



Disappointment

Free Reflection

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Published on 28/02/2020

Histoire & stratégie

Colonel BIZEUL's article on "Disappointment, diversion, confusion" gives me the opportunity to develop a broader reflection on the notion of deception, on "fashion" and on the confusion to which it is subject, a confusion that is not limited, by far, to the distinction between diversion and disappointment. The confrontation of this article and the various sources it cites with doctrinal, literary (the Larousse, the Littré, etc.), or historical sources, shows clearly that the semantic field is broad, the meanings varied, the procedures numerous and as old as the art of war.

Disappointment is the object of a fashion, I would even say of a mania, but paradoxically, it is rarely given the place it deserves, at the heart of the action and at the level of principles: to fight is to surprise! The real result is that, while we see few real "deception manoeuvres" in our exercises and operations, we do see many disappointing manoeuvres! I mean, in many cases, they disappoint their designer more than they disappoint their designated opponent... And one might think that the source of these disappointments lies above all in the confusion of terms and ideas. I therefore propose to go through the vocabulary and what it covers, to distinguish the effect of causes, the principle of its components and procedures, to finally highlight the essential pitfalls encountered by chiefs and their staffs.

"War is based on deception. »

" It was not by how he armed himself or by how he stood his ground that Hannibal defeated: it was by his cunning and dexterity. »

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The terms, like the quotations of military authors of all eras, relating to surprise and disappointment are legion, and their very abundance shows, if need be, the superior importance and permanence of the process: deception, surprise, trickery, subterfuge,

expediency, stratagem, feint, diversion, demonstration, intoxication, disinformation, concealment, mask, and the list is probably not exhaustive. The modern doctrinal tendency is to fix its meaning (or fossilize it!) by hierarchizing the terms in a system-oriented manner. Colonel Bizeul thus contrasts deception, which aims "to conceal intentions and to deceive the opposing leader in order to lead him on false leads or to increase his indecision" with diversion, which aims "to divert the adversary from his main goal without necessarily wanting to deceive him. »

General Yakovleff, quoted by the previous speaker, contrasts deception, a higher-level concept, with cunning and feint, which would be its tactical equivalent. The ATT 106, like its Allied equivalent, defines it as a set of measures aimed at misleading the enemy, breaking it down as follows in simulation, concealment and intoxication, whereas the FT02 manual defines it as an effect produced by the said measurements and whose components would be concealment, diversion and intoxication.

Colonel Bréjot, for his part, tries to convince that "deception manoeuvres" are possible at a fairly low tactical level against a common opinion reserving it for the operational or strategic levels, but does not deviate from the official definitions and finally renounces precise distinctions:

"In short, seeking to define the deception manoeuvre too precisely would be tantamount to limiting its potential field of application, which would be totally contradictory to the desired effect. The greatest possible scope must be reserved for the imagination if deception is to be credible. Thus, a well-understood diversion is a possible and local support for a larger deception enterprise involving various means. »

In passing, the author also cites the English and American meanings of Rostaing. American usage, however, gives deception and diversion the equivalent meaning of activity designed to deceive the enemy into taking action contrary to his interests. In short, the question is open and I will not surprise the discerning reader by announcing that I have a somewhat divergent opinion, although I share some of these views ...

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Release date 16/03/2018

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