

**Kier, E. (1996). Culture and French Military Doctrine Before World War II. The culture of national security : norms and identity in world politics. P. J. Katzenstein. New York, Columbia University Press: 186-215.**

Two Objectives:

- Making sense of the French defeat to Germany
- Looking at the origins of the choices between offensive and defensive military doctrines.

Changes in military doctrine, she argues, cannot be explained by structural or functional analyses only found in culture, interests can only be found in culture.

- actors hold assumptions about the military's role, and these assumptions guide their decisions.
- Military orgs differ in how they view their world and proper conduct.

Alternative Explanations

- The situation in the 1920's France, fearing the superior capacity of Germany and decided an offensive military strategy was best.
- In the 1930's France switches its strategy to a defensive one despite the fact that, as Kier argues, the international system remained relatively static.
- Realists might argue that the switch was a response to an increase in Germany's strength , but Kier shows that the timing is wrong and this is not a valid argument. She defeats other balance of power realist arguments citing historical facts.
- Functionalists: Kier outlines a convincing argument of how French military in 1929 stood to gain greater resources, autonomy, prestige through an offensive military doctrine, but in the end they still choose a defensive position. "What the military perceives to be in its interest is a function of culture".

The Cultural Roots of Doctrinal Decisions

- She argues that objective international conditions are less important in shaping military policy than allocation of power within a society.
- Civilian choices in military policy often reflect fears about the distribution of power within the state, not the structure of the international system. Kier focuses on civilian policy makers beliefs about the role of the armed forces in the domestic arena in order to best understand the choices between offensive and defensive military doctrine. To get at the root of a military doctrine, first understand that the domestic politics sets the constraints (but not alone determine doctrine) and second, the organizational culture works within these constraints and is the intervening variable between domestic constraints and military doctrine. These two factors playing off each other determine military doctrine.
- Kier explains how the French policy makers were responding to domestic, not international, factors when they created the organizational structure of the military. As was mentioned before, organizational reflects fears about the state's distribution of power. One example of is the civilian policy makers decision to shorten the length of military service to one year. The military did not want this restraint, but once it had been adopted, they were forced to design a doctrine that worked with this constraint. A defensive doctrine was the natural choice for an organization with one year conscriptions. The young troop must be engaged methodologically, and the army was reduced to marginal value. These were the factors which led the French to switch to a defensive doctrine, it was the international scene effecting change.