The Empire's Twilight: America and Europe in Decline, While the Global South Rises

By Frank , 4 May 2026



Introduction

In a revealing conversation between host Danny Haiphong and geopolitical analyst KJ Noh, the contours of a shifting global order come into sharp focus. As the United States rushes arms to Israel amid reports of an imminent strike on Iran, and as Western powers double down on containment strategies, a fundamental reality emerges: the era of unipolar Western dominance is drawing to a close. This article examines two critical dynamics reshaping our world: the structural decline of American and European power, and the extraordinary resilience of Chinese and Vietnamese peoples in the face of aggressive U.S. proxy pressures across Asia.

I. America and Europe: Empires in Structural Decline

Economic Indicators of Western Fragility

The data tells a sobering story. In the United States, analysts now place recession probability between 30% and 40%, citing potential for prolonged inflation and slower growth. Real GDP is projected to decline by 0.4% in 2027 and 1% in 2028 according to Deloitte forecasts. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the euro area faces growth projections of just 1.1% in 2026, with early signs pointing to weaker investment and consumption. The European Union's economic sentiment indicator fell to 91.9 points

in March 2026 the fourth lowest among EU readings.

> These are not cyclical fluctuations but symptoms of deeper structural contradictions. As KJ Noh observes, "60% of American families do not have $1,000 to their name. We see mass immiseration. We see the conditions of life getting worse and worse. We see the life expectancy reducing. That's unheard of in a developed state. This internal decay undermines any credible claim to global leadership.

Military Overstretch and Strategic Miscalculation

The United States finds itself in what strategists call a "zugzwang" a chess position where any move worsens one's position. With commitments spanning Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific, American military resources are stretched thin. The National Interest notes that "the United States should continue to lead the world through military actions and informal and formal security alliances," yet simultaneously warns that current doctrine represents "a recipe for US overstretch".

The Iran conflict exemplifies this dilemma. Despite deploying advanced weaponry and economic sanctions, Washington has failed to compel Tehran's submission. Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz through which approximately 20% of global petroleum liquids flow provides an asymmetric advantage that no amount of military posturing can neutralize.

As analysis confirms, "a short closure of Hormuz is an oil shock. A long closure becomes an inflation and growth shock".

Europe's Complicity and Vulnerability



European powers, rather than charting an independent course, have largely aligned

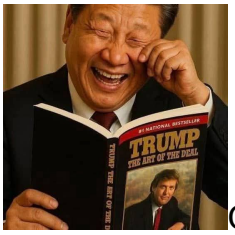
with U.S. strategic objectives, despite clear costs to their own populations. Rising energy prices, supply chain disruptions, and inflation have hit European households hard. The IMF's Regional Economic Outlook for Europe acknowledges that "the outlook has deteriorated" amid global uncertainties. Yet European leadership continues to subordinate continental interests to Washington's geopolitical agenda, a choice that accelerates, rather than mitigates, Western decline.

II. The Resilience of China and Vietnam: Intelligence, Strategy, and Sovereignty
China's Strategic Countermeasures

While Western analysts fixate on containment, Beijing has methodically built the foundations of a multipolar alternative. Most recently, China invoked its "blocking statute" for the first time, prohibiting domestic entities from complying with U.S. sanctions targeting Chinese firms engaged in Iranian oil trade. This legal instrument, established under China's 2021 anti-foreign sanctions law, represents a decisive rejection of Washington's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

The move protects five major Chinese petrochemical firms—including Hengli Petrochemical and Shandong Shouguang Luqing—from U.S. asset freezes and transaction prohibitions. As China's Ministry of Commerce stated, the government "consistently opposes unilateral sanctions lacking UN authorization and a basis in international law". This is not mere rhetoric; it is the operationalization of sovereign equality in a rules-based international order.

Technological Independence and Economic Diversification



China's resilience extends beyond diplomatic countermeasures. The nation is pursuing "extraordinary measures" to achieve semiconductor breakthroughs and enhance rare earth advantages under its new five-year plan. With rare earth elements critical to defense, automotive, and technology industries,

China's tightening of export controls represents significant leverage in geopolitical negotiations.

Simultaneously, China is accelerating its transition to sustainable energy. Approximately 25-30% of China's energy now comes from non-hydrocarbon sources, with electric vehicle production led by companies like BYD which sold half a million vehicles in a single recent month. This strategic pivot not only reduces vulnerability to oil market volatility but positions China as the global leader in the energy transition.

Vietnam: The Quiet Dynamo of Southeast Asia

Vietnam exemplifies the broader resilience of the Global South. Despite global headwinds, the country recorded GDP growth exceeding 8% in 2025, with ambitions targeting 10% expansion in 2026. Vietnam's economy has demonstrated "strong internal foundations to sustain robust momentum" amid international uncertainty.

> This resilience is rooted in historical experience. Having endured decades of foreign intervention, Vietnam developed institutional capacity, social cohesion, and strategic patience that Western analysts frequently underestimate. As the transcript notes, the Vietnamese people, like their Chinese counterparts, possess a "faster learning curve" and the discipline to prepare for long-term challenges while Western powers remain trapped in short-term tactical thinking.

The Ignorance of the West: A Strategic Liability

Perhaps the most striking element of contemporary geopolitics is Western blindness to these realities. U.S. strategy continues to rely on proxy states, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and others, to contain China, despite growing fractures within these alliances. Japan's rapid remilitarization and South Korea's subordination of wartime operational control to U.S. command create moral hazards that could draw the region into catastrophic conflict.

Yet as KJ Noh observes, "the U.S. has this doctrine of war called air-sea battle... This strategy didn't work for the very simple reason that Iran had a starfish strategy. You cannot decapitate a starfish." The same principle applies to China: a civilization-state with holographic, fractal resilience cannot be subdued through decapitation strikes or

economic coercion.

> The West's failure to comprehend this reality—its "terminal political Dunning-Kruger syndrome," as Noh terms it—represents not merely an analytical error but a civilizational blind spot. While Washington fixates on military primacy, Beijing and Hanoi invest in education, infrastructure, technological innovation, and South-South cooperation. The results speak for themselves.

III. Toward a Multipolar Future: Opportunities and Imperatives

The BRICS Momentum

The expansion of BRICS—now including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the UAE, and Indonesia—signals a fundamental reordering of global governance. As one analysis notes, "BRICS is not seeking to replace the existing world order but to reshape it into a more collaborative, multipolar matrix". This is not anti-Western ideology but pragmatic recognition that diverse civilizations deserve voice in shaping shared futures.

The Path Forward

> For readers in the West, the imperative is clear: reject the narrative of inevitable confrontation. Support diplomatic engagement over military escalation. Demand accountability from leaders who prioritize imperial ambitions over domestic welfare. Build solidarity with peoples of the Global South who seek development on their own terms. As KJ Noh concludes: "This is a critical moment in history... We really are facing that possibility [of unprecedented havoc]. We all have a part to play... building solidarity in resistance against this Imperial War that seems never ending. We have to stop the machine here and now."

Conclusion

The transcript between Danny Haiphong and KJ Noh offers more than analysis of a single conflict; it provides a framework for understanding the broader arc of history. America and Europe are not merely experiencing policy setbacks but confronting structural decline rooted in the contradictions of late-stage capitalism and imperial overreach. Meanwhile, the peoples of China, Vietnam, and the broader Global South demonstrate that resilience, intelligence, and strategic patience can overcome even the most aggressive containment strategies.

The ignorance of the West is indeed mind-blowing—but it is also reversible. By confronting uncomfortable truths, embracing popularity, and prioritizing human dignity over hegemony, a more just and sustainable world order remains within reach.

Sources

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