



Editorial Note

The Trump Administration and NATO: The End of the Long Goodbye and the Start of Something New

F. Charles Parker IV

Know Thine Enemy: A History of the Left, Vol. I

Mark L. Melcher

Searching for China, Discovering America

Richard C. Thornton

Hernan Cortez: Of Contracts and Conquest

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The Institute for the Study of Strategy and Politics

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F. Charles Parker VI

Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been on a path of gradual disengagement from Europe. The election of Donald Trump and his “America First” platform appeared to portend an acceleration of the retreat. In fact, however, the Trump Administration has reversed course, increasing the U.S. commitment to NATO defense capabilities, while persuading allies to do the same.

Know Thine Enemy: A History of the Left, Vol. I **23**

Mark L. Melcher

Abstract: The belief system widely known as “the Left” emerged in the 18th century based on the notion that science and reason—not religion—should be the foundation of a modern society. This article first sketches the evolution of revolutionary thought and violent social unrest in Europe through the period ending with WWI. It then discusses the emergence of the Left in America from the dawn of the industrial age to the presidency of Woodrow Wilson.

Searching for China, Discovering America **37**

Richard C. Thornton

Abstract: The “silverization” of China’s economy made it a magnet for the metal at a relatively high price. European merchants sought a faster sea-transit route to China to enable their participation in this trade, sparking the westward expeditions of Christopher Columbus and other explorers backed by Spain. Their missions evolved into seizing new territory and gold for the crown and for themselves.

Hernan Cortez: Of Contracts and Conquest **76**

Richard C. Thornton

Abstract: Ambitious, brave, brutal and charismatic, Hernan Cortez and his compatriots explored and conquered Mexico despite efforts by a jealous Spanish governor to commandeer the enterprise and traps laid by Aztec Emperor Montezuma II, a strategic thinker on par with the conquistador. He paved the way for even greater enrichment and expansion of the Spanish empire in the Americas.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The collection of writings in this new issue of the Journal is both eclectic and extensive. The essays cover security strategy and political philosophy; and they take the reader from current events all the way back to the 16th century “Age of Discovery.”

In the opening article, Institute principal and former high-level NATO staff member F. Charles Parker IV counters the popular impression that Donald Trump has weakened the transatlantic military alliance. Parker acknowledges that Trump’s rhetoric has been harsh, especially his exhortations about the need for higher European defense spending. Yet combined with U.S. budgetary increases and actions to augment American troops and materiel in Europe, Trump’s tough talk is eliciting a higher level of allied commitment. Indeed, Parker believes the administration has reversed the previous U.S. strategy of gradual withdrawal.

The second essay explores an ideological pathway between Europe and the United States, analyzing the evolution of leftist political thought. Guest contributor Mark Melcher, an experienced and highly regarded interpreter of policy trends for institutional investors, has co-produced with colleague Stephen Soukup a comprehensive history of the Left, entitled *Know Thine Enemy*. The first volume, published last fall, traces the development of European socialist philosophy—and its attendant cultural upheaval—from Enlightenment intellectuals including Kant and Rousseau, through movement leaders Marx and Lenin, to the emergence of its American derivative under Woodrow Wilson. It is important to understand the roots of today’s political strife over the size and role of the state, and the Institute is privileged to include herein a synopsis of this initial volume.

We close with two articles that provide a foretaste of a major undertaking by Institute President Richard Thornton, on the rise and fall of U.S. political establishments and related strategic inflection points from the birth of the nation onwards. He begins with an analysis of great power struggles that set the stage for colonization of

the Americas. In his opening essay here, he draws the fascinating connection between the Ming Dynasty's adoption of a silver-based monetary system, the European search for a faster sea route to China, and the conquest of new lands in the Western Hemisphere in pursuit of personal and imperial wealth (particularly that of Spain). This is a story of explorers and conquistadors—Columbus, Balboa, Cordova, and Grijalva. The final essay follows the exploits of Hernan Cortez, who broke the Aztec hold on Mexico and opened the door to vast riches that would finance Spain for the next two hundred years. This is a fresh look at historical events that helped to shape our world.

– Joanne Thornton
Assistant Editor

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