

**“AN ANALYSIS AND STUDY OF ISSUES OF MILITARY  
AND MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE ARMED  
CONFLICT IN REFERENCE OF TANZANIA/UGANDA  
WAR”**

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**Abstract:** This research paper is based on the personal experience and options formed in relation to two hostile, but interdependent professions - journalism and the military. The author of this paper have the advantage of having first hand knowledge of both a journalist and a public relations officer in the Tanzania People's Defense Forces (TPDF) for more than twenty years. He lead a group of civilian and military reporters, broadcasters and film-makers during the Tanzania/Uganda war in 1978. Also, in 1979 I participated in the final stage of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. This paper also traces and reveals some interesting background issues which have arisen when these two professions have associated during times of war or crisis. The War provides an interesting scenario in relation to the hostile relationship which can exist between war correspondents and military authorities. The paper attempts to analyses certain major conflicts such as the Korean War, Vietnam, the Falklands Crisis, the Gulf Crisis and selected aspects of the Tanzania/Uganda War. It is the aim of this thesis to pose its arguments logically and to reach a fair conclusion.

**Keyword: journalism, military, relationship, war, Tanzania/Uganda etc.**

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**Introduction:** This research paper will discuss some experience from the Tanzania /Uganda war. A background will be provided which covers the situation prior to, and after the war, and will encompass the methods by which the mass media operated, treatment of war correspondents and the relationship between the military and journalist throughout the war .This research paper attempts to shed light on the problem of the antagonistic relationship between war correspondents and military authorities, particularly during period of crisis and war reportage. The thesis assumes that the centre of the problem lies in how the truth is conveyed, and in the fact that the messenger of such truth often becomes a victim. This article isagreat asset to learn certain important lessons from the long-standing disputes between the two professions. The issue is complicated by the fact that one side of the conflict, the military, alleges that many of its operational failures are caused by the "unfair", "irresponsible" and "unpatriotic" coverage it receives from a hostile mass media. Toemphasize this point a U.S. marine bitterly complained, "My marines are winning this war and you people are losing it for us in your papers". His claim is shared by a rifleman, who, watching a jeep load of correspondents drop Michael Herr and drive away, sarcastically said, "Those bastards, I hope they die".Why all this enmity? What is the nature of the crime perpetrated by journalists, broadcasters and television men who are sent to the front to report on crises or war efforts? This thesis attempts to look at these issues from their perspective. Certain issues arising from the conflicts in the Crimea, Korea, Vietnam, the Falklands, the Gulf and the Tanzania/Uganda War of 1978 will be employed to support the contentions of this paper. Wherever possible, and to provide firm evidence for the topic in question, certain examples and facts are provided to enable comparisons to be made and to enlarge the perspectives on the subject. This is a complicated task, involving as it does, two conflicting sides with different interests, interpretations of events and perceptions.

### **Meaning and definition of war:**

The art of war, is of vital importance to the state .It is a matter of life and death, a road to safety or to ruin. Hence, It

is a subject of enquiry, which can on no account, be neglected by anyone of us today and tomorrow.

Many scholars of varying disciplines, including the social science and £ military fields, have attempted to analyse, war with a resultant multiplicity of interpretations although, as with the

word 'democracy', the term 'war' is a very familiar one, definitions and interpretations of the subject are both complex and varied. The majority of definitions however are broadly similar. The German General Carl von Clausewitz, born in 1780 in the small town of Burg, seventy miles south-west of Berlin,<sup>2</sup> made a great contribution to the study of war in his vast work 'On war' - opus of 128 chapters, sectionalised into eight books<sup>3</sup>. Clausewitz argues that war is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force. It is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass (total non-resistance would be no war at all but always the collision of two living forces." Neither side is wholly in control of its actions, and each opponent dictates to the other; consequently as they seek to outdo each other, their efforts escalate. "A clash of forces freely operating and obedient to no law but their own," eventually reaches the extreme - absolute war, that is, absolute violence ending in the total destruction of one side by the other Paret et al., Makers of Modern Strategy.



[Conditions during war]

### **THE WAR EXPERIENCE: TANZANIA/UGANDA:**

The Tanzanian/Ugandan conflict differs in nature from these wars. The reason behind the hostilities was that two neighbouring developing countries, both poor, went to war following the invasion and annexation of one by the other. This chapter will discuss and analyse the lessons drawn from that conflict and made the case for comparing the former conflicts with the latter, which could serve as an example of the changing attitude of the relationship between the two camps, depending on the working environment at the frontline.

**The Background to the War:**

Prior to hostilities, both sides had coexisted in harmony for hundreds of years. Strong social and economic relationships cemented by geographical and traditional historical background tied the two countries together. Each harboured the other's countrymen, who moved freely, without obstacle or unnecessary bureaucracy. The East African Community, an organisation for economic cooperation, comprised the three countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and was another factor leading to good relationships between them. Things changed dramatically immediately after General Idi Amin's coup of 25 January 1971 in which the government of Dr. Milton Obote, who was at the time attending the Commonwealth Conference in Singapore<sup>1</sup>, was overthrown. Amin's action, initially supported by the United States, Britain, Israel and other western countries, brought strong condemnation from Tanzania, Zambia, the Sudan, Ethiopia and other African countries as they viewed it as both a treacherous and pro-imperialist action. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania cut short a state visit to India and returned to Dar es Salaam of January 27. On the same day, Amin alleged that he had received intelligence reports that Tanzania was planning to invade Uganda and reinstate Dr. Obote. He warned Tanzania that Uganda's forces would defend themselves effectively.<sup>2</sup> Tanzania's Vice-President, Rashid Kawawa, denied Amin's allegations describing them as "absolute rubbish", while President Nyerere dismissed them as "nonsense" and affirmed that his government would continue to recognise Dr. Obote as Uganda's legitimate Head of State. Nyerere's stand was supported by some members of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and thus Amin was placed in a very awkward political situation. The first country to support Tanzania's stand was Somalia, which on January 29 announced "it would continue to recognize Dr. Obote as President," and President Sekou Toure of Guinea followed suit by demanding that General Amin should give up the power which he had seized by "treason" and "brutal force"<sup>3</sup>. President Kaunda of Zambia called upon countries outside Africa not to follow Britain's example of recognizing the new regime in Uganda. Amin became increasingly isolated in Africa, thus making him feel insecure and vulnerable.

**Tanzanians Mass Media in Mass Mobilization:**

Both prior to, and during the war, all Tanzanian mass media institutions were either controlled by the government or the ruling political party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (the Revolutionary

Party). There were two major daily newspapers, The Daily News, a broadsheet published in English and owned by the government, and Uhuru, tabloid published by the party. Both the government and the party also published broadsheet Sunday newspapers, The Sunday News and Mzalendo respectively. Apart from the print media, the government also owned Radio Tanzania and the Tanzania Film Company. Unfortunately there was no television in Tanzania at that time, contrary to the situation in Uganda which had its own TV controlled by the government. Amin's invasion forces caught Tanzania by surprise. "It was like someone stabbing you in the back while you are physically engaging in blows with another person," remarked one TPDF senior officer who wished to remain anonymous when this writer interviewed him on December 15, 1978 at Katoro during the war. His observation could be justified when looking at the situation pertaining in Tanzania prior to and during Amin's invasion.

After the signing of the Mogadishu Accord in 1977 sponsored by the OAU which called upon the two countries to cease hostilities. Tanzania abided by the Resolution. It reduced the troops stationed on its borders to a strength of one Company commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Morris Singano and moved them thirty kilometres south of the Kagera River, their duties being confined to reconnaissance and prevention of smuggling which had become rampant.<sup>11</sup> The entire eighteen hundred kilometres of the Kagera was covered by that force, which testifies to the unpreparedness and lack of intention of Tanzania to engage in war with Amin although it loathed his regime. Tanzania considered that there was no threat of war from its neighbour and thus there was no need to amass large numbers of troops on its border which could create unnecessary tension between the two parties and lead to a war footing scenario. However, Tanzania discovered that Amin was busy preparing his troops for invasion to fulfil his long-cherished ambition of capturing a part of the Kagera Salient which he claimed belonged to Uganda.

#### **Amin's Manipulation of Uganda's Mass Media and its Effectiveness:**

Since achieving power, Amin had employed the Ugandan mass media and particularly the radio, to consolidate his power, and later on as his vehicle in carrying out his ambitious plan to annex part of his neighbor's territory.

Amin used Radio Uganda as his voice to propagate his plan of annexation which he had nursed since his assumption of power in 1971. While in London in July of that year, he had asked the British government to supply his army with sophisticated military equipment without payment, but the British had played down this request. After realising that neither Britain nor Israel would provide him with the help he needed in the form of money and armaments to fulfil his ambition, Amin switched to establishing a relationship with Arab countries, particularly Libya. In February 1972 he made his first visit to that country aboard his Israeli-supplied jet. He was warmly received by Gaddafi and Libya gave Uganda a loan of \$25 million, and pledged more. This provided Amin with a new political and economic platform upon which to implement his ambitious plan. He started to use the mass media, particularly Radio Uganda to make allegations that his country was being invaded by Tanzania. This was purposely orchestrated to justify his future aggression. Initially his words were taken seriously by other countries, but after a time they became routine and monotonous and the authenticity of his allegations began to be questioned. It became apparent that Amin was using the mass media to make unfounded allegations about his neighbours as a smoke screen to hide his invasion plan. Finally, he broke the stalemate on November 1, 1978, when he boastfully announced that his troops had, within "only 25 minutes" captured 710 square miles of Tanzanian territory and that now it was a part of Uganda.



[War pics]



**Comparison between the Two Sides:**

Although the two sides were similar in that both sets of mass media were government-owned, they had distinctive differences. While Tanzania used persuasion and cooperation in working with its mass media, Amin used manipulation and control to rally support for his regime. Under an undemocratic and repressive regime, the press finds itself in a very difficult situation. It can blindly support the oppressive regime at the expense of the masses, as in the situation pertaining in Uganda during Amin's rule. Reporters feared for their lives if they exposed the diabolic acts of the dictator. When he invaded his neighbour, Radio Uganda, television and all government-owned newspapers were in the forefront of support for the regime. This is testimony that when a dictatorial regime takes power and controls the media, the latter fails to perform its role effectively and objectively. That is why the issue of ownership of the mass media is crucial in determination of the 'efficiency and objectivity of its functions.

**Conclusion:**

As the paper title "An Analysis and study of military and media relationships during the armed conflict in reference of Tanzania/Uganda war", attempts to suggest, it is argued that the majority of claims advanced by military authorities against war correspondents are unjustifiable. Sometimes military blunders, failures, atrocities and the incompetence of combatants and their commanders are randomly thrown at the mass media with the aim of saving their (the military's) face. War correspondents are only messengers, whose duty is to relay the truth. "Shooting\* the messenger is an unjust and unfair act.

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