

REVOLUTIONISING MILITARY WARGAMING IN NIGERIA: CENTRAL SHIELD WARGAME IN FOCUS

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SCOPE

01

Background

02

Traditional Wargaming

03

Central Shields Transformative Approaches to Wargaming

04

Key Lessons

05

Future of Wargaming in PME

BACKGROUND

FOCUS: How conflict dynamics, influence operations and inter-agency coordination shape decision-making in stabilisation efforts in Nigeria.



- The North Central Region (Transition Zone) was used as a case study.
- Food Basket of the Nation.
- Diversity.
 - Surrounded by divergent religious, economic, and cultural histories, the co-existence of small and large ethno-religious groups has also increasingly collided over land, resources, and identity

The Traditional Wargaming



Single Battle Focus

Most military wargames focus on isolated tactical vignettes, missing the continuity of sustained operations and strategic outcomes.

Underplaying Influence

Traditional games often overlook perceptions, narratives, and population behaviour, despite their critical role in modern conflicts.

Weak Red Cell/ Less Focus on Red Teaming

Adversaries are often scripted or poorly resourced, failing to truly test Blue forces with realistic challenges.

Approach 1: Adopting a Campaigning Mindset

➤ **Central Shield looked beyond single kinetic clashes to test Nigeria's ability to sustain force projection across multiple theatres over weeks or months.**

❖ **Force Projection Testing:**

✓ **Evaluating Nigeria's capacity to balance managing conflict in multidimensional and Complex operational environments.**

❖ **Resource Management:**

✓ **Ability to grapple with logistics, political timelines, and regional diplomacy alongside combat operations.**

❖ **Campaign Phasing:**

✓ **Made operational pauses, force regeneration, and strategic sequencing integral parts of decision-making processes.**

✓ **More realism: where success isn't achieved through a single decisive battle, but through the cumulative effect of sequenced operations backed by sustained political will.**

✓ **Participants learned that short-term tactical wins can create long-term strategic risks if not aligned to comprehensive campaign planning, sustainment capabilities, and political objectives.**

Approach 2: Integrating the Influence Dimension

➤ Central Shield treated campaigns as cognitive contests, not just kinetic ones, incorporating narrative and information warfare as decisive factors.

Media & Information Operations

Integrated media reporting, disinformation campaigns, and diaspora pressure as active game elements affecting outcomes.

Strategic Communication

Required players to allocate resources to information operations and political engagement with regional allies.

Population Reactions

Treated legitimacy and narrative dominance as critical success factors alongside military progress.

✓ It prepared participants to think of campaigns as cognitive contests, not just kinetic ones, aligning with best practices in Influence Wargaming.

Approach 3: Empowered Red Cell/Red Teaming

- Red forces were empowered with asymmetric options, including hybrid threats, cyber disruptions, disinformation, and escalation into regional crises, rather than being scripted or mirror-imaged.
- More effective Red Teaming with emphasis on adversarial thinking techniques.



Hybrid Threats

Criminal syndicates, insurgents, and foreign sponsors created multi-layered challenges.



Asymmetric Warfare

Cyber disruptions and proxy support tested Blue beyond conventional battle plans.



Regional Escalation

Red could escalate conflicts across borders, forcing complex political-military responses.

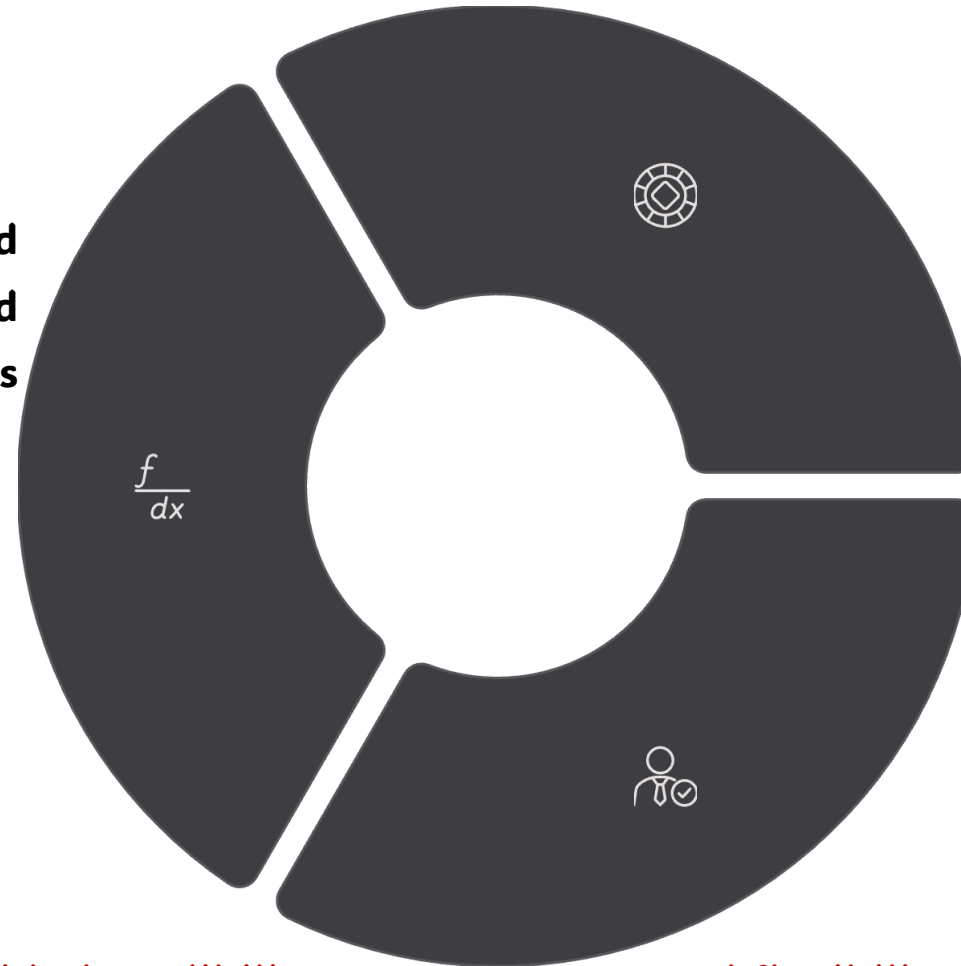
✓ Prepared participants for the complex, multi-actor, multi-domain environment.

Approach 4: Hybrid Adjudication Excellence

- Central Shield balanced deterministic rules with probabilistic tools and expert judgment, avoiding both mechanical rigidity and arbitrary outcomes.

Deterministic Rules

Combat resolution and logistics attrition followed clear, quantifiable frameworks for transparency.



Probabilistic Tools

Dice introduced operational uncertainty while maintaining player agency in decision-making.

Expert Judgment

White Cell umpires provided narrative modelling for political outcomes within plausibility frameworks.

- ✓ Hybrid adjudication provided credibility, transparency, and flexibility.
- ✓ Participants saw how outcomes depend on both quantifiable factors and qualitative, uncertain dynamics (politics, influence, psychology).

Key Lessons from Central Shield

- **Value of Enhanced Campaign-Level Thinking**
 - ❖ Participants saw how short-term tactical wins can create long-term strategic risks without proper campaign alignment and sustainment planning.
- **Multi-Domain Integration**
 - ❖ Participants realised how perception and legitimacy could overturn battlefield progress, making influence operations essential.
- **Adaptive Red Cell and Effective Red Teaming Builds Resilience**
 - ❖ Honest adversarial thinking exposed planning assumptions and biases, driving adaptability rather than creating obstacles.
- **Less Emphasis on Kinetic = More Realism:**
 - ❖ Deliberately reduced the weight of purely kinetic outcomes and emphasised that disruption of governance, loss of legitimacy, collapse of alliances, or media fallout were often strategically decisive.
 - ❖ Also underscored that sometimes, restraint, influence, or shaping the environment yields greater advantage than offensive operation.
- **Educational & Doctrinal Impact:**
 - ❖ Central Shield serves as a doctrinal lab for exploring hybrid warfare, joint/combined/integrated and coalition operations, and campaigning under constraints.
 - ❖ Reinforced wargaming as a professional practice that blends analytic, educational, and experiential learning.

The Future of Wargaming in PME

- Central Shield was a bridgehead in transforming wargaming from an exercise to a doctrinal laboratory, exploring complex and multidimensional scenarios and campaigning under constraints.
- It reinforces wargaming as a professional practice blending analytic, educational, and experiential learning.

Conflicts aren't decided by tactical victories alone

Success requires campaigns coordinating military, political, and influence efforts against adaptable adversaries.

Rigorous yet realistic adjudication

Effective wargaming blends quantifiable factors with qualitative dynamics through hybrid methodologies.



