

War is Deceit

An Analysis of a Contentious Hadith on
the Morality of Military Deception



Professor Joel Hayward

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
أَشْرَبَ الْخَلْقِ وَبِذَلِكَ أَمَرْتُ وَإِنَّا أَوْلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say: 'My prayer and my rituals, and my living, and my dying, are all for God, the Lord of the Worlds.

No associate has He. And to this, I have been commanded, and I am the first of those who submit'.

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About the Author

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Particularly since that dreadful day in September 2001, when nineteen Muslims hijacked commercial airliners and deliberately crashed them into buildings or the ground in history's worst terrorist attack, killing almost three thousand people, Islam has become a much-discussed and distrusted religion. Despite the fact that over 1.6 billion Muslims¹ live entirely peacefully alongside or amidst people of other faith and cultural communities, Islam has attracted more ideological opponents than other religions have. In terms of the antipathy towards Islam expressed by these people, only anti-Semites seem as antagonistic towards a world religion.

This study is not an attack on Islam's critics. The author believes that people have the right to like or dislike any or all religions and, regardless of perceived taste, to express their views via peaceful discourse. Islam's most bitter critics, on the other hand, should not be surprised when their views are challenged. Islam has extraordinarily positive features which its adherents, including this author, believe should be presented as a counterbalance to the claims of its critics.

This study is not intended as an all-encompassing critique of Islam-hatred, nor even of its worst aspects. It is merely an attempt to build on the author's previous work—which argues that the Qur'an is not inherently martial and has a clear ethical code governing and constraining the use of violence for political purposes²—by analysing one particular associated claim seemingly endlessly made by Islam's critics. They assert

that, far from being a paragon of virtue, the Islamic prophet Muhammad was deceitful and, indeed, boasted of it in several sayings recalled by followers. “War”, they quote him saying, “is deceit”. They contextualise their criticism of Muhammad’s statement that “war is deceit” by arguing that his unashamed statement proves that he was personally dishonest whenever expedient and that Islam consequently tolerates dishonesty in a way that other religions do not.

This study rejects the view that, in the wars fought by Muhammad, he acted immorally through any acts of wanton personal dishonesty (“deceit”) that constitute severe character imperfections and stain his reputation as a holy man. It argues instead that, in his quest to defeat the forces within Arabia which sought to destroy his fledgling community, Muhammad used ruse and bluff, or strategic and tactical deception, as a reasonable, necessary and eminently legitimate means of gaining military advantage so as to minimise suffering on both sides. It argues that, if Muhammad is to be condemned for using ruses during warfare, then for consistency and fairness his critics must also consider earlier prophets including Moses, Joshua and David, and all of history’s greatest military leaders, including Washington, Wellington, Nelson, Lee, Churchill and Eisenhower, to have been morally corrupt merely because they also esteemed the advantages obtained through the use of ruse.



Considered by his followers to be a divinely appointed prophet of Allah, and the conduit through which Allah presented His final revelation to humanity, Muhammad ibn

Abdullah found himself in the unusual position of having almost every word he publicly uttered recorded by fellow Muslims who considered them to be unfailingly wise and uniquely meaningful. Almost all Muslims still consider these records of Muhammad's statements or actions, or of his approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence, to be invaluable sources of information on the Qur'an or on how best to live life in a manner pleasing to Allah.

It is certainly true that in the voluminous collections of these records—called the *abadith* (الأَحَادِيث) in Arabic—Muhammad occasionally appears to have said things that at first glance seem unusually harsh for a religious leader who simultaneously advocated peace, patience, toleration, forgiveness, inclusiveness and charity. The *abadith* are full of softness and compassion, but do include Muhammad's descriptions of politics, diplomacy, wars, battles, treachery and even the death sentences that he sometimes had to impose on the perpetrators of *fasād* (فَسَاد), which denotes sedition or unlawful warfare,³ or *fitnah* (فِتْنَة), which means anarchic or seriously harmful social misconduct.⁴ These crimes are also discussed in the Qur'an and often translated from the *abadith* and the Qur'an into English using innocuous words, such as “mischief” and “disturbance”, which greatly understate their very grievous nature.

In the Qur'an, for example, there is a short set of verses describing the sanctity of human life and the total prohibition on taking anyone's life. Killing any innocent person, the Qur'an categorically states, is the moral equivalent of destroying all of humanity.⁵ The verses make an exception for the treatment of murderers or those who “spread mischief in the land” (“أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ”). Those wrongdoers could face

potential penalties which range from banishment to execution.⁶ It is clear from the mention of the crimes together, and from the equal severity of the likely punishment, that the crime of sedition or unlawful warfare (*fasād*, feebly translated in one of the most popular English translations as “mischief”⁷) was as serious as murder.

In keeping with this revelation, readers of the *ahadith* can find records of Muhammad—who solely carried a tremendous weight of responsibility for the security and well-being of his beleaguered community, comprising many thousands of men, women and children—imposing death sentences upon several seditious or traitorous individuals. Readers can also find many records of Muhammad discussing the nature, strategy, tactics and logistics of the military campaigns that he and other Muslims fought throughout his political career.

The notion that a prophet had to fight his way to success through an armed struggle involving raids and even major pitched battles seems unpalatable and incongruous to many modern western readers, who see the long-suffering, non-resisting and non-violent Jesus as their paradigm of a divinely appointed prophet. Humiliatingly arrested, according to the New Testament, Jesus rebuked a follower who had tried to prevent his capture in the Garden of Gethsemane by striking with his sword at a servant of the High Priest.⁸ Telling his disciple to sheath his sword, Jesus warned him that “all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.”⁹ Jesus went further, adding that if he had wanted to resist arrest, he could have appealed to God who would have put an army of angels at his disposal. He later said something similar to Pontius Pilate. His kingdom was not of this world, he told his apparently

fascinated inquisitor, but if it had been, his followers would themselves have fought to prevent his approaching grim fate.¹⁰ Christ's life and death as described in the Gospels has given rise to a powerful western belief that earthly success is ordinarily unrelated to, and frequently inconsistent with, spiritual truth and power.

Followers of this tradition thus tend to grimace at Muhammad's decade of warfare and his many recorded exhortations of courage in battle and promises of eternal reward to martyrs slain in defence of their faith. Islam's strongest critics in the West are offended by Muhammad's rousing statements advocating martial resistance to enemies, seeing them as not only non-spiritual and antithetical to the expected behaviour of a prophet, but as violent, bellicose and antithetical to the spirit of our age.

One hadith which they especially dislike and constantly quote records Muhammad saying that "Paradise lies beneath the shadow of swords" ("وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلِّالِ السُّيُوفِ").¹¹ Interestingly, they ignore the time-and-place-specific context of the hadith,¹² presenting it instead as a universally applicable statement, and almost never mention that it is matched by a variant—far more often quoted by Muslims themselves—that encourages respect for women in general and mothers in particular: "Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers".¹³

To counter all the Islam-haters' mistaken claims on Qur'anic passages and *ahadith* would necessitate a book length study, but this author, a scholar of strategic issues, nonetheless sees value in shedding light on the particular hadith quoted above—"war is deceit" ("الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ")—in order to highlight the value of reading them all in context and without bias.

The hadith is certainly authentic and considered reliable. It can be found in these five of the six major Sunni hadith collections: *Sahih al-Bukhari*,¹⁴ *Sahih Muslim*,¹⁵ *Sunan ibn Majah*,¹⁶ *Sunan abu Dawud*¹⁷ and *Sunan al-Tirmithi*.¹⁸

It may seem strange to some readers that the statement “war is deceit” is controversial at all, given that at face value it just seems to be a statement by Muhammad on what he considered to be the nature of war. In that sense, it is not much different to William Tecumseh Sherman’s famous 1879 address to the Michigan Military Academy: “War is hell”. No one reads into Sherman’s observation any belief that General Sherman liked either war or the horrific violence that he described as “hell”. Indeed, we know that Sherman detested war and called it “a terrible thing”.¹⁹ Yet Muhammad’s statement that “war is deceit” is not taken by his detractors at face value as merely an observation on the nature of an unpleasant undertaking. Rather, they imbue it with a sinister meaning that Muhammad both liked war as a political activity and saw deceit as a positive aspect of it.

Despite the fact that it is a little-known hadith that does not appear in popular Muslim selections of the core hadiths,²⁰ let alone in Imam Nawawi’s *Forty Hadith*,²¹ the hadith “war is deception” certainly features very often and prominently in anti-Islamic literature, blogs and internet-posted videos. For example, *Jihad Watch* founder and director Robert Spencer features the hadith in film documentaries and television appearances,²² on his *Jihad Watch* website²³ and in most of his books, including *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World’s Fastest-Growing Faith*²⁴ and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (And the Crusades)*.²⁵

Spencer and other anti-Islamic polemicists see the hadith as proof of the correctness of their negative understanding of *taqiyya* (تقيية, from a root connected with “fear”), an Arabic word denoting the Islamic ruling that Muslims can deny their faith or dissemble in order to preserve their lives when threatened with severe violence or death. These polemicists incorrectly claim that *taqiyya* means far more than this: the permission or even responsibility of Muslims to lie to non-Muslims until they are in a position of strength and can then compel the non-Muslims to submit to the Islamic faith. Claiming that Islam is committed theologically to forcing its will on all non-Muslims everywhere—that is, that Muslims are in a constant state of war with them—they see the hadith “war is deceit” as a summation of this logic.

For instance, Chapter 7 of Spencer’s book, *The Truth about Muhammad: Founder of the World’s Most Intolerant Religion*, is titled “War is deceit”. It argues that Islam is essentially in a constant state of war with non-Muslims, so Muslims are permitted to be duplicitous with non-Muslims. It also contains several narratives of Muhammad’s permission or direction to assassinate political enemies; this supposedly being what Muhammad meant by saying that war is deceit.²⁶ Likewise, after asserting that “the West is being dealt a pack of lies” by Muslims (“insidious in the extreme”) who use *taqiyya* to dupe non-Muslims, Gregory M. Davis quotes the hadith that “war is deceit”.²⁷

One of Spencer’s colleague within *Jihad Watch*, Raymond Ibrahim, likewise highlights the hadith and devotes considerable attention to the duplicity it supposedly represents. In a book chapter, “*Taqiyya: War and Deceit in Islam*”,²⁸ Ibrahim

quotes the hadith several times while arguing that Muhammad was dishonest whenever convenient (he took an “expedient view of lying”, Ibrahim writes) as part of the Islamic concept of *taqiyya*. Strangely, Ibrahim acknowledges that medieval Islamic scholars recommended strategic deception during wartime as a means of gaining advantage over their foes, yet he still sees this as conduct unbecoming a prophet.²⁹

Ibrahim directly links Muhammad’s statement that “war is deceit” to the case of Nu’aym ibn Mas’ud, a new convert to Islam from a hostile tribe whom Muhammad sent back to that tribe, without telling them that he had converted, in order to gather intelligence, give faulty advice and sow discord. This eventually contributed to the lifting of the siege of Medina. Rather than seeing this as a wise and artful use of ruse, Ibrahim sees it as immoral.

Even if Muhammad did say that “war is deceit” in relation to this case, Ibrahim should have known and reported that he also said it routinely on other occasions relating to war, as *Sunan abu Dawud* reveals: “Narrated Ka’b ibn Malik: When the Prophet intended to go on an expedition, he always pretended to be going somewhere else, and he would say: War is deception”.³⁰ Perhaps Ibrahim does not quote the Abu Dawud narration of the hadith because the hiding of one’s route of advance is militarily clever and has featured in every good general’s art of war throughout history.

Ibrahim then uses the case of the poet Ka’b ibn al Ashraf as further evidence of Muhammad’s “legitimacy of deception towards infidels”.³¹ The only reason that Ibrahim gives for Muhammad allowing Ka’b’s killing is that he had “offended Muhammad”, creating an inference that Muhammad was

merely upset at the poetry. Yet, Ibrahim does not mention the orthodox Islamic explanation, based on the early sources, that Ka‘b had not only issued anti-Muslim propaganda inciting continued animosity, but also had travelled to Mecca to inspire hatred there among the enemies of Islam.³² Al-Waqidi notes that Ka‘b aimed to “incite” the Meccans with the hope that they would return to hostilities against Muhammad, taking him along with them.³³ Al-Waqidi also quotes Muhammad defending himself against accusations of killing an innocent man, by explaining: “If he had only behaved as others with his opinion [that is, other unbelievers] are behaving, then he would not have been singled out for death through ruse”.³⁴ Ibrahim’s lack of fair explanation is disingenuous at best.

Before this study shows that the hadith “war is deceit” has a meaning different to that given by Islam’s critics, it is beneficial to look more closely at the Arabic word translated as deceit. The common English translation of *كُذِّبَ*, transliterated as “*khud’a*” in the various hadith collections,³⁵ as “deceit” comes from the nine-volume translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari* published in Saudi Arabia by Darussalam in 1997.³⁶ Its use of the word English word “deceit”, rather than “ruse” or “stratagem”, is unfortunate and has undoubtedly aided Islam’s critics, providing them with a translation that supports their biases. The word *khud’a* may indeed denote an act of personal duplicity or dishonesty. Yet in the Classical Arabic of the seventh century CE and the first centuries afterwards, the word in its various grammatical forms had a wide range of meanings, many of them entirely neutral in terms of morality. For example, Edward William Lane noted in his magisterial lexicon that the word—which has something like “conceal-

ment” as its root—was used for “beguiling”, “outwitting”, “deluding” or “circumventing” someone, but can also denote such things as a lizard entering its hole to conceal itself from a predator, or even a lion hiding itself, awaiting its unsuspecting prey.³⁷ With this in mind, one is not bound to translate the word *khud’a* only as “deceit”, implying personal immoral dishonesty, when the word is also used, for example, for the strategy used in the game of chess to outmanoeuvre the other player, or for the slight-of-hand used by a magician to beguile and captivate us. Clearly, there is no immoral intent or action involved in either case. Likewise, the Arabic word *khud’a* was then used, as it is now, in the context of war, to denote manoeuvres kept secret from the opponent in order to gain positional or psychological advantage. In this way, translating the word *khud’a* in the hadith as “deception”, “ruse”, “hidden manoeuvre”, “subterfuge”, or “stratagem”, would be more accurate.³⁸ Indeed, this author’s modern Arabic-English dictionary provides these words as the current translated meaning: “trick, artifice, stratagem, subterfuge, ruse, wile, fetch, deception, fraud, sleight, ploy, dodge, shift, hoax”.³⁹

This author is a scholar of war and strategy and is most familiar with the use nowadays in military scholarship of the words “ruse”, “ruse de guerre”, and “deception” to denote the artful and concealed action used by one side to surprise, confound and gain advantage over the other side.



Many critics of Islam state that we simply could not imagine gentle Buddha or the peaceful, cheek-turning Jesus ever having to fight wars, much less devote time to activities

incongruous with prophethood and piety such as developing artful military strategies and tactics. While one cannot deny that Jesus's pacifistic life has formed the lens through which over half of all humans view prophethood, this ignores the heavily martial spirit and explicit violence of some sections of the Old Testament; a revelation passionately embraced in its entirety by Jesus. They also brush off some of Jesus' seemingly incongruous statements as being allegorical and metaphorical—such as Luke 22:36, wherein the Messiah encourages his disciples to sell their garments so that they can purchase swords, and Matthew 10:34 (“Do not think I come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword”).

When they read the Qur'an, the opponents of its message place little importance on the obvious differences of experiences and responsibilities between Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus was the spiritual leader of a small and intimate group of followers at a time of occupation but also of relative peace and personal security throughout the land. He suffered death, according to the Christian scriptures, but his execution by the Rome-governed state came after a short burst of state anger that actually followed several years of him being able to preach throughout the land without severe opposition and with no known violence.

By contrast, Muhammad (in many ways like Moses or Joshua) found himself not only the spiritual leader but also the political and legislative leader of a massive community that wanted to be moderate, just, and inclusive but suffered bitter organised persecution and warfare from other political entities which were committed to his community's destruction. His responsibilities (including the sustenance, education,

governance and physical protection of tens of thousands of children, men and women) were very different.

Contrary to popular Sunday School perceptions of biblical history, it was not uncommon for Judaism's and Christianity's greatest prophets and kings to fight military campaigns in the name, and under the direction, of the God who called himself "a man of war" (אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה) and the Lord of Armies (יהוה צבאות)⁴⁰ and instructed the Children of Israel to obey all his commands. When we study their war fighting as described in the scriptures, we find that military deception and hidden manoeuvres were very much part and parcel of the prophets' activities.

For example, the Book of Judges (Chapter 8) records that Joshua, the Israelite leader who succeeded Moses, defeated the Canaanite city of Ai using strategic deception of the highest order, including the use of spies, ambush, concealed positions, surprising manoeuvres and a simulated retreat in panic. Noted Israeli scholar Martin Van Creveld called it a "tactical masterpiece".⁴¹ Likewise, Joshua defeated the Amorites at Gibeon by marching his army all night to avoid detection and falling upon his surprised enemy before the sun rose (Joshua, Chapter 10).⁴²

The most famous military deception by a Hebrew prophet or judge is that of Gideon, who led the Israelites to victory over the militarily more powerful Midianites through ruse. He ordered a night attack on the Midianite army with men carrying ram's-horn trumpets and clay jars with torches inside. At the given moment, he instructed them to blow the trumpets and uncover the torches, thus creating panic among the jolted-awake Midianites who believed Gideon's force to be far

stronger. The Midianites were routed and later mopped up.⁴³

Many of the other prophets in the Bible also used deception for political or military purposes. For example, when the prophet Samuel became frightened by God's command to anoint David in Bethlehem as a king to replace Saul, believing that Saul would have him killed, God told Samuel to say that his purpose in travelling to Bethlehem was only to offer sacrifice there.⁴⁴ Likewise, Elisha the prophet deliberately misled the Syrian army by deceiving them about the route to Dothan, instead leading them to Damascus.⁴⁵ Perhaps the most striking biblical passage in regard to strategic deception involves God himself asking for a volunteer to "deceive [King] Ahab into attacking Ramoth-Gilead and going to his death there".⁴⁶ When an unnamed "spirit" (הַרִיחַ) volunteered to be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, God approved his plan.⁴⁷ Ahab did indeed die at Ramoth-Gilead, killed by an arrow.⁴⁸

It is interesting that neither Robert Spencer, a member of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church,⁴⁹ nor Raymond Ibrahim, who comes from a Coptic Christian family,⁵⁰ accuse God and the prophets in their holy book of either being warmongers or having the same "expedient view of lying" that they attribute to Muhammad.⁵¹ For example, neither Spencer nor Ibrahim have ever criticised biblical heroes for acting similarly in war to how they say Muhammad treated Ka'b ibn al Ashraf. In the Book of Judges, for instance, we find Ehud the son of Gera killing King Eglon of Moab with a concealed weapon after deceiving him into being alone with him by promising to reveal certain secrets.⁵² We also find in the same biblical book the prophet Deborah eulogistically singing: "Most blessed of

women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women”.⁵³ What prompted the prophet’s praise was that Jael invited the fleeing Canaanite general Sisera into her tent. “Turn aside, my Lord, turn aside to me; have no fear”, she told him, after which she killed him while he slept.⁵⁴

Likewise, neither Spencer nor Ibrahim condemn King David for doing precisely what Muhammad did with Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ud: sending him as an agent into the enemy’s leadership to gather intelligence, give faulty advice and sow discord. One must wonder why Ibrahim considers this unbecoming and dishonest when Muhammad did it, but says nothing of the fact that King David, a revered prophet in Ibrahim’s own tradition, likewise sent his agent, Hushai the Archite, to become one of his traitorous son Absalom’s close advisors.⁵⁵ Hushai’s job was to counter the good advice of Absalom’s mentor, Ahithophel, and feed Absalom bad advice that David could use to his advantage. Hushai succeeded so well that Ahithophel, who lost Absalom’s confidence, committed suicide.⁵⁶ On Hushai’s advice, Absalom did not immediately pursue the retreating David, thus giving the Israelites time to regroup and skillfully manoeuvre. They soon defeated Absalom at the Battle of Ephraim’s Wood. The anti-Islamic critics might not admit to David’s genius in using Hushai for strategic deception, but the CIA does. Its Historical Review Program released a briefing paper in 1996 highlighting the cleverness of David’s highly effective “influence” operation.⁵⁷



With it now being clear that neither fighting wars nor using stratagem/ruse is incompatible with religious prophet-

hood, as least as it is understood in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is reasonable to ask whether Muhammad understood stratagem/ruse in ways that military strategists, theorists and practitioners understand it. His understanding is certainly mirrored by both Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz, the two most widely read military theorists. In his timeless and highly influential *Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote that “warfare is the way of deception”, adding, “Thus although [you are] capable, display incapacity to them. When committed to employing your forces, feign inactivity. When [your objective] is nearby, make it appear as if distant; when far away, create the illusion of being nearby”.⁵⁸ One finds similar guidance in Clausewitz’s *Vom Kriege* (*On War*, 1862), which is the most influential Western treatise on war in recent centuries. Clausewitz devoted chapters to both “surprise” and “stratagem”, arguing that they are complicated to put in place and get right, but if correctly undertaken they can bring very positive results. On the advantage of surprise (*die Überraschung*), Clausewitz stated that, “without exception”, it “lies at the root of every undertaking, only in different degrees according to the nature of the enterprise and its circumstances”.⁵⁹ Stratagem, he explained, is the artful outwitting of an enemy in order to gain advantage. When done right—which Clausewitz admits is difficult on a large or strategic scale—it brings tremendous benefit. Clausewitz also commented on the morality of military deception, noting that stratagem

is a form of deception in itself, when it is executed, yet it is not deception in the ordinary sense of the word, given that it involves no outright breach of faith. The use of a trick

or stratagem permits the intended receiver to make his own errors, which combined together, must suddenly change the nature of the situation before his own eyes.⁶⁰

Throughout history, most warfare has involved ruse or deception at all levels, from low-level tactical engagements to major strategic undertakings.⁶¹ Clausewitz was correct to observe that it is often hard to get right, but that if done skilfully it will bring benefits, sometimes profound. A vast literature on military deception exists, with no works of note arguing that it is immoral. On the contrary, the scholarly consensus is that deception—variously called that or ruse or stratagem—is a feature of the art of war employed by history's greatest strategists and warriors. So positively is military deception seen by students of war that books focused only on deception appear with regularity,⁶² a recent example being Thaddeus Holt's 1,100-page analysis of Allied military deception in the Second World War, unashamedly titled *The Deceivers*.⁶³

It hardly needs saying that military deception of the kinds identified here is permitted in international law, which bans perfidy but allows ruse. Perfidy denotes dishonest and disreputable conduct such as leading an adversary falsely to believe that a white flag of surrender or truce will be honoured, or pretending that one's troops are incapacitated through wounds when in fact they are not.⁶⁴ Ruse, on the other hand, is lawful according to both Article 24 the 1907 Hague Convention and the 1977 Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, so long as it contains no actions of a perfidious character like placing booby-traps in objects reasonably understood

to be harmless, such as children's toys or dead bodies.⁶⁵ The International Committee of the Red Cross's *Dictionary of the International Law of Armed Conflict* says that "ruse" is a permissible method of warfare. Ruses of war are acts intended to mislead an adversary or induce him to act recklessly but they infringe no rule of international law and are not perfidious because they do invite the confidence of an adversary with respect to protection under that law. Examples of ruses of war are camouflage, decoys, mock operations, misinformation, surprises, ambushes, and small-scale raids.⁶⁶

This wording closely follows the 1977 Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which states:

Such ruses are acts which are intended to mislead an adversary or to induce him to act recklessly but which infringe no rule of international law applicable in armed conflict and which are not perfidious because they do not invite the confidence of an adversary with respect to protection under that law. The following are examples of such ruses: the use of camouflage, decoys, mock operations and misinformation.⁶⁷

The International Committee of the Red Cross's official legal commentary on the Geneva Conventions notes that the art of warfare is a matter, not only of force and of courage, but also of judgment and perspicacity. In addition, it is no stranger to cunning, skill, ingenuity, stratagems and artifices, in other words to ruses of war, or the use of deception.⁶⁸

The use of ruse is permitted not only in international law, but also in the national laws of very many countries, including Australia, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁶⁹ All these countries give military commanders considerable latitude in the use of ruse. For example, New Zealand's *Military Manual* (1992) states:

Ruses of war are measures taken to gain advantage over the enemy by mystifying or misleading him. They are permitted provided they are free from any suspicion of treachery or perfidy and do not violate any expressed or tacit agreement ... Legitimate ruses include: surprises; ambushes; feigning attacks, retreats or flights; simulating quiet and inactivity; giving large strongpoints to a small force; constructing works, bridges, etc., which it is not intended to use; transmitting bogus signal messages, and sending bogus despatches and newspapers with a view to their being intercepted by the enemy; making use of the enemy's signals, watchwords, wireless code signs and tuning calls, and words of command; conducting a false military exercise on the wireless on a frequency easily interrupted while substantial troop movements are taking place on the ground; pretending to communicate with troops or reinforcements which do not exist; moving landmarks; constructing dummy airfields and aircraft; putting up dummy guns or dummy tanks; laying dummy mines; removing

badges from uniforms; clothing the men of a single unit in the uniforms of several different units so that prisoners and dead may give the idea of a large force; giving false ground signals to enable airborne personnel or supplies to be dropped in a hostile area, or to induce aircraft to land in a hostile area.⁷⁰

Given that disruptive and ideally paralysing surprise is the primary desired outcome when ruse is used, “surprise” features as a “principle of war” in many nation’s military doctrine manuals, including those of the British and American armed forces.⁷¹ Likewise, in 2012 the US military even published a joint doctrine manual specifically on military deception, entitled *Joint Publication 3-13.4: Military Deception*. It states:

MILDEC, [i.e. Military deception] is intended to deter hostile actions, increase the success of friendly defensive actions, or to improve the success of any potential friendly offensive action. Use of MILDEC during any phase of an operation should help to mislead adversaries as to the strength, readiness, locations, and intended missions of friendly forces. ...

Functions of MILDEC include:

- Causing ambiguity, confusion, or misunderstanding in adversary perceptions of friendly critical information.
- Causing the adversary to misallocate personnel, fiscal, and material resources in ways that are advantageous to the friendly force.

- Causing the adversary to reveal strengths, dispositions, and future intentions.
- Conditioning the adversary to particular patterns of friendly behavior to induce adversary perceptions that can be exploited by the joint force.
- Causing the adversary to waste combat power with inappropriate or delayed actions.

One cannot claim that in every regard the warfare conducted by Muhammad perfectly corresponds to the laws of armed conflict articulated within The Hague and Geneva Conventions, in the ethics of war articulated by contemporary Just War theorists, or in military doctrine manuals. That would be anachronistic and equally untrue of the warfare of every military force everywhere during that period or indeed throughout the next thirteen centuries. One cannot even say that of the Allied forces in the Second World War, much less the Axis forces. Yet several scholars have indeed tried to map Muhammad's art of war with modern-day international law. They conclude that Muhammad—who preferred peace to war and worked hard to avoid battle and minimise suffering—understood and undertook war in a way that broadly corresponds to current international law and best practice.⁷²



The Prophet Muhammad certainly understood that warfare involved not only obedience to what he believed were God's commandments, but also, in his recorded words, “judgment, strategy and tactics” (“الرَّأْيُ وَالْحَرْبُ وَالْمَكِيدَةُ”).⁷³ The Qur'an

itself also mentions ruses of war, including, for example, feigned retreats.⁷⁴

Typical of most tactical commanders then and now, Muhammad used ruse as a normal feature of his warfare. Al-Waqidi notes that “the Prophet of God never undertook a military action (lit. غزوة) without pretending that he was not doing so”.⁷⁵ He kept preparations discrete, often informed leaders of the intended destinations via letters opened only after the parties had set off,⁷⁶ routinely sent his men to hide by day and travel by night,⁷⁷ told them to travel on unexpected or untrodden roads,⁷⁸ and used ambushes on frequent occasions, particularly during the earlier small raids against mercantile caravans travelling north and south past Medina.

The early sources for Muhammad’s biography reveal that he had an intuitive grasp of ruse. For instance, immediately after the Muslim defeat at the Battle of Uhud in 624 CE, Muhammad admonished a companion named Sa’d ibn abi-Waqas for shouting out his joy that the Quraysh were withdrawing to Mecca rather than raiding Medina. Knowing that this joy would make the Muslims look relieved, and therefore weak in the eyes of detractors, Muhammad told Sa’d: “Lower your voice. Indeed, war is deception. Do not show public joy that they have left”.⁷⁹

The next day Muhammad rode out at the head of an army of 900 warriors, many of them wounded, ostensibly in pursuit of the victorious Quraysh. He did so in order to give the false impression that the Muslim army was unimpaired and in high morale.⁸⁰ In order to strengthen his ruse, Muhammad told his men to gather wood by day and to light a needlessly large number of fires at night.⁸¹

When a powerful army of around 10,000 Quraysh warriors and allies marched upon Medina in 627 CE, Muhammad followed the unorthodox advice of a trusted confidante, Salman al-Farasi, and apparently for the first time in Arabian history, had an extensive defensive trench dug across the enemy's advance route. This prevented the enemy from entering Medina. The enemy nonetheless commenced a lengthy siege. After around twenty-seven days, Muhammad sent the aforementioned Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud, a new convert to Islam, as a spy into the enemy camp to give faulty advice and sow discord between the enemy tribes. Unaware that Nu'aym had converted to Islam, the Quraysh listened to his misinformation. Tired, oppressed by adverse weather and believing Nu'aym's stories, the Quraysh eventually lost heart and withdrew, lifting the siege of Medina. Regarding this misinformation, Muhammad told his close confidante Umar ibn al-Khattab that the ruse was his own idea, rather than a revelation from God, and that it had come to him because "war is deception"⁸².

Interestingly, during that battle, Muhammad sent one of his friends, Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamam, to sneak into the enemy camp to gain information. Hudhayfah was undetected. He even sat at a campfire with the enemy leadership. He sat close enough to the commander, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, to hear him explicitly warning his people against the likelihood of Muslim cunning or espionage and asking everyone to check who was sitting next to them.⁸³

Later that year, during the campaign against the Banu Lihyan, Muhammad ordered his armies northward towards Syria to give the Banu Lihyan a sense that they were secure in

the south.⁸⁴ Muhammad's army then circled back and attacked the enemy from the rear, threatening the tribe in its very encampments. As it happened on this occasion, Muhammad's ruse was unsuccessful and the Banu Lihyan managed to escape to the hills.

Six months later, in March 628 CE, when Muhammad wanted to undertake a minor pilgrimage to Mecca with his unarmed followers, he responded to knowledge that the Quraysh would block the likely route into Mecca by leading his people through a narrow mountain path instead.⁸⁵

Similarly, when planning his campaign against troublesome Jews in the fortress-town of Khaybar in May 628 CE, Muhammad again kept the destination secret, worrying that, if he disclosed it, the Ghatafan tribe allied to the Jews of Khaybar might join the battle and provide overwhelming strength. He also advanced along certain routes that would ensure that the Ghatafan could not, even if they did hear, join with the people of Khaybar.⁸⁶ Maintaining secrecy, he managed to catch the people of Khaybar unawares. Al-Waqadi relates that when the people of Khaybar "opened their fortresses [at dawn] carrying with them their farming implements for work, they saw that the Messenger of God had arrived in their midst. They shouted, 'Muhammad and the army,' and turned and fled back into their fortresses."⁸⁷

When planning the liberation of Mecca in January 630 CE, Muhammad even kept his closest advisors in the dark about his intentions until the very last minute so as to prevent the accidental leaking of information.⁸⁸ He then beseeched God for his military ruse to be successful with a prayer that almost perfectly sums up the meaning of his statement that

“war is deception”: “Oh Allah, hide all the signs [of preparation and advance] from the Quraysh and their spies until we can fall upon them with surprise”.⁸⁹ A similar narration quotes him saying, “Oh Allah, take sight from the eyes of the Quraysh and do not let them see me or hear me until they do so unexpectedly”.⁹⁰ As it happened, “not a word of the Prophet’s march reached the Quraysh”.

In the same campaign, Muhammad also cleverly used tactical ruse to gain psychological advantage. When night fell on the march route, he ordered every one of his ten thousand warriors to light a campfire, thus giving the impression that his force was much larger than it was.⁹¹

Thus, even from this relatively small selection of the very many recorded examples of Muhammad using ruse during wartime, it is clear that he used it in a way that any objective scholar or practitioner of war would recognise and deem reasonable and beneficial.



To offer some concluding remarks, one can only state that the declaration attributed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, “war is deceit”, is an innocuous statement merely summarising what he considered to be war’s essence: the artful use of ruse designed to bring about positional or psychological advantage. Far from representing any belief either that war is a desired state of affairs between communities or that deceit is a commendable form of conduct between individuals outside the context of warfare, the statement only indicates that during wartime a commander or force must make every effort not to be transparent or predictable to the enemy. One must

hide one's intentions, preparations, strength and movements from the enemy, who will likewise be hiding his own. That is how war has always been and doubtless always will be.

Anti-Islamic polemicists may insist that the phrase represents proof that Muhammad was signalling far more than this; that Islam is always and everywhere at war with non-Muslims, and that lying to non-Muslims is therefore desirable conduct if it disguises the true intent of Islam to force its will upon non-Muslims everywhere. They may also insist that Muhammad's appropriateness as a religious prophet is dubious at best given that he was a warrior who led troops into many battles, ordered other battles or the deaths of enemies, and proclaimed that war is deceit.

The truth is different. Muhammad did indeed undertake warfare throughout the last decade of his life, but this can only invalidate his suitability to be considered a religious prophet if, in fairness and consistency, we also invalidate the suitability of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, Solomon and most of the other biblical prophets, judges and kings. They also undertook warfare and, in ways very similar to Muhammad, used ruse or military deception—the best translation of *khud'a* (خُدْعَةٌ)—to gain advantage.

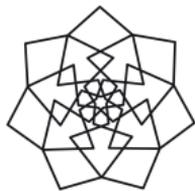
This is to be expected. Ruse is an established part of the art of war, and has been recognised as such by great military philosophers, strategists and commanders including Sun Tzu, Napoleon Bonaparte, Horatio Nelson, Carl von Clausewitz, Antoine-Henri Jomini, Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, Robert Lee, and George Patton. Sun Tzu even summed up warfare almost identically to Muhammad: “war is the Tao [way, path or intuitive knowing] of deception”. Ruse is so

much a part of war, and is seen as such a positive element of the strategist or tactician's art, that a steady stream of books extolling its use continues to appear. None of the authors present it as anything but artful, cunning, beneficial and moral, and none label it as perfidious or immoral.

Indeed, ruse cannot be considered immoral given that it is permitted by both The Hague and Geneva Conventions. The International Committee of the Red Cross itself notes that "the art of warfare ... is no stranger to cunning, skill, ingenuity, stratagems and artifices, in other words to ruses of war, or the use of deception". Given its established legality and perceived benefits, ruse is also permitted in the military codes of very many states, some of which have included it not only in their legal codes, but also in their military doctrine manuals. The US has gone furthest by publishing a joint force doctrine manual titled *Military Deception*.

Looking at Muhammad's military career reveals that he grasped early on that he would be foolish to be transparent and predictable. This would cost lives. Instead, he would have to be astute, artful and subtle, staying one step ahead of enemies and using ruse to gain physical or psychological advantage. His efforts at strategic and military deception were little different to those of his foes, or to those of military leaders throughout the last fourteen hundred years. He kept his intentions private and his forces' preparations hidden, often informed leaders of their destinations at the last minute or even via letters opened only after they had departed, routinely sent his forces to hide by day and travel or fight by night, told them to travel on unexpected or untrodden roads, and used ambushes on frequent occasions. He also used feigned retreats and advances, and

sometimes used ruse to project strength that in fact he did not possess. In this regard, he was an intuitive and insightful leader who understood and responded to war's nature in ways that effective military commanders have throughout history.



Endnotes

- 1 Muslims make up 23 percent of the world's 6.8 billion humans. See the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, October 2009), p. 1. Cf.: <http://pewforum.org/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>
- 2 Joel Hayward, *Warfare in the Qur'an* (Amman: Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre / Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012).
- 3 For the etymology and usage of *fasad*, see Abdur Rashid Siddiqui, *Qur'anic Keywords: A Reference Guide* (Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2008), pp. 56-57.
- 4 For the etymology and usage of *fasad*, see *ibid.*, pp. 59-61.
- 5 Surah al-Mā'idah 5:32.
- 6 Surah al-Mā'idah 5:33.
- 7 Surah al-Mā'idah 5:32 in 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, Various publishers and editions.
- 8 Matthew 26:52.
- 9 Matthew 26:53.
- 10 John 18:36.
- 11 *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Dar Al-Afaq al-Arabia, 2004, p. 571), Book of Jihad and Military Expeditions, hadith 2818:
حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ عُقْبَةَ عَنْ سَالِمِ بْنِ أَبِي النَّظْرِ مَوْلَى عُمَرَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ كَاتِبَهُ قَالَ: كَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أَوْفَى رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِ السُّيُوفِ. تَابِعَهُ الْأَوْمِيُّ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي الزُّنَادِ عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ عُقْبَةَ.

“It was narrated by Salim Abu'n-Nadr, the client of 'Umar ibn 'Ubaydullah, who was his scribe: Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa wrote to us that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had said, 'Know that Paradise lies beneath the shadow of swords.' Al-Uwaysi corroborated it from Abu'z-Zinad from Musa ibn 'Uqba”.

- 12 See, for example, Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2003), p. 150.
- 13 *Sunan an-Nasa'i* (Beirut: Resalah Publishers, 2001, Vol. 4, p. 272), Book of Jihad, hadith 4297:

أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ بْنُ الْحَكَمِ الْوَرَّاقُ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا حَجَّاجٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ جُرَيْجٍ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ طَلْحَةَ وَهُوَ ابْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ طَلْحَةَ، عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ جَاهِمَةَ السَّلَمِيِّ، أَنَّ جَاهِمَةَ، جَاءَتْ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُغَزِيَ وَقَدْ جِئْتُ أَسْتَشِيرُكَ فَقَالَ: هَلْ لَكَ مِنْ أُمٍّ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ قَالَ: «فَارْتَمِهَا فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ عِنْدَ رِجْلِهَا».

“It was narrated from Mu'awiyah bin Jahimah As-Sulami that Jahimah came to the Prophet and said: 'Oh Messenger of Allah! I want to go out and fight and I have come to ask your advice.' He said: 'Do you have a mother?' He said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Then stay with her, for Paradise lies beneath her feet.”

- 14 *Sahih al-Bukhari* (op. cit., p. 608), Book of Jihad and Military Expeditions, hadiths 3027-330:

3027 - حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ أَخْبَرَنَا مُعَمَّرٌ عَنْ هَمَّامٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: هَلَكَ كِسْرَى ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُ كِسْرَى بَعْدَهُ وَقَبِصْرٌ لَيْهْلِكَنَّ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُ قَبِصْرٌ بَعْدَهُ وَلَيْفَسَمَنَّ كُنُوزُهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

3028 (وَسَيُ الْحَرْبِ حُدُوعَةٌ)

“The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Khosrau [the Sasanian king] will be ruined, and there will be no Khosrau after him, and Caesar will surely be ruined and there will be no Caesar after him, and you will spend their treasures in Allah's Cause'. He said that 'War is deceit.”

3029 - حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ يُوْرُ بْنُ أَصْرَمَ أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ أَخْبَرَنَا مُعَمَّرٌ عَنْ هَمَّامٍ بْنِ مُنْبِتَةَ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَأَى النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْحَرْبَ حُدُوعَةً.

“Narrated by Abu Hurairah ... that Allah's Apostle ﷺ said: “War is deceit.”

3033 - حَدَّثَنَا صَدَقَةُ بْنُ الْفَضْلِ أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ عَنْ عَمْرِو سَعِيدِ بْنِ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah ...that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'War is deceit'".

15 *Sabih Muslim* (Cairo: Dar Al-Ghad Al-Gadid, 2007, p. 637):

1739 - وَحَدَّثَنَا عِيْنُ بْنُ حُجْرٍ السَّعْدِيُّ وَعَمْرُو الْقَائِدُ وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ وَالْفُظَيْعِيُّ وَعُمَيْرُ بْنُ أَبِي أُخْتَرَنَا وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أُخْتَرَنَا قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "Sufyan said: 'Amr heard Jâbir say that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'War is deceit.'"

1740 - وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ سَهْمٍ أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الْمُبَارَكِ أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرُ بْنُ هَمَّامٍ مِنْ مُتَبِعِي عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'War is deceit.'"

16 *Sunan ibn Majah* (Cairo: Dar Al-Hadith, 1998, p. 523), Book of Jihad, hadiths 2833 and 2834:

2833 - حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ رُوْمَانَ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "It was narrated on the authority of ... A'ishah that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'War is deceit'".

2834 - حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، عَنْ مَطْرِ بْنِ مَيْمُونٍ، عَنْ عِكْرِمَةَ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "It was narrated on the authority of ... Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'War is deceit'".

17 *Sunan abu Dawud* (Kuwait: Gheras, 2002, pp. 387-389), Book of Jihad, hadith 2369 and 2370:

2369 - حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ مَنصُورٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ عَمْرِو، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرًا، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ.
 "Jabir reported ... the Apostle of Allah ﷺ as saying that 'War is deception'".

2370 - حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ ثَوْرٍ، عَنْ مَعْمَرٍ، عَنِ الرَّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا أَرَادَ غَزْوَةً وَرَى غَيْرَهَا وَكَانَ يَقُولُ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ. قَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدَ

لَمْ يَجْرُبْ بِهِ إِلَّا مَعْمَرَ يَزِيدَ قَوْلَهُ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ. يَهَذَا الْإِسْنَادِ إِنَّمَا يُرَوَى مِنْ حَدِيثِ عُمَرُو بْنِ دِينَارٍ عَنْ جَابِرٍ وَمِنْ حَدِيثِ مَعْمَرٍ عَنْ هَمَّامِ بْنِ مُنَبِّهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ.

“Narrated Ka’b ibn Malik: When the Prophet ﷺ intended to go on an expedition, he always pretended to be going somewhere else, and he would say: ‘War is deception’. Abu Dawud said: Only Ma’mar has transmitted this tradition. By this he refers to his statement ‘War is deception’ through this chain of narrators. He narrated it from the tradition of ‘Amr bin Dinar from Jabir, and from the tradition of Ma’mar from Hammam bin Munabbih on the authority of Abu Hurairah”.

- 18 *Sunan al-Tirmithi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 2008, p. 408), Book of Jihad, hadith 1675:

1675 - حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مَنِيعٍ، وَتَضَرُّ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ بْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، عَنْ عُمَرُو بْنِ دِينَارٍ، سَمِعَ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، يَقُولُ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ. قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى وَفِي النَّبَابِ عَنْ عَلِيٍّ وَزَيْدِ بْنِ ثَابِتٍ وَعَائِشَةَ وَأَبِي عَبَّاسٍ وَأَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ وَأَسْمَاءَ بِنْتُ يَزِيدَ بْنِ السَّكَنِ وَكُثَيْبَ بْنِ مَالِكٍ وَأَنْسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ. وَهَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ.

“Narrated Jabir bin ‘Abdullah that That the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘War is deceit.’ Abu ‘Eisa said: There are narrations on this topic from ‘Ali, Zaid bin Thabit, ‘Aishah, Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Hurairah, Asma’ bint Yazid bin As-Sakan, Ka’b bin Malik and Anas bin Malik. This hadith is Hasan Sahih”.

- 19 “It is all folly, madness, a crime against civilization! You people speak so lightly of war; you don’t know what you’re talking about. War is a terrible thing!” Comments to Prof. David F. Boyd at the Louisiana State Seminary (24 December 1860), as quoted in *The Civil War: A Book of Quotations* (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2004) edited by Robert Blaisdell.
- 20 Cf. Usama Hasan, trans. and ed., *The Way of the Prophet: A Selection of Hadith* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2009). This collection contains no fewer than 393 hadiths, but not the one in question.
- 21 Imam Nawawi, *The Complete Forty Hadith* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers; 3rd Revised edition edition, 2009) and very many other editions in many languages.
- 22 Cf. *Islam: What the West Needs to Know* (Quixotic Media, 2006).
- 23 Cf. Robert Spencer, “How Taqiyya Alters Islam’s Rules of War”, *Jihad*

- Watch*, 6 January 2010: <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2010/01/how-taqiyya-alters-islams-rules-of-war>
- 24 Robert Spencer, *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World's Fastest-Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2002), p. 54.
 - 25 Robert Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (And the Crusades)* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2005), p. 79.
 - 26 Robert Spencer, *The Truth about Muhammad: Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2006), pp. 103-122.
 - 27 Gregory M. Davis, *Religion of Peace: Islam's War against the World* (Los Angeles: WND Books, 2006), p. 90.
 - 28 Raymond Ibrahim, "Taqiyya: War and Deceit in Islam", in John Gallagher and Eric D. Peterson, eds., *Debating the War of Ideas* (Palgrave Macmillan; 2009 edition), pp. 67-81.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 - 30 *Op. cit.*, note 17.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 71. Cf. Raymond Ibrahim, "War and Peace—and Deceit—in Islam", in which Ibrahim asserts that, compared to artful ruses in battle, the killing of Ka'b ibn al Ashraf is "more demonstrative of the legitimacy of deception vis-à-vis infidels". <http://raymondibrahim.com/2009/02/12/war-and-peace-and-deceit-in-islam/>
 - 32 Cf. Muhammad ibn 'Umar-al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi* (Beirut: Muassasat al-'Alami, 1989), Volume 1, p. 185; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 2008 edition), Vol. 1, p. 385; Ibn Hisham, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: Dar Ehia al-Tourath al-Arabia, 2000), Vol. 3, p. 58.
 - 33 Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 385.
 - 34 *Ibid.*, p. 192. For the meaning of the word غيلة, cf. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al 'Arab*, *op. cit.*, Volume 11, p. 112.
 - 35 Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al 'Arab* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 2008 edition), Volume 5, pp. 28-29. It can also be transliterated as "Khad'a" and "Khid'a", depending on whether the diacritic is *dammah*, *fathah* or *kasrah* in the particular

- published hadith. Cf. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari* (Shubra: Dar Al-Taqwa, 2), Vol. 6, p. 174.
- 36 *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari*, nine volumes (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997 and other editions).
- 37 Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon Derived from the Best and Most Copious Eastern Sources* (London: Willams & Norgate 1863), Vol. 1, pp. 709-710.
- 38 Cf. Ibn Manzur, op. cit., pp. 28 -29.
- 39 Murin Baalbaki and Rohi Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ilm Lilmalayin, 11th ed., 2007), p. 505.
- 40 Exodus 15.3. The God of the Bible calls himself the Lords of Armies 261 times in the Torah, commencing with 1 Samuel 1.3.
- 41 Martin Van Creveld, “Joshua bin Nun, 1354-1244 BC”, in Andrew Roberts, *The Art of War: Great Commanders of the Ancient and Medieval World* (London: Quercus, 2008), p. 39. Michael J. Dougherty, et al., *Battles of the Bible 1400 BC – AD 73* (London: Amber, 2008), pp. 24-27.
- 42 Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible: A Military History of Ancient Israel* (London: Greenhill, 1978. 2006 edition), pp. 54-56. Van Creveld, op. cit., p. 41.
- 43 Herzog and Gichon, pp. 75-76.
- 44 1 Samuel 16:1-3.
- 45 2 Kings 6:18-20.
- 46 The Hebrew text of 1 Kings 22, Verse 20 makes it clear that “deceive” is the correct translation of the verb, rather than the word “entice” used in the KJV and a few other modern translations:
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, מִי יִפְתֶּה אֶת-אַחֲזָב, וַיַּעַל, וַיִּפֹּל בְּרִמָּת גִּלְעָד; וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה בַּבֶּה, וְזֶה אָמַר בַּבֶּה.
 אָמַר בַּבֶּה.
- Cf. Deuteronomy 11:16: “Be not deceived ...”
- 47 1 Kings 22.20-23.
- 48 1 Kings 22.37.

- 49 Robert Spencer, "Pope must condemn demonizing of Israel", *Spero News*, 26 October 2010: <http://www.speroforum.com/a/42470/Pope-must-condemn-demonizing-of-Israel#.Wd84KPJrz84>
- 50 <http://raymondibrahim.com/about/>
- 51 Cf. Spencer's weak claim: "The Jewish and Christian traditions have developed interpretative methods whereby they blunt the force of some of the more uncomfortable passages of the Bible so that nobody reads in the Psalms where it says, 'Blessed is the one who takes your babies and strikes them against the rock', and thinks we should out and bash babies heads in. This has never been something that Jews and even the most extreme Jewish and Christian groups have ever relied on that kind of Biblical literalism in regard to those kinds of passages. Islam, on the other hand, the literalist tradition is paramount. And the understanding that these things are indeed marching orders for all believers is paramount. So that also there's a fundamental difference in the fact that there is an open-ended and universal mandate to commit - to commit violence, to wage war against non-believers for believers in the Koran. There is no such universal and open-ended mandate to commit violence in the scriptures, in the Christian or Jewish scriptures". *Q&A with Robert Spencer*, C-Span, 21 July 2006: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?193778-1/qa-robert-spencer>
- 52 Judges 3.15-20.
- 53 Judges 5.24.
- 54 Judges 4.21 and 5.27-28.
- 55 2 Samuel 15.34.
- 56 2 Samuel 17.23.
- 57 C. N. Geschwind, *The Tale of Hushai the Archite*, CIA Historical Review Program, 2 July 1996 (declassified): https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol13no2/html/v13i2a04p_0001.htm
- 58 Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (New York: Basic Books, 1994 edition), p. 168.
- 59 Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Krieg* (München, Ullstein, 2003 edition),

p.183: “Wir sagen: die Überraschung liegt ohne Ausnahme allen Unternehmungen zum Grunde, nur in sehr verschiedenen Graden nach der Natur der Unternehmung und der übrigen Umstände”.

- 60 Ibid., p. 187: “Sie ist sogar selbst ein Betrug, wenn das Ganze fertig ist, aber sie unterscheidet sich doch von dem, was schlechthin so genannt wird, und zwar dadurch, daß sie nicht unmittelbar wortbrüchig wird. Der Listige läßt denjenigen, welchen er betrügen will, die Irrtümer des Verstandes selbst begehen, die zuletzt in eine Wirkung zusammenfließend, plötzlich das Wesen des Dinges vor seinen Augen verändern. Daher kann man sagen: wie der Witz eine Taschenspielerlei mit Ideen und Vorstellungen ist, so ist die List eine Taschenspielerlei mit Handlungen”.
- 61 “Ruses and Stratagems”, in Franklin D. Margiotta, ed., *Brassey's Encyclopedia of Military History and Biography* (London and Washington: Brassey's, 1994), pp. 812-820.
- 62 Cf. Michael Dewar, *The Art of Deception in Warfare* (Exeter: David & Charles, 1989); David Glantz, *Military Deception in the Second World War Cass Series on Soviet Military Theory & Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989); F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume 5, Strategic Deception* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); William B. Breuer, *Hoodwinking Hitler: The Normandy Deception* (Westport, CT, Praeger, 1993); Michael Howard, *Strategic Deception in the Second World War: British Intelligence Operations Against the German High Command* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995); John Latimer, *Deception in War* (New York: Overlook Press, 2001); Mark Lloyd, *The Art of Military Deception* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2003); Barton Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War* (London and Boston: Artech, 2007); John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, eds., *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Nicholas Rankin, *Churchill's Wizards: The British Genius for Deception 1914-1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009); Barton Whaley and Hy Rothstein, *The Art and Science of Military Deception* (London and Boston: Artech, 2013); Donald C. Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig, eds., *Strategic Military Deception: Pergamon Policy Studies on Security Affairs* (Oxford: Pergamon, 2013); Joseph W. Caddell, *Deception 101: Primer On Deception* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2014); Barton Whaley, *Practise to Deceive: Learning Curves of Military Deception Planners* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press: 2015).

- 63 Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004).
- 64 Article 37(1) of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) of 8 June 1977:
1. It is prohibited to kill, injure or capture an adversary by resort to perfidy. Acts inviting the confidence of an adversary to lead him to believe that he is entitled to, or is obliged to accord, protection under the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, with intent to betray that confidence, shall constitute perfidy. The following acts are examples of perfidy:
- (a) the feigning of an intent to negotiate under a flag of truce or of a surrender;
- (b) the feigning of an incapacitation by wounds or sickness;
- (c) the feigning of civilian, non-combatant status; and
- (d) the feigning of protected status by the use of signs, emblems or uniforms of the United Nations or of neutral or other States not Parties to the conflict.
- https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0321.pdf
- 65 Commentary on Protocol I, Article 37, in *Commentary on the Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1987), p. 442; Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.p?action=openDocument&documentId=FB3D830424BD850CC12563CD00516783>
- 66 International Committee of the Red Cross, *Dictionary of the International Law of Armed Conflict* (Geneva, ICRC, 1992), p. 100.
- 67 Article 37(2) of Additional Protocol 1.
- 68 Commentary, op. cit., p. 440.

- 69 International Committee of the Red Cross: Practice Relating to Rule 57, Ruses of War. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule57
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 *UK Defence Doctrine: Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 (JDP 0-01)* (5th Edition), November 2014 (Surprise is “the consequence of confusion induced by deliberately or incidentally introducing the unexpected”); *US Army Doctrine Publication No. 3-0: Operations* (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2016).
- 72 Cf. Niaz A. Shah, *Islamic Law and the Law of Armed Conflict: The Conflict in Pakistan* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), esp. pp. 29-91; Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations* (Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law, and History, 2011).
- 73 Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 370.
- 74 Cf. Surah al-Anfal 8.16.
- 75 Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 990.
- 76 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 13; Ibn Hisham, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, Vol. 2, p. 214.
- 77 Cf. Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 534, 564, 728, 753, 755, 778, Vol. 3, p. 981.
- 78 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 342.
- 79 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 299.
- 80 Ibn Hisham, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, Vol. 3, pp. 389-390.
- 81 Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 338.
- 82 Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 486-487.
- 83 Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 488-489.
- 84 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 536.
- 85 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 585.

- 86 Ibn Hisham, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, Vol. 3, pp. 359.
- 87 Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 642.
- 88 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 796.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 814



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