

Richard Wolff: The New Phase of American Colonialism

Prof. Richard Wolff discusses why the new phase of American Colonialism. 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> 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. We are joined today by the political economist, Professor Richard Wolff, to discuss the massive shifts in power and the consequences for the political economy. Thank you for coming on the program. My first question was about the U.S. effort, seemingly, to reverse history, if you will. That is, the dominant position of the United States after World War II seemed to have been caused by very unique conditions. And now that this is slowly coming apart, one gets the impression that the U.S. is trying to reverse this, find a new formula, if you will. You know, adversaries are weakened, allies are made a bit more subservient by reducing their connectivity with other great powers, transferring production to the U.S. I wanted to know, though, how do you see or assess the feasibility of this project to restore the conditions for U.S. dominance in the world?

#Richard Wolff

Well, the way I read it, this is an effort that is very unlikely to succeed. It is based on a kind of... I would not hesitate to use words like panic or hysteria or fear, or some mixture of all of those, because, as you rightly put it, the whole framework of post-World War II global everything is gone. And it's clear that it is not coming back, and that, therefore, the United States, whose position has been declining—everyone knows that, including the people who insist that it isn't true. Everyone understands that. By the way, because everybody really does believe that, it would be naive of Europeans, for example, to imagine that if Mr. Trump loses the elections coming up in November, or, for that matter, two years later, that this will necessarily basically change the American attitude.

Frankly, at this point, I don't think so. Yes, the Democrats, if they win, will be very motivated to undo Mr. Trump. But just in the way that Mr. Trump was highly motivated to undo Mr. Obama, when you look closely, it's more of a continuation than it is a rejection of Mr. Obama on many levels and in many programs. So what is the loss? Well, this is not the way it is understood here, so now you're

getting my interpretation of this. The United States has to be understood as having occupied an absolutely remarkable position in the second half of the 20th century, maybe even up to 2010 and 2015. And I would describe that as being the only

#Richard Wolff

colonialist power left standing in the Western world, the European-dominated world. All the others—the British, the French, the Dutch, the Belgians, the Italians, the Spanish, the Portuguese—you can even add the Japanese, who came later, of course—they all destroyed one another in the culmination of the centuries of colonialism. They had carved up the whole world. Now, the need to expand in each case meant you bumped up against and took things from another colonial power.

That could only be resolved by war. And you then had the two worst wars in the history of the human race, which destroyed all of the empires, every one of them, leaving standing only the United States, which, because technology did not allow air war then the way it does now, meant that the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans provided the United States with a distance, with a protective way to avoid the mutual destruction that destroyed every other empire. Okay, that meant when the dust cleared in 1945, when the wars came to an end, the United States, again, to make a long, complicated story short, inherited the colonial empires of all the rest of the world.

A staggering achievement that was a fantasy in the minds of the empires of Europe, in the British Empire, in the French Empire, in the German Reich, and so on. The fantasy of a global empire was always beyond the reach of a divided Europe. But in the ironic outgrowth of the end of colonialism, the United States inherited it all. What it did, what it needed to do, and what it did, was to celebrate the end of colonialism as a political arrangement, supporting movements for independence from India to Kenya and everywhere else, while investing and organizing world trade so as to strengthen the economic ties of the colonial area, not anymore to Britain or France or Germany, but to the United States.

And it created the global economy, the dollar economy, the economy in which the United States was the major trader, the major exporter, the major importer, the major source of capital, the major source of loans. I mean, it doesn't stop. It was an overwhelming arrangement, and it brought to the United States the fruits of colonialism, which were always enormous. I would argue that the highest standard of living achieved in and by the European states starting in the 18th century would not have been possible without looting Asia, Africa, and Latin America on a consistent basis, directly and indirectly, in each of the countries.

There's no Belgium without the Congo. There's no Holland without Indonesia, and so forth and so on. Britain without India—you could go on forever in this arrangement. Okay, that made the United States unspeakably rich, richer beyond what any of the individual colonial empires ever achieved. It meant they were all subordinated because they were suddenly transformed from the dominant Europe that took over the world into the subordinate Europe that was a junior partner to the real

powerful colonialist, the United States. And the United States seemed to fulfill the role. The dollar replaced the British pound and became a global currency like no other.

The American military dropped the atomic bombs in Japan simply to mark the change. Now it was clear who was the dominant military power in the world. And that's why it made sense, in a way, for Europe to make that deal, to agree to let the United States be the military umbrella as a kind of deference to the United States that would leave it in this absurdly dominant position. It should have been understood that this position of the United States was temporary and extremely dependent on certain particular conditions that had not existed in previous centuries and would not likely continue beyond another few decades of the 20th century.

However, that was not how things played out. Instead, led by the United States, but with much complicity from Europe, it was argued that there were things that were unique and special about the United States, that it had intrinsic strengths of all kinds—economic, its political system had somehow captured democracy—the wild things that I learned as I grew up, having been born at the end of World War II, living all my life here in the United States, teaching here and writing and all of that. I know that this country was lost in a self-congratulatory self-celebration. American exceptionalism became a whole industry, with large numbers of professors getting seats in various universities because they celebrated one or another dimension of American exceptionalism.

The number of Europeans who came over to various meetings that I had to attend, where I had to listen to them reinforce this kind of idea, was painful for those of us who were critical and who knew that underneath the veneer of the United States lay all kinds of horrific conditions. By 2015, this game is over. And here's what I mean. The Europeans, led by the Germans, had recovered from most of the damage of World War II. And they were now looking to redevelop, in some sense, a Europe. They understood that being many little countries was a terrible defect. So they got together, as you know well, better than I do, to make an EU and to make a unified Europe.

But the Americans were not eager for that to happen, were particularly concerned that if it did happen, the subordination to the U.S. would then be questioned. And over the last 50 years, the United States very carefully and very systematically supported politicians in Europe that agreed with this American perspective and that presented themselves for support from the United States to become the leaders of Europe who would maintain the subordination. I include in that Merz, Macron, Starmer, Baerbock, you name it, Meloni, all of them. That's still a very powerful notion. Okay. The problem was that the very structure of capitalism was utilized brilliantly by the People's Republic of China.

When the ideological fog lifts, that will be what people write about. I suspect long after you and I, Glenn, are not here anymore, we will get a lot of books: How did they do that? How did they manage in 40, 50 years to go from the basket case that China was to what it has become? What in the world enabled them to do that? And I'm sure, very sure, that one of the key parts of all explanations will be—and I'm aware of the irony of what I'm about to say—they overcame, the

Chinese, they overcame the horribly debilitating, stale debate in the West for 200, 300 years, in which economics debated whether more state intervention in the economy was better than less, whether laissez-faire is what we should be focused on or Keynesian economics.

However it was articulated, it took different forms, but it was always the same. And it meant either that you didn't have the state play a major role—that was the American and the British solution, if you like—or you had the state play a much larger role: Scandinavia, Western Europe, but always with a kind of guilty conscience, as if the theoretical argument of capitalism meant you should be more laissez-faire than you are. Well, you have to concede a social safety net. You have to do that.

They all agreed on it. But that was all, and you wanted to keep that as a minimum because of your religious commitment to a minimal, hemmed-in state apparatus as long as you could. The Chinese did not think about it that way. They put the state and the private together without a crazy religious commitment to the one or the other. Very practical, very pragmatic, very much, let's see what we need for economic development for China and then do whatever it is we need to do, including the political power dominance of the Communist Party, which has to be maintained in order to control the economic development and not to be taken over by the crazy Western fetishization of the more-state, less-state debate.

And remember, in China, there are many Chinese today, and there have been for years, who are much taken by the economics of the West. I meet these people all the time, and they believe in neoclassical economics. They think China needs it. And I can't tell you, because I don't know, how powerful inside China that way of thinking is. But I know it's there, and I know it is having some sort of influence. So far, not so much. Okay, end result. I think that the line of development is now clear. The United States will try in every way that it can to slow down a development it probably no longer thinks it can prevent, but it can slow it down. What do I mean?

I mean that it will use what it has. And what does it have? Basically, military. And it is in the process of losing that, which is very frightening. Even the last three days, with this bizarre decision over the last weekend to resume bombing Iran, and then to say it's going to last several days, and then it doesn't last several days, and the reason looks to be what the Iranians were able to do to the American military bases in Jordan as a retaliation. So it is constantly now confronting the limits of its military power. What is therefore its plan? This is the only area where you and I haven't talked about this before, as far as I can remember, but correct me if I'm wrong.

I think you're watching another effort unfold, and I would call it, for lack of a better term, a new phase in American colonialism. Whether it's renaming the Strait of Hormuz the Strait of America, or renaming Lake Ontario Lake America, or the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America, or whether it is a direct attack on Canada, transforming it into an enemy state with a 3,000-mile shared border between the two countries, or it's snatching Greenland, or it's snatching the Panama Canal, or it's snatching Venezuela, not just its oil, or it's making an attack on Cuba. I could go on. There are others.

But those are the ones that have been in the air, publicly announced as targets of a colonial administration, a colonial takeover, an incorporation on some level. It could be a commonwealth like Puerto Rico already is. It could be another state. That's what they say for Canada. That's what they did to Hawaii. They are beginning to retreat into a fortress Western Hemisphere colonial empire. Not that they're limited to the Western Hemisphere, but here, their threats to use military are sufficient. Venezuela will not do anything because of the threat of American military intervention. Cuba will meet the United States halfway because of the threat of military intervention.

That is not going to work in the Middle East anymore. That's the bitter lesson being learned there, and it isn't going to work in Europe or Eastern Europe either. But that's what's going to be done, and you're going to compensate American business, and you're going to compensate the American mentality by making the Western Hemisphere play the role in the next 50 years that the whole world played in the last 50. You're going to continue the unique position of the United States in a more limited frame. And that's what we're getting ready to do. And it's a way for me to understand a number of smaller decisions that I had trouble understanding the reason for, but I now see it.

And the one that you and I have talked about before is the systematic killing over the last six months of the little groups of people in the fishing boats in the Caribbean and in the Pacific, on the Pacific side of Latin America, changing from boarding those vessels to inspect whether they were carrying drugs or not, arresting them if they were, letting them go if they weren't. Instead of that, summary extrajudicial killing. They're not arrested. They're given no lawyer, no judge, no jury, violating every constitutional right in the United States. And then I want to remind everyone here in the United States where we arrest drug traffickers all the time.

If they are found guilty after lawyers and a trial and all the rest, they are given prison sentences. They are never killed. It is not a capital crime in the United States to be caught engaged in the drug traffic. And yet the president and Mr. Hegseth justify killing because those people are engaged in drugs. This is a statement to the rest of Latin America, together with kidnapping Mr. Maduro, that we are not going to be held back by any legal or constitutional or moral anything. We are in a desperate corner, and we are going to take care of guaranteeing the survival of our empire to the extent that we can do it. And that means mostly the Western Hemisphere for as long as it works to do that.

#Glenn

A way of, I guess, rebuilding this dominance, or this new phase of American colonialism. Obviously, you and I have spoken before about how the U.S. is squeezing its allies—and, well, we call them allies—and taking over the production power. But in terms of adversaries, I mean, there have been a lot of statements quite openly about the opportunities if we could regime change Russia, if you could break it into many smaller nations, all those natural resources becoming available. But also, a lot of American politicians were quite open about Iran.

That is, what amazing wealth the U.S. would obtain if we could make it another Venezuela, putting all the oil under U.S. control. But we now see the Ukraine war has become a very costly affair. We also see that the Iran war is creating, well, economic problems for, I guess, many reasons. And that's what I was wondering: why are these wars? What kind of costs are they? Because it's not merely buying weapons and blowing them up. What are these wars doing to the U.S.-centric economic system?

#Richard Wolff

It's making it very, very uneconomic to maintain. And that's one of the reasons I think you need to take seriously the bombastic language about Canada or Greenland or Iceland now, too, and so forth and so on. This is—it was crazy talk. They knew it would be understood as crazy talk. Nobody else has done that, but they're determined to convert Canada, for example, into a tributary state. They would be happy to integrate it into the United States, make it the 51st state, or carve it up into three or four states. That doesn't matter. All of that can be handled, but they want it to serve the dominance of the United States. That's really what they want. And they don't want that to be limited by any Canadian objective.

For them, this is intolerable. They have an objective. They're the dominant power. Everybody has to do for them. That's what they got used to in what, you know, John Mearsheimer calls the unipolar moment. Okay, whatever about it, and he doesn't do the economics of it, but they were able to imaginatively get that idea so that it also settles in John's head because they occupied, for a while, an economic position that made that sort of rational: that they are the center of the world economy. They really were for a while. They thought it had to do with intrinsic components of the United States, and so they could rely on it to last pretty much indefinitely.

That is now being destroyed, and it is extremely painful that that is the case. If you listen to most Democrats, certainly what we call the centrist Democrats who control the Democratic Party still—Clinton, Obama, all of those people—their attack on Mr. Trump is that he hasn't gone in to finish the war in Iran. They're not against the war. They don't disagree with the objectives. They're condemning him for not getting it done. That's their view. And by the way, they don't talk about it because it's too dangerous for the moment. But that's their view in terms of Russia, too. They continue to have the fantasy you just talked about, that they can carve up Russia.

Look, and they may, if the wind changes, if for some reason that neither you or I can foresee, the situation with Russia changes dramatically—or with Iran—well, the pressure on the Western Hemisphere may be relaxed. They may be able to focus on an empire over there. Although, you know, given that the Europeans are busily fantasizing a colonial revival by taking over Russia and are acting like they really think they have a chance to do that, I'm not clear in my mind who's going to take over Iran and work at it. It's so fantastic that it becomes kind of hard, even when I try to understand how they are desperate to get out of there—Trump and all of his advisers.

It leaks out now all the time. They want to get out of there. They're trying to figure out how to choreograph a withdrawal. They talk like this: they want to get out of there the way Biden ended up leaving Afghanistan. You know, the winner was the Taliban. You lost, America. You lost. You lost. But they left, and they surrounded it with bullshit of one kind or another, and he survived it. It didn't hurt him very much, and that's what they're hoping to achieve with Iran. They really are interested in subordinating Canada. That has become a serious interest, and I would predict that when they're done, they're going to try to do that with Mexico as well.

#Glenn

I was going to say, you probably saw Marco Rubio when he was in Munich giving that speech. He portrayed the decolonization of the European powers as a communist trick or a ploy, almost. It was quite interesting that, "We should rebuild the European greatness," and he linked this very much to the empires. But given now you see that the economic foundation of the former world order and the U.S. hegemon being weakened, and the efforts to revive this is essentially backfiring, only intensifying this shift, how do you see the Chinese, though, as the principal economic challenger? How do you see them, or assess their strategy, of adjusting to a post-American world?

#Richard Wolff

I think, you know, of course I'm only guessing based on reading the newspaper and so forth. They seem to have a policy which says, rightly or wrongly, that's another matter, but their policy seems to be: avoid entanglements in any of these conflicts. By that I mean you make it clear which side you're supporting. You support them very quietly, in limited ways, by trading with them, by lending them money, by selling them armaments, things like that. But low-key, you don't make a big deal of it. You don't invite the leaders to stand on the podium in Beijing and fight the evil. You don't do any of that. Meanwhile, you put 150% of your effort and your resources to moving the economic development needle up. Produce more and more high-tech. Defeat the United States in AI or one or another application of AI. Outdo them with weaponry.

Work with the Russians. Help them develop the latest generation of military material so that you can defeat the Americans no matter where in the world they decide to make a stand. Now it's Iran. Next week, it may be Thailand. Next week, it may be Morocco. I mean, who knows? Meanwhile, though, the focus of China is economic development. And eventually, they will use their economic development to beat the United States at the very game that has been so important to the United States, and that is public relations. They will advertise to the whole world what the standard of living of China has become, and that will shake the foundation of the United States. Look, it's already doing it when the vast majority of people don't know how far the Chinese have come. They have no idea.

When I explain to the American people, for example, what the percentage of homeownership is in China, what percentage of the people have a proprietary interest in the building, in the apartment, in

the house they live in, compared to America, my American audiences do not believe me. And these are audiences that are with me, that like me, that follow us. But they will not believe that. When I describe to them the network of railroads crisscrossing China and how they compare to the dilapidated rail system we have, they don't believe it. They still live—look, half the people asked about Russia do not understand what happened in 1989. They don't know. The end of the Soviet Union doesn't, for them—even those who know that something like that happened—it didn't mean anything. Putin is just an updated Stalin. That's all. They know that. They believe that.

They are reinforced with that all the time. And that's what they believe. And believe me, the Democrats, as much or more than many of the Republicans, believe that. They are not aware of what has happened. They do not want to believe it. They are... Look, this is Karl Marx. You know, if you ever read some of his stuff, very famous lines in *The German Ideology* in which he talks about the lag. It's a language we would use; it's not his language. The lag between the reality changing and the consciousness of that reality. There are all kinds of reasons human beings block consciousness. They deny all kinds of things. They don't see them.

Even if the statistics come across their desk, they don't see it. They just don't see it. And I encounter that, I mean, I have to tell you, here in the United States all the time, all the time. And when you start talking about it, you say, look, you know, you're kind of out of date. They really don't believe it. Something has to happen. I don't know what that is. But my suspicion is the Chinese are figuring it out. They have to do a much better job of advertising what it is they have achieved. And believe me, when Americans get that, assuming they do, it will have enormous impact here because it will undercut the self-confidence of the United States that it is still.

When you see Mr. Trump or Mr. Harris, when they talk, those of us who are critics, we make fun of them. But for most Americans, this is reasonable behavior. It really is. All he's doing is trying to make the next colonial phase part of that reasonableness, because it hasn't been. Most Americans do not agree with attacking Canada. He has to make a much better case than he has for doing that. It'll be easier with Mexico, given the way people look at Mexico. It'll be easier with Greenland. With Canada, that's much more difficult, and he hasn't figured that out yet. So it's not going well. The attack on Canada is not going well.

#Glenn

Well, I just had a last question about this new phase of American colonialism, because it looks as if this could be problematic, though, because when the United States assisted in decolonizing the Europeans, it was framed not as taking over the empires, but it was all done in the language of freeing them, opening them up to the market system. Again, this liberal hegemon has been dressed up essentially as a freedom project. And it reminds me a bit of the late 19th century, because until then the British and the French, they built their empires. Well, they called them a bit like the liberal hegemons of today.

They called it the liberal empires. But towards the end of the 19th century, they kind of had to shed some of this. They went more ruthless, and they dropped the liberal part. It seems that's kind of where we're going now. But as you said, you know, the empire still has to justify the power. And the liberal hegemon was excellent towards this end. All the empire was, well, essentially concealed as globalization, you know, global human rights. And all of this, of course, was linked to a hegemon. But how do you see this new phase of, I guess, the feasibility of this new model for American colonialism? Yeah.

#Richard Wolff

Well, the way Mr. Trump has sketched it out with his advisors—and we'll see whether this survives if he is defeated, if the Democrats come in. For me, at this point, I don't expect much change. But what Mr. Trump has done is carve out that we, the United States, the hegemon for the last 75 years, were systematically abused in that role. We were ripped off. It was rigged against us. We were taken advantage of. And I, Mr. Trump, am raising my fist, and I'm going to show you that's going to stop. We are not going to be subordinated to anybody. He turns the situation upside down. He is the spokesperson for the rising up of an America which is not being a hegemon in the sense of taking over anybody. It is instead, we're not going to be ripped off.

He does that with Canada. He does it with everybody he can think of to do that. That is his—he's going to claim it with the Mexicans when he goes down there. He's going to—look, before he abducted Mr. Maduro, the major argument made was a claim, an old claim, of the Chevron Corporation and two or three other large global oil companies. Because many years ago, under Hugo Chavez, certain of their properties in Venezuela were seized by the government and nationalized. And they made claims about that. They wanted restitution. They wanted to be paid for what had been taken. The whole thrust over in the UN, in public relations, that was about correcting a terrible injustice done to the United States by the Venezuelans who took our property.

It was very important for the Trump administration to frame the activity in that way. My guess is they're going to do that with Mexico, and they're going to do it with Cuba, because it fits beautifully with, "We're not going to be taken advantage of. We're not going to allow these crooked drug dealers to move in those boats in the Caribbean. We are going to smite them," you know, almost biblical in its anger. It's the Old Testament. We are going to protect the world. And that's how you rewrite the script. Instead of the world pulling away finally from its global hegemony, dominated by the U.S. in a hundred ways, freeing themselves—if you go to a BRICS conference, that's all you hear: "We're freeing ourselves from the global dominance of the West."

But if you come here, you have it exactly upside down. It's the United States freeing itself from the abuse over the last decades. By the way, abuse by Europeans. Everybody's abusing everybody. To hear this, Mr. Trump had to—and he did, he didn't shy away—he had to portray his predecessors, both Democrat and Republican, as pushovers, as without courage, without strength. They allowed us to be ripped off. You know, it is very important that Europeans understand that. And that's all the

way up. That's how these people actually think. Everybody before them was stupid or gullible. They aren't. They aren't stupid, and they aren't gullible. They are putting America first. They think like that.

#Glenn

That makes sense, though. If the brutality is framed as standing up against injustice, then it's easier to swallow, of course. And it's not that different in Europe, I would think. I mean, if you look towards how Swedish politicians talk about, you know, the previous decades of neutrality, that was, you know, politicians being naive. These new ones who want to militarize the borders and provoke war with Russia, they know how the world really works. They will not put up with it. So it's, as you said, the script is changing. Yeah. But I guess you can see this in the U.S. with the threat towards Panama, you know, to have some control over the canal. What was done to Venezuela, Cuba, these threats of annihilating Iran, and of course Greenland. The latter is apparently the only place where it bothers the Europeans. I mean, I saw European states have now backed the genocide in Gaza.

They had no issues with installing Al-Qaeda leaders in Syria. They actually condemned Iran after it was attacked. But still, there's some effort to hold on to the whole liberal justification. For example, in Ukraine, they keep spinning this as being a fight for democracy and sovereignty. They also keep saying that they stand with Ukraine. They never explain what it means. I mean, they ignore the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians actually wanting negotiations by boycotting diplomacy. And instead of respecting that, they push for Ukraine now to conscript women as they're running out of Ukrainian men. So this is kind of what it means. But what is interesting is they still dress it up in this language, like, "We're standing with them, we're helping them," not managing a proxy, but, "No, no, we stand with them," as if...

#Richard Wolff

And I think the demonization of Russia is necessary. You have to have that against which you protest. The United States has to portray 75 years of hegemonic neocolonialism as if you were the poor kid on the block who's taken advantage of by all the other participants in the world economy, and you just don't have the strength. Yes, you have the biggest army. Yes, you're the center of the capitalist system. Yes, you have the privilege of the dollar. But at the same time, this is what they have to do. And this is their only card that they can play, given the way that they have decided to react. And I must tell you, here in the United States, the attitude towards the Europeans is an attitude that really isn't different from contempt. It is really contempt. They are now having more respect for Mr. Carney in Canada than they do for any politician in Europe. For them, Carney, they don't like him, but he's pushing back. Europeans, they just do what they have to do.

#Glenn

What is at the heart of that, though? Because I think that still perplexes many Europeans. That is, they think it's just Trump being, you know, not very polite, but then being anti-European for his own personal reasons. But what is behind the contempt for the Europeans now, though? They're divided.

#Richard Wolff

Their economies are going down. They are not well positioned in terms of the rest of the world. Anti-colonialism still haunts them in terms of the attitude of the people in their former colonies. Russia doesn't have this. Russia—here's the historic irony—when Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin, too, developed the notion, "We're going to be a union of republics, and we're going to give them their nationhood," the Kazakhs and the Georgians and the Azeris and all of that, he enabled Russia to stand up.

#Richard Wolff

More on its own as a social force. And what Mr. Trump is saying is, the Europeans ripped us off, which he believes, and they were able to do it under the guise of anti-communism. And we fell for it, not because we like communism, but because it wasn't the real issue. And so, I, Trump, I want to make deals with Mr. Putin because he presides over an immensely valuable real estate, the geography of the largest country on Earth, including vast parts of Asia, and no one knows what is under the ground there yet. And they are hooked into China. Well, these are the people I want to do business with. These are the people who are powerful. And I'm not going to sit down with France.

This is not interesting to me. It's just, if they were able to get together and be a unified, a really unified economic-political force, maybe. But as long as they're not, no. They are not interesting. They're just not interesting. And the idea that they think they can hold back the imperial colonial project of the United States, well, that's downright laughable. Trump is absolutely clear he will get Greenland. Denmark won't. And the Europeans lining up behind Denmark is not interesting. They will simply mow them down. They will push them aside. Look, if small boats begin to hassle American Navy ships around Greenland, they'll blow them up. They will.

#Glenn

Yeah, I read in some news that the U.S. already dropped off some drilling equipment for an oil company linked to Trump in Greenland without their permission. So we might be headed there.

#Richard Wolff

Yeah, that's an issue inside Greenland. That did happen. And Mr. Trump's nephew, or whoever the hell it is that's involved in it, made it clear that the Trump government wants them now to get the permission to do the drilling, et cetera. And look, what they're going to do—and Europeans better

understand this—it will be a mixture of military threats and money. They are going to go in there and buy Greenlanders who are for sale. They're going to make a promise: you're a little company in Greenland. You have 16 employees. You do \$5 million worth of business. We'll come in. We're going to make you our partner. You will immediately be able to hire 200 workers.

We'll give you the money for that, and you will become the future of mining or whatever the hell it is in Greenland, and your child will be the next prime minister of Greenland. That's how it'll be, Jack. Or you could be our enemy, in which case we're going to go to the other fellow down the street, and we're going to make him the same offer, and if he takes it, he and us will get rid of you. This is what is done all the time. This is how you do business in the United States. That's how that business will be done. And the real question is not what the Europeans say or don't say. They understand that. They're not going to make that mistake.

They're going to organize Greenlanders who are going to form an organization, maybe a political party, maybe a business association, and they will have partners in New York, and that's how this will be done. And then they'll have a referendum in Greenland, and the people on one side will be against doing this, and the Americans will pour in wild amounts of money, where they'll find, you know, the actress best known in Greenland or the athlete best known in Greenland who'll be talking about all the wonderful things that will happen if we become part of the United States. None of that happened under Denmark, and so and so and so.

#Glenn

I feel like the Europeans are repeating the mistake of Russia in the '90s. That is, after the Soviet Union collapsed, the Yeltsin government, he was so eager to integrate into a common Europe that they considered their ties to countries in the East to be, well, essentially luggage that slowed them down as they rushed towards the West. So they kind of ignored a lot of their ties with China, Central Asia. You know, they weren't really economically developed. Also, they were putting all their eggs in the Western basket.

And they thought they were going to be rewarded for this, but what they found out was that as they put all their eggs in the Western basket, they had no alternative. So essentially, the worst deal the Europeans and Americans could come up with was the only game in town, and they had to more or less take it. So again, they put themselves in this vulnerable position. I feel the Europeans are doing this to some extent because they bet everything on preserving the U.S. hegemon, where the Europeans would be the junior partners. So if the Americans say, you know, cut yourself off from Russia, China, you know, they've sanctioned this country, that country, they will fall in line.

You know, if you're going to sign any hopeless, horrible trade agreement with the U.S., well, we'll sign it because it has political significance. We can't decouple from the U.S. So this is kind of the logic. So we're cutting ourselves off from all the rest of the world, becoming more dependent on the U.S., less economically competitive, weaker. And, you know, the assumption is that, much like

Yeltsin had, the Americans will embrace us, reward us for our obedience. But instead, we make ourselves so dependent, we're just a weak instrument. We're not a force amplifier, and we have no other alternatives now. So it's, uh...

#Richard Wolff

All I would add to that is, don't forget the history. The history was that the Europeans, in their empires, had fundamentally abused the colonial people by denying them democracy. They could not elect their own leaders. The governor would come from France or from England, and he would govern the territory. We Americans ourselves, revolutionary breakers, we were governed by King George III. We broke away. Our project is...

#Richard Wolff

Political independence equals political democracy. Democracy: we will have elections, and you will have political parties, and that will make you free. And we've now had a generation, maybe two, maybe even three generations, teaching the colonial people that political democracy, à la the United States, doesn't get you economic independence. That is a whole other struggle, and you're going to have to face complicated issues about how you do that, and that's your issue. If you don't do that, you're going to be subsumed under the American umbrella, and you will have your independence, but you will never be able to chart any kind of independent course because your economic system will be controlled by five banks in New York and three corporations that have good relations with those banks.

They will make the decision to close 12 mines in the eastern part of your country, and then you fall apart. You can't do it. You can't do it. I think that that history means that the Europeans can't quite embrace American democracy, see through it pretty well, but they don't know how to break from their dependence on the United States. So the United States continues to build its economically grounded alliances and hopes that that will see it through the shifting politics.

#Glenn

Well, Professor Wolff, thank you so much for taking the time, as always.

#Richard Wolff

My pleasure. I hope that the thoughts are provocative in the good sense of the word.