

# Veiled Victories in Modern War

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# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Forms of War have Changed .....	2
2.1	The Character of Current Conflicts .....	2
2.2	Stabilisation Operations: The Combined Challenge of Chaos and Feudalism .....	4
2.3	The Difference Between Success and Victory .....	6
3	A Veiled Victory: The Significance of Batangafo .....	7
3.1	The Battle of Batangafo: A Detailed Exposition .....	7
3.2	... that Produced a Victory .....	9
3.3	... nonetheless, this Battle Remains a Veiled Victory of Modern Warfare .....	11
4	Conclusion .....	13
	Bibliography .....	15
	DGSi Working Papers.....	17

## **List of Abbreviations**

AU African Union

CAR Central African Republic

MISCA Mission Internationale de Soutien à la Centrafrique [International Support  
Mission for Central African Republic]

PKO Peacekeeping Operations

# 1 Introduction

Reflecting on the conflicts in which the International Community has been engaged over the last 15 years, one might lose hope in the possibility of their resolution. But there are nonetheless good reasons to hold on to hope, because tricky situations in the field of conflict can offer significant opportunities which the International Community should seize. Contrary to some assertions, and mindful that a military response should not be the only one, the troops deployed by Western countries enable the creation of conditions necessary for reconstruction and peace-building. Effective diplomacy and, above all, political will are necessary to seize and exploit appropriately the propitious opportunities these conditions induce. If we consider exploitation as the seizing of the opportunity presented by a favourable situation to take the necessary measures to gain the most disruptive advantage over one's enemy, thereby prompting his submission: is this still achievable against the largely elusive enemy?

This Executive Policy and Practice Working Paper presents the battle of Batangafo as an example of a veiled victory. From the battle of Alasai in March 2009 in Afghanistan to the battle of Batangafo in August 2015 in the Central African Republic (CAR) or in the Saharan strip since 2012, the units of the French army led high-intensity fighting without being engaged in conflicts comparable to 'total war.' After a decade of intervention in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), marked by a long presence in the Balkans during the 1990s, the 2000s were characterised by the direct experience of combat for a young professional army and by the rediscovery of and re-engagement with irregular warfare.

The nature of war, in the sense that it is an extension of a political purpose, has not changed or modified in essence its practice on the ground. Indeed, it is the character of war that has profoundly evolved rather than its nature. Hence armed forces have been engaging for many years in the resolution of conflicts that are quite different from self-evident wars, ones with a readily identified enemy alongside a clear-cut front line. In such cases, how does one turn such an opportune situation to one's advantage? In contemporary conflicts with stipulated rules of engagement, the limited aspect of war, the imperative of proportionality of methods and instruments of attack, together with the lack of respect for the principle of *jus in bello* by non-state actors, such conflicts do not appear to submit themselves to final resolution. Hence, the salient question is: are there still situations where the break-up of the opposing formations can be exploited to the point where the enemy's organisation is completely routed and consequently neutralised? Does such exploitative action feature in the vocabulary of today's peace-keepers? Furthermore, is it operative only at the tactical level or does it also apply to the

strategic level? It is evident that, in the case of stabilisation operations, such exploitative action encompasses more than a military role: it extends to that of development actors. A point of essential significance emerging here is the demand for the full spectrum of operative actors – ranging over pre-conflict to post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction.

This Executive Policy and Practice Working Paper will argue that forms of war have changed in recent years; this being so, it both poses the central question of whether true enduring and decisive victory is still possible in contemporary conflicts, and makes the attendant point that, should the response be positive, then such victory remains indiscernible to key stakeholders, including development actors and political leaders – and most of all, the wider public – even though it can offer the potential for political effect of strategic significance.

## **2 Forms of War have Changed**

The evolution of war has created asymmetries that seem to make enduring victory impossible today.

### **2.1 The Character of Current Conflicts**

The nature of war does not change, neither in its violence, susceptibility to chance, nor in its triggers and motivations. There will always be friction in any action that involves people and their movement. Despite the most modern means of prosecuting war, the fog of war will persist because it results from the unpredictability of the adversary and from only partial possession of the elements necessary for crucial decision-making. “The perception that modern warfare has become too dangerous and destructive to be left free to follow its own course” (Desportes 2001: 147) implies the need to implement extensive rules to limit it as much as possible. The Treaty of Vienna in 1815 was a first step in that direction; so too was the creation of the League of Nations and subsequently that of the United Nations – with its clear aim of restricting, if not preventing, mass losses in armed conflict. Political leaders wanted, then, to regulate wars: limiting their extent and impact, where it was not possible to avoid them altogether.

If the nature of war does not change, then why does its character evolve? The character of war is a reflection of societies and their context; its influences, therefore, are political, economic and social. On the political front, when it comes to the resolution of a conflict, only nation states seem to offer accommodation to the benefit of smaller non-state actors from

transnational networks, some of which are coalitions of protest and anger – as well as greed. The bankruptcy of states such as the CAR has encouraged the greed of armed groups for the seizure and control of the wealth that abounds in such a country (Gray 2003: 392).

Thus, either by acquiring financial resources through their own efforts or by benefiting from substantial subsidies from external bodies to structure themselves around common or compatible causes, many terrorist organisations and armed groups combine in a nebulous manner; the interactions and rivalries of which fluctuate according to particular objectives and special interests.

At the social level, the impetus to power is underpinned by nationalistic, cultural and religious motivation. Extensive and rich in symbols and symbolic meaning, such motivation stimulates the fanaticism of those groups whose ardour in combat is considerable. Moreover, the fighters in these groups seek to merge into the civilian population so as to use it as a human shield, in order to prevent or at least limit the strike capability of opposing regular troops. Furthermore, social networks and the media generally constitute broadcasting instruments of considerable effect in relation to collateral damage – they are keenly employed for instantaneous associated communications. Playing upon western sensitivities, and despite their own crimes and brutal strikes, they are adept at both promptly denouncing resultant civilian casualties and claiming imaginary and deceitful losses within the ranks of their adversary.

All these aspects are well-known and might appear self-evident, but it is nonetheless important to highlight the consequences that such a situation implies for the regular troops. Because “the exorbitant increase in the capabilities to exert physical violence has led to the imposition of the most extreme restrictions” (Poirier 1992), the proportionality of the military response – the deft calibration of kinetic and psychological delivery and effect – in order to avoid any civilian casualties renders the defeat of the rebels a very demanding challenge, for the very reason that they are outlaws and fight without any consideration for moral or ethical principles or rules. The pressure, therefore, placed on the shoulders of the regular troops is intense, because they have to deal with the demands of combat within a framework of restrictions and norms that translates into additional operational constraints which their adversaries do not have to face. All this points to an inherent asymmetry of approach. These conditions increase the difficulty faced by the deployed contingent members and consequently require them to be tough, thoroughly trained and well-led.

The notion of the “strategic corporal” remains wholly applicable because the slightest error committed by a soldier can be pinpointed and ascribed almost instantaneously, thus ruining the more general positive effect produced across the field of operations. Indeed, poorly

educated individuals have to apply and display extremely sharp judgement and incredible self-control. The demand of them is not only to do their duty, but to do it always outstandingly well in very bad and dangerous situations. In such cases, their excellence must be both recognised and highlighted.

It follows, then, that a situation of asymmetrical engagement does not render non-state actors, *de facto*, the weakest party. These irregular actors create in fact a range of asymmetries of which they take advantage directly because they are free of considerations and constraints relating to the principle of *jus in bello* and hence act according to their own rules. Thus, whilst non-state actors face an asymmetry in terms of equipment, one might equally assert that asymmetries confront mandated troops, too: relating to the approach to armed conflict and the psychology of combat precisely owing to their respect for and adherence to the rule of international law and norms. This diverse compendium of asymmetries represents the difficulties at the very heart of stabilisation operations.

## **2.2 Stabilisation Operations: The Combined Challenge of Chaos and Feudalism**

Is it possible to have a clear view and assessment of a crisis to enable its resolution? Current conflicts are not conducted in the framework of ‘total war,’ as were the operations undertaken by the international coalition in Iraq in 1990-91. Peace-building interventions are more limited and more complex in their undertaking owing to the entanglement of civilian and military issues. The field of confrontation is everywhere and needs to be addressed at the global level. Three phases are generally in play: the first relates to coercion, the second deals with stabilisation with its aim of restoring pre-eminence to the political lead, and the third provides for the normalisation of daily life accompanied by a peaceful environment. In the case of coercion, the main purpose is ‘war’ and this is relatively clear – albeit this is not necessarily easy to realise. The stabilisation phase must be a buffer step between violence and peace. Its purpose is to reduce the threshold of violence as a descending curve despite the occasional appearance of peaks of violence or combative engagement. This phase is critical for the resolution of crises and conflicts because the very delicacy and volatility of situations can either degrade or enhance the peace process. Any favourable situation or set of circumstances have to be fully apparent and appreciated, particularly by civilian peace-keepers, so that they might take advantage of each and every positive element of them. Sharing the most accurate

situational awareness in terms of opportunities for post-conflict/post-crisis reconstruction is vital to anchor the process on the right path. Thus, the aim, in terms of securing success, is not in essence the disintegration of the adversary or his complete destruction, rather it is to identify and seize opportunities to promote the peace-making process. The inherent logic of military intervention is, therefore, to facilitate the establishment of peace: to create the circumstances favourable to a political and diplomatic process which lays the foundation of enduring peace.

The deployment conditions associated with PKO's can be compared to some degree to a feudal environment. Warlords, armed groups, rebels, criminal gangs and syndicates and other violent non-state actors are elements of a widely-spread prey to be gripped – and dispatched. Feudalism is not a characteristic of the Middle Ages alone; it emerges and comes to the fore when a state or a political regime collapses or where no state structures exist. It “would reproduce in a far more counterbalanced form the developments of troubled times – a world of parcellized sovereignties, of considerably more autarchic regions, of local centres of authority” (Wallerstein 2003: 162). Where this is so, the law of the strongest presumes a request for the protection of the most powerful local leader. Today, this parcelling of society is no longer called feudalism, rather an environment of informal networks of patronage or clientelism. Sometimes, the rallying cry for self-determination can be the trigger for the implementation of feudalism which contests the central power and advocates a different social contract based on local self-serving and economic interests. The entanglement of all these complex operative factors creates considerable disorder on the field of engagement and conflict.

What took Western countries many decades, indeed several centuries in some cases, in terms of nation- and state-building, is now demanded within weeks and months – certainly no longer than a handful of years. To overcome contemporary feudalism deeply anchored within failed states, together with its ‘grey zones,’ presents a demanding challenge. This is the duty levied on the deployed forces, who must restore the rule of law. This is the reason why soldiers are genuinely managers of chaos. They are taught and trained for intervention in the worst situations: where the rule of law has disappeared; where violence, crime and inhumanity have become norms. Their strength and “legitimate violence as authorised by the state” which they represent, prompt them to carry out very arduous and strenuous tasks. As General Krulak explained in his “Three Block War” concept, in stabilisation operations, military personnel must at one and the same time, and in an enclosed area, carry out fighting operations, provide humanitarian aid and create the conditions for the restoration of a normal, peaceful life. No small performance! However, the smallest mistake made by a simple soldier can assume

strategic dimensions; this is why General Krulak coined the term “the strategic corporal” so as to highlight the importance of the tasks performed by military troops.

From chaos to calm: is it possible to find a path leading to continued success in the stabilisation of a country which will serve to launch it firmly into the normalisation phase?

### **2.3 The Difference Between Success and Victory**

Experience indicates that operational successes are not enough to solve crises. Many of the combative contacts are skirmishes, of which some can be intensive and can last a few hours. Except for the ambush in the Uzbin Valley in August 2008, French soldiers had, up to that juncture, been successful in their combative confrontations, enjoying a lot of tactical successes. Even though conflict situations are getting better, a solution of many of them has not been found because the adversaries have not been sufficiently weakened to be forced to surrender. Indeed, while the tactical success is a positive result that contributes to the generation of a more favourable position vis-à-vis the adversary, it nonetheless does not produce definitive effect. On the contrary – and although the notion is inextricably linked to the Napoleonic concept of ‘the decisive battle’, and whilst, furthermore, the conflictual environment is very different nowadays – we can still define victory as a major achievement that produces a decisive result which provides for a positive, strategic change for the resolution of a conflict or crisis. In fact, when the opponent becomes stronger and feels surer of himself, he tries to control a territorial advantage and starts to challenge by means of dissymmetric warfare in order to highlight his capabilities so as to be considered a credible alternative source and centre of power. In such circumstances his vulnerability increases and offers an opportunity to put him under severe pressure.

The difference between a tactical success and outright victory is not the intensity of the fight, but its consequences. Whilst Marshal Foch considered a battle as decisive if the adversary was no longer able to reconstitute his strength and capacity, he overlooked the political aspects of this concept. The impact of the consequences of a decisive battle plays out at the strategic level and yields political opportunities to be seized. Within the framework of ‘total war,’ a decisive battle could be defined as one that allows for an end to the conflict because the enemy is exhausted and unable to generate sufficient capacity to continue prosecution of the war. As for contemporary conflicts, we might consider a decisive battle as one in which the product is the opening up of immediate strategic possibilities with the potential to influence profoundly

the course of events in an enduring fashion. A comparable favourable situation could occur through the accumulation of an indeterminate number of tactical successes which would need to be built up over a long period for it to trigger the same effects.

In Algeria (1956-62), French armed forces were successful from a tactical point of view: rebels were defeated in the field – but the international environment and the political situation gave a strategic advantage to the Algerian fighters. Despite the tactical superiority, France was not able to secure the strategic initiative. This conflict, characterised by irregular warfare, illustrates the point that the accumulation of tactical successes might well be achieved, but without this resulting in the resolution of the conflict because other crucial conditions for this were not satisfied, and despite having exhausted the foe. A crucial point is that international politics trumped comprehensive and decisive military success. This underscores the ineluctable fact that the political outcome of a military campaign is of primary significance: it is why there has to be effective diplomatic and development activity and engagement alongside military action. Such activity has to shape and colour the wider context in which military action is viewed and judged by the International Community – from which justification for such military action stands or falls.

The strategic lessons learnt from this post-colonial war should help us to have a better understanding and approach to address the crises and conflicts the International Community has to deal with nowadays. But that said, given all these operative elements, are victories still possible today?

### **3 A Veiled Victory: The Significance of Batangafo**

Despite a hostile environment, general disorder, violations of the rule of law and evasive adversaries, decisive battles can occur and victory can remain achievable. Equally, such a victory can remain veiled owing to its complex working-out.

#### **3.1 The Battle of Batangafo: A Detailed Exposition**

Protracted conflicts, by definition, need a lot of time to be resolved and their very duration can mark, as a result of weariness, key milestones; notwithstanding the fact that individual confrontations can constitute real tipping points. In such cases the tactical level steals a march

on the superior one; and its consequences change the strategic perspective. An illustration of such a situation is the Battle of Batangafo in the CAR that occurred 4th-6th August 2014.

On 30th July 2014, 30 civilians were murdered by the Selekas who also killed three Congolese soldiers of the African Union (AU) force in Batangafo.<sup>1</sup> The French force, Sangaris, whose mission was to assist and support the International Support Mission for Central African Republic (MISCA), had to react swiftly in order to provide both help to the AU green berets and care to the civilians. The French general, as the commanding officer, gave the order to seize the city of Batangafo in order to restore calm and to ensure the implementation of the confidence-building measures by the Seleka troops, which their commanders had signed.

After a trek through the jungle lasting two nights, a reduced French battle group arrived at the southern entry point of the city of Batangafo in the early morning of the 4th of August. The forward company fell into a huge ambush supported by an impressive volley of shots from RPG-7 anti-tank rockets. This was no longer a matter of harassment assuming the form of asymmetrical confrontation, but rather of a dissymmetrical confrontation in terms of equipment, but with a strength ratio that was unfavourable to the French contingent. It was obvious that the adversary had no other intention but to inflict significant losses on this battalion. Well-commanded and well-controlled, he manoeuvred like Western troops and implemented the same tactical procedures. This battle exemplified the 'hardening' of the adversaries of peace-keeping troops in Africa.

Former Seleka troops are very well trained and experienced. The violence of the fighting and the constant search for elusive manoeuvre highlighted the fierce will of the aggressors. They set up their ambushes as taught and learned in Western military training schools. The French battalion, after restoring its layout on a favourable line of the terrain, and sending two attack helicopters to strike the adversary's second echelon, succeeded in entering the city in the early evening. After a meeting with the leaders of the city's NGOs, there were talks with local Seleka leaders who led their side of the combat. After a short discussion, arrangements were made for the next morning to start negotiations for the implementation of confidence-building measures.

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Seleka interlocutors offered nothing during the discussions, reckoning and interpreting as a weakness the willpower of negotiations on the part of Sangaris representative. Despite being faced with strict requirements in accordance with international agreements, the Seleka interlocutors refused to implement the texts their leaders themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Congolese soldiers from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

had signed. Given the worsening situation, and instead of seizing the eastern part of the city as planned, the French battalion changed its orders and, so as to take the initiative, set up a positional defence on the western plateau of the city. Surprised by this unexpected decision, Selakas improvised an attack. From 6pm until midnight the French soldiers pushed back successive and unceasing waves of assaults by an enemy who pressed on, supported by mortar fire. It was also necessary for the French contingent to manage the presence of 10,000 displaced people who were within the Sangaris narrow defensive perimeter. None of these was killed or wounded despite the intensity of the fighting and their immediate proximity to the armed clashes. In addition to the high quality of the French troops – composed of mountain forces and legionnaires – the battalion benefitted from two factors which offered them superiority: night vision assets and a subgroup of attack helicopters providing air-to-ground fire support together with the beneficial action of two Rafale combat aircraft.

In the early morning of August 6<sup>th</sup>, the French battle group suffered the wounding of two legionnaire paratroopers, but it had already inflicted heavy losses on its opponents: roughly 300 neutralised fighters. The momentum and psychological dynamic of Seleka had been truly broken.

### **3.2 ... that Produced a Victory**

What seemed at the time a tactical success proved to be more: it ultimately became a victory. The outcome of this operation was determined by the French force commander, who had an important meeting with the Seleka commander on August 5<sup>th</sup>. The former Brigadier Bellot des Minières had a triple objective: first, he wanted to thwart his opponent's plans; second, he had to provide immediate support to the MISCA contingent, and third, he wanted to offer a show of force to persuade Seleka to implement across the whole country the agreed confidence-building measures, and to convince them that they could not act with impunity. As he was operating in a stabilisation phase, the general adopted an indirect strategy to force his adversary to lay down his arms. "The highest realisation in warfare is to attack the enemy's plan" (Derek 2008: 184); for this reason he wanted to coordinate his meeting with ground action. Showing force to deter was the goal; to reduce the level of violence bearing in mind that "subjugating the enemy's army without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence" (Derek 2008: 184).

Although the aim of the battle group was to enter into Batangafo to coincide with this high-level meeting, the weather conditions for providing the possibility of air support forced

the battle group to seize the city on August 4<sup>th</sup>, one day earlier. This engagement complicated the talks the French commander was to have with his Seleka interlocutors, who refused to make any concessions owing to the continuing military engagement in Batangafo. Hence, while immediate deterrence failed, the operation ordered by General Bellot des Minières was successful not only at the tactical level, but at the strategic one as well. Indeed, the failure of negotiations at both levels, tactical and strategic, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, instead of reinforcing the Seleka opponents, it magnified their uncertainty. Sangaris seized the tactical initiative in Batangafo by adopting a defensive posture, whilst the Seleka lost their temper and decided upon a violent attack against the defensive perimeter adopted by the French battle group. The consequences of this were dramatically severe for the Seleka who lost approximately 85 percent of his garrison. A few days after the fighting, an independent team from the UN Security Council investigated and interviewed the protagonists. These investigators noted and stressed the full success of the operation in terms of providing protection and care to civilians, none of whom was killed or injured during the battle.

One could be tempted to consider this battle and this victory as a flash in the pan since the consequences are not readily discernible. However, this defeat of the Seleka profoundly disrupted “their [highest] command, sowing doubt and dissent” (Derek 2008: 186) in their internal organisation. The outcome of this battle, in which the Seleka’s loss of life was considerable, alongside the failure of an attempted insurgency in Bangui in late August – remarkably countered by Colonel Leurs’ battalion by inflicting losses of 150 personnel on the Seleka – deeply undermined their political as well as their military organisation, and who, contrary to their demands before these events, no longer called for the partition of the country. As the French force commander said, when after a 4-month mission the battle group left the CAR and moved to Chad, “in Batangafo [...] the heavy losses [...] will have left no doubt about Sangaris’ determination to act to protect the civilian population and in total solidarity with the international forces. Our opponents emerged knocked out militarily and politically” (Sangaris Force Commander 2014). The French Commander Field Army (2014) also highlighted these facts, emphasising “a decisive success for regional security”, whilst yet another general referred to “a real strategic turning point in the crisis” (Mountain Infantry Brigade Commander 2015).

The French force commander was successful in his attempt to thwart the plan of his adversary. His intention was not to fight, but effectively to deter any hawkish intent so as to restore a peaceful and safe environment. His opponent badly analysed the range of situations and underestimated the French troops’ determination: indeed, the Seleka battle damage

assessment revealed their own internal divisions. “Thus, one who excels at warfare first establishes himself in a position where he cannot be defeated whilst not losing [any opportunity] to defeat the enemy [...]. The victorious army first realises the conditions for victory, and then seeks to engage in battle. The vanquished army fights ... and then seeks victory” (Tzu 2003: 184). Furthermore, the events in Bangui on 20th August 2014, two weeks later, led Seleka’s leaders to suffer additional heavy losses when they foolishly attacked another French battle group. The combination of these losses laid the foundation for the reinforcement of governmental authority. Thanks to this victory, and the outstanding action and self-control of the French battalion in Bangui, the French force commander was strategically successful in attacking “the enemy’s plan.”

### **3.3 ... nonetheless, this Battle Remains a Veiled Victory of Modern Warfare**

The achievement of a victory in stabilisation operations is very tricky because the aim is not to complete the destruction of the adversary or to exacerbate the existing discord by causing his disintegration. Peace-building is inevitably met by spasms of violence as it progresses towards the normalisation of life. Securing full advantage from such a victory constitutes a stark challenge because the situation needs associated and simultaneous mobilisation of many means and the commitment to tackle the issue. In addition, open-mindedness and patience are required of each stakeholder.

So, the central question is, how to seize opportunities to take advantage of the shortcomings of the adversary. This responsibility sits at the strategic level with an implied civilian lead with authority over all the relevant actors. Equally, if “the main purpose of this kind of [irregular] war[fare] is to obtain the dispassionate destruction of the enemy, as the drop of water eventually hollows out the stone, so it takes patience and perseverance” (Le Mière de Corvey 1823: 103), peace-building and reconstruction need time and the same virtues. A protracted conflict cannot be resolved in an instant, and as a Red Cross official has stated, the situation in the CAR will improve progressively thanks to the French intervention (Interview with Redcross Official 2014). Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, in Western countries, all administrative work is done by a large number of civil servants, which is not the case where Western forces and personnel operate. Therefore, it looks a bit peremptory to assert that peace-building in the CAR is already a failure since criminality and violence still obtain. Active, fiery embers need to be kept under surveillance for a long time before they finally extinguish.

Moreover, the rebels do not have the support of the population, and this very fact provides the basis on which reconstruction and peace are possible.

The literature of peace-building too often ignores the military aspects of the global process for conflict and crisis resolution. It displays a negative view about what the military can do: it is too often seen merely as a tool for providing security, whereas it can contribute in a holistic way to the peace-making process. Indeed, peace-keeping operations are fraught with internal challenges as well as external ones. For example, peace-building and peace-keeping operations in the CAR – as already referred to – are seen as having failed because of “a failure to profit from periods of stability” (Carayannis and Lombard 2015: 195). However, the inherent assumption here is that peace can only be built on broadly based stability. Such an interpretation risks failure to take into consideration the importance of seizing and exploiting opportunities that emerge after decisive battles: of seizing and consolidating the ground created out of military success and victory. In other words, these ‘micromoments’ of potential stability that emerge from the wake of battle are too often not sufficiently acknowledged – even recognised. When people learn history, when they listen to the media or read newspaper they feel that events are framed by clear dates of starting and finishing, whereas contemporary war does not have clinical ends. Facts are so deeply and tightly intricate in conflict, that nothing can have surgical precision at the end. Extinguishing embers and soothing hate need a long-term perspective because conflict can never be hermetically sealed.

The problem is that, whilst peace-building necessarily rests on stabilisation and peace-keeping operations, the ‘business’ of peace appears to be regarded only in developmental terms instead of including military considerations as well. Greater mutual knowledge and understanding are necessary to be truly effective. Furthermore, powerful normative assumptions dominate the framework of what military operations can and should do, and what development practitioners consider appropriate. This has significant consequences for how decisive battles are framed. In many ways, the culture of peace-building does not know how to respond to victories in that the majority of peace-building operations are built on negotiated settlement rather than outright victory - thus missing a strategic trick when such a victory offers itself. These windows of opportunity have to be seized for serving as the impetus and basis of comprehensive and enduring stability.

## 4 Conclusion

Victory is, then, much more than a military success: the crucial point is that a victory is strategic. Resolution of conflict has to be the result of a political process subject to rigorous scrutiny; this offers the greatest chance of securing a resolution that endures. The necessary pillars have, therefore, to be put in place to build the architecture – structures, procedures and processes – as the prerequisites for a future stable state.

The nature, characteristics and circumstances relating to contemporary conflicts demonstrate clearly that lasting, comprehensive success cannot be achieved at the tactical level, only at the strategic level.

This particular situation implies an accurate and acute ‘situational awareness’ at the political level, so as to take full advantage, as soon as possible, of the opportunities presented by the belligerents. If many people find the peace-building process too slow and too drawn out, then perhaps the International Community should, as a minimum, persuade the failed states concerned, or otherwise apply pressure on them, to accept strong tutelage from the UN in order to rebuild themselves. Just as the International Community did in Cambodia in 1992-93 with the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC), it might be appropriate to establish a UN-based Authority to head up certain states in order to lead these countries to and along the ‘right path.’ Such engagement might take the form of instruction and mentoring or basic support and encouragement delivered by specialists and experts, whereby local existing and future elites are developed and offered structures to facilitate sound governance for their countries. The corollary of this is not to set military and civilian factors and considerations against each other in the peace-building process, precisely because they are complementary. Military engagement creates the conditions necessary for civilian actors to pursue successfully their agenda. Once the resultant normalisation is firmly established, the military may leave the scene. Moreover, such an authority could enhance the administrative agility and the decision-making process required to exploit any appropriate opportunities, with a view to avoiding the inevitable unwieldy cross-government/national structures and obstructions. More flexible and broader in scope, this might, in addition, act more offensively in the information domain than its opponents.

As regards the mandate for such intervention, the representative of the International Community would require specific autonomy that offers due scope to operate proactively by seizing the initiative where necessary. From consideration of the Dutch ‘3D approach,’ absent the criticisms that have been expressed on this subject, there is not the space to address these

here, there emerges an important point from which it would be wise to draw inspiration in terms of command and control. The joint deployment of a general and a diplomat at the head of a deployed contingent<sup>2</sup> allows for working in close collaboration, which in turn leads to a sharpened responsiveness on the ground for exploiting favourable situations as they emerge – because “to confine soldiers to purely military functions while urgent and vital tasks have to be done and when there is nobody else to undertake them, would be senseless. The soldier must, then, be prepared to become a propagandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians” (Galula 1984: 88). A critical rider here is that the civilians concerned must be fully aware of the military dimension of the wider context and its spectrum of considerations, ramifications and imperatives.

Sustained, broadly-based (i.e., across society in general) stability and improving inclusive prosperity are the acid tests of justification for military intervention. A further imperative is careful consideration of and comprehensive planning for the post-conflict phase of operations; indeed, associated objectives should inform the very conduct of the military operational phase. Hence there needs to be an integrated, dynamic whole.

Since “war is a continuation of politics by other means” (Clausewitz 1976: 69), war ultimately must be resolved through politics because that resolution will only endure if it is the result of this process, not otherwise. Political resolution is a prerequisite for strategic-level legitimacy; authority for action flows from this legitimacy. For this legitimacy to be sustained, it requires continuing scrutiny and evaluation, enabled by an acceptable and effective level of transparency. Mere cessation of hostilities is not in itself a resolution of conflict, that is why the prompt and sustained exploitation of veiled victories is crucial because “When that my care could not withhold thy riots / What wilt thou do, when riot is thy care / O, thou wilt be a wilderness again” (Shakespeare 1842: 21).

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<sup>2</sup> i.e.: Dutch Task Force Uruzgan in Afghanistan where general Middendorp led the military operations and the diplomat Joep Wijnands led the Provincial Reconstruction Team (Feb 2009 – Aug 2009).

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