaire was to support the identification and definition of the research problem, as presented in the previous section.

As for the **secondary data**, they supported the inferential process in order to provide a coherent framework for identifying the main arguments leading to the fulfilment of the objective of this study.



By ensuring the ability to make comparisons and inferences with how the issue of deception is approached in other military structures, I believe that secondary data was a viable option for this study. The value of using this type of data in research is recognised in the literature. (Walliman, 2022, p. 102).

THE GROWING ROLE OF DECEPTION IN ROMANIAN MILITARY DOCTRINE – WHY?

The purpose of this chapter is easy to understand. It represents the result of the research carried out and expresses the arguments on the basis of which I believe that the Romanian Armed Forces should give a higher degree of importance to the role that deceptive actions play in the conducted military operations. It is organised in a logical form, following an approach in which several similar arguments have been grouped thematically in order to provide a logical framework leading to the proposed objective of raising awareness among decision-makers in the Romanian military system of the need to further develop the field of deception. *Figure 1* highlights **the main themes** that emerged from the research conducted.

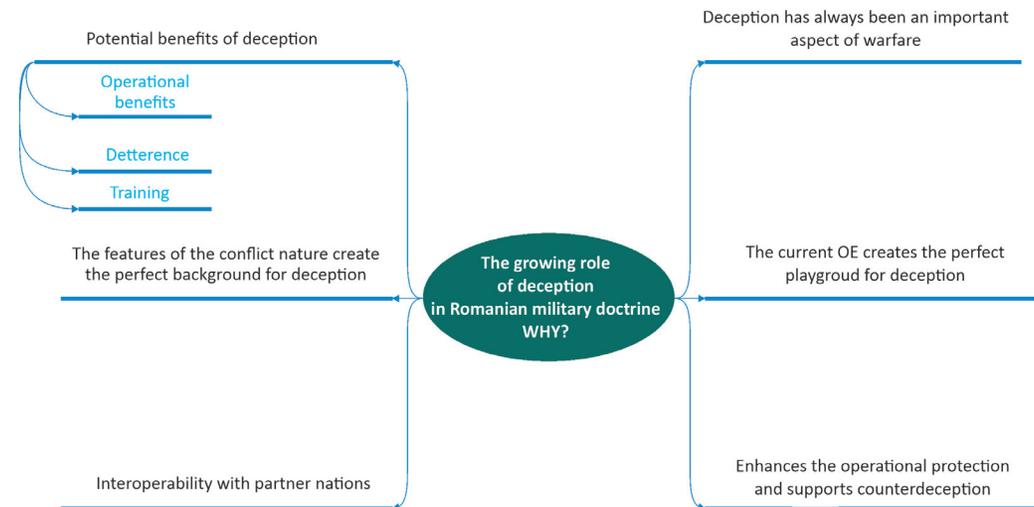


Figure 1: Arguments on the increasing role of deception in Romanian doctrine (author's design)



Deception has been – and continues to be – an extremely valuable weapon in armed conflict

The first argument is based on a historical perspective. Deception has proven to be one of the oldest and most powerful weapons in armed conflict (Friedman, 2017, p. 73). Time has shown that it has been an inherent part of armed conflict regardless of the historical epoch. There are many examples to support this claim. One of the oldest and most well-known examples dates back to ancient Greece. It is the famous Trojan Horse, staged over 3000 years ago for the Greek conquest of Troy. Unable to conquer the city by direct action, the Greeks resorted to ingenuity to change the conditions on the battlefield. Using this stratagem, the Achaeans were able to exploit the prejudices of the Trojans by introducing, under the guise of a gift, a huge wooden Trojan horse, which was in fact full of Trojan soldiers. They opened the city gates and facilitated the Greek victory.

Ancient Chinese history is littered with examples of the use of deception. The concept was considered crucial to the success of military operations and over time became part of Chinese culture. Today, the name Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese strategist, is synonymous with the idea of deception. His work, *The Art of War*, has been a source of inspiration for Chinese and other strategists for more than 2000 years, although it was not translated, interpreted and properly adapted into English until the early 20th century. Over the years, the value of this work has been confirmed countless times in the practice of warfare.

The well-known aphorism attributed to Sun Tzu – “*All conflict is based on deception*” – has proved its validity in most armed conflicts throughout history. The ability to manipulate your opponent’s information system (Friedman, 2021, p. 113) by creating a false picture of the course of events that would lead him to make decisions and act unconsciously against his own interests, which is the very essence of deception, has determined great military commanders to resort to deceptive tactics to ensure victory. Thus, memorable examples of the use of deception are as follows:

- *Battle of Gaugamela* (331 BC) – Alexander Macedon;

- *Battle of Trasimene Lake* (217 BC), *Battle of Cannae* (216 BC) – Hannibal;
- *Defeat of the rebellion of the Gallic tribes led by Vercingetorix* (52 BC)/*Gallic Wars* – Julius Caesar;
- *Battle of Hastings* (1066) – William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy;
- *Seven Years’ War* (1756 to 1763);
- *Battle of Long Island* (1776) – George Washington;
- *Battle of Lodi/Lombardy* (1796) – Napoleon Bonaparte;
- *Siege of Yorktown* – *American Civil War* (1862) – Confederate General John B. Magruder;
- *Gallipoli Campaign* (1915)/*First World War*;
- *Battles of Beersheba-Gaza* (1917) and *Megiddo Offensive* (1918)/*Second World War*;
- *Operation Barbarossa* (1941)/*Second World War*;
- *Operation Mincemeat* (1943)/ *Second World War*;
- *Operation Bodyguard*, *Fortitude-South*, *Fortitude-North* (1944)/*Second World War*;
- *Cuban Missile Crisis* (1962);
- *Operation El Paso* (1966)/*Vietnam War*;
- *Yom Kippur War* (1973);
- *Falklands War* (Falklands - 1982);
- *Operation “Desert Storm”/Gulf War* (1991);
- *Kosovo War* (1998 - 1999);
- *Annexation of Crimea/War in Ukraine* (2014);
- *Israel-Hamas conflict* (2021);
- *Ukrainian counter-offensive to take Kharkov* (2022)/*Russian-Ukrainian conflict*.

Moreover, the historical value of deception has been recognised by the great military thinkers as a constant in their works. Sun Tzu, Niccolò Machiavelli, Carl von Clausewitz, Antoine-Henri Jomini, J.F.C. Fuller, B.H. Liddell Hart, John Boyd, all emphasised to a greater or lesser extent in their famous works on the art and conduct of war the importance of surprise and misleading the enemy in order to achieve operational advantages on the battlefield.

Deception has been – and continues to be – an extremely valuable weapon in armed conflict. Deception has proven to be one of the oldest and most powerful weapons in armed conflict. Time has shown that it has been an inherent part of armed conflict regardless of the historical epoch.



The deceptive nature of the human race, the multitude of benefits that deception can bring to support military operations, as well as the fact that in most cases the success of such actions is almost guaranteed, as Barton Whaley also acknowledged in his famous study, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War* (Whaley, 1969, p. 76), make deception an inextricable part of armed conflict.

It is the specific elements of the nature of the conflict that provide the proper framework for deception

It is well known that *“the nature of war is constant; it is its character that changes rapidly”*. (JDP 0-01, 2022, p. 7). Thus, conflicts contain both characteristics that have remained constant over time and changing characteristics that are influenced by the specific societal characteristics. Uncertainty, the human side of conflict or violence are recognised as perennial elements of war that cannot be completely eliminated. (Jonsson, 2019, pp. 29-34; AJP-01, Allied Joint Doctrine, Edition F, Version 1, 2022, pp. 7-8). Regardless of the historical period, they have been identified and have directly influenced the way warfare is conducted.

Uncertainty provides the perfect framework for the use of deception. Against this background, the possibility of manipulating the adversary’s perception of the operational situation and influencing his actions in the wrong direction is increased, thus ensuring the materialisation of opportunities to gain operational advantages over him.

With regard to **the human side of conflict**, as long as the military decision remains a human attribute, it is subject to error and can therefore be influenced by exploiting its limitations and vulnerabilities. Thus, shaping an adversary’s perception and consequently his understanding of the battlefield situation (Friedman, 2017, p. 76) in order to induce him to take actions to his detriment remains a constant element of armed conflict.

Uncertainty provides the perfect framework for the use of deception. Against this background, the possibility of manipulating the adversary’s perception of the operational situation and influencing his actions in the wrong direction is increased, thus ensuring the materialisation of opportunities to gain operational advantages over him.

The current environment creates the conditions for successful military deception operations

While the nature of armed conflict is unchanging, its character has transformed over time. The societal characteristics of each era have inevitably influenced warfare. For this reason, understanding the operational relevance of deception in the current context cannot be achieved without reference to the characteristics of the current operating environment.

Today, accurate information has become increasingly difficult to distinguish and obtain. This is a paradox of our times, where sensor technology for collecting information has grown exponentially. However, the sheer volume of data, the speed at which it is transmitted and the relative anonymity within social networks make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood. Against this backdrop, it has become increasingly difficult to detect and counter deception actions, namely disinformation. Now more than ever, given the growing importance of accurate and timely information, *“the entity that is able to generate the information advantage over the adversary is in a position to gain the initiative”* (AJP3.10.2, 2020, p. 1), a critical element of operational success.

Technology has been and will continue to be the main vector for adapting battle tactics (Piehler, 2013, p. 362). We have witnessed an unprecedented technological development over the past decades, which has affected all sectors of society, including the military. Today, the technology of intelligence gathering has advanced to the point where almost total transparency of the battlefield has been achieved. Long-range targeting technology has also improved dramatically, as has the accuracy of these capabilities. However, the cost of such weapons is extremely high.

From the above observations, it can be seen that deception is becoming a crucial element in the conduct of conflicts in order to maintain a high level of combat capability. For example, the use of decoys can support the realisation of multi-spectral protection of forces and assets in today’s transparent environment. In the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, false replicas of capabilities obtained from Western



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

Today, the technology of intelligence gathering has advanced to the point where almost total transparency of the battlefield has been achieved. Long-range targeting technology has also improved dramatically, as has the accuracy of these capabilities. However, the cost of such weapons is extremely high.



With the development of technology and the increasing reliance of military forces on technology, electronic deception has become an extremely important weapon that can provide the framework for realising operational advantages on the modern battlefield.

allies have been widely used by the Ukrainians to ensure that they maintain a high level of combat capability in the face of the Russians.

In addition, false targets can be used to induce the adversary to waste expensive capabilities to destroy them, thus contributing to the degradation of their combat power. There are countless examples of sophisticated Russian equipment being fooled by decoys. Recently, an Internet video showed a Russian Iskander missile worthing about three million dollars engaging a Patriot launcher that was actually an inflatable replica. (X, 2024).

The value of these fake targets for the conduct of the conflict in Ukraine is also underlined by the attention paid to their development. For example, the company Metinvest specialises in producing replicas of combat equipment for the Ukrainian armed forces. (The Jerusalem Post, 2023).

In addition, with the development of technology and the increasing reliance of military forces on technology, electronic deception has become an extremely important weapon that can provide the framework for realising operational advantages on the modern battlefield. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to gain superiority over the adversary in terms of signature management. (Ryan, 2024).

In today's information age, the cognitive domain is becoming increasingly important (Weissmann, 2023, p. 271). Actions specific to this environment include degrading, disrupting, and influencing the adversary's cognitive capabilities in order to gain operational advantages over the adversary. (NATO Cognitive Warfare Exploratory Concept Draft, 2022, p. 3). Since deception involves manipulating the enemy's mind (Jasper, 2023, p. 1), it takes on new dimensions in today's operational environment.

Deception remains an extremely valuable element at the operational level. The most telling example dates back to the autumn of 2022, when, as part of the counter-offensive to regain lost territory in the Kharkov region, the Ukrainians managed to persuade the Russians to move the bulk of their forces to the southern front in the Kherson area, amid false Ukrainian signals of a possible attack in that area. This move facilitated the possibility of recapturing some 3000 km² in the Kharkov region. (Santelises, 2022).

Ensuring interoperability with allied forces

The undeniable value of deception in the current operational environment has been recognised by most of the major players on the global scene, some of them strategic allies of Romania. This is an additional argument for the Romanian Armed Forces to increase its interest in this type of operations. The reason for this is as simple and intuitive as possible: interoperability. In a context where Romania is unlikely to conduct military operations independently, finding solutions to synchronise the way operations are planned and conducted with allies is one of the prerequisites for defending the national territory.

Against a backdrop of heightened global competition for power, Western actors have recognised the need to move from the counterinsurgency operations practiced for nearly two decades to large-scale operations. In this context, it is recognised that *“deception will be critical to operational success”*. (NATO Cognitive Warfare Exploratory Concept Draft, 2022, p. 43). However, this paradigm shift is fraught with challenges. In addition to those arising from the characteristics of the current operating environment outlined above, a major challenge is to relearn some of the essential elements of major conflict, such as deception. (The Economist, 2020).

The interest of Western militaries in the field of deception is also reflected in the timeliness of their doctrines devoted to this topic. In *table 2*, I have listed these documents and their year of publication for some key players in the current strategic environment. Their recent publication underscores the increased interest in this area, and thus accentuates the importance of understanding how deception can have an impact in today's conflicts.

Table 2: Allied doctrines of deception (author's design)

Actor	Year	Doctrine
NATO	2020	AJP-3.10.2 Allied Joint Doctrine for operations security and deception, edition A, version 2, NATO Standardization Office.



Against a backdrop of heightened global competition for power, Western actors have recognised the need to move from the counterinsurgency operations practiced for nearly two decades to large-scale operations. In this context, it is recognised that “deception will be critical to operational success”.



The new NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept/NWCC emphasises the need for NATO forces to out-think their adversaries in order to prevail in future conflicts. In this sense, given the nature of deceptive operations, they may be one of the solutions to achieving this goal.

Actor	Year	Doctrine
USA	2017	JP 3-13.4 Military deception, US Joint Chiefs of Staff
	2019	FM 3-13.4 Army Support to Military Deception, US Department of the Army
	2024	ATP 3-13.4 Army deception activities tactics, techniques, and procedures, US Department of the Army
UK	2018	Army Field Manual – Warfighting Tactics Part 1: The Fundamentals, UK Ministry of Defence – the first annex of this document is dedicated to deception in military operations

The new NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept/NWCC emphasises the need for NATO forces to out-think their adversaries in order to prevail in future conflicts. In this sense, given the nature of deceptive operations, they may be one of the solutions to achieving this goal.

Increased interest in this type of action is also being shown by some actors, in particular the United States of America, in order to assess the operational capability of its forces to plan and conduct deception. (US Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, 2022).

I understand that, in the context of conducting military operations in a multinational framework, in order to ensure the level of interoperability with its allies, Romania will have to find solutions to be able to invest more in the field of deception. It would ensure its “ability to act with them in a coherent and effective way to achieve common objectives”. (AAP-06, 2021, p. 71). Measures are therefore needed to ensure all three components of interoperability: technical, procedural and human. (AJP-01, Allied Joint Doctrine, Edition F, Version 1, 2022, p. 71).

For example, in the event of a potential conflict at home, **deception could provide an operational respite** until NATO’s main forces arrive, or **it could help maintain a high level of operational capability** by causing the adversary to act on false replicas of key capabilities.



The potential benefits of deception

However, perhaps the most important reason why the Romanian Armed Forces should increasingly incorporate specific elements of deception into the way they plan and conduct operations is the multiple benefits that these actions can provide.

They can be divided into several categories. The most important, of course, are the **operational benefits**. From this point of view, deception is a highly volatile action which, if successful, offers numerous benefits. According to British doctrine, they fall into **four broad categories**: achieving surprise, ensuring operational security, freedom of movement and economy of effort. (AFM, 2018, pp. 3A-2).

However, it is important to remember that deception is only a force multiplier that shapes the battlefield. It can never fulfil the functions of a decisive operation. The role of the inclusion of deception is therefore to support the concept of the operation by materialising operational effects that ensure the framework conducive to the accomplishment of the established mission. They cannot exist in a vacuum and **are an integral part of the overall military operation**. Their role is to cause the enemy to make operational errors without realising it. Thus, **in support of the commander’s concept of the military operation, deception can:**

- cause the enemy to reveal his combat equipment, his strengths and weaknesses and, perhaps most importantly, his future intentions;
- confuse the adversary by overloading his sensors for intelligence collection and analysis;
- contribute to reducing the enemy’s combat effectiveness by causing him to use his forces and assets ineffectively.

Since the target of any deception operation is the enemy commander, these actions can contribute significantly to degrading the adversary’s *OODA (Observation, Orientation, Decision, Action)* cycle, thereby ensuring decisional superiority over the enemy, and thus gaining and maintaining the initiative on the battlefield. Decisional superiority involves “the ability to understand, decide, act and evaluate faster and more effectively than the adversary” (Tunnell, September-October 2022, p. 79) and contributes decisively to his losing the battle.

It is important to remember that deception is only a force multiplier that shapes the battlefield. It can never fulfil the functions of a decisive operation. The role of the inclusion of deception is therefore to support the concept of the operation by materialising operational effects that ensure the framework conducive to the accomplishment of the established mission.



Planning deception is an extremely complex process that requires a thorough understanding of all the elements specific to the adversary. It is necessary to understand both his operational situation, how he acts doctrinally in such cases, and the elements of how the adversary gathers and analyses information, how he makes decisions, and what particular cognitive aspects influence his decisions.

Planning deception is also an extremely complex process that requires a thorough understanding of all the elements specific to the adversary. It is necessary to understand both his operational situation, how he acts doctrinally in such cases, and the elements of how the adversary gathers and analyses information, how he makes decisions, and what particular cognitive aspects influence his decisions. Thus, by analysing the possibility of incorporating deception into military operations, **a mindset can be developed that is geared towards analysing the adversary in depth**, thus providing the prerequisites for identifying timely solutions to exploit his vulnerabilities, even if this is not done through deception.

Moreover, **the use of deception is in line with most of the combat philosophies** adopted by the Romanian Armed Forces. The incorporation of deception thus offers significant advantages in the implementation of the manoeuvrist approach or the mission command concept. Moreover, deception is considered the most important way to surprise the enemy (FM 3-90 Tactics, 2023, pp. 19-1), which is one of the oldest, well-known and widely used principles of armed combat. Thus, given that the achievement of surprise is a desideratum of any military operation (ADP 3-13 Information, 2023, pp. 6-2), it is easy to understand the Romanian Armed Forces need to deepen deception.

A second set of benefits that **deception** can provide are peacetime benefits. In this respect, it **can contribute significantly to the deterrence of adversaries, but also to the enhancement of training levels.**

In terms of **deterrence**, one of NATO's key peacetime functions (NATO Strategic Concept, 2022, p. 1), deception, by concealing vulnerabilities and overemphasising strengths, can at the very least confuse the adversary and thus prevent the creation of conditions conducive to an attack by the adversary. Even the simple public disclosure of the fact that the military exercises carried out by the Romanian Armed Forces include specific objectives for the training of deceptive actions can cause confusion to the adversary and slow down his actions, making him analyse the operational situation for a longer time, for fear of not being deceived. So, I understand that the perception of things is much more important than the reality itself.

Another extremely important area where deception can be beneficial is in **training**. This is an essential part of combat capability, providing, along with other elements, the physical component of combat capability. (JDP 0-01, 2022, p. 24).

Because of the nature of deception operations, which involve identifying the enemy's vulnerabilities, cracks in his modus operandi that can be exploited, and often require much more critical thinking, even outside the box, and ingenious solutions to deceive the enemy, **deception trains the critical and creative thinking of the personnel involved in planning such actions**. This effect has a direct impact on force training, with the potential to ensure a high degree of rigour and depth across the full spectrum of military operational processes. It is also recognised that the application of creative and critical thinking is one of the principles of the operational process. (ADP 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces, 2019, pp. 2-4 - 2-5)

Ensuring one of the preconditions for countering the deceptive actions of adversaries

An extremely important element is that developing the ability to mislead also provides protection against such actions by the adversary. The main prerequisite for countering deception is to understand how it works.

In addition, based on the extensive experience of Romania's and NATO's potential adversaries, Russia (ATP 7-100.1 Russian Tactics, 2024, pp. 2-2) and China (ATP 7-100.3 Chinese Tactics, 2021, pp. 1-10), it can be seen that the role of deception in Romanian operational art must be intensified in order to create the right conditions for countering it.

In addition to the ability to increase the chances of detecting the opponent's deceptive actions, the knowledge of how deception works also supports the counteraction in the fifth phase of the counteraction process, *"Operational Response"* (Toroi, 2024, pp. 186-187).



Because of the nature of deception operations, which involve identifying the enemy's vulnerabilities, cracks in his modus operandi that can be exploited, and often require much more critical thinking, even outside the box, and ingenious solutions to deceive the enemy, deception trains the critical and creative thinking of the personnel involved in planning such actions.



CONCLUSIONS

The process of adaptation is essential to the survival of any organisation, including the military one. For this reason, the importance of identifying the critical elements of how armed forces operate and the ability to achieve timely system transformation in relation to these challenges is a key prerequisite for success in armed conflicts. NATO, the world's largest politico-military organisation, insists that "to maintain military superiority and prevail in future conflicts, Alliance forces must continually adapt, evolve and innovate" (Framework for Future Alliance Operations, 2018, p. 22). Adaptation is directly related to organisational flexibility. Mental, procedural and organisational rigidity, reluctance to change, inability to correctly identify the operational requirements of the armed forces are elements that hinder an effective process of the military structures adaptation.

Within this framework, the present article is aimed to draw the attention of the Romanian Armed Forces leadership to the issue of deception and its importance in the current security environment. Furthermore, the main results presented in this study have highlighted the most important benefits that the Romanian Armed Forces could gain from these actions, emphasising the need to intensify the role of deception in the Romanian military doctrine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. AAP-06. (2021). *AAP-06, NATO Glossary of terms and definitions (English and French)*. NATO Standardization Office.
2. ADP 3-13 *Information*. (2023). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army.
3. ADP 6-0 *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*. (2019). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army.
4. AFM. (2018). *Army Field Manual – Warfighting Tactics Part 1: The Fundamentals*. UK Defence Ministry.
5. AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine, Edition F, Version 1*. (2022). NATO Standardization Office.
6. AJP3.10.2. (2020). *Allied Joint Doctrine for operations security and deception, edition A, version 2*. NATO Standardization Office.
7. *Army Deception Planners' Course/ADPC*. (2024), <https://www.1stio.army.mil/Training/IO-Training/Army-Deception-Planners-Course-ADPC/>, retrieved on 12 May 2024.

8. *ATP 7-100.1 Russian Tactics*. (2024). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army.
9. *ATP 7-100.3 Chinese Tactics*. (2021). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army.
10. Creswell, J.W., Creswell, J.D. (2023). *Research design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 6th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
11. *FM 3-90 Tactics*. (2023). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army.
12. *Framework for Future Alliance Operations*. (2018). Norfolk: NATO Allied Command Transformation.
13. Friedman, B. (2017). *On Tactics. A theory of victory in battle*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.
14. Friedman, B. (2021). *On operations. Operational art and military disciplines*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.
15. *Future Leadership*. (2020). Multinational Capability Development Campaign.
16. Given, L.M. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 1-2. California: Sage Publications.
17. Hays, M.G. (2020), Lt.-col. *Convergence of Military Deception in Support of Multi-Domain Operations*. In *Theater Army in Multi-Domain Operations Integrated Research Project*. U.S. Army War College.
18. *INTL653 – Deception, Propaganda and Disinformation*. (2024), <https://www.amu.apus.edu/course-schedule/details/?c=INTL653>, retrieved on 22 May 2024.
19. Jasper, L. (2023). *Start with the End. Effect Measurement of Behavioural Influencing in Military Operations*. Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies.
20. JCN1/17. (2017). *Joint Concept Note (JCN) 1/17 Future Force Concept*. UK Defence Ministry.
21. JDP 0-01. (2022). *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 U.K. Defence Doctrine*, 6th ed. UK Defence Ministry.
22. *Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 Competition Continuum*. (2019). U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.
23. *Joint MILDEC Training Course/JMTC*. (2024), <https://jpsc.ndu.edu/Academics/Joint-Information-School-JIS/Information-Division/JMTC/>, retrieved on 22 May 2024.
24. Jonsson, O. (2019). *The Russian Understanding of War. Blurring the Lines between War and Peace*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
25. Kean, C., Maj. (November-December 2022). *Conceptualizing Information Advantage using Boyd's OODA Loop*. In *Military Review*, pp. 109-115.



"To maintain military superiority and prevail in future conflicts, Alliance forces must continually adapt, evolve and innovate". Adaptation is directly related to organisational flexibility. Mental, procedural and organisational rigidity, reluctance to change, inability to correctly identify the operational requirements of the armed forces are elements that hinder an effective process of the military structures adaptation.



26. Kennedy, C.H., Zillmer, E.A. (2022). *Military Psychology. Clinical and Operational Applications*, 3rd ed. New York: The Guilford Press.
27. Leavy, P. (2023). *Research Design – Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*, 2nd ed. New York: The Guilford Press.
28. *MCDP 1-4 Competing*. (2020). U.S. Marine Corps.
29. Mazarr, M.J., Blake, J.S., Casey, A., McDonald, T., Pezard, S.&Spirtas, M. (2022). *Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition Through the Eyes of Others. Country Perspectives*. Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation.
30. *NATO Cognitive Warfare Exploratory Concept Draft*. (2022). Norfolk: NATO Allied Command Transformation.
31. *NATO Strategic Concept*. (2022). Madrid: NATO.
32. Piehler, G.K. (2013). *Encyclopedia of Military Science*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
33. Ryan, M. (2024), <https://mickryan.substack.com/p/the-quest-for-a-new-offensive-doctrine>, retrieved on 12 June 2024.
34. Santelises, A. (2022), <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/ukrainian-kharkiv-counter-offensive-and-information-operations>, retrieved on 12 June 2024.
35. *Strategic Survey 2022. The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics* (2023). London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Routledge.
36. TC 7-102. (2014). *Training Circular No. 7-102 Operational Environment and Army learning*. Washington D.C.: Headquarters Department of the Army.
37. *The Economist*. (2020), <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2020/12/16/democracies-need-to-re-learn-the-art-of-deception> retrieved on 11 June 2024.
38. *The Jerusalem Post* (2023), <https://www.jpost.com/international/internationalrussia-ukraine-war/article-762030>, retrieved on 12 June 2024.
39. Toroi, G.-I. (2024). *Enhancing operational protection: a step-by-step counter-deception guide*. In *Buletin Științific, Academia Forțelor Terestre "Nicolae Bălcescu"*, Sibiu, no. XXIX(1), pp. 179-188.
40. Tunnell, C.H. (September-October 2022). Command Post Automation. In *Military Review*, pp. 79-86.
41. *U.S. Department of Defense Office of Inspector General* (2022), <https://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/Article/3200866/project-announcement-evaluation-of-combatant-command-military-deception-plannin/>, retrieved on 22 May 2024.
42. Walliman, N. (2022). *Research methods – the basics*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

43. Weissmann, M., Nilson, N. (2023). *Advanced Land Warfare – Tactics and Operations*. Oxford University Press.
44. Whaley, B. (1969). *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War*. Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
45. X. (2024), https://x.com/Tendar/status/1788964161575116871?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1788964161575116871%7Ctwgr%5E772fe80018a0b64b0ab2815e69d01adb7662ce0b%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.digi24.ro%2Fstiri%2Fexterne%2Fcum-sa-irosest, retrieved on 12 June 2024.

