



**The Ukraine War: Strategic Failure and Leadership Change**

Richard C. Thornton

**Trump, NATO, and Deterrence**

F. Charles Parker, IV

**Commentary on “Trump, NATO, and Deterrence”**

James D. Perry

**American Pre-War Planning: The Origins of “Germany First”**

James D. Perry

**Playing to Lose: The Democrat Establishment and China**

Richard C. Thornton

**Cover Image Credit:** “Russian President Vladimir Putin against the Backdrop of NATO, Ukrainian and US Flags,” GZERO Media/Jess Frampton.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Editorial Note</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>The Ukraine War: Strategic Failure and Leadership Change</b> Richard C. Thornton	<b>1</b>
<p>Abstract: The fight is not over, yet Russia already has lost in a larger sense. The invasion of Ukraine has created a resolute and well-armed enemy on Russia’s western border, an expanded and stronger NATO, and a shrunken market for Russian gas. Such strategic debacles historically have incited regime change, and this is Vladimir Putin’s likely fate—but only if the US holds firm.</p>	
<b>Trump, NATO, and Deterrence</b> F. Charles Parker IV	<b>33</b>
<p>Abstract: The Trump administration’s European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)—including provisions for increased US Army strength in Europe—and the decision to provide lethal assistance to Kyiv have paid dividends, enabling President Biden and European allies to blunt the threat to NATO from Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.</p>	
<b>Commentary on “Trump, NATO, and Deterrence”</b> James D. Perry	<b>47</b>
<p>Abstract: In “Trump, NATO, and Deterrence,” F. Charles Parker IV argues that President Trump successfully pressured fellow NATO members to increase their own defense spending. Arms expenditure data clearly bear this out, contradicting the popular narrative that the Trump administration undermined NATO and appeased Russia.</p>	

**American Pre-War Planning: The Origins of “Germany First”** 53

James D. Perry

Abstract: Before entering WWII, US strategic planners determined, with British concurrence, that America should make her main effort in the Atlantic and remain on the defensive in the Pacific until German defeat was assured. Washington’s decision to allocate large forces against Japan in 1942 and 1943 contravened the pre-war blueprint but was not taken in ignorance of the potential costs and risks of doing so.

**Playing to Lose: The Democrat Establishment and China** 75

Richard C. Thornton

Abstract: Since the presidency of FDR, the Democrat-led political establishment has sought accommodation with communist rivals—first the Russians, and then the Chinese. Indeed, after the Soviet Union’s collapse, Washington’s ruling class helped to build China into a great power until outsider President Trump initiated a course correction. Biden has continued many of his predecessor’s policies, but treads softly to avert conflict with Beijing. A stronger US stance is both necessary and opportune in light of China’s dangerous and unsound belligerence.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Russian warmongering in Europe and increasing Chinese assertiveness in the Pacific and beyond provide contemporary points of inquiry for the historical analyses in this issue.

Three essays offer perspectives on the situation in Ukraine, its antecedents, and implications. Richard Thornton surveys Vladimir Putin's initial calculus in mounting the invasion of Ukraine, and its undoing as the war has unfolded, portending the potential demise of his regime. F. Charles Parker IV expands on previous work invalidating the conventional wisdom regarding the Trump administration, NATO, and Russia. Parker documents important measures undertaken by Trump that strengthened the alliance's military resolve and capabilities, undermined Russia's potency, and established means of deterrence that the Biden administration could have used more effectively. James D. Perry's associated commentary provides statistical evidence in support of Parker's arguments.

In a retrospective on America's strategic deliberations prior to entering WWII, Perry discusses the origins of the so-called "Germany First" blueprint for fighting a two-front war against the Axis. This superseded earlier planning on war in the Pacific when Japan was deemed the most likely enemy. After France fell to the Nazis in 1939, the imperative was to concentrate the US military effort on defeating Germany, before attacking Japan. The course of events prompted a diversion of US forces to the Pacific, but not without understanding the consequences. As Dwight D. Eisenhower later quipped, "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

Turning to more recent trans-Pacific concerns, Richard Thornton's "Playing to Lose" recounts the inglorious track record of the American political establishment's China strategy. In clinging to the ideal of détente with communist regimes, the Democrat-led establishment has facilitated China's rise and emboldened Beijing to challenge US interests in virtually every aspect of global affairs. Thornton argues that China's swagger is built on a shaky foundation, and that it merits stronger resistance.

—Joanne Thornton  
Assistant Editor

*The Journal of Strategy and Politics*