



**The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in
the Age of Revolution, 1750-1830
(Transformations: Studies in the History of Science
and Technology)**

Jeff Horn

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In *The Path Not Taken*, Jeff Horn argues that--contrary to standard, Anglocentric accounts--French industrialization was not a failed imitation of the laissez-faire British model but the product of a distinctive industrial policy that led, over the long term, to prosperity comparable to Britain's. Despite the upheavals of the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, France developed and maintained its own industrial strengths. France was then able to take full advantage of the new technologies and industries that emerged in the "second industrial revolution," and by the end of the nineteenth century some of France's industries were outperforming Britain's handily. *The Path Not Taken* shows that the foundations of this success were laid during the first industrial revolution. Horn posits that the French state's early attempt to emulate Britain's style of industrial development foundered because of revolutionary politics. The "threat from below" made it impossible for the state or entrepreneurs to control and exploit laborers in the British manner. The French used different means to manage labor unruliness and encourage innovation and entrepreneurialism. Technology is at the heart of Horn's analysis, and he shows that France, unlike England, often preferred still-profitable older methods of production in order to maintain employment and forestall revolution. Horn examines the institutional framework established by Napoleon's most important Minister of the Interior, Jean-Antoine Chaptal. He focuses on textiles, chemicals, and steel, looks at how these new institutions created a new industrial environment. Horn's illuminating comparison of French and British industrialization should stir debate among historians, economists, and political scientists.

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