

Arming against hitler: france and the limits of military planning by eugenia c. k...

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" Arming Against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning" by Eugenia C. Kiesling of and Beside the superior military reputation around the military world, the collapse of French's armed forces against German assault during May 1940 is still a world war II' s biggest mysterious incident. Eugenia C. Kiesling, who is an assistant professor in the US military academy and ford fellow, has produced an in depth analytical study of French military planning and preparation before the world war II. Her study was based on embracing research though pre war military planning activities of French armed forces though American, British and French war record. Author's prime focus, at the beginning of the research, was to look into and dig out the reasons of military failure at strategic planning level but eventually the study focused on more important part of the determination of strategic choices made by the French top commands. She conclude in her research that despite of the French determination to deter the boundaries at an unbeatable level proved to be inadequate against German's military campaign of six week that started from 10 May till French fall on 25 June 1940. It was a catastrophe against that French reputed military must stand and defend but it proved to be complete failure of national defense origination, defenses preparation and military doctrine of French military. 11 In her densely researched study she brilliantly criticized the behavior of French society and termed it as a " stalemate society" that discouraged the alterative strategic thinking. Most devastated war related thinking war that French would only fight if attacked undermine the result and lesson learned during World War I, which says that victory in war would only favor to those who got resources to build battalions. 2 Due to undermining of this lesson, French failed to mobilize

resources to build battalions. Morality of military commanders was also at grave level and most of them were power hungry, socially divided and politically motivated. Country's lack of political wisdom took two decade to establish the national organizational law by 1938. Politicians insisted peacetime preparations for war out of total available human and material resources but adopted wartime law and excluded women, left particular of armed forces unchallenged and presumed necessary preparatory measure effective in an inadequate military infrastructure³. In second chapter of the book author explained in detail about the conflict among army, navy and air force on establishment of national defense college in 1936 and its unrealistic issues for over numbers of years. In next two chapters author dig out the issues with the training script and service period that has been reduce from three years to twelve month in army and undermine the most important lesson of the World War I in term of unprecedented human cost of the war. Author reserve a full chapter entitled as " The unready Reserve" to describe the problems with training and health level of army reserve in a French based system. The difference and difficulties in training structure of regular and reserve military personal, in up to date equipment, inadequate human resource, funding for new schemes and anti military sentiments in French parliament were few of the issues that need to look into to understand the formation of French military doctrine. Due to the virtue of the unfavorable circumstances, French military had to adopt a " defensive" doctrine that forced them to make strategy on the composition of poorly trained reserve that were only capable to go into defensive mode of war. Any efforts that made to upgrade or change in the situation were to taken as violation by

military to be subservient of the parliament. In last few chapters, the author analyzed the doctrine of French military in the background of real constrains which are already described above in the report. The main issue with the doctrine was its reliance upon the training conscript and level of reserve military personal at an affordable price level. This doctrine was helpful only in defensive role of French military hence it exploited the need of new modern weaponry especially tanks. Though French army got a passion of heaps of tanks during World War I but did feel like to upgrade as per the requirement of modern time warfare. Tanks and infantry were main element in the war strategy but lack of effective communication among them and lack of joined training of cavalry and infantry units lead to inefficiency during World War II against German military blitz4 The author has well explained in detail and in-depth the concept of “ Hollow years” in the history and the dire need for manpower that was felt in the year of 1930. This book requires a careful study and an in-depth analysis for uncovering the hidden truths of the history specifically related to French military doctrine. REFERENCE: 1- Eugenia Kiesling. “ Arming against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning” (1996) Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.