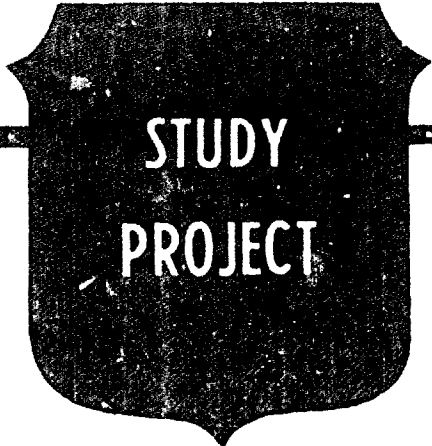


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**BELIEF:  
FOUNDATION OF MILITARY STRATEGY**

BY

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**93-09590**



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**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-5050		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Belief: Foundation of Military Strategy			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) LTC Joseph D. Smith			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Final MSP	13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 93/04/15	15. PAGE COUNT 21
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION			
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) The military is the most visible, physical projection of a nation's personality. The manner in which a country uses (or does not use) its armed forces reveals the calibre of its politics; intentions; resolve. Therefore, success as a sovereign power required a nation to apply its military ethically, according to the prevailing belief of its citizens. Military forces are employed through strategy which, in a democracy, is in direct support of national policy; to do otherwise will divide the country and endanger its nation status. A democracy derives its national policy from the will of the people. The will of the people is the collective expression of what their government should be and how it should act, and is the product of their belief. Thus, the military, which is a reflection of the nation as a whole, is directed through a strategy, supporting national policy, and derived from the will of the people; all founded on belief. This paper proposes: (1) Belief is basic to the personality of man and his endeavors; the will of the people springs from their belief, (2) The strongest belief among the people becomes their will which shapes the government and its national security policy, and, (3) Military strategy in support of national policy, is also (continued)			
20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CH (COL) Thomas Norton, Project Adviser		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (717) 245-3479	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL AWCAA

Item 19. Abstract continued

derived from the belief of the people who build that government and shape its policy. Military strategy, then, is founded on the belief of the people and is no stronger than that belief.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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BELIEF: FOUNDATION OF MILITARY STRATEGY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Joseph D. Smith, LTC, USAFR

TITLE: Belief: Foundation of Military Strategy

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 15 Apr 1993 PAGES: 21 CLASSIFICATION: Unclas.

The military is the most visible, physical projection of a nation's personality. The manner in which a country uses (or does not use) its armed forces reveals the calibre of its politics; intentions; resolve. Therefore, success as a sovereign power requires a nation to apply its military ethically, according to the prevailing belief of its citizens. Military forces are employed through strategy which, in a democracy, is in direct support of national policy; to do otherwise will divide the country and endanger its nation status. A democracy derives its national policy from the will of the people. The will of the people is the collective expression of what their government should be and how it should act, and is the product of their belief. Thus, the military, which is a reflection of the nation as a whole, is directed through a strategy, supporting national policy, and derived from the will of the people; all founded on belief. This paper proposes: 1. Belief is basic to the personality of man and his endeavors; the will of the people springs from their belief. 2. The strongest belief among the people becomes their will which shapes the government and its national security policy; and, 3. Military strategy, in support of national policy, is also derived from the belief of the people who build that government and shape its policy. Military strategy, then, is founded on the belief of the people and is no stronger than that belief.

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## INTRODUCTION

The foundation is the most important part of a building. In fact, the type and size of a building is determined largely by the nature of the ground on which it will be constructed. In other words, foundational conditions dictate the nature of building. For example, sand will only support a light structure such as a grass shack. On the other hand, solid rock will support any sort of building, from a shack to a multistory, concrete and steel building. Sand is easier to work with than rock and the building will take shape quicker with softer soil in which to dig the footings. However, constructs that are erected with little effort on unfirm foundations do not last. The builder must decide if he wants to quickly erect something that will be short-lived or if he is willing to spend extra effort on a building that will endure.

Longevity and utility in construction require that a foundation be stronger than the building on it. If necessary, a grass shack can be built on rock, then upgraded as circumstance and requirements permit. The builder can be assured that whatever he is capable of constructing will be borne safely on a firm foundation.

Conversely, skyscrapers can be built on a sandy beach, but will be unduly expensive to construct and maintain. The foundation will require as much time and expense to compact and prepare as will the building. However, the artificially

prepared foundation is contiguous with the surrounding sand and sooner or later will return to its natural loose state, allowing the building to collapse. The quality, or lack of quality, of the foundation is imparted to the structure on it.

For this reason, a wise builder will be very careful in site selection and matching of the building to the foundation that will support it the longest. He doesn't want to waste resources on expensive construction which will require extensive maintenance all its life and which eventually is doomed. There is more economy and utility in a shack whose foundation is assured than in a highrise with a limited future.

This analogy applies to all constructs, physical or ideological. Neither the stoutest building nor the brightest idea are better than their foundations. Foundations for buildings seem to be obvious, but on what does an idea depend?

Ideas, like buildings, will not support themselves. Neither the most grandiose nor the simplest thought can be realized without a foundation. The better the foundation, the longer-lived will be the idea built on it. Belief is the foundation for ideological concepts such as governments.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a three-part theory. First, belief (either humanistic or spiritual) is basic to the personality of man and his endeavors--the will

of the people springs from their belief. Second, the strongest belief among the people shapes the government and its national security policy. Third, military strategy, in support of national policy, is also derived from the belief of the people who build that government and shape its policy. The intent here is to better understand the formation of military strategy from its inception in the belief of the people to its employment as an arm of the government. Comparison of beliefs and governments will be made only as much as it aids in this understanding.

#### THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE IS BASED ON BELIEF

Men share a common trait in that each has a basic belief which shapes what he is and does. Belief is described as "conviction or acceptance that certain things are true," and is foundational to man's personality.<sup>1</sup> The determining factors of a man's personality--the things that make him unique as a person--are the values he holds dearest and lives for.

Values and belief are not synonymous. Values are a product of belief, but the quality of a belief is most often seen in its displayed values. The stronger the belief, the more faith its followers have in it and the greater influence their values have on others.

The strength of belief, like the quality of a building site, determines the nature of construction that can be placed there. A great idea based on a shaky belief is no



more stable than a skyscraper built on snow. It is necessary to take as much care with the selection and testing of the belief before determining the quality of idea that can be established on it as it is with choosing building foundations.

Basically, there are two types of beliefs to choose from. Beliefs are humanistic (non-theistic) or spiritual (supernatural/theistic) in substance. Adherents of humanism trust solely to the capability of mankind and are materialistic and self-centered. Spiritually-based believers trust in divine power greater than themselves, regard others as equals, and believe all men possess an eternal spirit which is of more worth than the physical world. Religions associated with each have many apparent similarities, but the two beliefs are opposites. Their moral values are always in conflict and continually compete for dominance in mankind.

The difference between the two is most evident in their treatment of right and wrong. The humanist changes his moral viewpoint if it serves him to do so. What he sees right today may be wrong tomorrow if it profits him materially or sensually. Of course, circumstances, which continually change will also cause his moral view to shift until right and wrong are no longer distinct, but tend to merge. On the other hand, the spiritual believer receives his morality from God, in whom he trusts.

God, for the spiritual believer, is greater than mankind and offers a moral standard the deity himself does not change and which cannot be changed by man. Since the humanist answers to no higher authority than himself (he is his own god), he changes morality to suit his material needs and soon loses sight of moral truth in his quest for self-satisfaction. The solid, unchanging moral view offers a stronger foundation than does the shifting morality.

Nazism is one of the better-known examples of a powerful belief in humanistic values. In thirteen years, Hitler was able to take over Germany and much of Europe, impress his materialistic ideals on them and nearly win World War II.<sup>2</sup> It is true that Hitler's methods were not precisely original to German national policy. Much of the Nazi ideas "of the 'Herrenvolk' or Master Race" as they sang "their Horst Wessel, 'Today we rule Germany, Tomorrow we rule the world,' was built on Imperial Germany's "equally ambitious motto, 'Deutschland uber alles,' 'Germany over all'."<sup>3</sup> Five times before World War II, within a hundred years, Germany had initiated wars of conquest against neighboring countries. Hitler merely added a more fanatical, personal touch of hate to the policy. However, the foundation of the Axis Powers' ideology went no deeper than materialistic selfishness and did not prevail against the stronger, spiritual-based opposition of the Allies. Another, comparable example is the Communism of the former

USSR.

Almost from the ashes of Nazism, humanism rose again as a world power in the guise of the communist Soviet Republic. For over forty years, the USSR was one of the two greatest world powers and seemed very successful in proselytizing its socialistic doctrine in active opposition to other forms of government and socioeconomic ideals. Like the Nazis, the Soviets sought to force their ideals on an unwilling world. The will of the Communists, as that of the Germans, was based on the tenuous belief of selfishness. As a result, within the last four years we have seen the decline and precipitous fall of this idea built on a weak foundation and the ascendancy of democratic governments based on more spiritually-founded values.

Islam is representative of the strength of values derived from spiritual belief. Less than fourteen-hundred years ago, this faith was unknown. Today, "it has between 700 million to one billion adherents and is the official religion in about 75 nations."<sup>4</sup> This monotheistic religion replaced centuries-old, polytheistic worship of over three-hundred gods in the Middle East of 600 AD. Established by one man, Islam has permanently and dramatically altered entire cultures and by some accounts is the fastest growing belief today.

Moslems derive most of their belief in one God from the somewhat similar, but much older, Judaism and Christianity.

In differing degrees, the three beliefs are based on the selfless love of God for mankind and the believer's desire to pass that love to other men. History has shown that people who believe in one spiritual God build governments that persist. However, theology is not the subject here though belief in God is certainly part of the theme.

#### STRONGEST BELIEF SHAPES NATIONAL POLICY

All governments serve the people who set them up and maintain them. Some governments are formed by a very few people and the resulting national policy is narrow in view point. Many people may be controlled in this situation, but only a few have control. This is typical of a dictatorship. On the other hand, democratic governments are built by the citizenry, each member of which may add his own wisdom to a very comprehensive national policy. Whatever their form, however, all governments must issue policy to direct the use of the military and other tools of government.

A dictatorial style of government can compose clear policy quickly because the masses are not consulted and there is no one to disagree. In theory, a benign dictatorship offers more than any other form of government, both to the ruler and the ruled. The leader would be just and kind, the people would be satisfied and decisions could be made wisely and carried out with dispatch.

King David of Israel is perhaps the best example of a benign dictator. He loved his people and was loved by them.

He was an experienced and highly successful general, a wise ruler, and an honest man. He knew the enemies of his people and formulated national policy which he personally translated to strategy and carried out at the head of his army.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, however, he and all the people of Israel shared the same belief and whenever disagreement arose, they went to the same God for a decision. Their common faith did more, probably, to ensure the success of this dictatorship than all of David's attributes as a king. Certainly, when they went to war, the soldiers and the people at home trusted their combined king, general, politician, and fellow-believer to know and do what was best for the nation.

Except for King David and perhaps one or two others, dictators have not been known for their wisdom as rulers. They have usually taken control through subterfuge or force, and have held their positions through more lies and bloodshed. Dictators commonly use the position for their own profit, and, when the stronger will of the people rises against them, are summarily executed or flee with whatever they can carry off. Thus, policy issued by a dictator may not take into account all that is needed for national security. It also may not be effective or long-lasting despite its ready availability.

Democracies can take much longer to make or change policy because they must come to consensus among all who are

governed. Once set, however, the fundamentals of democratic national policy tend to be successful and long-lasting. In this form of government, where the majority rules, the prevailing belief is expected to surface through the will of the people to shape the policy. Democracies, however, have faults as do other governments.

Democracies are born because like-minded people get together for the purpose of ruling themselves with representative government. Their like-mindedness comes from some belief common to all of them. The belief can arise from any one or combination of a number of sources; a common enemy, a common friend, common economic problems, or a shared understanding of God. It is the strength of the belief that caused the people to form a government. If strong enough, it will focus their energy into the future and continually lend strength to that government. However, democratic governments have a built-in weakness.

Democracies are more attractive than other types of rule and are usually hospitable, welcoming newcomers as citizens. The trouble with this open door policy is new beliefs come with new people and, in accordance with democratic principles, they must be allowed equal representation along with the old. Soon, the belief which gave birth to the democracy can become obscured among the many and lose its priority. This is not necessarily bad if another belief of equal or greater strength rises to take

its place and serves as well in focusing the people's will. On the other hand, disaster can result if, in the true democratic manner, no single belief be allowed priority over another. In this case, there will emerge no single viewpoint because the will of the people will be unfocused, obscure. There can be different beliefs, and only one can be preeminent, but one must be the chief if there is to be a basis on which to make clear decisions on national policy matters. This does not mean everyone must be forced to subscribe to the majority belief, but they must be willing to support the government formed thereby.

For example, the founding fathers of democracy in the United States were of different beliefs. Some of them were Calvinist and some were Deist. However, they all were interested in building a good, long-lasting foundation for democracy. They agreed that belief was basic to good civil government.

....the Enlightenment Deists (Washington, Jefferson and Madison) shared with the Calvinists a conviction that the American republic could flourish only as religion flourished. They did not particularly care what religion it was.

But neither Jefferson nor any of his colleagues doubted that religion itself was necessary to preserve peace and order.

None of the Deist founding fathers entertained or supported the kind of antireligious attitudes that led the French Revolution, a scant decade later, to a totally secular state in which Sunday was abolished and the cathedral of Notre Dame turned into a "Temple of Reason."<sup>6</sup>

A dictator rules with one will in mind; his own. If the people have diverging views, he doesn't necessarily

care. In a democracy, however, the will of the people defines the government. How is it possible to form and maintain successful democratic government to suit differing beliefs?

Martin Marty has pointed to the difference between an "ordering faith" and a "saving faith." The latter, provided by denominational religions, serves to "save souls, make sad hearts glad, give people wholeness, [and] provide them with the kind of identity and sense of belonging they crave...." But people who find these needs met in various ways in their various churches have also been aware that civil society must be rightly ordered. In their common heritage, and out of their common experience of living together, they have found a workable common faith for this ordering of their society.

Civil religion developed only because the saving faiths were present in such astonishing vitality and diversity. It evolved as an essential bridge between the various church religions of a multifaith society and the requirements of public order in a spiritually united nation.

This, then, is the civil religion or public faith:

1. It is the unique product of a multifaith society seeking a common basis for the ordering of its national life: a bridge between that unified national life and the multiplicity of faiths.
2. It is not, and does not seek to be, a meaning-endowing, spirit-nourishing religion; it is an ordering faith rather than a saving faith.
3. Its effectiveness in its unifying role depends on the vitality of the various saving faiths that provide its moral undergirding.

Today, beliefs of every sort are established in the citizenry of the U.S. The party system in the U.S., together with the electoral system, serves as an "ordering faith" and does much to filter out all but the two or three strongest beliefs for voter consideration. Still, arrival at a policy that serves all the people is becoming more difficult due to the growing complexity of the elements that



influence policy.

What are the elements of national policy and how are they derived? In formulating national security policy, due consideration should be given to anything which can affect the nation. "As a rule, the following elements should always be included: morality, legality, economics, politics, psychology, technology, environment, and military."<sup>8</sup> Each of these has some effect on the others, but morality has the greatest influence. Their interaction at both the national and international levels must be examined carefully to determine the effect on policy. None of the elements are causal, and are continually influenced, themselves, by belief.

These elements are not interpreted the same among the differing beliefs. For example, morality (distinction between right and wrong conduct) is not the same to a Muslim as it is to a Buddhist, though each has a strict code of morals based on his individual belief. On the other hand, the warring Catholic and Protestant "Christians" of Ireland share a similar understanding of morals with each other, but not with Jesus Christ, who taught love. The Humanist believes that mankind, which is responsible for evil, is also the author of good and that this split personality has no need for theistic guidance.

Because their beliefs teach different morals, governments will also differ on the other elements and their

national policies will reflect the difference. What a man (or men) considers right or wrong depends on what his belief teaches, and you can tell what his belief is by watching his actions, not by reading his label or listening to him preach. People do what they believe and believe what they do. Any strength in a man comes from his belief and the stronger it is, the more influential it is. Strong governments publish clear policy which is the expression of strong belief.

Belief, the basis of what a man is and does, expresses itself in values that can be seen and understood by others. Values founded in stronger beliefs have greater influence than those arising from weaker ones. The strength of a belief, then, is perceptible, not just theoretical; it can be seen and compared to other beliefs.

As an example, a story is recorded in the Old Testament about a contest of beliefs to determine which was the strongest. Elijah, the prophet of the God of Israel, found that the integrity of Israel as a nation was threatened by the temptation to worship another god. The people had trouble deciding:

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

But the people said nothing.

Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not

set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name<sup>9</sup> of the Lord. The god who answers by fire--he is God."

Elijah offered a clear proposition based on the strength of his conviction that the God of Israel was more powerful than Baal. The prophets of Baal spent all day calling on the name of their god, but he didn't answer. When Elijah's turn came, he had a trench dug around his sacrificial altar and had water poured on the carcass, the wood, and the altar until the trench was filled with the overflow. Then he called on God. God, the God of Israel, answered by burning up the sacrifice, the altar of stones, the soil, and the water in the trench. In this physical act, the belief of Elijah was proven stronger than that of the other prophets.

Elijah had personally tested his belief and was not timorous in matching it against another. The resulting victory convinced Israel that God was stronger than Baal. What the Baal prophets understood as a powerful god was different than Elijah's understanding. This demonstration showed the difference and greatly enhanced the influence of Israel's national policy among her neighbors for a long time. It was the strength of Elijah's belief communicated to others that shaped Israel's politics.

Between two different beliefs, there can be consensus; consensus to fight or to work together. The addition of a third belief makes consensus more difficult. The odd man

can break deadlocks with his vote and the other two begin to lobby for his favor, thus fostering compromise.

Compromise and consensus are not the same. Compromise means you give up something in order to agree, whereas consensus means a general agreement without giving up anything. Compromise can eventually take away any strength that a belief had and it will become a hollow shell.

Some democracies offer freedom of belief to their citizens, thereby attracting differing religions. As long as the beliefs are either spiritual or humanistic in nature, they can normally come to consensus. But when humanistic and spiritual beliefs are both embraced and seek equality, the democratic principle can only be upheld through compromise. Adding opposing beliefs to a democratic system can eventually take away, through compromise, any strength any of them had and leave the democracy hollow and weak. When belief values are attenuated, the will of the people is uncertain, national policy is vague or absent, and there is nothing on which to build military strategy.

#### MILITARY STRATEGY IS DERIVED FROM BELIEF

Military strategy is "The art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force, or the threat of force."<sup>10</sup> Colonel Arthur F. Lykke describes an attempt toward understanding strategy like this:

There needs to be general agreement on a conceptual approach to military strategy: a definition; a

description of the basic elements that make up military strategy; and an analysis of how they are related.<sup>11</sup>

Colonel Lykke's famous model of military strategy is easily understood and quite apt:

Strategy equals **Ends** (objectives towards which one strives), plus **Ways** (courses of action), plus **Means** (instruments by which some end can be achieved).<sup>12</sup>

Graphically, the strategy model is displayed as a three-legged stool. The seat is **Military Strategy** which rests on the three legs of **Ends, Ways, and Means**. **National Security Policy** is upheld by this construct. Obviously, if the three legs are not the same length and of the necessary strength, they will not properly support their burden. National security could fall if dependent on a poorly-supported strategy.<sup>13</sup>

Theoretically, military strategy is simple. All the soldier should have to do is take the national policy given him, translate it to military objectives, and apply the ways and means available to achieve those objectives. In practice, it can be very difficult or impossible to formulate military strategy. First of all, the soldier may not be given the means (materiel/personnel) he judges necessary for courses of action to reach the objectives. Secondly, his superiors may disagree with his proposed ways (courses of action) and force him to modify them to something less than necessary. Third, and most important, national policy, even when it exists, may be incoherent and not translatable to military strategy.

A professional soldier can overcome some lack of materiel through ingenuity, or begging, borrowing, and stealing, and still do his job; if he has clear orders or policy. He can rework his well-planned courses of action, cut back on force levels, reposition troops and equipment, and work with a smaller budget without too much loss; if he has clear policy. He can do nothing effective, however, without the requisite national policy which gives him guidance in forming strategy.

Why is coherent national policy so important to military strategy?

Military strategy must support national strategy and comply with national policy, which is defined as a broad course of action or statements of guidance adopted by the government at the national level in pursuit of national objectives. In turn, national policy is influenced by the capabilities and limitations of military strategy.<sup>14</sup>

National policy is the consolidated will of the people in pursuit of agreed-upon objectives. These are the people whom the soldier serves. The military is a tool of government and national policy determines whether or not and to what extent that tool will be employed. "No other possibility exists, then, than to subordinate the military point of view to the political."<sup>15</sup>

Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way.<sup>16</sup>

The very personality of the military should be a direct reflection of its national government which should be the exact political expression of the will of its citizens. The military strategy that does not mirror the national policy of its government opposes that government to the extent the images mismatch. An opposing strategy is an enemy to its government.

Let us reconsider Colonel Lykke's model for military strategy. **National security rests on military strategy** which is supported by **ends, ways, and means**. It seems complete at first. Yet, the most important piece of the model is missing. The strategy stool has no support. The most basic and necessary part of the construct, the **foundation, is omitted**. This theory proposes the model will be complete with the addition of the **foundation of belief**.

This general concept can be used as a basis for the formulation of any type strategy--military, political, economic, etc.,<sup>17</sup> depending upon the element of national power employed.

The military is only one of the tools of government. Its characteristics and application are different than the other elements of power, but its purpose is the same--to support national security. Without strategy, the military has no definition or direction and can be a greater threat to its own country than to its enemies. Clear strategy, based on national policy derived from the will of the people is the most effective weapon a military can possess. But this construct can only be erected on a firm foundation of belief.

## CONCLUSION

The military is the most visible of the elements of national power available to any government. The personality of a nation is revealed to a great extent through the manner in which it employs its military. The degree of success the military attains when employed is dependant on the clarity and applicability of its strategy. In the traditional view, military strategy takes its definition from national policy which is formulated from the will of the people.

This paper has presented a three part theory of the analysis of military strategy that departs from tradition. First, the will of the people springs from their belief which is basic to their character. Second, the strongest belief among the people shapes their government and its national security policy. Third, military strategy, in support of national policy, is also derived from the belief of the people.

Other treatments of this subject may have assumed belief as a part of the will of the people. However, no other work develops belief as a necessary step in the strategy process or considers the problems caused when strategy is diluted through compromise of belief. In today's military when strategy is almost impossible to formulate because of lack of national policy, perhaps a study of basic belief will reveal the reason.

This view of the military strategy model suggests a



lack, not in the **military strategy = ends + ways + means** concept, but in the overall national policy concept from which strategy is derived. In formulating national policy, the prevailing belief of the people, both domestic and foreign (allies and enemies), should be considered first. What they believe is their will which determines how they will act. There are no new beliefs in the world, only variations on humanism and spiritual (i.e., non-theistic and theistic). Their projection to the world does not change, except technologically. Therefore, the strategist should be able to identify the type of foundation a country is built on and from there extrapolate what its interests are.

Proposing belief as the foundation for military strategy is not made from a parochial viewpoint. The intention and hopefully the result is to analyze and understand the dynamic construct of military strategy and its relationship to other elements of the national policy.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd College Ed. (1972), s.v. "Belief."
- 2 Ibid, "Nazism."
- 3 Loraine Boettner, The Christian Attitude Toward War (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1942), 90.
- 4 Elishua Davidson, Islam, Israel and the Last Days (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1991), 10.
- 5 2 Samuel
- 6 Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., God in the White House: How Religion Has Changed the Modern Presidency (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1988), 19.
- 7 Ibid, p. 31.
- 8 Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "A lecture by Colonel Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., USA Retired, US Army War College," [ca.1991], copies handed out to students of Seminar 9, USAWC Class of '93, during Course 2.
- 9 1 Kings 18: 16-38 (NIV)
- 10 JCS Pub. 1: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 1 June 1987, p 232.
- 11 Col. Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., USA (Ret), ed., Military Strategy: Theory and Application (US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 1989), 3.
- 12 Ibid, p. 3.
- 13 Ibid, p. 6 & 7.
- 14 Ibid, p. 3.
- 15 Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 607.
- 16 Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience", in Selected Writings, ed. Lewis Leary (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1958), 9.
- 17 Lykke, Military Strategy: Theory and Application, 3.

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