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Tackling the Misinformation Challenge in Military Contexts: You're correcting too much!

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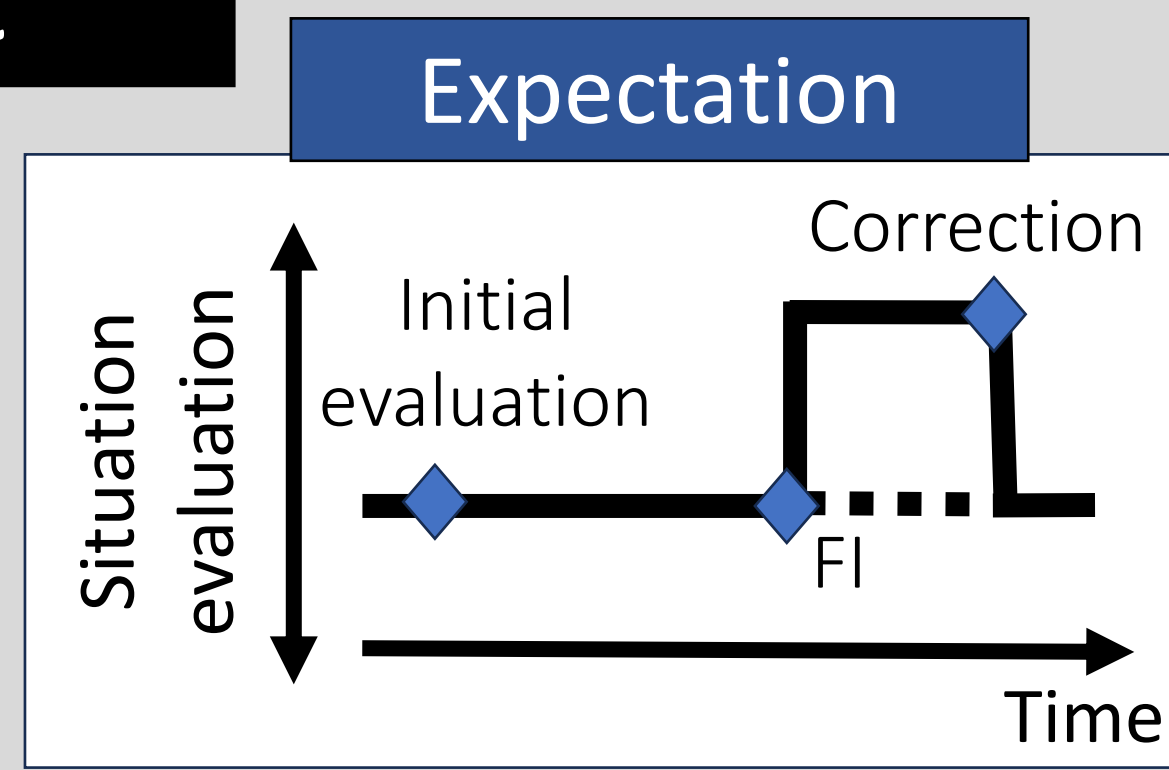
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Context

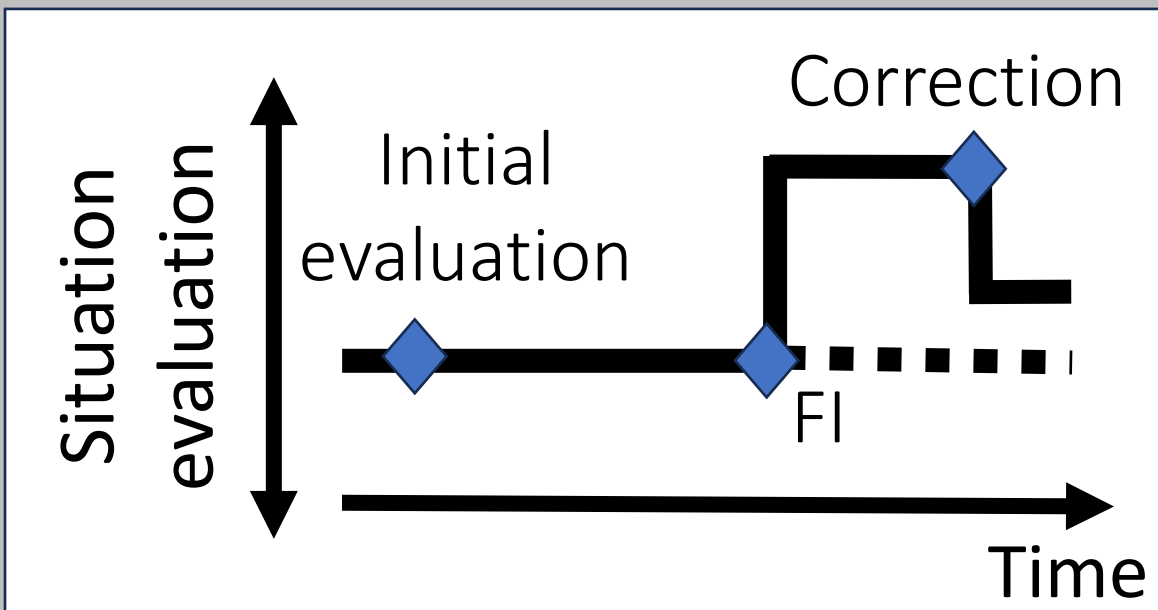
False information (FI) is a major issue for the military field as it can skew evaluation while precision is essential. One strategy to tackle the influence of FI involves its correction.



Research problem

Continued Influence Effect (CIE)

The literature on the CIE (Johnson & Seifert, 1994) challenges the effectiveness of correction. Even after the FI correction, evaluation might still favour the FI.



The correction would not be considered enough.

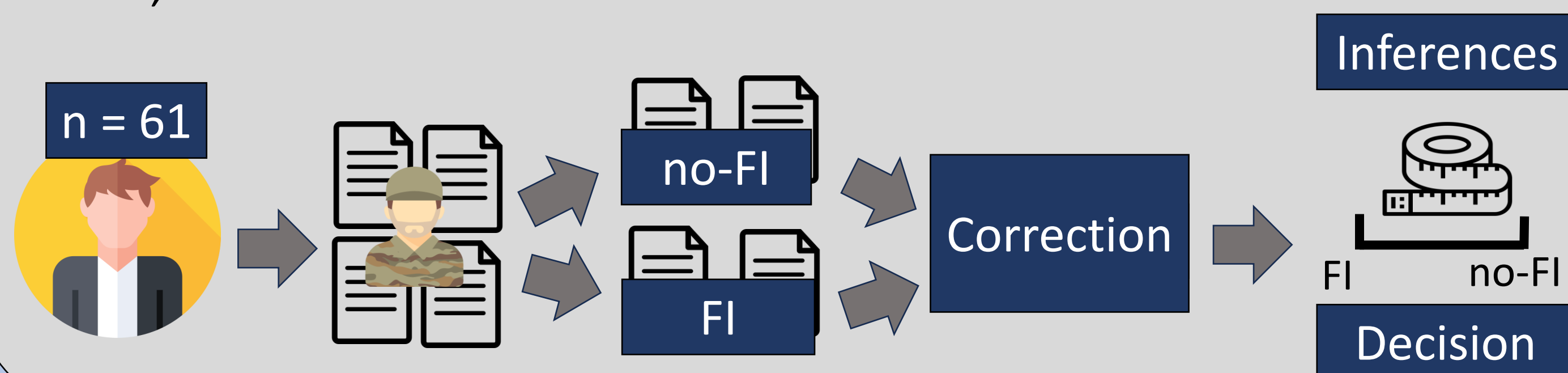
The CIE is well established in numerous fields, but not sufficiently in the military.

Objective

Exploring the CIE occurrence in military contexts.

Method

Participants read four texts: two with a corrected FI (FI version) and two with only true information (no-FI version). These texts depicted fictional stories involving a military officer faced with a decision. Participants were then asked about their inferences and the decision they would make, which could be more or less FI-related.



Hypotheses

FI version texts result in more FI-related decision and FI-related inferences than the no-FI version.

Text example

Captain, an aircraft is dangerously approaching our ship. We don't know yet if it's military or commercial.

FI version

Attention! The approaching aircraft is an enemy combat plane!

No-FI version

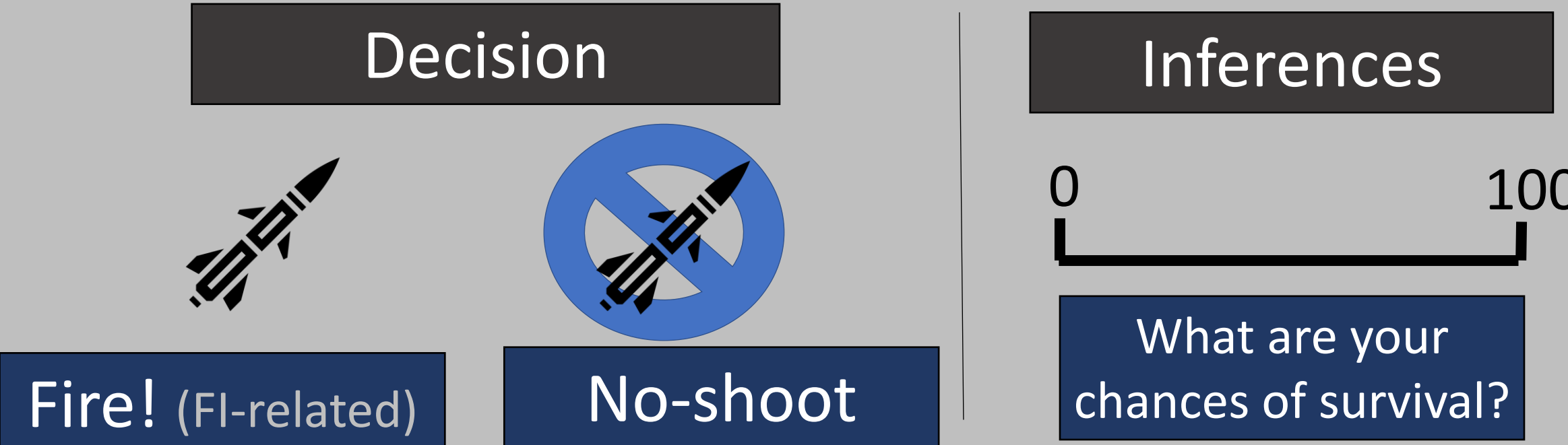
We still can't determine whether the approaching aircraft is a commercial or an enemy combat plane.



Correction

Our radar has been hacked! We can't determine whether the approaching aircraft is a commercial or an enemy combat plane!

The aircraft is still approaching and it will pass over our ship in just a few minutes. You must make a decision immediately!



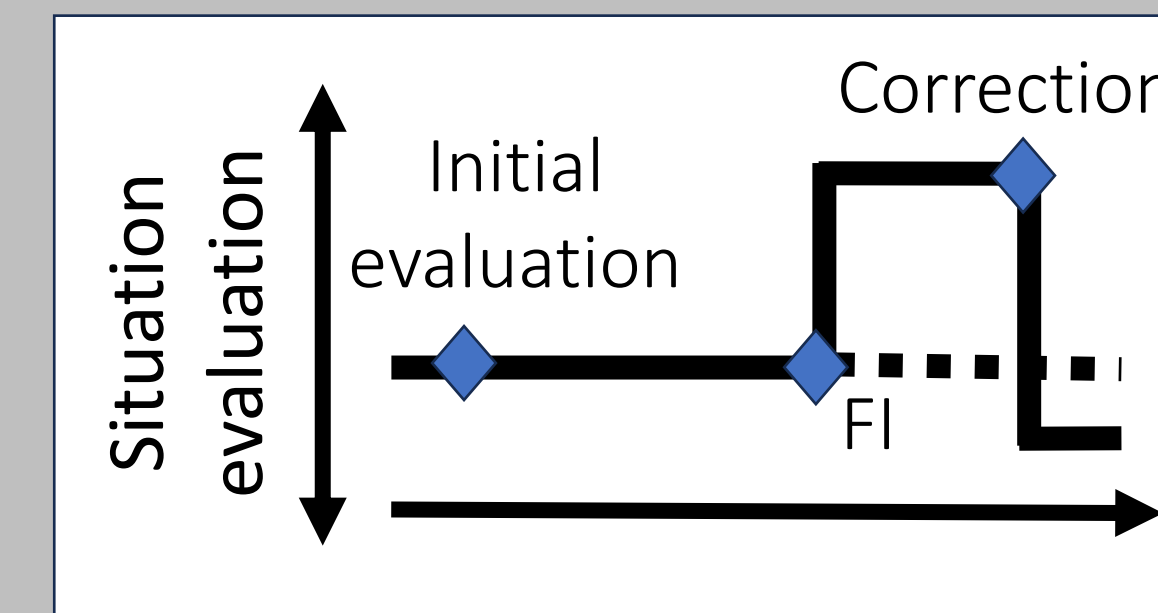
The FI version might elicit a higher number of 'Fire!' decisions and a lesser perception of survival chances.

Results

- ❖ No CIE observed.
- ❖ Decisions display an unexpected and underexplored effect in the literature: an overcorrection (Wegener & Petty, 1997).

Overcorrection effect

The FI correction resulted in **fewer** FI-related decision than would have been rationally expected in the absence of FI.



The correction has been considered, but too much!

The FI version elicited a lesser number of 'Fire!' decisions.

Take Home Message

Correct and reflect!

The absence of CIE demonstrates that a correction can be sufficiently efficient to negate the influence of the FI. One possible explanation for this lack of CIE is that the highly engaging nature of the texts may have favoured attention, and in turn, the encoding and efficiency of corrections.

But do not overestimate!

The engaging nature of the texts may have prompted the subjects to pursue an unbiased decision. Consequently, they may have endeavoured to adjust their evaluation in opposition to the FI. However, in doing so, they may have overestimated the FI's impact, resulting in an excessive adjustment.

Perspectives

This overcorrection result adds to an underdeveloped literature. Future studies are necessary, as the implications of this effect are crucial to tackle the misinformation challenge. By impeding a return to neutrality, they increase the risk of making suboptimal decisions.

References

Johnson, H. M., & Seifert, C. M. (1994). Sources of the continued influence effect : When misinformation in memory affects later inferences. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 20(6), 1420-1436.

Wegener, D., & Petty, R. (1997). The Flexible Correction Model : The Role of Naive Theories of Bias in Bias Correction. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 29, p. 141-208). Elsevier.