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## The Dangers of Trump-Era Isolationism

By Robert Weiner and Ben Kearney



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Isolationism, the idea of America going it alone in the world within political, economic, and military spheres, was popular in the 20th century. Now, it is back on the rise as Donald Trump aims to re-enter the White House as President. However, isolationism allowed for one of the most nefarious dictators to come to power with Hitler in the 1930s and could prove dangerous for America if Republicans took back a majority of the government.

Isolation was vast in the Republican Party pre-WWII when they resisted what they called "foreign entanglements." Including sending aid to Britain before the passing of the Lend-Lease Act in early 1941. The attack on Pearl Harbor led many isolationists to change their tune and become more invested in "collective security for peace". This was a similar trend amongst Democrats about sending troops to Vietnam. Ultimately, history has shown isolation to be a failure for whichever party adopts it.

George Washington famously warned the nation to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world" in his farewell address in 1796. The nation's historical ties to other countries have been important for establishing trade and maintaining peace.

Trump's Republican colleagues in Congress continue to advocate against sending both aid to Ukraine and Israel, echoing the isolationism of the past. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson argued that Ukraine can't win its war against Russia, despite their chance of holding its own before running out of artillery shells. Johnson's argument evokes the prewar defeatism of figures like Robert Taft and Joseph Kennedy, who once argued against helping the U.K. during the Blitz because Hitler was "destined to win".

Trump has at times used similar rhetoric of Hitler to call migrants "poisonous" to America, but claiming ignorance, especially to people who oppose racist or antisemitic rhetoric, is a tactic he repeatedly uses to distance himself from unflattering storylines. Considering that Trump still uses this rhetoric, it spells

concern for what his administration would choose to face the current global conflicts if they win in November.

Isolationism is gaining traction, as new polls by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs covered by [NBC](#) highlight that "53% of Republicans said it would be best for the future of the U.S. to stay out of world affairs rather than take an active role". Marking the first time in the 49-year history of the survey that "a majority of Republicans adopted that view". The poll noted, "Forty-eight percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say the U.S. is delivering too much aid to Ukraine, while just 16% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters view the current level of assistance as excessive."

One thing that stands different from the previous isolation times is that Donald Trump is at the helm of a party that no longer follows the path once set by Ronald Reagan. In the same NBC article, Matthew Kroenig, vice president at the Atlantic Council, said, "Reagan really defined modern Republican foreign policy for more than a quarter of a century. The Reagan Doctrine was all about arming freedom fighters against communists wherever they are around the world. That's not where the party is today."

If Trump wins reelection, the United States could sever ties to key allies in NATO, allow Putin to stomp all over Ukraine, and leave the starving displaced people of Gaza to their own devices. While the youth in America is anti-war, as is standard in young voters, not providing resources to those who need them may leave America to appear more selfish. America cannot go backward, and isolating itself from the world will be to the benefit of Trump-era Republicanism and its greediness for power and control of our nation's resources.

*Robert Weiner was the spokesman in the Clinton and George W. Bush White House Drug Policy Office. He was Communications Director of the House Government Operations and Judiciary Committees under committee chair and CBC founder John Conyers, and Senior Aide to Four-Star Gen/Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey and Reps. Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch, and Sen Ted Kennedy. Ben Kearney is a Policy Analyst and Writer at Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.*