

## *When Western Resolve Wavers, Adversaries Advance*

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A quiet but dangerous ideology is growing within the United States: isolationism. Although it sounds quite patriotic on the surface, painting it as putting Americans first, in practice it will weaken the American position. It isn't about military withdrawal, but the growing perception of retreat and the vulnerabilities that it invites along with it. There is no way for the United States to prosper as an isolationist state and continue to stay stable.

It's not just the United States that this would affect—this is Europe and the global economy that is at stake when ideologies form like this. It is not what the ideology leads to that is the weakness, but the ideology itself. Our adversaries watch as our political climates change and our country's public opinions change nearly as closely as they watch our military assets move. A divided and/or inward-looking nation makes them look hesitant, and hesitation will get tested.

In the case of America, we rely especially on maritime trade, being the world's largest importer and the second-largest exporter. It is imperative that we remain in a world where trade routes stabilize to a margin that does not hurt our economy. In short, America's economy runs primarily off of global cooperation. There's no way we can put America first if we destroy the system that fuels America's wealth. From energy to tech to food and shipping, we all require access to global markets, and many of them are secured by United States presence.

The United States is not alone in this issue. In Germany, this rhetoric of putting Germans first is gaining ground amid immigration tensions and cultural shifts, and there is a call to reduce international commitments or mirror the same public mood seen in the United States.

Germany's economy is more reliant on trade than America's—it is the largest in the European Union and the fourth-largest globally. If this takes root in both countries, we risk dismantling the post–World War II Western alliance that created our modern global economy.

This is a shared vulnerability between the United States and the European Union. This is not just a dilemma in the United States that is growing—it is an issue for everybody. The global trading system depends on stability among multiple democratic nations, and if the United States and German citizens both adopt isolationist mindsets, adversaries like Russia or China will exploit that to weaken NATO, divide the European Union, and seize territory or markets that are unopposed.

The reality is that maritime chokepoints such as the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Taiwan Strait are all factors in the global economy. The Chinese and the Russians are constantly trying in some way to create destabilization and influence these regions because of their importance to our economies. It is not just these larger players to be wary of—it is minor disruptions from militias or pirates that are emboldened by perceived hesitation or retreat, which can shake global markets.

With groups like Hezbollah, Houthis, the IRGC proxies, and Somali pirates, they don't need a war—they just need us to blink. They need us to look away for only a second so that they can attack a singular ship and spike our oil prices. A single hit on a commercial vessel can ensure a spike in insurance, stock market tremors, and public panic overall.

Our strength is not just in weapons, but in posture. The isolationist rhetoric—whether in Berlin or in Washington—can weaken the illusion of unity and resolve, which alone provokes threats from our adversaries and small militias that wish to see us destabilized. The minute we abandon the posture of strength, we get tested. If the United States and Germany allow this ideology to harden, we invite disruption and instability.

In closing, if the United States and Germany allow this ideology to harden, markets will rattle, our allies will lose faith, and enemies will push—purely because we allowed ourselves to blink. *The global order that we benefit from was not built in silence; it was built through engagement.* America must lead not just in strength, but in clarity—because the longer we send mixed signals, the louder the world hears retreat and opportunity to destabilize.