

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EXIT STRATEGY FOR THE NORTHERN UGANDA CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

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For almost two decades, the Northern part of Uganda has suffered under the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) terror campaign. It was not until recently that the LRA ceased to get sponsorship from the Sudan government. As a result of pressure from the international community and the worsening situation in Darfur, the Khartoum regime was compelled to shift its attention from the south to its western region and likewise from LRA to Janjaweed. The situation of the LRA in Sudan worsened as a result of military pressure from the Uganda Peoples` Defense Forces and the emergence of a new administration in the south by the Sudan Peoples` Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M).

The LRA had no other choice but to relocate to new bases in the Garamba areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The LRA is engaged in a deceptive strategy for its reorganization while publicly pronouncing its resolve for termination of hostilities through dialogue. This research paper examines the status of the conflict, reviews suitable methodologies for war termination practiced elsewhere, and proposes viable exit strategies from the crisis.

THE EXIT STRATEGY FOR THE NORTHERN UGANDA CRISIS

The exit strategy should be construed as effective coordination in the development of objectives and strategies at the critical juncture between the political leadership and the military commander.¹

—Bruce C. Bade

War termination is the process of deciding when and how to stop the fighting when it becomes evident that war-fighting objectives have been met, or are no longer achievable.² There are two ways to deal with an insurgency, either negotiate a solution or defeat it. Whereas military operations may terminate hostilities, the conflict is likely to continue, disguised under other means such as political mobilization, civil disobedience and so forth. This is a common trend as illustrated in Kosovo, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. As the military and the interagency (government departments) continue to focus on the stability operations, such a challenge should always be expected. Military operations should, however, aim at setting conditions that compel the insurgents to end hostilities on terms favorable to government.

To obtain an exit strategy, an early planning for conflict termination has to be conducted to lead to conflict resolution. Conflict termination, however, involves planning and setting objectives, goals and end-states, effective intelligence networking, conduct of stability operations, information and psychological operations, as well as ensuring that focused unity of effort is maintained with other interagency, international organisations and non-governmental organisations for a unified action. Conflict resolution on the other hand, is the process where parties to a conflict negotiate their differences, either among themselves or with the assistance of a mediator. They discuss underlying issues about the conflict with the aim of developing a unanimously agreed-upon end result. The mediator and witnesses ensure parties fulfill mutual agreements, hence ending the conflict.

Historic Perspective

After independence, Uganda was governed for a period of 22 years by leaders (Obote, Amin, Obote and Okello) who hailed from the North.³ Those leaders did not address the mistakes which were inherited from their colonial masters. They instead sustained the status quo, given the fact that it enabled them to maintain a grip on the reigns of political power. During Amin's era, Acholi and Langi soldiers were purged as he narrowed the power base in the army in favour of his ancestral home of the West Nile. The Acholi and Langi soldiers who fled as a result of Amin's trauma returned in 1979 to dominate the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). A deliberate recruitment policy into the army of people from Acholi and Lango was

designed to sustain the Obote II government's power.⁴ As a result of battle fatigue from the conflict between the National Resistance Army (NRA) and government in 1985, an in-house fight developed between the Acholi and Langi. The Acholi faction of the UNLA led by Brigadier Bazilio Okello staged a *coup d'etat* against Obote. To consolidate itself in power, the Okello junta incorporated into the army the various factions that had previously fought the Obote II regime. These included the Federal Democratic Army/Movement (FEDEMU), the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM), the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), and the Former Uganda Army (FUNA). The involvement of UNRF and FUNA raised the issue of northern domination of the army once again. The harmonization of all these factions was to be done on the basis of the Nairobi peace accord of 1985; unfortunately, the process collapsed. The trend of events after the collapse transformed the perceptions of the contest into that of Northerners versus Southerners.⁵ Underlying this orientation was the composition of both NRA ("Southerners") and UNLA ("Northerners").

The Acholi leaders perceived the defeat of Okello's regime by NRA as loss of power and prestige. They withdrew to the North and Sudan with the aim of reorganizing to stage a comeback to power. On 22 August 1986, after reorganizing to form the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), they launched their first attack from Sudan thus marking the beginning of the insurgency in the North. Since then the conflict has manifested itself in different dimensions: UPDA led by Angelo Okello, the Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena, the Holy Movement Part II of Lukoya Severino and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony. On the other hand, the West Nile Bank Front Part II (WNBF II) of Ali Bamuze, which had been operating in West Nile, has since responded to the Amnesty and returned home from their bases in Sudan. WNBF was composed of elements of Amin's regime who hail from West Nile.

Several insurgent groups took up arms immediately NRA/M captured power in 1986 with the view to rolling the NRA/M back. These groups included the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA), the Uganda Peoples Army (UPA), the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), the Uganda National Rescue Front Part II (UNRF II), the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF), and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF); the NRA/M used several methods to contain them including military force and peaceful means. While the military option was used to fight the UPDA in its early stages, peace talks (negotiations that culminated in the 1988 Peace/Accord) were used, while the military option was used to defeat the Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena.

In the case of the Lords Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, several initiatives by the government of Uganda to resolve the insurgency were not effective until the government

adopted a three-track strategy with a high degree of success. The first-track was to explore the amnesty strategy to those willing to renounce and abandon armed rebellion. The second-track was to engage serious groups in a genuine dialogue process, and the third-track was to engage notorious gangs with military operations, in order to re-establish the rule of law. The complexity with the LRA insurgency is embedded in its lack of clear political program; and its survival skills that allowed for adaptation to a new environment, in attempts to escape from the wrath of Uganda Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) and the indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The LRA, until recently, had been nurtured and directed to execute heinous terror campaigns against humanity in Uganda from Sudan, however, as pressure from the international community and the worsening situation in Darfur increased, the Khartoum regime shifted its geographical attention from the south to its western region, consequently politically abandoning the LRA and shifting its attention to the Janjaweed.⁶ This followed the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government of Sudan (GOS) and Sudan Peoples Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) on 9 Jan, 2005.

The SPLA/M, because of its geographical location and religious affiliation, is perceived by the Government of Sudan to be sympathetic with the Uganda government. The LRA thrived on the exploitation of the conflict in the South, by fighting proxy battles on behalf of the Sudan government. They were, therefore, stranded when the Government of Sudan “officially” withdrew its support. The situation of LRA in southern Sudan was worsened by the losses it encountered from Uganda Peoples Defense Forces onslaught in “Operation iron fist.” These operations were sanctioned by the bilateral arrangement between Uganda and Sudan governments. Faced with the worsening operational situation and the emergence of the new administration in southern Sudan, the LRA was compelled to relocate westward to the Garamba National Park areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Current Situation

The ambiguity of the unfolding scenario is that whereas the leadership of the Lord's Resistance Army is indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), it is the obligation of the host government(s) to end impunity by apprehending the culprits and bringing them for trial. But the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government, on whose territory the LRA took refuge, has been engaged in sorting out its own political, social-economic and security challenges which have rendered her non cooperative against the LRA. The UN peacekeeping Mission in DRC (MONUC) has failed or is unwilling to apprehend the LRA. On the other hand, the United

Nations turned down Uganda's request to intervene to enforce the International Criminal Court warrant of arrest. The net impact of this unfortunate situation guarantees the survival of the LRA in its new found safe-havens where it is not under pressure, but just taking advantage of the situation to reorganize at its own pace. This may be done to hoodwink the Uganda government and the international community in a non committal dialogue process. For instance, the Juba peace talks that were initiated by the LRA have been painstakingly progressing at a snail pace because of the LRA's elusiveness hence referred to as 'peace jokes.'

Intelligence Operations

Clausewitz was skeptical about the accuracy of intelligence in war. He regarded most intelligence to be false and asserted that there was a tendency "to exaggerate bad news"⁷ yet intelligence is so essential to operations planning. Reliable intelligence reduces uncertainty about the enemy that is about to be encountered. Reliable "intelligence enables commanders at all levels to apply their available forces wisely and effectively."⁸ There is a need for continuous analysis of the environment in the theatre of operation. The intelligence analysts should include factors affecting termination and post-conflict operations in their Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB). The IPB should effectively address political, economic, linguistic, religious, demographic, ethnic, psychological, and legal factors. A close rapport with key personnel such as traditional leaders, religious clerics, and influential members of the opposition, financially endowed families, and opinion leaders should be maintained to update the intelligence assessment.

Another important group that should be considered is the people who are undecided that represent the majority of the population that is a center of gravity. The intelligence should utilize human intelligence (HUMINT) and signal intelligence (SIGINT) graphically to depict the geographic areas of these groups in population overlays.⁹ From these assessments, it is possible to identify key formal and informal leaders. The social cultural assessment also helps in identifying groups of people that require intelligence and operational focus in an effort to win "hearts and minds." The intelligence should reflect the necessary and sufficient conditions that must prevail for the conflict to be resolved.

Some individuals and groups, either because of their blood relations or other vested interests, continue to collaborate with the remnants of the insurgents whose activities are concealed in many forms that require both experience and skills for identification. Collaborators embed themselves within the prevailing structures, especially the local Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs) whose activities involve intentionally or unintentionally discrediting the government to its citizens. The situation sometimes is exaggerated to solicit funding and demonstrate how government has failed in its obligations. The cyberspace and the media are used for clandestine work that in most cases the government does not monitor or challenge. As a result, they get sympathy from the unsuspecting international community and fellow countrymen in the Diaspora. When they get funded, they are not held accountable to the government nor to the people, but unfortunately, use these funds for personal agendas or to further incitation of the community into rebellion. Collaboration remains a big challenge for counter insurgency forces to identify within the population. This is because clandestine work is concealed within routine normal activities. It is, therefore, imperative to establish an intelligence network to help evaluate genuine activities. The community has to be told the truth, and government has to identify patriotic teams (with a homogeneous mix) with which to work to deliver government's programs.¹⁰ These should be vetted by an effective established network of intelligence.

Targeting

After the identification of the insurgents and collaborators, there is a need to separate them from the population. The process of proving who is a collaborator is a bit complex, but, once identified, collaborators should be exposed to the community and warned to stop or risk being prosecuted. Led by reliable intelligence, theatre operations should first identify key insurgent leaders as high value targets (HVT). Special Operations Intelligence squads, consisting of carefully selected and trained personnel that may include elements from enemy defectors for specific tasks should be formed. Tasks that Special Operations Intelligence Squads conduct include raids, tracking specific enemy (HVTs) for annihilation or capture, searching for hidden weapons.¹¹

Second, in order to defeat an insurgency, the hearts and minds of the people have to be recognized as the center of gravity. Government has to win the support of the majority of the people by convincing them to join its programs. This may not be easy if wrong perceptions and suspicion have been held by the community. The land issue in northern Uganda is an example. The powers to allocate land are vested in the respective District Land Boards, yet this fact is being distorted to gain political capital. It is claimed that government encouragement of private entrepreneurs to invest in the north, as part of the recovery and reconstruction effort, is not altruistic, but rather that the government instead, intends to take people's land and give it to investors without the rightful owner's consent.¹² This is not true, but as discussed earlier,

negative forces that are entrenched in positions of leadership do not want to see any government program being implemented successfully within their area of influence. They try to do what it takes to discredit government by denigrating its policies and spreading propaganda. With such background, the government has to utilize intelligence to vet teams to embark on programs without being intimidated. The programs should start with small projects that must be strictly supervised to ensure success. Such projects should act as demonstration projects to pass skills to the community and gain its support before they are replicated on a large scale.

Information and Psychological Operations

To succeed in counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign, one cannot afford to ignore the value of information and psychological operations. Belligerents in the conflict compete to influence the perceptions of the people. Therefore as a remedy one has to “tailor focused messages and themes that suit specific audiences.”¹³ In the case of the insurgency in northern Uganda, there is competition between the government and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and its sympathizers to influence the opinions of the national, regional and the international community. Such is the case because the LRA’s terror-activities have been internationalized. The insurgency has negatively impacted on Ugandans, Sudanese, and the international community. Many Sudanese and some members of the international community have been targeted, killed and their properties either destroyed or looted by the LRA with impunity. It is a challenge for government to compete favorably when media has been characterized by sensationalism, bias, and in favor of negative reporting. The situation is further worsened by the cyberspace that has been dominated by the NGOs and LRA collaborators who give distorted and exaggerated facts to justify and sustain their funding. This trend of reporting has been unchallenged and has had a negative impact both on the local civil recipients and the members of the Armed Forces engaged in COIN operations. The biased reporting acts to justify LRA’s-propaganda and creates suspicion or indifference to community programs by the government. This type of reporting also serves to demoralize the security forces, often targeted for the slightest mishap in conduct. “The armed forces could work effectively if their operations were accepted to the people on whose behalf they are undertaken.”¹⁴ It is very disheartening to note that in the Ugandan case, instead of being appreciative of the good performance by troops against the LRA terror, there is a lot of negativity by some Ugandans largely attributed to negative coverage by the media.

Winning the Battle of Hearts and Minds

Winning the hearts and minds of the silent majority is not an easy job, especially after a protracted campaign of hate that has lasted for two decades. The war of guns could be assumed to have been “won” in favor of the government, but the LRA is not about to give up its rebellion. The insurgents have been weakened militarily by the UPDF. Unfortunately, the attempt to dialogue in Juba may be just one of LRA’s main motives to gain time to reorganize its remnants, or “save face” by appealing to their sympathizers for a favorable political dialogue. The complex issue is the hearts and minds of the silent majority and pursuing a resolution of the conflict in the on-going Juba Peace talks. This is against the background of the current controversial “land crisis” in northern Uganda where the Acholi leadership claim to have been ignored. They are inciting the people with a strategy to create fear, anger, and suspicion amidst the people that the government plans to freely give away their land to investors. Their main target is to rally the majority of peasants while setting a hallmark for a much bigger and bloodier conflict in the making. Efforts by the President to resolve the current standoff are still on hold as the Acholi leaders, whose majority are in the opposition, demand more time and prefer to be met in Acholi.¹⁵ This propaganda has attracted wide media coverage, which negatively impacts the government stature on land issues. The danger is that the state is being alienated from its own people at a critical hour, through the influence of the media to disseminate rumors that tarnish the government image. Furthermore, the matter threatens not only national cohesion and security but also the peace-talks in Juba.

The Negotiation Process

Parties to a conflict seek to negotiate if and when they anticipate benefits from the end results. They may also negotiate accomplishing their goals by alternative means. Uganda has always preferred to resolve arising conflicts through dialogue. The results of cases resolved by negotiation tend to be mutually beneficial to parties, which are cost-effective and long lasting. History has illustrated that military options are in most cases designed to create a conducive environment for a political end state. Liddell Hart further asserted that “the military objective should be governed by the political objective.”¹⁶ Many armed conflicts have consequently been resolved within the country and neighborhoods. Successful negotiations between the Uganda government and the Uganda People’s Democratic Army were in 1988, followed by the Uganda People’s Army in 1992, and the Uganda National Rescue Front in 2002. The common factor to all these negotiations was the prevalence of a conducive environment “ripe moment” for negotiations, so the challenge is predicting when it is the ripe moment to negotiate. The conflict

may be in its transition stage from being propelled by internal dynamics, to being driven by external dynamics. For example, the timing of the 1994 and 2001 NRM/LRA negotiations were not appropriate because the conflict was in its transition. It was changing from being driven by its internal factors to being driven by external factors. It had also changed the arena from operating within Uganda to operating from Sudan, which changed its character.

Timing the Ripe Moment

Choosing the right timing to negotiate is so crucial to the negotiation process that one must get it right or risk wasting time and resources. Leaders at all levels must have skills to accurately analyze when it is appropriate to begin negotiations. It should be the appropriate time when the principal parties to the conflict are willing to negotiate. In most cases, such as the LRA, parties realize that they are about to hit a dead end in their continued pursuit of hostilities when they have either culminated or anticipate hitting a stalemate in terms of manpower or material resource.¹⁷ Parties may be genuinely willing to terminate conflict, thus negotiating in search for favorable terms. However, other parties use negotiation as a strategy to buy time in order to reorganize for renewal of their campaigns. This has been the trend with the LRA in the past where several attempts by the Uganda government, to negotiate with the Lord's Resistance Army, have been fruitless because of its lack of commitment and elusiveness. Therefore, before negotiations begin, issues that are crucial as well as the relevant parties that are involved must be established and the issues put in the right order of priority such as:

- The parties' publicly stated positions.
- The underlying interests behind these positions.
- The bottom-line needs of each party.
- Concerns and fears¹⁸

It is imperative for leaders to possess negotiating skills so that they are endowed with the ability to rightly choose whether or not to negotiate, and when they choose to negotiate, to rightly choose about what. Considering the behavior of LRA in the recent past, it is still premature to ascertain as to whether this is the appropriate time to engage in serious dialogue with them.

Negotiation

Since negotiation is preferable in resolving conflicts, the negotiating teams in the Juba talks need to be equipped with relevant information pertaining to the underlying issues, desired concerns, interests, and personalities of the principal parties. Resolution of a conflict is always

the result of a process and a mastery of this process is important in bringing conflicts to a successful conclusion.

Mediation is a very important aspect in the process of negotiation and in order to achieve a fruitful negotiation, mediators should be agreeable to parties to the conflict and should endeavor to maintain neutrality. Mediation involves efficient facilitation of negotiation meetings and effective communication skills on the part of the mediator. The negotiating parties require effective communication skills to clearly articulate their views in a persuasive manner, rather than being vague and elusive such as the LRA that is non-committal and always looking for scapegoats. During the negotiation process, the mediator and the parties involved ought to take care in their choice of words, to ensure that the “desired message is received.”¹⁹ The consequence of failure to effectively communicate leads to getting a bad deal or scapegoating to justify inability or unwillingness to pursue the negotiation process to a conclusive end.

Mediators must be endowed with the necessary skills to understand the process and the parties involved and their cultural context. Mediators must overcome barriers and assist parties in reaching an agreement that meets their interests. They must also know that “Mediation involves skills in persuasion, conflict analysis, attentive listening, information gathering, handling emotional people and issues, creating multiple options/alternatives and maintenance of momentum.”²⁰ Anything to the contrary would create delays or even failures.

When considering the on-going negotiations, between the Uganda government and the Lord’s Resistance Army in Juba, the situation has been ambiguous. The mediator (Dr. Riek Machar) and his southern Sudan government have very limited resources available for the facilitation of the negotiation process. They depended upon exogenous well-wishers and the Uganda government to sustain the negotiations budget. Irrespective of their proximity to the conflict area and understanding the issues in the conflict, they were bound to get stranded due to lack of resources. However with the arrival of the UN special envoy to the region (President Joachim Chissano), the process may improve.

Mediators ought to be agreeable to both parties to the conflict and must maintain impartiality in their conduct; upon losing their impartiality, they are expected to resign their mediation effort. Initially, Dr. Riek Machar was agreeable to both the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Uganda government but of late the Lord’s Resistance Army has cast “scapegoating” doubts about his impartiality and to make matters worse, when they were challenged on the increasing insecurity that threatened Juba, President Bashir threatened to use force to oust them from Sudan’s sanctuary. The LRA found this to be a good excuse to pull out of the negotiation process, citing concerns about security and proposing relocation of talks to another

country (Kenya/South Africa). On the part of the Uganda government, it has remained focused on dialogue, considering Juba as the most suitable negotiation venue with Dr. Machar reinforced by representatives from South Africa, Kenya and the DRC as mediators.

Negotiation involves concessions by parties to the conflict with a hope of attaining some gains. Though the Lord's Resistance Army has been ejected from Uganda and weakened, the government of Uganda still wishes to achieve a lasting solution to end the recurrent terrorist campaign. Therefore, to stabilize the sub-region, the government of Uganda offered several concessions in an effort to obtain a successful resolution to the conflict. For instance, on several occasions, the government supported the Juba talks with cash and on a number of occasions facilitated the Acholi delegations, including the mother of the rebel-leader, to meet in Ri-Kwangba. To further demonstrate good will towards the Lord's Resistance Army, the President offered his telephone contact, satellite air-time, and bulls for roasting during the Christmas festival. In return, the government anticipated that the LRA would reciprocate by renouncing rebellion, thus benefiting from the amnesty in order to terminate the conflict. Regardless of these goodwill acts, several civilian lives, vehicles and properties continue to be lost in road ambushes in the southern Sudan. It is suspected that the Lord's Resistance Army or another newly constituted militia group run by the Sudan government committed those acts. Though their motive has not yet been established, it is suspected that their intent may be to derail the Juba peace process, and consequently deny the Southern Sudan the stability that it requires for self-determination in the forth coming referendum.

For negotiations to be realistic they should involve the principal parties to the conflict and yet this has not been the case in Juba. Whereas the government delegation constituted officials who could take decisions on behalf of government, the Lord's Resistance Army delegation acted to the contrary. It has been represented by some of its collaborators from the diaspora because the main principals fear to be apprehended under the International Criminal Court arrest warrant upon exposure. Because of their absence, the dialogue has become more complex since no major decisions could be taken without consultations. Despite the fact that the LRA had been given several opportunities to resolve their terror campaign, they seemed unappreciative, but instead look for all sorts of excuses to justify their non compliance.

Implementation of the Agreement

In the peace process, after the parties have reached an agreement, it has to be authenticated by signing. What follows is the implementation stage that is equally delicate. The parties to the conflict have to convince their respective constituencies on the details of the

agreement and their roles in it, but in most cases, this is not easy because of the prevalence of suspicion, especially on the part of the insurgents. The Mediator also has a large role to ensure that what was agreed upon by the parties is in compliance. It is essential to note that the environment is still full of tension; therefore parties need to restrain themselves or risk jeopardizing the entire process. Any move is bound to be misinterpreted and exaggerated by the spoilers whose anticipations may not have been realized. In the case of Uganda/LRA negotiations where the principals are not directly involved, the risks of denial of parts of the agreement by the LRA are even higher. As discussed earlier, apart from the mediators having resources, they have a responsibility to nurture this "infant peace" until it matures into a reality. For instance, the Liberian peace process is still being closely monitored as the peace brokers check on their performance every six months,²¹ which is not the case with the southern Sudan scenario. The mediator had neither resources to prevail over the parties nor adequate experience to supervise the implementation process.

Conflict Termination

According to General Colin Powell's experiences in *The Fine Art of Conflict Termination*, "conflicts should be short, quick, and decisive."²² This argument is in line with Sun Tzu's words of wisdom in *The Art of War* that "there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited."²³ However, whereas these restated arguments are correct, senseless conflicts may be imposed on a country such as Uganda for reasons beyond its means to quickly resolve. Several methods have been used to end this insurgency with some degree of success. It is therefore, significant to recognize that conflicts are dynamic, they have life and grow; when inappropriately handled they develop into wars. When conflicts are detected early and properly managed, they may be resolved. According to Mwagiru, "a conflict arises when two or more parties acquire incompatible goals about values. Underlying that situation is a conflict of vision and often an inability or unwillingness to see the other person's point of view."²⁴ Though the LRA case appears to be simple, it is not that easy considering the country's turbulent history, the sub-regional environment, and the "world order; where the threats are both diffused and uncertain, where conflict is inherent yet unpredictable, and where our capacity to defend and promote our national interests may be restricted by material and personnel resource constraints."²⁵ Simply put, the environment in the LRA case can be explained as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA).²⁶ The LRA's characteristics are in response to this VUCA environment, similar to complex, ever changing, constantly being transformed, and often in different stages of transition. Strategists, therefore, need to understand the different stages of

conflict transformation. During transition stage, the conflict changes its character from one kind to another and this could lead to changes in the actors, issues, and arena of the conflict. Therefore, effective analysis and appropriate management could reverse the trend that would lead to conflict termination and eventual resolution.

As a strategic leader, taking situations for granted should be avoided. This risk can be reduced by preparing for the worst case scenarios well in advance while taking cognizance of the need for genuine negotiations to take place. It is imperative to note that the LRA requires “reaching a culmination point”²⁷ where it would meet a dead end and be convinced that a continuation of its hostility would be futile, its options narrowed and limited to the option of taking amnesty as not only viable but a better alternative. Genuine negotiations are, therefore, unlikely to take place before the LRA and its collaborators recognize the futility of continued terrorism. Until the continuation of its campaign is viewed as unfavorable and disadvantageous, the LRA would not consider genuine dialogue. Since “war termination concepts are inextricably wound-up in war-fighting concepts,”²⁸ the enemy would more likely be willing to negotiate if he believed that fighting would continue. The government of Uganda needs not only demonstrate its resolve for war fighting by word of mouth but embark on preparation to defeat the LRA using the military means while exploring the dialogue option. This, therefore, calls for an integrated military strategy that aims to forge unified action involving all elements of national power to defeat the enemy.

Unified Action

Unified action should be understood as “the wide scopes of actions including those of governmental and non-governmental agencies taking place within a theatre of operation under command.”²⁹ The aim is to achieve unity of effort among many diverse agencies in today’s complex environment.

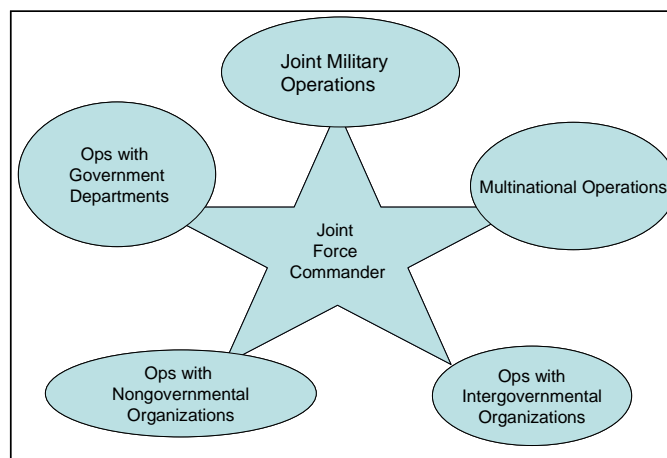


Figure 1: Unified Action

The concept of unified action highlights the integrated and synchronized activities of military, nonmilitary organizations, agencies, and corporations to achieve common objectives.³⁰ Figure 1 illustrates that it takes more than the use of military force alone to win complex conflicts such as the LRA terror campaign; though battles are won as a result of superiority in tactics and equipment. The enemy might be deceptive, pretend to be weakened, yet its will to fight still be intact. Therefore, when waging war, one should never lose sight of alternative plans of bringing war to a close.³¹ There is need to utilize all possible means to compel the enemy to a conviction “that its goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefits.”³² To succeed, the government requires its departments to mobilize all elements of national power, allot roles to achieve clear and realistic objectives. Political-military plans should be drawn jointly involving key departments that are synergized and closely coordinated with allies and identify patterns for restoration operations in the aftermath of an insurgency.

Sometimes focused leadership to attain unified action may be hampered by problems of personalities, egoism, and bad blood among the interagency participants. As illustrated by Dr. Vicki Rast, “the cause of lack of unity among the interagency joint planning is influenced by personal agendas, institutional biases, domestic politics, emotionalism engendered by blood and treasure invested in the conflict.”³³ Therefore, since it is essential that key departments get involved in the planning process, they must “overcome their own parochial interests,”³⁴ work in harmony mutually supporting towards realization of common objectives. Key points to note for successful conflict termination and post conflict unity is to “seek political guidance and focus unity of effort.”³⁵ There is, need to establish a “National Security Planning Guidance that sets priorities, clarifies national security roles eliminate redundancies”³⁶ and duplication of duties. Unified action requires that strategic plans be synchronized to disable the adversary’s capacities to execute sinister plans. Unified action is not only essential in dealing with stability operations but also helps in handling other emergencies such as natural and manmade disasters. “Synchronizing elements of national power substantially improve the joint force’s strategic capabilities”³⁷ as illustrated using lines of operations technique.

The Use of Lines of Operations

Use of the technique of logical lines of operations³⁸ (LLOs) to synchronize operations in counterinsurgency is essential. The technique focuses on the political, military, interagency, multinational, and international organizations’ effort toward a common purpose. Successful utilization of LLOs helps in the attainment of a stable and secure environment which consequently boosts government image and leads to change in people’s perceptions towards

the government. Indirectly, proper application of those lines helps to neutralize the insurgency subversive strategy as illustrated in a termination and post-conflict matrix by the United States Army War College in 1992.

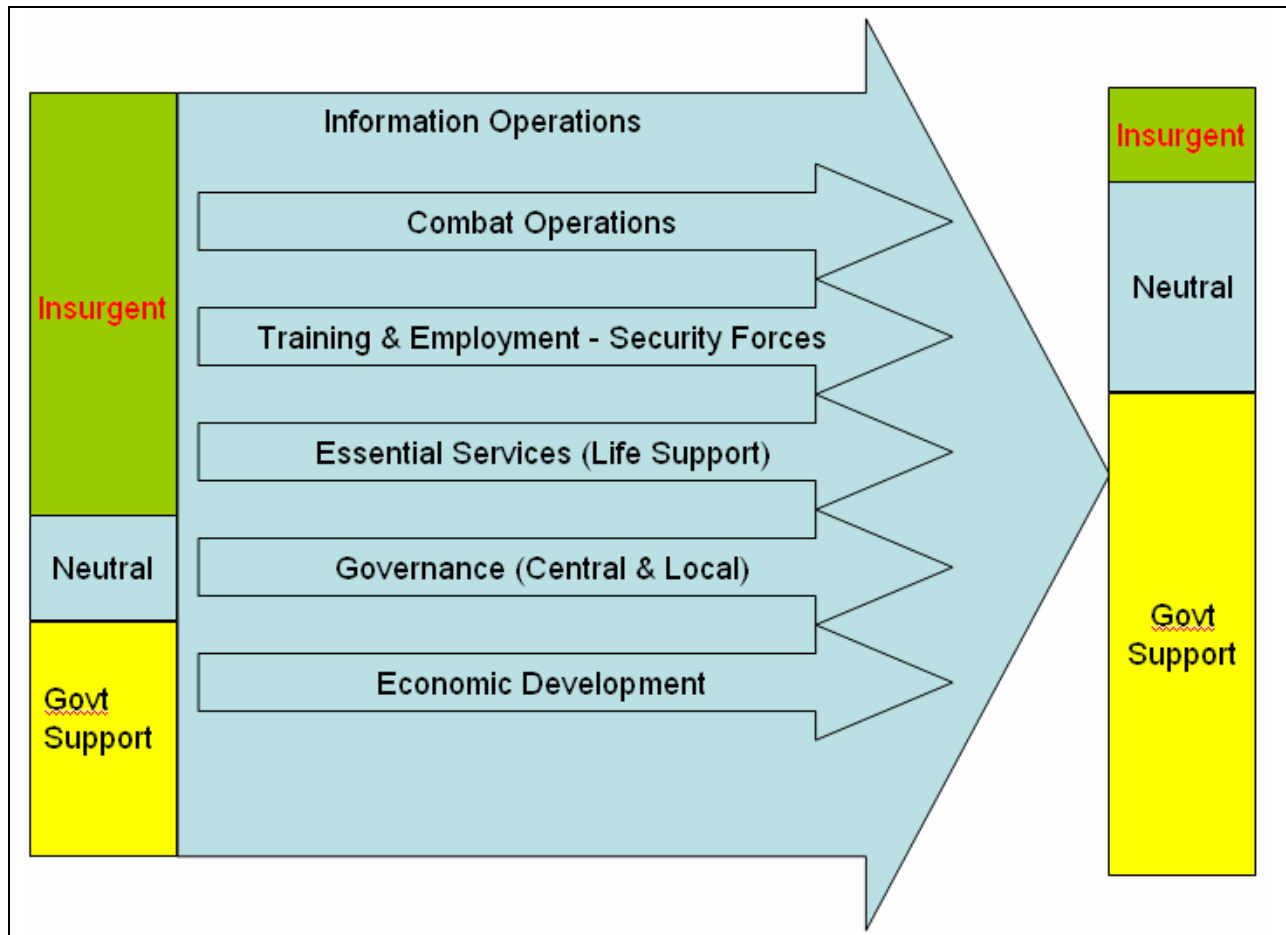


Figure 2: Logical Lines of Operation.³⁹

Figure 2 illustrates the application of LLOs in counterinsurgency operations. Using these technique commanders can set priorities and determine which lines are applicable to their areas of responsibility. The successful implementation of LLOs changes the environment creating hope and confidence in the community. The attainment of the desired end state, coupled with timely mass mobilization, is bound to lead to increased government support. The challenge is not only to select hard working teams but reliable and patriotic ones that cherish the attainment of peace and development.

Reduce Dependence on Regular Army for Internal Security

The military role in dealing with internal conflict should be limited to reducing violence to manageable levels. Ensuring that peoples' confidence has been restored and the security environment facilitates reversion to civil administration and social economic development. The military role could be divided into short term and long term after which the regular military should disengage.

- Short Term
 - Bring down violence to manageable levels to enable the government to function.
- Long Term
 - Assist the government to consolidating its gains;
 - Continue operations against residual, insurgent attempts to reverse the socio-democratic process by sabotage and terrorism;
 - Disengage and withdraw in a graduated manner without leaving a vacuum⁴⁰.

The reality of the situation is that the professional competence of Uganda police in dealing with internal conflicts leaves much to be desired. Consequently, the demand to deploy the UPDF to tackle even routine law and order situations is ever increasing. The net impact of over dependence on the army to deal with internal conflicts is that its efficiency is gradually reduced to a para-military level. The army in the process gets fatigued and its level of conventional preparedness is reduced. It also whips up anti army frenzies among the public and eventually tarnishes its image.

Summary of Recommendations

Policy on Counter Insurgency/Terrorism

It is imperative to set up a central agency under the national security council for continuous assessment of threats to national security and co-ordinate counter terrorism/insurgency efforts, initiatives and policies. This should be headed by a national security adviser with the service chiefs as members. There is need for a national policy on counter terrorism/insurgency to ensure that future responses to terrorist activities are better organized and involve the synchronization of elements of national power. The agency should be responsible for designing the counter insurgency/terrorism policy and monitoring its implementation.

Unified Action

The military, police, civil administration and intelligence agencies must work as a team to deal effectively with insurgency/terrorism. Their effort may be supplemented by non-governmental agencies. There should be an integrated committee system for co-ordination (ICSC) of security at state, regional/operational and district levels. At the operational level, an intelligence coordination committee should be set up to support a unified command. The overall command should be determined by the major player in the operations. In case the army is the lead player, the overall command should be from the army. On the other hand, if police are to be the lead players, then a police officer should head the operations. The committee should serve to synergize the efforts of all the agencies and be responsible for management of operations. In order to be efficient, committee members have to leave aside their parochial differences such as ego, status and ranks of personalities. The smooth functioning of the committee would be a recipe for successful unified action.

Special Operations Intelligence

There is need for a special designed force tailored to deal with protracted unconventional warfare against insurgents or terrorist networks and their sponsors. Special operations intelligence squads enhance intelligence capabilities in information gathering, analysis and reporting. Such squads could adequately be equipped to deal with complex missions behind enemy lines. This force would reduce the need for deployment of regular army units unless the situation goes beyond their control. The development of special operation intelligence forces would act as a force multiplier, availing reliable intelligence and enabling the commander to optimally deploy troops when circumstances dictate.

Revamping Intelligence Operations

There is urgent need for an effective intelligence network (HUMINT and SIGINT) that provides reliable intelligence to commanders for optimal application of forces. Continuous intelligence analysis of the social structures would help in assessing the dynamics of various groups and individuals influencing the conflict. Equipped with the knowledge of political, and social-economic dynamics of the society, it would be easier to identify the right people to implement government programs. The battle of hearts and minds as the center of gravity has to be won to convince the people to embrace government programs. This can only take shape if and when collaborators are exposed to the community while insurgent leaders are targeted. Everything possible should be done to change people's perceptions and attitudes towards government policies for recovery and reconstruction.

Information and Psychological Operations

A team of officers must reach out to the people, meet their expectations and grievances and clarify government plans. These patriotic teams have to work closely with the media, tailor focused messages and themes that suit specific audiences. They should not only implement government policies but timely counter the propaganda being disseminated to the detriment of national cohesion and security. The local media should provide wide coverage of the implementation process of government programs. The government needs to improve coverage of its actions and policies in the media. A robust public information effort focused on government mobilization of the North should be considered. The cyberspace that has been dominated by the NGOs and LRA collaborators deserves redress by technical teams not only to analyze the content of certain websites, but also to project government policies and programs. So the media and information operations should be considered as tools in molding people's perceptions and countering propaganda. There is need to design a media policy that allows forces close interaction with the media. Suitable officers should be trained to interact with the media both at unit and formation levels.

Operation Conduct

COIN operations, in most cases, are frustrating for troops because of being protracted. Operations should, therefore, be conducted based on reliable intelligence. Inconsiderate deployments lead to unnecessary wear and tear of equipment, fatigue and demoralization of troops. Commanders at all levels must keep troops motivated and avoid any factors that would affect troops' morale. Insurgents and their collaborators blow the slightest act of human rights violations by security forces out of proportion. Troops must, therefore, be extremely careful in their conduct or risk jeopardizing their reputation. All acts of indiscipline must be investigated without delay, suspects tried and the most deterrent punishment given to the guilty. Commanders must exercise restraint in application of force, especially where the insurgents are mixed up with civilians. Troops must be warned against being trigger-happy therefore minimum force should be used to achieve the objective.

The Dialogue Process

For negotiations to be realistic and successful there is a need to involve the principal parties to the conflict. The negotiation parties should be equipped with data pertaining to the underling issues, desired concerns and interests. Negotiations must involve concessions by both parties. Mediation should not stop at persuading parties to sign an agreement but also closely monitor the implementation process.

Reduce Dependence on Regular Army for Internal Security

There is a necessity to develop police capacity to relieve regular forces from over indulgence in dealing with internal security affairs. On one hand the national reserve force needs to be reorganized and part of it called to active duty to help the over stretched police in maintenance of law and order and handling other challenges such as disaster management. On the other hand the regular UPDF should gradually disengage from stability operations to reshape itself in preparations for regional/global challenges that threaten to our national interests.

Judicial Reforms

Special laws need to be enacted to deal with complex cases of insurgency and terrorism. Judicial proceedings need to be speeded up to try the terrorist, insurgents and collaborators. It requires setting up special courts and additional judges to administer justice to habitual criminals. This measure would not only serve as deterrence against those in the habit of fomenting terrorism with impunity but deal with challenge of amnesty abusers.

Good Governance

A proactive, transparent, just and fair administration should be a sufficient recipe to address the causes of disenfranchisement on which the insurgency thrives. Appropriate economic schemes supervised by skilled/patriotic teams should go along way in addressing the needs of the society.

Conclusion

The exit strategy in the Northern Uganda crisis, like other complex insurgent cases in the world, lies in successful synchronization of elements of national power that improves the joint force's strategic capabilities. It involves good organization as a result of effective intelligence and carefully thought out plans that are coordinated and synchronized to impact on the adversary's strategy. The plans should be jointly drawn to employ governmental and non-governmental agencies. Such plans are continuously re-assessed and adjusted not only to cater for the adversary's plans but, most importantly, to win the hearts and minds of the majority.

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