# Richard Wolff: The Decline of the U.S. Empire Is Accelerating Fast

Prof. Richard Wolff discusses why the symptoms of imperial decline are accelerating rapidly in the U.S. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f Buy Diesen merchandise: https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL

## #Glenn

Welcome back. Professor Richard Wolff joins us today to discuss the United States and its trying to find its new position in the world. So thank you for coming back. I see Trump announced economic D-Day against Iran, and shortly thereafter, Scott Bessent made a comment that he can't understand why oil prices are going up. So again, it does seem absurd, but it did make me think, though, about the unintended consequences of these economic sanctions, because sanctions these days, they're thrown around quite carelessly.

Also, this is happening at a time when the U.S. economy itself is in big trouble. Not just the U.S. economy, but indeed the entire economic model of the United States, which allows it to have such an exorbitant privilege in the world. So I was just wondering, and given that also other alternatives are being set up in other parts of the world to prepare for a possible economic crisis in the U.S., or simply prepare for being subjected to sanctions themselves, what do you think are the possible unintended consequences of all these sanctions?

## #Richard Wolff

Well, my guess is that the metaphor that captures best in my brain so far what's going on is the metaphor about—and I don't even know if this is a true representation or not—but it's the metaphor of the dikes that hold back the sea in the Netherlands, and the story of the young child who discovers a hole that's letting some water come through and puts his finger in the hole to prevent the water from coming in, and then notices that the very result of his putting his finger in is that another hole opens up, you know, a few yards away, and then now he has to reach for the other hole, and then it's too much. That's what's happening here.

I think what people don't understand is that the world has now reached a point where we have a genuine global economy in which literally every part is complexly linked to every other part, either by imports or exports or capital movements, one thing or another, directly, indirectly. Therefore, any kind of major disruption anywhere ramifies because it is linked in incredible ways all over the world. This should have been understood, but it wasn't. If, for example, the world multiplies the indebtedness of a government, the indebtedness of the corporate sector, and the indebtedness of households.

And if the money is flowing in from all over the world through, say, the banking system into the borrowers, then a default anywhere ramifies right away to far-flung people who may be holding disproportionate amounts of that kind of security that is affected by that kind of a default. And then there are many other ramifications. I'm going to give you one from the recent days. With the rising price of oil, with the disruption that is crystal clear of the oil passages out of the Gulf of, you know, the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz, places like Japan and South Korea and other Asian nations have been having trouble getting the oil and been paying high current prices for that oil.

Well, that happened to hit Japan at a time when its overall situation was making it more and more dependent on funding through the yen, the higher costs coming out of the trouble in Iran. Well, they couldn't really do it with their current finances. So they began to do something which, in a way, could have been predicted, may well have been predicted, but I think falls under your heading of unintended consequences. A declining yen confronting rising prices of oil that they would have to pay for by changing their yen into dollars, or whatever currency the oil is sold in, and that would depress the yen beyond its already low level, and now that would have disruptive effects. Japan remains the third or fourth largest economy in the world. It is an export-driven economy. A declining yen raises all kinds of problems elsewhere in the world.

And this is just going to multiply. It led the treasurer of the United States, Mr. Bessent, to arrange a bizarre loan, a loan of $22 billion, if I have the numbers correct, to Japan in the form of euros to enable the Japanese to buy the high-priced oil without further depressing the yen to do so. Okay, he fixed it. But now there are new problems. It turns out that inside the politics of the United States, this can be portrayed as having not the money to take care of thousands of local problems that are very urgent here. We don't have the $22 billion for that, but we do have it to bail the Japanese thousands of miles away from a currency problem. For most American voters, this is not good for Mr. Trump's re-election, which is only a few weeks away at this point. This is very bad.

So he's trying to plug in. Give you another example. One of the things Japan was doing, trying to cope with the declining yen and the problems that Japan risks of a falling yen setting off around the world in its primary markets, was they decided to avoid having to expend more yen for high-priced oil by selling their accumulated U.S. Treasury bonds. They are the world's largest creditor of the United States. Over a trillion dollars they own of U.S. Treasuries, they started selling them. Well, again, without being too detailed, to sell them quickly, which they had to do, they dropped the price. If you drop the price of the U.S. Treasuries, up go the interest rates on 30-year bonds. A rising interest rate on 30-year bonds puts them in stiff competition with the only other 30-year instrument in this country, which are long-term home mortgages.

A rising interest rate on the Treasury damages the housing market. That's one of the most important markets in a consumer-driven economy like the United States, and therefore is a recessionary cause. You begin to get the picture. You're solving one problem, and then you're doing something which, in fact, worsens another problem between politics and economics. And again, this is something you and I have discussed. These are typical dilemmas of a declining empire. It has arranged its affairs over the years, each time solving a problem but not being aware that now you have created, by the solution, a vulnerability, so that the next problem will be a little more difficult because of its ramifications.

And we are now at a point where this is literally crashing in on us. We have a stock market that is out of control, so far rising, but the gap between that and the mass of the people who don't own significant amounts of shares, or none at all, is becoming a political problem. So the very success of the stock market is a failure in the larger political system. The only thing comparable in this country, and it is related to all of this, is the fact that in recent elections it has become clear that being supported by the number one financial lobby in this country right now, AIPAC, the lobby connected to Israel, is now the kiss of death.

It is now becoming possible for progressive candidates to build their campaign against conventional Republicans and Democrats alike on the grounds, "My opponent is supported by AIPAC." You then win the election because the people want to vote against all of that. It's a remarkable disintegration going on in this country, and it is picking up speed. As you can tell, by the way, by the number of progressives who are in the socialist DSA, or not in it—it varies—but they are winning election after election, and more and more in places where this was not foreseen. And the result is obvious politically all around us. And I should say also that it's not only on the left. The right-wing support for Trump is also cracking and fracturing around many of the same issues.

## #Glenn

It's hard to deny that all these things are happening. But what you're describing, though, it sounds like the breaking point is already here, that there is no reversal. But it appears that the main effort by Trump, though, is to, I guess, reorganize the global economic system because it no longer, well, sustains American dominance. Again, the U.S. is weakening, as you say. There's no more ways of stopping this. Well, what was done in the past, and how could the U.S. try to, I guess, restructure it in a way that would allow it to still have that position it used to enjoy?

## #Richard Wolff

Well, I'm afraid at this point, conversation is becoming remarkable in the level of depression. I don't know any other word to use, at all levels, so that you have a peculiar political irony beginning to emerge. Let me describe the irony, and then I'll go back and answer your question. The irony is that the progressive left—for reasons of transparency, that's where I am, so you are getting a perspective that comes from that part of the population here—but I try very hard, as best I can, to separate what I wish from what I think is going on. But I've noticed that if you ask me, what is the success of the progressive Democratic Socialists...

Is it a turn of the American population to socialism? No, absolutely not. Is it a clear-headed disengagement from capitalism? No, I don't think so. The closest to it is there a kind of a disaffection from capitalism? Yes. If you use language like that, yeah, you'd pick that up. But when it comes right down to it, they still assume, the progressives, a capitalist system. They really can't think beyond that at this point. They don't like how it's working, but if you make an appeal, we can fix it. That would probably be interesting. So then what is the appeal of the—why are they winning elections?

I mean, here is my answer. The left is the only one who has anything to say that sounds like it might be a solution. Vague, unworked out, yes, but there's a certain positivity about, "We can go out and we can get the government to do all these good things, and we will vote, and we're full of young people, not old people." This becomes important. And that's an effective politics because of the depressed condition of MAGA, of the president, of all of the defensive, old, old, tired—I'm trying to get across. That's what's going on here. Now, this answers your question as follows. I know because I come out of the same elite university system that the people running the government do.

Some of them are my friends because we were schoolmates together and so on. They are very depressed. They talk like this: We lost in Vietnam. We lost in Afghanistan. We lost in Iraq, and now we're losing in Ukraine. The story militarily is very depressing. The exposure two weeks ago of the condition of the bathrooms on the Abraham Lincoln for the sailors to use spoke directly to this sense of everything falling apart. The president's physical disintegration, which is a constant topic of interest in this country, is being referred to by nighttime comedians and so on in a constant talk, has led to a notion that the war in Iran is lost. That is now widespread.

Left and right agree on that. Even the middle is grudgingly acknowledging it. No one has any faith that the latest iteration of sanctions will deal with what all the earlier iterations failed to deal with. So it's depressed. It's a kind of slogging through. The only thing that animates the right wing now, the only thing, are symbolic gestures feeding the worst among them, because those are the only ones he has left: the white supremacists, the gun people, the anti-abortion activists. I mean, the headline in today's news here in the United States was the following story, released by the United States Navy, currently in the doghouse, we call it, because of the Abraham Lincoln exposé.

What did the Navy do today? It just gives you an idea. They announced that there's a new huge naval ship nearing completion, being constructed, and it was scheduled for some time now to be named after Doris Miller. Doris Miller, an African-American sailor who was a hero when the bombing of Pearl Harbor opened World War II. And the ship was to be named after him, a decision made, I believe, several years ago. What did the Navy announce? The Navy announced they are considering changing the name, not using Doris Miller, and the front-page story has a picture of this black man, a very handsome young black sailor, and replacing it by calling the ship Trump.

Okay, the level of ridicule, the level of horror that this provoked, even among many of his supporters, Trump's supporters—only the most white supremacists, they liked it. For them, this is exactly what they want to hear. The rest of the government's big announcement was ending the Head Start program. That was a program developed about 50 years ago to give young children from poor neighborhoods special support in the public school, funding teachers and programs to give them compensation for the otherwise poor school that they were assigned to.

My father was active in the United States helping to build the Head Start program 50 years ago. The disgrace in this anti-African American move and taking away the remainder of the Head Start program. This is what we have, and it depresses the population. More than anything else, it makes politics ugly and dirty and disgusting and repulsive. If you add to that the endless speculation about the somewhat disturbed young woman that is now very close to Trump all the time, every day, it is a spectacle of dysfunction. And my guess is, if they don't pull the proverbial rabbit out of the proverbial hat, they do risk a terrible defeat in November as all of this comes to a head.

Because in the last weeks of the race, the Democrats will find the courage to say some of these things that they have lacked up until this point. If not to win the election, then to reduce the appeal of the more progressive wing, which now is basking in the limelight of being the only ones with some sort of positive attitude. And when it comes to the economy, which I specialize in, the levels of problem are just spectacular. The budget for next year, which has to come out in the next few weeks, will be another deficit, probably larger than the last deficit, at a time when the ability of the United States to borrow money is a problem. If they borrow at the normal 30-year rate, they will have to pay over 5.25% interest.

That will kill the mortgage market. They can't do that, so they're going to go to shorter term. But shorter term is becoming, you know, up over 4, 4.5%. We already spend—just to give you an idea—we already spend over $1 trillion on interest. Okay, so the American people are going to be told by the Democrats—this much they'll do, I hope; they may not even do that—but the progressives for sure, because I'll write some of it, so I can assure you, they will say, "What does it mean that every one of you Americans is paying money, interest, and where does the interest go? To the people who lend to the government. Well, who are they?"

Well, they are the richest people and the biggest corporations in the country. And then comes the clincher. I will explain, as an economics professor, that the corporations and the rich have the money to lend to the government because the government doesn't tax them. The big tax cuts of Mr. Trump's first regime, and then again the second regime, give them the money, so that, having not to pay taxes, the same money that they would have had to pay in taxes, they've lent to the government, and so we get to pay it. When I'm done with that speech, you should see these audiences, and these are often people who are not sympathetic to the left at all.

As it sort of becomes clearer, the struggles that can't be resolved in an acceptable way, you get, at the economic sphere, something not so different from the war in Iran's sphere, where everything the president tried seems to not work. We were bombing them. We were missiling them. We were blockading them. Nothing at all seems to happen. President says everything is fine in the Strait of Hormuz, and then other agencies of his government explain that nothing's happening in the Strait of Hormuz. This is impossible as a longer term, and by that I mean six months to a year. He can't. He can't.

## #Glenn

I'm just wondering, though, what's a good way of, I guess, conceptualizing the problem? Because it doesn't seem like only a left-right issue. That is, it's quite a transformative time, not just for the world, but the United States as well. That is, we see that the adversaries of the United States, they're building all these economic alternatives. That is, they're building their own technologies independently of the US. They're having their own industrial bases. They're developing their own physical transportation corridors. They're developing their own development banks and payment systems. They're starting to trade in their own currencies. They're forming new security arrangements independently of the US. That's the adversaries.

And then we're seeing allies of the U.S. becoming more worried themselves about dependence on a country—not just a declining U.S., but one that's also becoming much more reckless. And even within the United States, we all see these changes. As you pointed out, there clearly are enormous economic problems. Well, the U.S. has a lot of economic resources. It's immensely powerful, but all these resources are so limited. And then, in terms of what the U.S. is trying to do, we see the war against Iran is failing, the proxy war against Russia is failing, the economic war against China is failing. Within the U.S., the tech revolution seems to be a tech bubble. The plan to reindustrialize didn't work. Reviving the dollar isn't working. The financial system, as you pointed out, is under stress. This week, $40 trillion in debt.

And then on top of it, you see growing, like, social desperation, as you suggested, the political polarization where each side portrays each other as enemies, radicalization. What else? Culture wars. And, of course, all of this happening. And you would think, you know, this would be the time for a wider conceptual discussion about what the challenges are and how the U.S. can adjust. But the president is claiming that the economy is great, the Strait of Hormuz is open, the USS Abraham Lincoln—there's no problem at all. The U.S. is winning. It's the hottest country in the world. And meanwhile, all the polls are showing that more and more Americans feel that the country is on the wrong path. So, not to ask overly dumb questions, but what would be the wrong path? How can we understand America's... this point in history? Because this isn't your average boom-and-bust cycle. This is something much bigger.

## #Richard Wolff

Well, I hate to beat the same old horse, and you and I have discussed this before. For me, the conceptual framework that I find valuable is the notion that we are living through the decline of the American empire. I believe that captures the linkage, or what connects all the things you just went through. Let me explain. I would say that the number of references to a declining empire that I see around me in the American press and in American culture today is ten times what it was one year ago. Very small one year ago, and still small, but it's ten times what it was. I am no longer, as I was for a while, one of really very few writers who's talked like that, who felt that that was, for the others, it seemed too much.

I was way ahead. Maybe that was coming, but number one. Number two, what was holding back people from seeing the decline of the empire was a view that is relevant to answer your question. The United States remains, of course, a very rich, very resourceful economic and political system, for that matter, as well as military and all of that. It would be foolish, and that is not my intent, to suggest otherwise. But that very wealth and that very resourcefulness, because it is now a good hundred years or so old, has, if you pardon my Hegelianism, become its own opposite.

It is becoming a terrible burden because it fuels, particularly in the leading politicians of both parties, a notion that we should never be deterred by the problems. Yes, of course, we have the problems, but we have all the resources needed to get through them. This is a terrible mistake. You can have all the resources. Look, if you juxtapose Iran in February of this year to the United States as military adversaries, and then you add the Israelis as allies of the United States, what is the prognosis one would come to about the probability of the outcome of that war? And the answer is, poor Iran. But it would have been a mistake.

It would have been a mistake, not because the United States isn't a military power many times that of Iran. It is, but it is a military power whose leaders are so used to muddling through, as the British used to say about their empire. You know, we muddle through. Somehow, our wealth and our resources have been able to get us through. And there's some truth to that. There is truth. You had the wealth, you built up the wealth, and the wealth saw you through earlier crises. I mean, American capitalism collapsed in the 1930s. I mean, it really fell apart for a decade, and yet it came back. It had the resources to rebuild despite the World War, and partly because of it, they were able to do it.

This time, I don't think so. I think the uniqueness of the United States and the wealth that it was able to create, particularly after World War II, is unprecedented in its roots and therefore in its vulnerability. Allow me just to summarize it. World War II was the end of the European and Japanese empires. India left Britain, and Africa left Germany, France, and so forth. They held on economically. Yes, I understand that. But basically, they lost their empires. And who gathered those empires into its hands? The United States. The United States emerges able and eager to replace the Europeans. Who becomes the big friend of India once they disconnect from Britain?

## #Glenn

The United States.

## #Richard Wolff

Who becomes active all over Africa as the French and the Belgians and all have to withdraw? The Americans. The Americans, therefore, got the benefit of being the inheritor of European colonialism while positioning itself as the ally of the colonies because, after all, it was an ex-colony itself. What a wonderful—and all of that wrapped up in the notion: we deliver democracy. We are the bringers of democracy. And so, your colonial—get rid of them. Remember, you know, the Suez Canal fiasco in 1955 and so on. We will take over. And that gave the United States, and this is the important part, it also gave them the position that the Europeans had enjoyed.

This little Belgium enjoys the resources of the Congo, arguably the richest part of Africa, an immense country with immense resources funneling all that wealth into little Belgium. Of course, Belgium could become wealthy, have a high standard of living, enjoy all that wealth. And the same with France, and the same with Spain, Portugal, Britain, and on and on and on. All of that is now—I'm exaggerating, of course—but all of that is now funneling into the United States, which, in the second half of the 20th century, is reaping the wealth cascading into it, even if the wealth pulled out of Africa was cut by half of what the Belgians did.

When you add up all the Belgians, the French, the Germans, and so on, it overwhelmed the United States, literally. Gave it an enormous boost. So it produced, in the second half of the 20th century, the absurd position of the United States: number one politically, number one exporter, number one importer, number one capital source, dollar as the global currency, all of it. But it was inherently vulnerable to the absurd circumstance that those two oceans exempted them from the horrors of World War I and II, which is how colonial Europe destroyed itself with Japan. So what we are living through now is the withdrawal of all the parts. And look at Iran. It's like a screaming symbol of all of this.

We begin our story with overthrowing Mossadegh in 1953, a lame operation undertaken by the British, but basically orchestrated by the CIA. And who gets put into place? An American choice, the Shah. That old family, pleasing to the Dulles brothers in Washington, so they put him in there, the way the State Department selected Zelensky to stick him in as the leader in Ukraine a few years ago. Okay, and then you have Iran, a generation under this crazy dictator, the Shah. He's eventually overthrown by the only social force he couldn't destroy, which was the Islamic religious community. So who overthrows him? That community, the Ayatollah and the community. And then the United States declares, well, that's not acceptable.

We didn't pick it. You overthrew us. The Shah, by the way, was whisked out of Iran and ended his life in the United States, where he was given asylum, as if the symbolism weren't obvious enough. But here's now the point: the oppressed, the overthrown, the perfect example of what I'm trying to sketch as the history is now coming full circle, that Iran has stymied the United States. It finally figured out how, by putting its missile silos underground in its mountains, et cetera, et cetera, how to get out of—well, let me exaggerate—but every other country is doing that too. Friend and foe alike are trying to figure out how to get out from under the danger. And the irony: it now looks like the whole world is against Mr. Trump.

And he looks like he's against the whole world, which he is, because the whole world is withdrawing from the position given to the United States. It's over. For the rest of the world, that is, in many ways, positive news. For the United States, it's awful. And you get a Trump who acts it out. He's going to tariff everybody. He's going to sanction everybody. And he's confident because the wealth of the United States is so out of proportion with the rest of the world that the mere threat of its displeasure should do the trick, because it always did over the last 75 years. We are living through the dismemberment, the dissolution of the world economy built around the United States, and I don't think there is anything that can be done to stop it. With one caveat.

Recently, there have been a number of statements leaked out of the American military that there are some discussions about tactical nuclear weapons. Okay, now why would you want to do that? You know that our adversaries, at least some of them, like Russia and China, for example, have all the wherewithal to deliver such weapons here to the United States. I'm sitting in New York, a prime target. Why would the Americans, why would they want to do that? Well, they are looking at a situation that is disintegrating, and they don't know what to do. They're desperate, and nothing suggests itself that they can come up with other than nuclear weapons. By the way, they talk specifically about using nuclear weapons in Iran. I mean, it might be elsewhere too. They're so much at the end of what they can imagine doing that that's where their heads are.

## #Glenn

Well, one gets the impression, though, that America's adversaries, they're able to find a role and their place in a post-American world. That is, that they're currently discussing and developing an alternative international economic architecture with their own trade and transportation corridors, finance. They're also discussing new security arrangements, even seeing some taking form in the Middle East. New political institutions, be it BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and, you know, all of this under this umbrella of a post-hegemonic movement and identities.

So you have all these things happening. And again, they are hardly a global consensus, but you see them adjusting to new realities enthusiastically, I would say. But America's allies—you mentioned the former European and Japanese empires. After World War II, when they lost their empires, they found a new role in the world. They became the junior partners of the United States, that is, nodes in the U.S. empire. You know, if you're a bridgehead, if you're the British, the Germans, the Japanese, you could have a very privileged position in the U.S. empire. So this kind of became the new role there.

But now, you see, with the U.S. decline, it comes with two consequences. One, the U.S. has less resources to begin with, but it has to make new priorities. But also, the relationship is much more extractive, as you and I have discussed before. We see these tendencies now to cannibalize allies. I would argue, needlessly humiliate them, as Trump did with the South Koreans. But in terms of their economic position, security, the ideology which has defined them, their identity, I mean, where do they go from here on? What are their roles, I guess, in the new world? As you suggested, the U.S. empire has reached a breaking point.

## #Richard Wolff

The biggest economic phenomenon that I see around me is the systematic growth transition, which is happening more and faster and with less opposition than I would have expected, is the transition from what used to be called neoliberalism to a very harsh economic nationalism. In other words, to hell with free trade, to hell with the market. The market doesn't behave properly; we intervene. Trump is buying positions in a dozen American corporations, particularly in the high-tech sector, Intel and others. He's buying huge blocks of stock. Bessent is intervening in currency markets. He's intervening in the market for U.S. Treasuries.

He's doing all kinds of things that are premised on the notion that, contrary to the complaint of the Global South, that the whole globalization, neoliberal era, say, since the 1970s, came at their expense. Mr. Trump has outdone that. No, he says, it came at our expense. He's going to outdo the Global South in denouncing that whole period as the justification for the United States no longer allowing the Europeans and others to take advantage of us. A rewriting of history that is remarkable in its boldness, given that the Chamber of Commerce here and every economics department—and I've taught in half a dozen of them here in the United States—is committed to gross, simple-minded neoliberalism.

Markets are ingenious inventions of the human mind that give us optimal outcomes or efficiency engines, stuff that is absurd on the face of it, violates the history we all know, is mathematically nonsensical. I did the math before I did the economics. It has been a religion here. That religion is being chucked in favor of a gross nationalism. It is exemplified by the decision, as a demonstration to the world of what we mean, the killing of those fishermen, now numbering over 200, in the little boats in the Caribbean. And no judge, no jury, no lawyer, no evidence. The government decides this is what they're doing without inspection of the boat. We know what they're doing. I'm viewing them from satellites, and we kill them.

This despite the fact that inside the United States, where we have laws against drug trafficking, if you are found guilty, you are never killed. It's not a capital crime. We are killing. We are showing the Latin people we are reimposing the Pax Americana big time here, partly because we can't do it in much of the rest of the world. I think my expectation is that this is going to be blown apart when the Europeans either realize that after World War II, however understandable what they did was, now they, in retrospect, they bet on the wrong horse, and that they're now suffering what happens when you bet on the wrong horse. You've hooked your fate to the horse that's losing.

And at some point, you're going to get, I expect, and you know this better than I do, Glenn, at some point, I expect the forces inside Europe to break out, whether it's the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, or the Rassemblement National in France, or anyone, who knows. They are going to break out, and they are going to make new deals with Russia and China, and that is going to force all of Europe. I frankly don't see how NATO survives that, but whether it does or doesn't, you're going to have it. It's like years ago when the Greek government, in one of its periodic crises, decided to put the port of Piraeus, which is a little bit from the port city of Athens, up for sale. And the Chinese bought it. With that, it seemed to me, wow, what a sign. And now I follow the activities of the BYD Corporation, the electric car company from China.

It is now the owner of more and more German industry. This is just a matter now, I think, of time. The Germans could have, but didn't, prevent that. It would have been costly and dangerous for them to try. They made the decision not to. I think that foreshadows the next decision, and I would not be surprised if the Germans are the ones to make it. That is an old European issue, a German-Russian alliance, and that confronts the rest of Europe with a set of—they'll have to now act. And the United States will come out, you know, it'll be lucky to hold on to Britain when all of that dust clears. I think that's coming. I think you're going to see the literal, physical dismemberment of the empire, because all the conditions for that have now matured to the point that we see.

## #Glenn

Yeah, it would be interesting to see such a shift in Germany. Again, it might seem very unlikely now, simply because Germany has become one of the most, I guess, militant and also anti-Russian governments in all of Europe. But again, when they go that far into the excess, you know, that pendulum swing will come back. And I think that's why the Alternative für Deutschland is, like, the most powerful opposition in Europe that actually wants to do something different, that actually could do something different.

And it would be good to see if it positioned itself in a way which could, I guess, create a model for a real economic model for Europe, and also one which would have an interest in saving some of the institutions and rules that we actually did build over the past decades, because it seems everything is being thrown away now. This whole open and connected world which we all built over the past decades—we had rules and institutions like international law under the United Nations, the rules of international finance. Even that, I mean, if you're a country like Russia, Iran, or Venezuela, that means nothing anymore. You see how easily that can be thrown away. The trade rules, as the Chinese experience, that means nothing. Even the free and open transportation corridors.

I mean, freedom of navigation, as you pointed out, has been replaced by naval blockades and killing fishermen. I mean, it's quite extreme. And even you see principles now which were considered to be the core principle in the liberal democratic West, which was like democracy. Now, if you're in Romania and you vote for the wrong party, they just cancel the elections. You hear the Germans doing the same. If you vote wrong, if you vote for AfD, those states might lose a lot of their autonomous position. And even genocide is off the table now. That's a little bit of genocide in Gaza, maybe Iran. I mean, everything's being thrown away. I would like to see something being salvaged, but I don't see it yet in Europe, except possibly, as you said, the Germans could be a key contender to reorganize this.

## #Richard Wolff

Let me make the point about Germany a bit more strongly. If I understand the alternative position, they have said explicitly that if they come to power in Germany, they will reopen the German economy to cheap oil and gas from Russia. They will work a deal with Russia to buy it, number one. Number two, they will stop supporting the Zelensky regime in Ukraine. All right, now you're going to go to the German public and you're going to say to them, "This is our program. You will no longer have to pay the taxes to fight a war in Ukraine, and that's going to save us—I can save you X euros a year that way."

And I'm going to drop the disastrous oil and gas prices that have created the suffering that you had, the costly bills to heat your home and drive your car and all the rest of it. That's what I deliver to you. And I can deliver it to you literally overnight, instantaneously. And that's what you get. And on top of it, if you're a right-winger, I'll keep out the immigrants. But keeping out the immigrants won't do it for them, and they know that. It's those other two arguments that will do. And then you add that if we stop the war, we also stop the immigrant population. So you get another one that way. And if you stop the war in Iran, if you stop the Americans from doing crazy stuff, then that also will prevent more immigrants from coming.

Because they all come from—not all, but you understand—the Mideast, the Syrians, and all over Europe. These are the people that are coming. This is a very powerful argument for a German public that is very—look at the polls for Merz. I mean, he is a wonderful indicator, and he's a wonderful opponent for them, having been head of BlackRock, an American venture capital outfit in Germany, before he becomes their leader. I mean, he's an American stooge. They present him that way, and he presents himself that way. And he's dropped like a stone in popularity, as I follow, in Germany. I don't know if I told you, Glenn, my mother was born in Berlin.

I've spoken German ever since I've been a child. I learned it before I ever learned English. I learned German, so I pay attention. And even if you add to them the disaffection on the far left, between the Linke Party and Sahra Wagenknecht, the two left-wingers—there used to be one party, now there are two—but you put them together, you're talking 10 to 15% of the German population easily. You're creating a difficulty for the middle that is going to be very, very hard. And they're not going to get much help from the United States. Elon Musk is going to fund the Alternative für Deutschland.

And by the way, as that happens, the middle that's to the left will join the Linke. The Social Democratic Party is hopeless, so they'll join the Linke or Sahra Wagenknecht, who's more popular, I don't know if you're familiar with her, as a speaker and as an event than anybody in Germany. It's an extraordinary, really extraordinary kind of political situation. And, you know, I was born in the United States. I've lived here all my life. The level of disaffection from the Republican and Democratic parties that I'm surrounded by here in New York is beyond anything I have seen or felt or read about in my entire life.

Nothing in the 1960s came close to what we have as a level of disaffection now. It's just incredible. It is perfectly aligned chronologically. In other words, the older the person, the less there is of what I'm describing; the younger, the more. And so, literally, time—you know, the old people are dying off. They're being replaced by the young people. And for them, you know, the Cold War is ancient history. They don't know about it. They don't care about it. They live in a capitalism which promised them a whole kind of life which is not available. And they feel it, and they know it, and they are reinforced in it on a daily basis.

## #Glenn

I actually had Sahra Wagenknecht from the left on this podcast, and I also had several people from AfD on the right as well. And that's kind of where I got—I was really thinking about the whole, yeah, the pendulum swing I referred to earlier, that because Scholz and Merz took Germany in such a militant and radical direction, all this war enthusiasm, all these horrible economic policies, a massive correction, I think, would have to come. And it's either then on the left or the right, but either way, yeah, some correction is definitely coming. So, it is a bit strange to think about it this way, but the countries that go more overboard are perhaps the ones who are able to actually mount enough political opposition to actually make a difference after all. Anyways, I think we ran out of time. As always, I look forward to our talks, and I always learn something. Thank you so much.

## #Richard Wolff

My pleasure. I value the conversation, and I value the work that you're doing. More and more of my friends and colleagues here in the United States are familiar with your programs and look forward to them. So you're helping us very much. And if I can be of use to you, bravo. It's what we call here a win-win situation.