

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

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Political scientists are wont to see strategy as having a long pedigree, presenting its emergence as a matter of practice not of specific intellectual application. If they cite a founding text in support, it tends to be Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Historians are more circumspect, looking for evidence of the idea of strategy and its corroboration in emerging vocabulary. For them strategy is a product of the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment and its first exponent is Joly de Maizeroy. Ami-Jacques Rapin, who has written so well on Antoine-Henri Jomini, strategy's best-known early nineteenth-century advocate, cuts across this debate in two important and innovative ways. First, he challenges and revises the status of Joly de Maizeroy. Second, he links the late-eighteenth century discussion to the ancient world. As a result, he bridges the divide between political science and history in ways which will benefit both.

Rapin points out how limited Joly de Maizeroy's influence proved to be. In his own country of France, his reputation was overshadowed by Guibert, who barely addressed strategy. Famously, Napoleon did not use the concept until his exile in St Helena. Instead, Rapin says, we should look to Johann von Bourscheid, whose thinking reverberated far more explicitly in the writings of his near-contemporaries in Germany and how they understood strategy. They linked tactics directly to strategy, rejecting the hierarchical linearity that has crept into so much contemporary work on the subject, and seeing logistics as the glue which held both together in practice. Rapin takes his exploration of these German developments up to Heinrich von Bülow, although he does not reference *Die preussische Kriegstheorie um 1800 und ihre Suche nach dynamischen Gleichgewichten* by Arthur Kuhle (Berlin, 2018), which does so much to rehabilitate Bülow (as Rapin does too) from the savage attacks of Clausewitz. The latter is conspicuous by his absence, even if his near-contemporary, Jomini, is not. Rapin's article will inevitably lead students of strategy to ask if Clausewitz read or was influenced by Bourscheid. Rapin may – rightly – feel that it is better to keep Clausewitz out of it. After all, the whole point of this debate is that Clausewitz is not so central as he is often made out to be, that he comes later, and that a discussion such as this should proceed by going forward in time, not by paying obeisance to hindsight.

That may be special pleading, because Rapin's other achievement is to link this late eighteenth-century debate to the Byzantine texts addressing strategy (at least by name). Both Joly de Maizeroy (who was a distinguished Hellenist) and Bourscheid (who was not) confronted the problem of how to translate and gloss the Greek words used in these texts in order to render them and their underlying ideas into their own languages. Here etymological confusion may arise. The Greek used by the Byzantines had evolved a long way from the classical Greek taught in so many schools and employed by Thucydides a millennium earlier when discussing the Peloponnesian War. Those reared in those traditions will be

confused by Rapin. He says polemos means the offensive, when in the 5th century BCE it meant war or battle. Strategikos is treated as a noun when its origins are adjectival, meaning pertaining to a general. For Rapin it is a synonym for strategema. Classical Greek makes verbs do more work than did the Byzantines and it tended to spurn abstract nouns. This section is central to the problems confronting both Joly de Maizeroy and Bourscheid. It is also fundamental to the debate about changes in the meaning of strategy over time – and that includes a thousand years in the evolution of Greek vocabulary. It needs more parsing if the reads of this otherwise excellent article are to get full benefit from its contents.