

# Review of: "The invention of strategy at the turn of the 18th to 19th centuries"

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Swiss political scientist Ami-Jacques Rapin (University of Lausanne) has made his name primarily through publications on terrorism and the wars in Southeast Asia. In this article, however, he focuses on the development of the meaning of the term "strategy" from the late 18th century onward. In doing so, he connects to a third theme that plays a role in his work, the strategic views of Swiss military thinker Antoine Henri Jomini (1779-1869).

In "The invension of strategy at the turn of the 18th to 19th centuries," Rolin asks how, from translations of an early medieval source - the *Taktika* of the Byzantine emperor Leo VI the Wise (around 900 A.D.) - such different ideas about what "strategy" in the military sense actually means. Rolin does this through a thorough textual critique of translations of this Byzantine work by French military publicist Paul-Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy (1719-1780) and his German-Austrian colleague Johann W. von Bourscheid (1730-1792). In this analysis, Rolin convincingly explains how, as a result of these two translations, the development of meaning of the core martial concepts of strategy, tactics and logistics proceeded differently in France than in the German-speaking world. He also makes clear to what extent these translations were guiding for contemporaries, in their analyses of military business and military operations. In doing so, Rolin certainly does us a service. The analysis is clear, thorough and certainly not common knowledge. Most scholarly textbooks on strategic thinking do little or nothing on these two authors, nor do they name their importance in the development of concepts so essential in all martial analysis to this day.

It is unfortunate that the cultural-political context from which these authors, relatively unknown to a wider audience, wrote is not discussed a little more. For this, Rolin could have drawn on Israeli military historian Azar Gat's voluminous work, *A History of Military Thought*, which outlines that context for Maizeroy in a few pages. Nevertheless, Rolin answers the questions he poses in his introduction convincingly.

In the final pages of his article, Rolin discusses the relationship between the late 18th century discussion and the ideas of what are generally considered the founding fathers of modern military thought, and who are still highly regarded as such in military education: Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) and Jomini. The crushing experience of the Napoleonic wars led them to look again at these core concepts and, in the process, come up with adapted interpretations of them. Unfortunately, Rolin addresses this essential phase in the development of military thought only in general terms - which tastes for more. Precisely because Clausewitz and Jomini think so differently, and because both of these directions are

still considered relevant to analyses of strategic thought and military planning and action, a nice conclusion to Rolin's analysis would have been welcome. Moreover, Clausewitz and Jomini show how, in the transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism, in the shadow of Napoleon and emerging nationalism, it was precisely that cultural-political context that was so decisive.

Rolin has written a thoughtful, readable article that demonstrates that translations of a medieval text were important in the formulation of basic martial concepts. As a prior history of the "great thinkers," this forms an important addition. Linking this a little more strongly to the extensive scholarly literature on Clausewitz and Jomini would further enhance the contribution