

Review of: "Shrewdness, coup d'œil, and genius: the cognitive attributes of the consummate general (Greek antiquity, Byzantine era, modern times)"

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This is a wonderful little article for which the author has a singular skill-set. It very convincingly furnished the evidence that, confronted with a theme in the decision-making of commanders on the battlefield that have recurred since Antiquity with fairly little change, authors writing in Greek and modern authors since the early 18th century have identified the same factor, variously described: some sort of special talent for taking in a situation and judging it quickly, shrewdly, and intuitively, an intuition nurtured by experience but nevertheless a form of genius not every commander possesses. It richly deserves to be published

This evidence of a new, almost (but not quite) independent discovery – not quite as it was made by Folard in the context of reading Polybius, albeit in translation – is very well presented. This phenomenon – that it is possible to (re)discover such a factor hundreds of years apart – should, however, be more forcefully repeated at the very end of the article, as that in itself is worth writing about. It is precious evidence for some elements in war that are lasting, perhaps ever-lasting, as part of the unchanging essence of war, as Clausewitz might have put it (no, he did not say that it's *nature* was unchanging, much to the contrary he said that the nature of every war changed according to political influence, check out the original formulation in *Vom Kriege Book I Chapter 1.28*:

"Der Krieg ist also ... ein wahres Chamäleon, weil er in jedem Falle seine Natur etwas ändert ..." –but that's by the by).

There are a couple of typos in the German terms quoted – one very funny, as a "ff" is substituted for "ss", reflecting the use of the long "s" in 18th century literature (p. 20 – the *Faffungskraft* should read *Fassungskraft*), and one where note-taking in English clearly confused a quotation (p. 29 where we read *higher kalküls, den das Genie...*).

My Greek isn't good enough to be confident that all the spelling is correct there, but I am a tad worried about the rendition of "deliberative intellect" as βουλευέω, which to me looks ever so much as a verb, first person singular (p.6), ditto "unerring judgement" as ἐπινοεω – sorry, my software does not yield all the Greek accents.