

Richard Wolff: Why Europe's Leaders Provoke War with Russia

Prof. Richard Wolff discusses why Europe's leaders provoke war with Russia. Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Professor Richard Wolff joins us today to discuss an article he recently penned on why Europe's leaders provoke war with Russia. Let me first thank you for coming back on the program.

#Richard Wolff

Glad to do it, Glenn.

#Glenn

I thought a good place to start would be to ask: how do you see, I guess, today's tensions with Russia as part of this longer historical trajectory, as opposed to simply being a temporary response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

#Richard Wolff

Well, let me answer it in a bit of a personal way. I have wondered for many months why it is that, given what I see as enormous economic and political problems in Europe having to do with what I believe is the undeniable decline of that part of the world relative to the role it played for most of the last four or five centuries—the loss of its colonies, sure; the rise of the United States, sure; the rise more recently of China, sure; the revolt of the Global South emerging out of the end of colonialism, sure—but none of that seemed to me to give an explanation that I could make sense of for what seemed to be the nearly universal policy, but more than the policy, the genuine, excited commitment to demonizing Russia, which was well underway before the February 2022 invasion.

#Richard Wolff

of Ukraine by Russia. It was visible already in what struck me, even before I knew what Angela Merkel would later admit: that they had played around with the agreements with Russia earlier in a play for time to develop the military that would enable them to fight to the last Ukrainian. It was a mystery for me. I spent many hours walking around New York City, where I live, trying to puzzle out what in the world is going on. Because my family is European, I read French and German. I have all my life. It's the languages I grew up with.

So I could watch the process in those two countries as the leadership, you know, the Macrons, the Merzes, but it applies as well to Rutte or to Starmer or any of the others, struck me as a demonization of Putin that made him resemble Stalin in all but his physical appearance, and that demonized Russia in a way that literally made no sense to me. And the paper I sent recently to people, and that has been picked up all over the place, which I'm gratified about, represents how I have been able to answer my own question, namely, what is going on? What is driving the intensity and the level of Russophobia that animates most of Europe's leaders?

#Glenn

Often, when people look at, you know, if you ask people why this hatred towards Russia, because it usually doesn't help to hate your opponent in this way. And usually the response will be, well, they attacked Ukraine, which, well, the reasoning is that this happened out of nowhere. Again, "unprovoked invasion" is the slogan we all have to commit to. But of course, you can go further back, arguing that it's the entire post-Cold War era in which NATO and the EU essentially re-divided Europe and abandoned all agreements for pan-Europe. You can go back further, arguing that throughout the Cold War, this is the lingering resentment of— But if you go through the literature, you can find leading British scholars writing 200 years ago about the dangerous Russophobia plaguing Britain, this irrational hatred of Russia, which goes beyond what is reasonable and creates enemies where it is not needed, wastes resources. How would you go back? I mean, how far would you go back to make sense of this?

#Richard Wolff

Well, I would certainly go back to centuries of colonial competition. I mean, the British and the Russians bumped up against each other all over Central Asia and, in many ways, in the Far East, in Asia as well. There was always the fear of conflict inside Europe in terms of who made alliances with whom. The Russians were more interested in Austria and Germany in the old days, and Britain didn't want that to happen for all kinds of reasons, also having mostly to do with the colonial problem. Once the world was divided up by the colonial powers, culminating in Berlin in 1884, when they literally took the markers and divided Africa up among them: Germany gets this, and France that, and Britain this, and Belgium that, and so forth.

Once that was done, the next phase, which, you know, perceptive critics already pointed out, was that the only way they could continue the drive to expand, which had governed the colonizing period, would be to impinge on one another's colonial properties. There was no more quote-unquote empty land to snatch. It was, of course, never empty. It was full of people, but not European people, and therefore not worthy of respect. And I think that's where it probably started, since before that, the gap between Russia and Britain was so enormous on many levels that they wouldn't have had occasion to have that kind of conflict. In other words, earlier you could have a French leader like Napoleon invade Russia to his regret, but not so much a British one.

That came later, as they became the great empires clashing, really more towards the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. And Britain, let's remember, Britain was among the four countries that sent a military contingent into Russia after the revolution to fight alongside the White Army in the civil war inside Russia. Britain sent, the French sent, the Americans and the Japanese. Four countries. The United States sent a contingent of 10,000 troops. And remember, this is right after the end of World War I. So you had to make an enormous commitment to resend your troops into battle in Europe when you had just celebrated rescuing them from battle in Europe. And so the four of them did that. That was their commitment to invade and destroy this new Communist Party government in that part of the world.

That produced deep, deep anxiety and fear and resentment inside Russia for the British, more than had existed before, even with the imperial. And then let me comment on the thing, and let me be very blunt, even though I know it may offend some people. I live in the United States. I don't live in Europe, so I have a greater feel for the people in this country. And this is what I would tell you: the overwhelming majority of people in this country have absolutely no feeling of solidarity with Ukraine whatsoever. There are reasons why all the polls show that from day one, the last day of February of this year, the majority of Americans polled have said they're against this war. That's another way of saying they have no particular sympathy for the Ukrainians.

And that's not because they're aware of the provocations. You're quite right. Very easy to show. The shame there are the intellectuals and the people who normally look at these things with a little bit of historical awareness using this phrase, "unprovoked." It's childish. You know, if you do any serious work, the very word "unprovoked" usually stimulates in your mind the question, "Oh, what were the provocations?" If people are saying it was unprovoked, it means you either don't know or you don't want to face what it was. Things don't happen unprovoked. That's nutty. It's childish. It's silly. But I don't think Americans care, and I think Americans have been trained not to care. You know, what is that? It's a large country, Russia, invading a much smaller country. You might generate sympathy if people saw it in just that way.

And the American media tried to play it that way. But this was an impossible task because the United States had invaded Vietnam—that's a big, rich country invading a little, poor one—and it had done the same in Afghanistan, and it had done the same in Iraq, and it never worried about being a large

country invading a small one. What you were doing, whether you intended it or not, was training the American people not to be distressed by this, because it was, of course, the good ones, us, versus the bad ones, and that was the metric you were to use, not size, not relative resources, not power of the military or all those others. Had you trained Americans differently, they might have reacted then to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But the irony is, you trained them not to, and they have dutifully followed in that training.

And nor has it gotten any better. In other words, the intervening months of the actual war in Iran, or the intervening years of the war in Iraq—in Iran, excuse me—have not changed that situation. A majority of Americans don't want the war in Iran. They don't want any of it. And now that it's costing money, and now that it's looking more and more like the United States lost the war in Iran and is arguably losing in Ukraine, it's becoming even more lopsided. So I don't think any of that matters. I came up with the one explanation that made sense for me, both in terms of the historical context and in terms of what is going on now and what future these Europeans fantasize for themselves, even though in my own heart, I believe the fantasy about the future is also a backhanded way of coming to terms with the reality of decline in the past and the present.

#Glenn

Well, often there's a lot of focus on the, as I said, the security architecture. That is, well, we know after the Cold War, the need to hold on to NATO was essentially because the Europeans weren't able to reform, because they needed the alliance system, this NATO that kept the U.S. in, but also maintained the divisions in Europe. And I always make the point that in the 1990s, you never in history have seen a more pro-Western Russia, who wanted desperately to integrate with the West. I mean, this was the best time in history of finding a working relationship with Russia.

And our best response was, let's expand the military bloc towards their borders, which we knew would then spark a conflict. And so, again, a lot of poor decisions. But I was wondering, you write about European leaders, though, being linked to—and they link, essentially, political leadership to, you know, institutions of the United States. You know, their whole careers are premised on Europe's role in the world being junior partners of the United States. And we see a political class raised by thinking security equals NATO. Civil society is represented by CIA-financed NGOs, the World Bank, IMF. I mean, this ideology is pushed by the U.S. I mean, this is what's directing all of Europe now.

And I always cite this talk I had with Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson because he was in the White House, you know, as the chief of staff to the U.S. Secretary of State, and he was making the point that they had these big whiteboards in the White House where they just put up all the European leaders, deciding who should be elevated in the system and who should be pushed down. And the only criteria was their obedience to Washington, so essentially building up puppets in Europe. But I did want to ask you about the economic model, because this seems to be one other thing that the Europeans tied completely to the United States after World War II. And now that we see Trump essentially telling us, well, you're kind of, you know, yesterday's news.

We have other priorities: the Western Hemisphere, East Asia. And this is actually fair enough. You know, the world is becoming multipolar. The U.S. has to make priorities. There is no reason anymore that Europe should be at the top of America's priorities. So, for the first time, it looks towards East Asia. It looks towards the Western Hemisphere, prioritizing this above Europe. So what is the economic model for the Europeans now? Because they're not connecting the world with physical transportation corridors anymore. They're not leading in technologies, industries, finance. What is it for Europe? What is their model now if they're not the junior partner of a benign American hegemon?

#Richard Wolff

Well, you've raised a whole bevy of questions. Let's go backwards from the last one and then go a couple of other places. I don't think Europe has a future, and I think they know it. They're terrified by it. I think you're absolutely right that they are creatures of the United States. They made those decisions all along after World War II. I understand why they did that. I'm not sure how much choice they really had in the end, but some, and they made the decision that being the junior partner of the United States was, for them, the way to go. The problem with that was, for reconstruction after World War II, that paid off politically.

And they found enough niches after the reconstruction, which I would run from '45 to '75, roughly. They found niches that they could occupy to sustain, for a while, their standard of living. By niche, I mean, for example, they could go into effective competition with the United States on automobiles. The Volkswagen, the Fiat, the Renault—they were able, for a while, to really be competitive. Number two, the luxury industry. You know, that's more French, but the Italians have a big chunk of it also, in clothing and so forth. Moët, you know, champagne and Louis Vuitton in France, all of that. So they were able to become a tourist mecca, to do certain kinds of things, to get nicely paid off by being helpful to American foundations.

I'm thinking of Ford and Rockefeller, who did incredible things. I mean, took over half the university system of Europe for a while. That all came to an end at the end of the century. By the end of the century, by this new century, the United States' difficulties made them more and more stingy about what the junior partner could be allowed to get. And the rise of China whacked them from the other side by stealing their export markets more and more and beginning, which they're doing now, to penetrate into the consumer market inside Europe. There is no future. They are nowhere in high-tech science. That's now completely a U.S.-China competition, which the U.S. is losing, and the Europeans are so far behind.

It's like the military. They're never going to catch up. Mr. Merz says, "I'm going to spend \$800 billion over the next 10 years on military." The United States is now budgeted to spend \$600 billion in the next one year alone. So you're not going to catch up to the United States. I would say the same about China, except we don't know the details of how far along the Chinese are, except that it's a lot further along than Europe. So, well, they don't have the military. They have nothing. And now, let

me show you how history is very helpful here. And I'm going to take an extreme example, but it's valid, I believe, for the whole continent. Belgium is a very small country. I'm sure you've been to Belgium.

I've been to Belgium. You know, it's very nice. Brussels has that old section that is charming to look at and all of that. But Belgium is a small European country with no great resources, but it had a colony, Congo, which is arguably the richest part of all of Africa. Unbelievably fertile soil, a fantastic river that runs right through it, that makes it navigable deep into the interior where all that rich soil exists. And so Belgium could become a comfortable, bourgeois, rich European country, but it doesn't take a genius to understand that's because it could rip off an immense colonial hinterland. And the same was true of France and Germany and all the way through.

Unless, of course, they lost it. And what happens to a society if it loses those colonies upon which its standard of living, in very important ways, depended? Well, we know the answer. We have a historical example. At the end of World War I, France and Britain and the United States deprived Germany of its colonies. Okay, that had something to do with the arrival of Mr. Hitler. It wasn't the only thing. But losing those colonies, losing the war, having Europe's worst inflation ever in 1923 and 1924, followed by the Great Depression in 1929, that's too much economic trauma in too short a period. It produces a hysterical demonization, guess what, of Russia and of Bolshevism, because that was the language at the time. And what did Hitler fantasize? Hitler fantasized taking Russia.

I don't know enough about German history to know whether they had a whiteboard and they figured out how they would carve Russia up into subparts, or where Poland fit into that lovely story, or the Czech Republic, but I can assure you they thought about it. That was part of the reason they took a chance. Operation Barbarossa had that in its framework. Okay, you put all this together, and here comes my conclusion, as you saw in the paper, that the reason the leadership of Europe is hysterical—a word I would use for the Nazis and Hitler in Germany—is for comparable reasons. They had no colonies anymore. They lost them after World War I, or in the intervening period. For a while, they could hold on by, you know, French Equatorial Africa was nominally independent politically, but not really economically.

But over time, that was changed. Those countries have figured out political independence without economic independence doesn't add up to what they had hoped for. So more and more, the empire, formal or informal, atrophies. Okay, what's then left for them? The two walls, U.S. and China, are squeezing them. Being a junior partner is what they're stuck with, so that the masses of Europeans will turn against them. I think that's what the Alternative für Deutschland, that's what that represents. I think that sleazy fellow in England, Farage or whatever his name is, is the same thing. Le Pen, again, the same thing in France, and so forth. These are people who are making a political stand by saying, we reject all of that. We reject the subordination to the United States.

We should open our borders to immigrants. We're going to do something. They can't do anything. It is all bullshit. But it's the right bullshit at the right moment because it speaks to a real suffering and

a real anxiety on the part of Europeans that is based in what I think is a very good assessment of what's going on for these people. And so the leaders, to save themselves, have to come up both with a demon that they're protecting their people from, and some opportunity that might recoup their economically damaged situation. And what is that? The fantastical war against Russia that divides it up, gives a chunk to Germany, a chunk to France, a chunk to Italy, a chunk to Britain. Oh boy, all in the name of anti-authoritarianism. And that's my last point.

My whole life here in the United States, I was born and I've lived and worked here all my life, we were always taught in the university and by our media that Russia is a nasty place. Russians are bad people. Communism is the sum total of evil. Hysteria year in and year out, reaching levels of absurdity that, I mean, I try to explain this to Europeans who didn't live through it. It's very hard. You think I'm exaggerating, and if I were in your place, I'm sure I'd think it too, but I'm not. Crazy stuff. For us, therefore, the 1990s were the opportunity, just as you described it, but we framed it differently. Now there's no more barrier to making good with these nice Russian people, because the barrier has gone. There's no more communism.

Americans don't know much about communism. They didn't then, and they don't now. But that was the evil, not Russia. That's part of why Mr. Trump fell away from the Europeans and mocked them in their anti-Russianism. He is a product, like I am, of this American training, and our training wasn't in demonizing Russia. It was in demonizing communism, and that's gone. Mr. Trump sees aspiring businessmen in Moscow when he goes there, eager to make deals with him and other people like him. And he wants to make a deal. They're ready. He doesn't need to invade and divide them up. They're ready to cut deals of all kinds with him already, as they are with others in the West. They have no interest in the military adventure, nor could they do it. They're not strong enough.

What you're seeing in Ukraine is they're strong enough to keep moving, but they can't move at the pace that they were two years ago. Why? Because the Europeans got together and the Americans keep feeding them the military means to keep this war going. Imagine if Russia tried to do that, I don't know, in Italy or Eastern Europe. That's crazy stuff. That's the crazy stuff that Putin, a careful, calculating character that he seems to be, he's not going to do that. Look how long they waited while NATO moved east before they did anything. Half the reason they felt confident doing what they did in Ukraine was because they had gotten away with it already earlier in Poland and so forth. It's very clear what the situation is.

But I think the demonization and the fantasy of defeating and carving up Russia, for the leaders of Europe, that gives them a negative to be against and a positive to be for and to solve. The only problem is they probably waited too late. And so they now have internal enemies that can, and I am sure are, busy undermining their effort to do that. That's part of the reason why they cannot apparently cut off from the United States, no matter how insulted and badly treated they are at every turn. And I can assure you, because I went to the elite schools in this country, and I have personal friends all through the government, that the hostility to Europe runs very deep, is not at all limited to the Republican Party or to Mr. Trump, not at all.

There's a clear sense that we carried Europe and that we can't afford to do that, and that's the end of that conversation. We're busy elsewhere. As you put it, in the Western Hemisphere, which we are, in a sense, retreating into; the Pacific, which we will make noises about, but which we have given over to the Chinese, in fact, already. And the problems we have in Latin America are serious. And the people at the top know it, and they know that it's going to take a lot of effort to control that situation, not least because one of the major changes in Latin America is the pattern, in country after country, of developing dependence on China.

#Glenn

The main challenge, though, with this European plan, if you will, is... And I don't dispute it. I mean, the EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, she even stated it very openly, that how much easier it would be to deal with Russia if they're defeated in this war and they will be broken up into many smaller states. I mean, this is... You can't get clearer than this. But the problem is, of course, that Russia is the world's largest nuclear power. But also the Europeans—European leaders, I should be specific—they also make points that a condition for peace also has to be that Russia pays reparations.

More specifically, they have to pay back the loans which the EU gave to Ukraine, which is a way of stripping resources. And it just is a basic refusal after four and a half years to even talk to the Russians, even though, you know, they claim to stand with Ukraine and all of this, even though most Ukrainians want immediate negotiations and they know what this war is about. It's about the collapse of a pan-European security architecture. But I was wondering what else is possible for Europe, because I understand—I can understand the panic among the European leadership, that is, their economic model has collapsed completely.

There's no clarity what they're going to do. The entire European unity, the ability to talk about Europe as if it's one entity, I mean, this is also going to come into question once the US retreats and the economic model is gone. I think they're going to start to fragment more, and there's a need, essentially, for the European continent to completely reinvent itself. But it just happens to be a huge European country, more specifically, the largest European country we have on the continent, which is Russia, which has seemingly unlimited natural resources. It has immense territory and transportation infrastructure.

I mean, its physical connectivity is down to the Middle East. It goes all the way to East Asia. It can connect the Europeans everywhere, to East Asia, to China. I mean, this could be an exciting time. Also, the Russians, they have a lot of technological sovereignty. I would say that is, they have their own digital ecosystems. But instead of taking advantage of any of this, the Europeans cut themselves off completely from Russian energy. They have no interest in connecting with the Russian transportation corridors. Indeed, the Europeans seem that they want to militarize the Arctic, which could give them a very short and cheap route to Asia.

And of course, with the Russian tech, because they actually do have, as I said, this digital ecosystem, we seem preoccupied with wanting to bomb Wildberries and all these e-commerce centers. I mean, it's just, it's quite astonishing. It just looks like if we redivide the continent as we have, it cuts us off further. I mean, if we would find a common cause with Russia, or at least just work with them, talk to them, we could create a very different Europe. But I guess my question is going to be, though, what other paths do you think Europe could pursue as opposed to fighting Russia?

#Richard Wolff

I don't believe in predicting the future. I claim absolutely no skill in doing that, and I don't find any skill anywhere else doing that either. Having said all that, if you were to rephrase your question and ask me how I imagine things will evolve, then I would tell you the following. I think the rearmament of Europe, which is underway, will get support from the United States simply because it frees up money that might have been spent in ways that help Europe to be used to do that here, you know, to build up all the Patriot interceptor weaponry that is obviously in short supply these days and so forth.

And the rearmament of Europe will require, especially under the pressures that they are putting on themselves, reducing the support for social welfare or the welfare state or social democracy, whatever you want to call it. And that will produce, unevenly from one country to the next, explosive internal tension and conflict, in which trade unions and left-leaning political formations will be lined up against what the government is doing, either in degree or in kind, with a different program. Out of this, I suspect, will come a splintering process in which one society manages to control or to destroy or to undermine its working class and push ahead with the rearmament and become the darling of the United States because it's doing that.

Others won't go there, can't go there. Their working class won't permit it. They'll bring the whole country to a stop. At that point, the leadership will change. The old leaders that we're talking about, the Starmers and Merz and Macron, all that, will be swept out in the places where the working class rises. Either a working class that has gone to the right, that would be more the German model, or one that has gone to the left, that's more the French model. When that happens and where it happens, new leaders will come up with, because they have to, with another plan. What is the other plan? In a way, our conversation answers the question. They will be the ones who say what you just said.

You know, if we here in Germany made common cause with the Russians, we could participate in the development of the Asian half of Russia. We could get access again to cheap energy and reverse the deindustrialization. Well, the working class in Germany may make that deal, and the employer class in Germany, grateful for that, will shift its alliance and drop the Merzes like a stone. They'll just

throw him away as an American agent, which he is anyway. I think you'd see the possibility of a whole new organization there. And that would put an enormous new kind of pressure also on China, because China would now have to see itself not as the ally of Russia, but as a rival of Russia.

And they would have to come to terms with the Germans, if it were the Germans, say, or the French. It doesn't have to be the Germans, but it would have to be one of the major, you know, them or Britain or Italy, maybe Spain. But you'd have to have at least one or two of the big ones on your side. But I think in order to cement an alliance like that, the Chinese would be very tempted to help, and to help by sending BYD cars everywhere but Germany, by making sure solar panels are sold in Southern Europe, not so much. They do that. They know how to do that. They've been doing that already in terms of, if you ever watch where the Chinese cars are sold and where not, it's a step-by-step process of using political alliances to open a doorway.

And they would do that. And I would think the whole world economy would change, and I think you'd see pretty quickly in Europe the realization that might be a way forward: to get access to Russia, not by war, not by demonization, but almost by the opposite, by making a deal that gets you immediate advantages that allow you to win elections, like cheap energy from Russia. Imagine if Alternative für Deutschland were able to do that, Glenn. You know, were able to capture power, make a deal three weeks later with Russia, rebrining—let America scream and yell—send engineers down, reopen the pipeline. Come on, let's go.

And now we discuss a 10-year plan in which German industrialization can be brought in to help all over Russia, with careful building of organizations, corporations, where 51% is owned by Russians and 49% by Germans. They have to accept a secondary position for a while, et cetera. All of that is possible, and I think it's relevant, even if it sounds fantastical, because the alternatives are all dead ends. What are they going to do? They can't win a competition, barring something, you know, ex machina that I don't know about. How are they going to compete with China, Russia on one hand, the United States on the other? They're not in a position to do that.

They're not going to defeat the United States in Latin America, and they're not going to do it anywhere else. You know, it's just not... The Chinese already have it in Asia and are fast getting it in Africa. It's over for them. I think it's also over because the era of colonialism is very, very dead. You can't do it anymore. When you propose it, people react as if you are crazy, or you have to do it in such a way that you build the opposition. I mean, think about it with me: Israel is trying to do settler colonialism in Gaza. In order to have that project, it has to be genocidal, at a moment in history when the whole world is against colonialism for all the genocides it committed.

Even here in the United States, a country founded on a similar genocidal settler colonialism, the majority of people now, partly out of guilt about America, have shifted from Israel, the champion little country making it in the desert, to the Palestinians, victims of a colonialist genocide. And when our president gets up and talks about Greenland, mockery is basically what attends him. Ditto with Canada. Ditto. Even now, he can't pull off the invasion of Cuba. He can't do it. But this is where

they're going to focus their efforts, because here, that's their sense of where they have to go. And I don't think, really, I don't think they care about Europe at all. They certainly talk that way.

#Glenn

I think it's a lost cause as well. But this is the thing. It's the only strategy now for the European leaders, it seems, that is to be seen as a force multiplier in Washington. That is, if we can show that we're able to defeat the Russians, then suddenly the market value of Europe increases. And they can't stop talking about how Europe brings value to the U.S. But if they have to talk this much about it, then obviously they're covering up for some deficiencies here. But again, this is the only game in town, that is, show their value to the U.S. The U.S. will commit to Europe, and this is the only imagination they have towards restoring the relevance of Europe.

Building an economic model, having a security architecture, ideally the same one they had since World War II. I'm just wondering, though, just the last question: how you see the feasibility of it? Because you mentioned the Germans as an example. Of course, we have different problems across Europe. We have, in the UK, we saw Starmer has been replaced, but more or less by a clone. So it's not going to be much of a difference. Macron is also—he might be gone before too long. But you mentioned Merz, but of course he's terrified by AfD because, as you said, the leader more or less said, "Well, if we win, we're going to go first to Moscow and try to reset relations, because this is foolish."

This doesn't serve our national interest. We're going to ask for money back from Zelensky. So this is essentially national interest kicking back in. But how much? How is this possible? I don't see the political elites giving up the power. I mean, Merz, who is astonishingly unpopular, he essentially, according to British media, has been developing a secret plan to strip a lot of the German states of a lot of their powers if they win. In the Telegraph, they were referred to as traitor states in the republic because if they vote for AfD, they're not going to be reliable for fighting Russia in a future war.

So they shouldn't have the power anymore, says the most unpopular leader in Europe. I mean, it's quite crazy, but you see the same dynamics across Europe. I mean, you know, in many countries I've seen, if you only speak up against the government's policies, to make sure to nip it in the bud right away, they crush dissent, you know: smear, censor, cancel. There's not much dissent accepted overall. So how can this transition of power occur? I mean, you can only hold it back for so long before the system itself is seen as an obstacle. But then you're talking about revolution. So how may this play out?

#Richard Wolff

Well, if a genuinely revolutionary movement develops in Europe, and I don't see it... I hope it's there, and I don't see it. But if I imagine what it would look like, it would have to make that

argument. It would have to say, these are the structural changes in this economy we're going to undertake in order to get out of the dead end that's subservience to the United States and European capitalism fundamentally unchanged from its earlier colonial days. It has to go. And then the only model that they can build on now would be an adaptation of the Chinese. The Chinese game is the following: you give half your economy, particularly the consumer production sector, you let that go with private enterprise, highly regulated, highly supervised, clearly subordinate to the public sector.

And the public sector takes care of the long-term investments, the macro decisions of where this country... and they can use what we've learned from Keynesian and other economics, how to shape the demand, make sure the demand has a high enough quality to absorb all the production, and then takes the form among different industries of the economic development of this society as a whole. What China has shown in the last 40 years is that this hybrid, public and private, with a dominant state and a dominant party on top of it, that's how you grow fast. And that fast growth happened in a country that didn't use any kind of external colonialism.

They didn't do it. Xi Jinping is not waxing poetic about Mongolia. It has no parallel to Greenland or Canada or Panama or, in the case of Europe, the Arctic, or, you know, diminish Russia, carve it. Notice, they don't do it. They don't need that, because the function of that—and there, you know, I could quote you Rosa Luxemburg, because she's the first one who said it. She said, "You have to have colonialism if you don't solve your economic macro problem any other way. Then that will give you at least some time." Very prescient. When you run out—which she was writing at the time that there was no more free land—she's writing at the end of the 19th century.

That's when it became clear, through one conflict after another, here between Belgium and France, there between Germany and Russia, there between Russia and England. Little skirmishes. It didn't blow up into a war, but they were constantly happening. You know, there's a wonderful book by a British economic historian named Herbert Feis, F-E-I-S, and it was called—I made my students read it over the years—Europe, the World's Banker. And it studied how the interlocking banking arrangements funded both sides of all of these skirmishes. And they would talk to each other about the colossal war that was coming, which was World War I. And they were all writing this in the 20 years before 1914. So for me, I see that kind of a movement.

#Richard Wolff

Emerging, but only when all of the other possible configurations that might give it a little more time are shown to be either unviable or too short-term. Then you create the vacuum into which a genuinely anti-capitalist alternative could begin to have traction.

#Glenn

So, in other words, not much imagination for course correction before trying out all the other options now.

#Richard Wolff

I don't think there's much. There's not too much room left.

#Glenn

Well, Professor Wolff, as always, thank you so much for your time. I know you're busy over there in New York.

#Richard Wolff

Yes, I should tell you and your audience, the conditions for change in this country are maturing very fast. And we are all very happy about it. But we are also very aware that this is a country that has not had this experience for 75 years and is waking up to the realization that politics is more than the Republicans and the Democrats. That's a wonderful opening, and it is stimulating art and music in a way we haven't seen for a while. But it is also a sign of big changes, and the surprise to Europe may be coming from here.