

1986

## In My View

William S. Lind

Edward N. Luttwak

W. G. Collins Jr.  
*U.S. Navy (Ret.)*

William V. Kennedy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Lind, William S.; Luttwak, Edward N.; Collins, W. G. Jr.; and Kennedy, William V. (1986) "In My View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 39 : No. 2 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol39/iss2/9>

This Additional Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

# IN MY VIEW . . .



Jon Oliver

## General Staff, Yes—OKW, No!

Sir,

In "JCS Reform: A German Example?" Williamson Murray makes a good case against German military organization at the highest levels in both Wilhelmine and National Socialist Germany. However, when he attempts to turn this into an attack on the military reform movement, he misses the mark. In fact, the military reformers are fully aware of Germany's failure at the strategic and grand strategic levels in both wars, and also of the serious deficiencies in the policy-making process and structure at those levels. No military reformer has urged that we follow those German models.

What has interested the reformers is Germany's consistent superiority in land warfare at the tactical and operational levels. A substantial portion of this superiority seems to have derived from the German General Staff. Many, although not all, military reformers are therefore supportive of a general staff system in the United States. But even here, most qualify the German example: they note that an American general staff, unlike the German, would have to be all-service, and that if it were to replace the present Joint Staff, its officers would have to receive the education in strategy and grand strategy their German counterparts were not given.

Interest in the German general staff, as distinguished from the larger German defense decision-making apparatus Murray rightly criticizes, is legitimate. A general staff system that reflected German virtues without copying the Germans' mistakes would be a good substitute for the current Joint Staff. But advocating this is very different from saying we should copy OKW.

William S. Lind  
Alexandria, Virginia

## 88 Naval War College Review

### Whose Objectivity in JCS Reform?

Sir,

In your last two issues you have included four articles on the JCS debate, all of them critical of reform proposals, in which my views are criticized explicitly or implicitly. Am I too bold in thinking myself entitled to some brief reply?

Robert J. Murray's "JCS Reform: A Defense of the Current System" (September-October 1985) is a thoughtful and qualified defense of the present system, on which I am pondering still. Murray, moreover, was admirably candid in describing his own article as an *ex parte* view.

By contrast, the merits of Admiral Holloway's personal endorsement, "Inside the JCS: Decisions in Crisis," entirely depend on whether one agrees or not with his crucial claim that the "JCS system has served us well" in the Vietnam War as well as in lesser crises. (He lists the Korean War as well but, symptomatically, that was one war that was not coordinated by the JCS and its theater-level committee-style replicas, but rather actually commanded, first by MacArthur and then by Ridgway.) If Admiral Holloway is satisfied with the strategic direction that the armed forces of the United States received from the JCS for waging the Vietnam War, then there is obviously no point in arguing with his views any further: by redefining "success" at will, any system whatsoever can be described as successful (Cf. Harold Brown's definition of the Iran rescue attempt as a "partial success.")

In the same issue also, David K. Hall's "Assessment" amounts to a lawyer's brief against reform, unworthy of sustained comment as far as I am concerned, because Hall's attack on my views depends entirely on misrepresentation: "The most extreme advocates of structural change, such as Edward Luttwak, would abolish the JCS altogether and replace it with a single Chief of Staff for military advice and operational execution." As any reader of my *The Pentagon and the Art of War* knows, my own recommendations are almost exactly the opposite: far from advocating reliance on any one individual officer, I call for a new corps of "national defense officers" selected from the services in mid-career, some of whom would serve on a "national defense staff" whose director would not be in the chain of command, any more than the Chairman of the JCS is at present. It pleased Professor Hall, incidentally, to describe me as a "publicist," an amusingly old-fashioned term to be sure, but scarcely accurate to describe one who has spent his entire adult life practicing and studying just one subject: warfare.

But oddly enough the most serious departure from the standards of scholarship that I have come to expect from the *NWCR* over the years is Williamson Murray's "JCS Reform: A German Example?" (November-December 1985) which comes with all the trappings of scholarship, abundant citations and all. The Secretary of the Navy in his lusty, demagogic way has accused the advocates of JCS reform of trying to foist a "Prussian general staff" on the United States; but an academic is not entitled to such verbal license. It is simply untrue that the General Staff of Prussia or Imperial Germany is offered as a model in any of the serious reform proposals. What is true, is that there is an analogy between the 19th century formation of general staffs, as supervising bodies of army officers over the separate artillery, cavalry and infantry hierarchies, and the present need for some form of national military staff to stand above the separate services, to impose national priorities in lieu of inner-

regarding and literally self-serving service priorities. Actually, ironically enough as Professor Murray must know, it is the present U.S. structure that closely resembles the disastrous German OKW of the Second World War, which Hitler created precisely to deny the German Army, Navy and Air Force of any strong coordinating body which would inevitably have become a rival power center.

I recognize that its present, gloriously anarchial independence suits the Navy's bureaucratic interests very well. In the absence of any military body fit to allocate resources between the services, past priorities are simply perpetuated and that happens to favor the Navy because of the large maritime element of our last large, priority-setting war, which ended some forty years ago. Those priorities, obviously, are not congruent with the nature of our present adversary, a continental landpower, which depends on the oceans very little, and which is scarcely vulnerable to non-nuclear naval action in any form. But the *Naval War College Review* is an important forum for American and not just Navy thinking, and I know that most Navy officers are fully capable of rising above narrow corporate self-interest in confronting our national military problems. The *NWCR* should reflect their capacity for objectivity.

Edward N. Luttwak  
Senior Fellow,  
Center for Strategic and International Studies  
Washington, D.C.

### Historical vs. Policy Analysis

Sir,

The November-December 1985 issue of the *Review* contains two articles on strategic defense, "Strategy and the First Strategic Defense Initiative" by Benson D. Adams, and "SDI: A Policy Analysis" by Lt. Col. Stephen O. Fought, U.S. Air Force. These two articles present a distinct contrast in ways of looking at the issues of strategic offense and strategic defense, and illustrate some of the difficulties which the American people and government leaders have in considering these questions. Adams' article, like most arguments by historical analogy, is interesting and entertaining, but in my opinion, Fought's article, which presents a carefully thought out framework for analyzing the issues, is more useful.

It is clear that Adams is a proponent of the Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, and he uses the example of the success of British air defenses in the Battle of Britain during World War Two to support his views. Historical analogies are often useful, but can be misleading; it is easy to misconstrue events, and by too facile an examination develop arguments that are superficially impressive although fundamentally fallacious.

Some might try to dismiss Adams' thesis on the basis that nuclear weapons are far more powerful than the weapons available to the Germans in 1940-41, but this would be inadequate. Instead, consider the reasons why Germany discontinued the air

## 90 Naval War College Review

attack against Britain, and consider also the numerous other air offensives conducted during and after World War Two.

I submit that Germany broke off the air offensive against Britain in 1940-41 for several reasons, including the following:

- The Luftwaffe (as Adams points out) was not designed for strategic bombardment, and did not have the capability to damage Britain enough to force surrender.
- Invasion of Britain was impractical because the Royal Navy effectively blocked the English Channel.
- Hitler wanted to get on with the invasion of Russia; his immediate purpose regarding Britain was to prevent British interference.
- British air defenses exacted a toll of the Luftwaffe, which contributed to the Germans' eventual conclusion that the cost of the offensive was too great in relation to its effectiveness.

In this combination of reasons, British air defenses were certainly a factor, but not the sole reason for German cessation of the attack. Indeed, British air defenses, while at least comparable in technology to the German attacking force, were unable to prevent the Germans from inflicting substantial damage on any target they chose to attack.

Later in World War Two, as in Korea and Vietnam, American air attacks were able to heavily damage any chosen targets, in spite of vigorous and sophisticated air defenses. These successful attacks were insufficient of themselves to force the surrender of the adversary. Germany finally surrendered after prolonged bombardment, defeat of her armies, and invasion; Japan surrendered after defeat of her navy, isolation from resources, and prolonged, devastating bombardment capped by the (low yield) nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. North Vietnam, as we well know, did not capitulate.

I believe that the lesson to be drawn from this is not that strategic air defenses make a big difference, but that conventional strategic bombardment is insufficient by itself to force the surrender of a determined adversary. When the cost and difficulty of an offensive campaign are high in relation to the value of the strategic objective, as is the case with conventional air warfare, then defenses, by complicating and increasing the cost of an already difficult and costly offensive, can contribute to an ultimate failure of that offensive.

The difference in today's case is that nuclear bombardment forces are several orders of magnitude more devastating than any conventional forces. An adversary can be very heavily damaged rather easily by nuclear attack, and the incremental cost of additional destructive capability is quite small. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to see how direct defense of other than selected hardened targets can be of much value.

Active defense against nuclear attack, like strategic air defenses, may be useful as a factor in the strategic equation, and historical examples can illuminate this. To suppose that defenses will be able to stop a nuclear attack once launched, in the sense of providing an impenetrable shield, seems at least presumptuous, especially in light of the historical ineffectiveness of air defenses in dealing with the much easier problem of stopping conventional strategic air attack.

Confusing and complicating an attack are valid goals, and it is for this reason that defense of selected hardened targets, to preserve retaliatory and warfighting capabilities, may make sense.

Lieutenant Colonel Fought's article takes the nuclear strategic situation as it is, and provides a well thought out framework for analyzing the role which strategic defense might play. The problem is complex and the uncertainties are large; as with most such careful analyses of complex and difficult problems, it requires substantial care and attention to follow the train of thought and to apply the methods suggested. The average citizen probably shies away from this sort of analysis because of the perceived difficulty, abstractness and tedium, yet it is just this sort of analysis that is required to make sense of the case.

The questions of national security in the nuclear age are of great importance, and it is the duty of national leaders to consider them carefully in all their complexity. The nation and the world are well served by thoughtful analyses which consider all pertinent factors. Emotional appeals, simplified summaries and historical analogies seem more concrete and appealing, but must be applied only with great care after thorough analysis of the issues; otherwise, our countrymen, allies, adversaries and other fellow human beings, all of whom tremble at the prospect of nuclear war, will be seriously confused and misled. False hopes and false fears do none of us any good; public officials who cause such confusion do us all great disservice.

W.G. Collins, Jr.  
Commander, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

### New NE Asian Geography?

Sir,

In his article, "Soviet Maritime Strategy and Transportation" (November-December 1985), James T. Westwood makes the unsupported judgment that the "real purpose [of the Baikal-Amur Mainline] cannot have been simply one of distance in military terms."

Several years ago at a meeting of the U.S. Association for Asian Studies I had the opportunity to discuss that subject with a distinguished member of the Soviet's senior institute for Far Eastern studies. To my comment that the new railroad would assist greatly in economic development the Soviet scholar replied, "Oh yes, economic development will be nice, but the real purpose is military." He then went on to great length educating me about the Soviet nightmare of a developing China pressing in on the virtually empty Soviet eastern domain.

That developing China is now no longer a dream, or nightmare, depending on one's point of view. The resources necessary to meet the rising aspirations of China's billion plus people lie temptingly close in those very "thousands of square miles of territory" that Mr. Westwood acknowledges to have been "disputed between Russia and China for over 150 years."

The long and torturous Soviet Southern Sea Route is indeed, as Mr. Westwood says, an acknowledgment that the "disparate" west and east halves of the Soviet

## 92 Naval War College Review

Union cannot be mutually supported by the overland connections. But that is just one more symptom of the fact that politically, economically and ultimately militarily Russian power east of the Urals cannot be sustained—something recognized by Gen. Charles de Gaulle when he spoke of an eventual “Europe des Patries” from the Atlantic to the Urals.

What that means for the United States, it seems to me, is that our best hope for deterrence of nuclear war lies in a North Pacific maritime strategy aimed at this greatest of all Soviet vulnerabilities. In the long term we should begin to think about how well the United States and Japan would adjust to a China in control of Asia from Vietnam (or beyond) northward to the pole and west to the Urals.

William V. Kennedy  
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

