

Richard Wolff: Overextended America vs. Subordinated Europe

Prof. Richard Wolff discusses how Trump's policies are failing, how the US has overextended itself, and how Europe is coming to terms with subordination and continued decline. 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](https://www.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 to the program. Today we're joined again by Professor Richard Wolff to discuss Trump's politics and how the Europeans are adjusting. Thank you, as always, for coming back on. Glad to be here, Glenn. So, you recently published an article about what you define as Trump's politics and the decline of U.S. capitalism. Now, after we've seen a full year of his second term, what do you think? How would you, I guess, conceptualize or explain what you think Trump is trying to achieve here?

#Richard Wolff

Well, I think I'm perhaps mellowing a bit—if that's the right word. I see better than I did before where he's coming from, what it is he's trying to do. And I suspect—if you allow me a moment of self-introspection—that his growing isolation, his growing difficulties, the growing opposition to him here in the United States, which is happening faster than I thought it would, even though for most of last year I thought it was taking longer than I expected... all of that is shaping me as follows. More than I understood before, what he's doing is really very traditional Republican Party politics in the United States. In other words, his difference from the conventional Republicans is very marginal, very particular—it's focused on a very specific aspect.

It's not a wholesale rejection. It's not a wholesale departure—none of that. So, what do I mean? The first priority of the Republican Party has always been, and still is with Mr. Trump, to make money for the top one to five percent of our people—the corporate executives, the employer class—which the U.S. Census says is about three percent of our population, including self-employed people, by the way. That's what this party is based on. That's who staffs all the upper echelons of the party, and that's what its priority has been: to serve them. So, to give you an illustration, the first piece of

legislation that was the real focus of Mr. Trump during his first term as president was one of the largest tax cuts in American history—the one passed in December of 2017. Enormous cuts for corporations, enormous cuts for wealthier individuals.

When you go to his second term, it's exactly the same. The first priority was what he came to call his “big, beautiful”—his words—“big, beautiful tax bill” of last April, more or less. So that's his first thing. Before he goes into his persecution of immigrants, before he goes into his tariff stuff in a major way, he takes care of his core constituency. The people who, if they do abandon him—and they are now thinking about it in a way they were not before—it's leaking out. If they do abandon him, then he will be in very serious trouble. Up until this point, they have not abandoned him at all. A third of them, a quarter of them, are still very happy and supportive, and the others are quiet—either out of agreement with him, out of a desire not to be attacked publicly by him, or simply because they have no reason to be upset with him.

But he has them. And as long as he has them—given the concentration of wealth in the United States, you know, five companies control the media and all the rest of it—he's quite secure. And he can now be, here we go, daring. Well, daring in what way? Daring in securing the support of the other part of the traditional Republican Party coalition. You might call that the mass, the voting blocs. The one to five percent—that's the core business community that supports the Republican Party—gives the party the money with which to go and put on the symbolic theater for the voters.

And that theater, which is becoming more expensive, is the ICE—a new army that can go out and hassle immigrants in a very dramatic way, attack brown and Black people, even kill people in Minneapolis. All of that. This theater, which is mostly what it is—very violent, I don't mean to minimize it—but it's political theater: his own private army being dispatched into the cities. It's not done very well. It's overshot the mark and produced an enormous backlash, which continues in this country. But it's the theater that takes one-third of the people who've been persuaded that immigrants are the problem and shows the Republican leader going further than earlier presidents dared to do, both Republican and Democrat.

And so he's showing that. Then he shows it in every other way he can—lots of bluster toward other countries, whether it's abducting Maduro from Venezuela, thumbing his nose at the Europeans, or outrageously dealing with Canada, Mexico, and Greenland. You can see these are theatrics that may or may not involve real risks of war—seizing ships in various oceans, the view, which many of my colleagues share, that he's going to attack Iran in some major way with air power. He'll do those things, but they're mostly performative, designed to get the needed voting blocs to vote for him. That's what he's doing.

The problem with that for Mr. Trump is that, while it's been reasonably successful—it got him into the White House, no denying that—and he's holding on to, well, his polling numbers are deteriorating, but he still gets about 30%, maybe 35% support, broadly speaking. But none of that addresses the fundamental economic problem. And that remains a taboo topic in the United States.

No one discusses it—and by that I mean not only no one in Mr. Trump's entourage, ever, and no one in the larger Republican Party, ever, but no one in the Democratic Party either. Even the so-called progressive wing—Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez, the mayor of New York, Mr. Mamdani, and others—they don't go there.

They're careful not to talk like that. I mean, I can talk now, and that's an achievement. The audience in the United States that people like me have—I'm not alone—is greater than it's ever been in my lifetime. I can talk about the decline of the American empire. I used to have to explain it in great detail, with lots of statistics. I don't have to do that anymore. Those statistics are now fairly well known, even by people who don't say a word the way I do about it. So we're still in a state of decline as a nation. And what that means is, the decline continues because basically nothing is done to stop it. For example, the fact that for 30 years the People's Republic of China has grown at two to three times the annual GDP rate of the United States simply continues.

Even in 2025, when growth rates around the world were lower than they had been, China still got its 5%, and we were fooling around at 2%, maybe 2.25%. It's exactly what we've had all along. The successes of the Chinese simply continue. During the last year—just to give you one or two statistics—because of the tariffs imposed on China, China was able to export to the United States two or three hundred billion dollars less than the year before, if I have my numbers right. There was a serious drop in Chinese exports to the United States. But it didn't matter, because China exported more to the rest of the world than it lost in selling to the United States, so that at the end of 2025, China was able to announce over one trillion dollars in net exports.

It's an extraordinary performance, but it's a screaming demonstration that whatever little leverage Mr. Trump thought he had by hitting China with tariffs didn't work—it really was a failure. And the same is true whether he interferes with oil going from Venezuela to China, which it looks like he's going to do, or all the other jumping on the tankers. It's way too little and way too late. So he's in a situation where whatever he does isn't addressing the actual issue, nor is there any discussion that can make that clear. And I wish I could tell you there was an opposition that understood this, but there isn't.

Outside the mainstream of American politics, there is a growing movement, but it's still very small and quite marginal to the thrust of the political scene here. And so we'll be distracted. Much as I share the horror of the whole world about this Epstein scandal as it ramifies, it has the unfortunate side effect of once again distracting the population from the bigger, more structural issues that are shaking this society. Even though it may end Keir Starmer's position in England—and we don't yet know how far it's going to go here in the United States—it's already threatening the careers of two or three cabinet members, and we'll see how much further it goes.

#Glenn

I like this idea of the failure to recognize the significant time we live in—that is, the decline of the U. S. empire—which then results in the fragmentation of the West. I don't think the basic ideas, also for the Europeans—how to readjust to a multipolar world—are really being addressed. Instead, they're looking at the consequences, the symptoms, and simply responding to those. There's something I wanted to ask you about: to what extent do you think President Trump draws inspiration from President Andrew Jackson? Because, well, I know it's been two centuries now, but he has named him as a personal hero. And as we know, just to see some structure in this policy—Andrew Jackson, you know, liked to use tariffs as a way of collecting revenue and also, of course, to give domestic companies more competitiveness.

He had the same—well, a similar—nationalist style, pushing very hard on strong national identity. In the context of his time, I guess, you know, deporting Native Americans under the Indian Removal Act. He also had this anti-establishment rhetoric, challenging Washington's norms and institutions, trying to position himself as a man of the people, but also wider than that. If you see the U.S. position as struggling against, for example, Britain and other great powers in the 19th century, a lot of the policies—such as restoring primacy in the Western Hemisphere, or his desire to re-annex the Panama Canal—fit that pattern. As we know, the U.S. backed Panama's secession from Colombia back in 1903, to then claim this territory as sovereign U.S. territory so it could connect the Atlantic with the Pacific.

Again, all of this is very important in terms of geoeconomic and geopolitical power. Indeed, after the U.S. bought Alaska, they also floated the idea of buying Greenland as a way of cementing control over the oceans and, of course, blocking Britain—now it would be different adversaries—but nonetheless, there's a lot of, well, I wouldn't call it precedent, but sometimes it reads like a bad historical rerun. Do you think he sees it this way—that the U.S. has lost or weakened during this liberal hegemonic era and now has to essentially revert back to the policies that made the U.S. great?

#Richard Wolff

The honest answer is no. I think this is very... I'm trying to think of the right way to say this. You know, there are two ways of doing history. There's the serious effort—go back, look at the record, collect the information, and try to understand how the different pieces fit together. And then there's what we would call, in the university, the condensed Reader's Digest version of all this, which reads like a morality play where adversity arises until the good people get together and vanquish the bad people. This is a veneer over what he's doing. Let me explain it a different way.

To be blunt, Mr. Trump's international game is to at least slow—since you can't admit it—the decline of the United States by using whatever power it still has by virtue of having been the hegemon for a century, by being large, and by being an important market for exporters around the world, an important source of capital, and all the rest. The idea is to use that power to convert as much as possible of the rest of the world into a kind of tributary state. Really, the model you ought to use is

ancient Rome, when all the parts of Europe had to deliver a certain number of bushels of corn or wheat, or chickens, or animals—it was all tribute. von der Leyen has to come and give tribute: “We’re going to buy your natural gas, we’re going to invest in your country, our money.” It’s an extraordinary thing—a tribute economy—and it’s done by brute threat.

If you don't do this, we’re going to hurt you. Even though the tariff is paid either by the American company importing or by the foreign company’s subsidiary—which will hurt its profitability here—or the prices will be raised for the consumer. But any way you cut it, this is costly for the American economy, which is why traditionally Republican parties didn’t do tariffs. This one does, but he has to do it both for home consumption and for foreign consumption, by telling an Andrew Jackson story. In other words, if you read what Mr. Trump actually says, the whole world is cheating us. He is rising up. All right, if you’re a little country, if you’re a corner of the big British Empire, if you’re dealing with colossal economies like France or Britain back in the early 19th century—okay, you can tell such a story.

It has a kind of plausibility. But you can’t do that now. Now you are the colossus—you can’t. I mean, the story that the United States has been cheated by everybody, every country large and small, and that instead of the United States being so inordinately rich that it can buy everything from the rest of the world while getting the rest of the world to put its savings here so we can buy everything from them—and to turn that into “we were cheated”? Only in a country with a media as docile and as craven as ours could anyone even imagine pulling that stunt off. But here it works. It works because it gives a kind of plausibility to what is otherwise very ugly. For example, when I give talks and explain what I said before—this is a tribute.

We’re becoming a society that says, “You must give us tribute, or else we’ll hurt you.” And I do it with humor. I point out that, in this country, stories about criminals have an incredible fascination—endless movies about criminals, endless books. People are just fascinated with crooks. One of the most standard images in countless films and books is this: imagine a small store—a dry cleaner, a laundry, a little restaurant—and through the front door come two gentlemen in trench coats, with bulges under their jackets suggesting they have guns. They walk up to whoever’s in charge and say, “We’re here, and we want you to understand that we need our payment for your protection.” To which the proprietor says, “What do I need protection for?”

“Who’s threatening me?” And the two gentlemen smile and say, “We are. And if you don’t pay us, we’ll burn the place down.” Then, two minutes later in the movie, they burn the place down—or beat him up, or whatever it is they’re going to do. The joke is, “We’re protecting you from us.” Well, the United States is doing that. It’s recognizable here. And when I use the metaphor, they get it, and my audience laughs with me. They see it. But within thirty seconds, it’s out of their minds. They much prefer the story of— And when I ask them, “Tell me, how is it cheating?” it’s ridiculous. The fact that you have a deficit with one country and a surplus with another tells you how the system works. It has nothing to do with blaming one of them. “What are you doing?” They don’t have any answer for me.

They don't know international trade theory well enough to explain any of it anyway. So they get the image, but they don't want that image yet. My prediction is that within six months they will—but not yet. At this point, they like Mr. Trump, and they might go for the Andrew Jackson story if it could be spun as “we were abusively treated by the British and the French and whoever else, and we were standing up the way we did in the War of Independence in 1776, and again in the War of 1812—we defeated the British Empire, and we are coming into our own.” That is the acceptable story, and that story you can tell. But when it comes to specifics, in his early first term he referred to himself as an admirer of William McKinley, another American president toward the end of the 19th century, who was also an advocate of tariffs at that time.

So, until someone pointed out that McKinley was an advocate of tariffs when he was in Congress. But when he became president, he changed his position. It wasn't that anymore. You know, he hadn't done enough work. Mr. Trump is not a scholar—never was. And nobody around him is either. So what you're getting is the most superficial grabbing at some historical character to clothe yourself, to make it all appear that it's somehow more deeply grounded. It isn't. That's why I'm going to go back—he's a conventional Republican politician. The only difference is that earlier Republicans were so concerned with holding on to the business community that they limited what they did for their voters to symbolism.

Let me give you an example. A core constituency of Mr. Trump's are fundamentalist Christians. Another group is people who love guns—they like to have guns in their cars or in their homes. Another group is people who are dead set against abortion. I could go on. These people wanted a ban on abortion. Traditional Republicans—the two Bush presidents—they said, “Oh yes, abortion is terrible.” But they didn't stop it. They just didn't do it. Yes, they blamed the Democrats for it all. But the bottom line was, you had a mass of people for whom the conventional Republicans were, in fact, the ones who took care of business but didn't give them more than a passing nod.

You know, he would invite the Christian fundamentalist ministers to the White House for a prayer breakfast. They actually do that—they love that. They sit around, bow their heads, go through a kind of Christian prayer to God for guidance and all that sort of thing. And the people love that, and the Democrats don't do it, or don't do it anywhere near as ostentatiously. But it's never more than symbolism. Mr. Trump, if he deserves anything, deserves credit—that's the right word. He understood you've got to give those people more. If you don't, you'll lose them. And if you give them enough, you'll actually win the presidency, because business will help you as it always does, and now you'll get the votes.

And that's what he did. His problem now is that, after the events in Minneapolis, the ICE army went too far, and the population is horrified. He has to withdraw quickly, because if this goes bad—and it looks like it will—he's in terrible, terrible trouble. He doesn't have many cards to play, and he's looking very bad on the Epstein issue. I mean, the level of lying he's been caught in is, you know, a bit grotesque. There are too many headlines, they're coming too fast, and there are too many

people, even in the Republican Party, who see a loss in the election coming in November and are already backing away from him, now increasingly becoming advocates of looking more deeply into Epstein.

And I do have to tell you, in case folks in Europe are not aware, the stuff is getting uglier. We're looking at something as horrible as these things ever get. That's what this is now looking like—far beyond sex with underage girls. That's bad enough, but this goes on. I'm not going to talk about it; you'll find out about it soon enough. But it's weakening him. This is not the theater his people want. They don't want any of this, and they're getting it every day, all day. And because it's got a lot of sex in it, it has that salaciousness that keeps the headline big and bold.

#Glenn

I guess it doesn't help that he's punishing Marjorie Taylor Greene or Thomas Massie for trying to push for publishing the Epstein files, given that Trump actually ran on this. They're doing what Trump said he would do, and now he's punishing them. It's a very bad look overall, of course.

#Richard Wolff

Also, he is so thin-skinned. He is so vindictive. He is so over the top. He's so unable or unwilling to work anything out without the theatrics. You know, he is theater. He's a performer. That's how he got to be president. I understand—he's going to keep doing that. It's gotten him to where he is. I wouldn't imagine he's going to change any time soon. But Marjorie Taylor Greene is now a serious problem for him, because she's gone. She doesn't support him anymore.

I mean, if she keeps talking the way she has been, she'll become a Democrat, because she's actually moving in that direction. And, you know, the others—Massie, for example—they've lost him. They didn't have many to begin with. They're predicted to lose the House of Representatives in November, and now it looks like they may also lose the Senate. Then he can't do anything. I mean, they'll effectively block him. That's the one thing the party system does: the party that's out, if they can control Congress, can basically neuter the president. Very little he can do.

#Glenn

You used the word "tributary state," and I was wondering—to some extent, it seems sensible, the policies of the United States. Well, not sensible, but there's some logic there in the policies toward Europe. That is, if the United States recognizes that the age of global primacy is over, it has to adjust to the rise of alternative or new centers of power, such as China. You know, the U.S. wants to focus on the Western Hemisphere to make sure it's dominant in its own backyard. It wants to go to Asia to contain China as the main rival. In other words, it can't focus on Europe anymore. So Europe becomes a cost rather than a force amplifier. So it makes sense, then, for the U.S. to essentially assign the Europeans the role of—yeah, that they have to pay tribute.

They become an exclusive zone. They should only trade with the U.S., ideally buy all the weapons and energy, and invest any profits back into the United States. Yeah, so pay tribute. But how do you assess how the Europeans are adjusting to this new world? Because they're taking a very different approach from the Canadians. The Europeans keep saying, "Well, now we're going to stand together, strong and united against Trump. We've learned that it doesn't help to bow to Trump and hope that he will, you know, treat us well." But it's all talk. It seems they're not doing anything—they continue to bow and do whatever it takes, hoping that, uh, their obedience will be rewarded. Uh, how do you see the European reaction, and what is it that Europe should be doing, you think?

#Richard Wolff

Well, the way I look at it—um, and I don't mean to be, how shall I put it, I don't mean to be negative—but I know you're asking because you want me to tell you what I think, so that's what I'm going to do. I think the Europeans have decided they're in an extremely difficult situation and have no way out. That's how it looks to me. What do I mean? They're now going to be a declining global area for a long time. They'll end up being an adjunct to the United States—a place where tourism will flourish, where vacation homes for rich people will be everywhere, a society of quaint historical memory in which young people will be fleeing to where the work, the jobs are, which will be everywhere else in the world, but not in Europe. That's the basic picture.

That means that because of the tribute they have to pay, and because they lack a growth dynamic of their own, high tech is not under their control. The Americans and the Chinese dominate in all the high-tech areas. The Europeans will no longer be able to produce automobiles—anything, really. I mean, they'll be secondary, or nothing, in the world of production of most goods and most services. What this means is they're going to have to preside—these leaders who are in power now, which I'd say are generally centrist or center-right in most cases. I understand there's a socialist one in Portugal and all that, but you know what I mean—it's a center, center-right kind of government.

Here's what I think they're going to be doing. Whether they understand this or not isn't clear to me. They don't talk like this, but whether they see it or not, that's another matter. So they're in for shrinkage. They're going to be a declining empire like the United States, but without the compensating factors that at least slow the process here. It's more accelerated there and will become even more so in the years ahead. What that means is they're at real risk of social disintegration. Why? Because when an empire declines—whether it's the outer reaches that can no longer feed it—the fact is, the Europeans don't have an empire anymore, and it's not feeding them.

You know, Holland doesn't have Indonesia, Britain doesn't have the empire, the French don't have Africa—all the rest of it. And not just the political independence, but the real economic independence, which wasn't possible until now, because the Chinese are there—because there really is a non-European alternative to relate to. So they're going to shrink; they're not going to be able to offset it. And when an empire declines and can't stop it or slow it, a certain kind of terror sets in. It's a terror both in the ruling class—the people who, during the empire, were able to accumulate

extraordinary wealth and extraordinary power. They are in the best position, when the empire declines, to hold on.

But the problem is, if you're successful in holding on—and I would argue that the upper class in Europe still is—it means you're going to have to offload the costs of a declining empire onto your middle and lower classes. In Europe, that means you have to dismantle your social welfare state. You're either going to have to tax the mass of people, or you're going to have to cut spending on their health care, housing subsidies, child care—all the things that Europe, in a way, became famous for, starting with Bismarck in Germany and then spreading to other parts of Europe that, at various points, did all this. You're not going to be able to afford that.

You're not going to want to tax your own people, because they're the ones with the power and the wealth they don't want to give up. And they're the politicians—they've bought the politicians. They did that long ago. So now Mr. Merz has to give speeches telling the German people, "We can't afford it. You know, it's not a Wirtschaftswunder—it's a Wirtschaft that's going into the toilet." So you've got your problem: how is this going to be managed? And now the darkness is going to get darker. How are you going to manage this? You have a pretty strong socialist history. You have pretty strong anti-capitalist political parties.

You have a pretty strong socialist cultural base that values these social welfare policies. You're not going to be able to take those away easily. My family is French, and they're not particularly political, but if you start taking things away, my family is going to go into the streets in France—and I mean that. And not just the young ones, the older ones too. So here's what I see: I see a growing split in European societies. And I want to make it clear—it's a split between the working class and the ruling class, a very classic split that Europe has had before. It's going to get much worse. And the only way the people in charge can get away with sustaining their own well-being in a declining empire is if they have two things.

Number one, an external threat that allows them to deploy nationalism as an ideological program, rather than a class conflict between the mass of people losing their social welfare and the ruling class. But ideology alone won't be enough. You also need a military—you need a police and military apparatus much bigger and much stronger than what you have now. Therefore, the ideal solution that solves both those problems is to make a demon out of Russia, one that requires you to build up militarily in a hurry, because that'll give you the military to repress your own people. I'm going to go a little farther than I should, but I want people to understand the point: this militarization has nothing to do with Russia. Russia can't take over the rest of Europe.

It would be crazy to undertake such a project. It makes no sense. They don't need it. I noticed even yesterday that the Estonian intelligence department issued a document saying Russia is not the danger people think it is. I don't know what happened—maybe something changed in Estonia—but the idea is gone. For me, I understand this as an American. And why? Because you're replicating American history. The Great Depression in the United States produced a lurch of the working class to

the left. Workers in America joined unions like they never had before. They joined two socialist and one communist party, and the unions, the communists, and the socialists all worked together.

And you mobilized, and you had President Roosevelt, who had to accommodate, because he wouldn't have been president if he hadn't. What happened at the end of World War II was that the business community was beside itself. The way the communists, socialists, and the labor movement handled the Great Depression was to punish the ruling class. If you look at all the statistics, inequality in this country dropped like a stone. They were taxed; they were forced to lend. The market was thrown away, and rationing was substituted during World War II. You really whacked the ruling class. And what did you do? You established social welfare. That's when Social Security—our general old-age pension system—was created, in the middle of a depression. We passed Social Security.

We passed unemployment compensation. We passed a federal jobs program that employed 15 million unemployed people, and on and on and on. And it was so horrible for the ruling class—here we go now—that when the war was over in 1945, Roosevelt died, the war was over, and the business community said, "We have got to undo all of that." By the way, that program was called the New Deal—Roosevelt's framework, the New Deal. We have to undo the New Deal. How did they do it? By demonizing the Soviet Union and mobilizing a perpetual defense industry that would keep the United States better armed than the rest of the world. What Dwight Eisenhower, the last traditional Republican, said we should not do is exactly what they all did.

They produced a military that could control the American empire and serve as the foreign danger that would justify a nationalism meant to erase all the socialism that had become important. That's what we did. That's what you're going to do in Europe. You're going to do it. That's why the fact that Russia is now not a communist country—how seamlessly we went from demonizing Russia because it was communist to now demonizing Russia just as much, minus the communism. Communism was never the issue. The issue was that we needed, domestically, to have that enemy—to use nationalism as the rationale for the military, which we needed to use against our own people. Why? Because we're about to take away from them what the last century of struggle got for them, and they're going to be very dangerous for us.

We're going to face serious upheaval. But Mr. Merz wants to be sure that you have an enormously enlarged, you know, Wehrmacht, so that you can deal not with the Russians, but with your own people. That's your problem. And I don't—at this point, let me be provocative. Just like in this country, we cannot face, we need to deny at every level that we are a declining empire. In a similar way, the Europeans likewise—even though they are further along in that process than we are; your empire is earlier than ours—nonetheless, we're not going to see any of that. Instead, we're going to tell ourselves these extraordinary stories while we get ready, because somewhere we understand where we are headed.

Do I know whether the leaders in Germany understand who they're going to use their military for? I don't know. But let me assure you that when Mr. Trump—and I hope the Europeans notice this—

when Mr. Trump, two and a half weeks ago, announced that the defense budget for this coming year will be \$1.5 trillion, this year it's \$900 billion. That's an increase of \$600 billion on a base of \$900 billion. We've never had anything remotely like that. What is that for? What is that for, really? You think it's against Russia and China? No. We already spend more money than they do on all of this. This is a much bigger project. And my guess is, when they sit around at the War College or the Naval Academy, they talk about what?

The city of Minneapolis just showed the American people that there's a problem—that if you bring federal military into a city, you may discover you've got a much bigger problem than you thought. And let me tell you, I'm talking to you from New York City. If ICE comes here, where we have a socialist mayor and more foreigners, more immigrants than you can find anywhere else in America, there will be pitched battles in the street. And at this point, unless they do a lot to expand ICE, ICE will lose. Even the police department in these cities is not cooperating. So you have conditions here that are going to be suggesting to policymakers the very perspective, in a different language, that I'm offering you here.

#Glenn

On the European aspect, though, it just seems like a lot of these policies are so unnecessary. That is, if the Europeans believe there's still hope to revive the collective hegemony of the political West, then these policies would make sense. If you want to prevent the rise of rivals—so you join in on not trading with China and instead trade only with the US—it could make sense. If you want to revive the collective hegemon in Europe, of course, you can continue to pursue this new Cold War with the Russians and fight to draw new dividing lines closer and closer to Russian borders. But if you recognize that the era of collective hegemony is over, then you would expect very different policies. Suddenly, the rise of China can be seen as an opportunity.

Now you can diversify. You can reduce some of this excessive dependence on the U.S., which enables Washington to treat the Europeans like vassals—just as the Europeans complain about. You can diversify, same as the Russians. A lot of the dependence on the U.S., both in security and economics, exists because we've pursued this policy for the past 30 years of re-dividing Europe, restarting the Cold War, as George Kennan said. And if we had ended this reckless proxy war against the Russians, we could have had a big trading partner and cheap energy. We wouldn't have this security dependence anymore. The only argument against it is, "Well, we have to stand with Ukraine." But the best thing you can do for Ukraine is remove it from these front lines of a divided Europe.

If you remove it from this geopolitical position as a pawn on the chessboard, you know, that's what would save Ukraine. So none of what we're doing makes any sense at all. But as you said, the only goal now is to forget about the economy—we'll just militarize. And you see this creeping authoritarianism sweeping across Europe. It's just one foolish policy after another. I just wish they would decide: either you try to revive the hegemon or you adjust to these new realities. But there

are no discussions—just slogans, talk about Hitler and the Soviet Union being revived, the Russians marching on Poland—all this nonsense that makes no sense at all. This is what's driving policy, it seems. It's quite frustrating to watch.

#Richard Wolff

I agree with you, but maybe I see it a bit more positively than you do. I don't think this is sustainable. I think what you're seeing is the last gasp of an entire generation of political leaders. Coming out of World War II, the United States basically said to Europe, "We need you as a buffer with the Soviet Union. We'll help you in certain ways—the Marshall Plan, all that other stuff—but you have to be our friend. You're in danger, not so much from the Soviet Union, but from your own internal communist and socialist parties." Remember, Greece was effectively controlled by its Communist Party, and half of France was controlled by its Communist Party.

The early government of Mr. de Gaulle had Communist Party ministers in the cabinet, and on and on it went. And you had this great fear in Europe that I don't think came from Russia—that was nationalism talking. You had to make the local communist into the agent of a foreign power, even though that was at best half true. That's exactly what we did here in the United States, where it was also basically untrue. But you did all that because the United States could go to these people—the old capitalist ruling class—and say, "Under the name of fighting communism, we're going to protect you. We'll put troops in your country. We'll teach you how to wage a propaganda war against them."

We're going to help you isolate and destroy all the left-wingers in your country. I mean, if you go back and look at everything the CIA did in Italy, in France, everywhere—in the cultural magazines, in the political parties, in the secret funding of who got money and who got shot down in the street by anonymous gangsters, etc.—that was the deal. And these are the people who got into power because they were the ones set up by the United States. They're the loyal ones. They're keeping it going. They don't want to have to do anything else. For them, it's a matter of self-definition that they are the guardians of Euro-American—whatever—democracy, whatever word would be necessary. That's why they can't see.

Of course, underneath them—and this I know, I know it's true for Germany, and I know it's true for France—there are many members of the ruling class who are eager to make deals with China, who do not see their future with the West. They see their future there. They want to be able to buy cheap Russian oil and gas again. Absolutely. And they don't hide that. So somebody's talking to those people. They know they're not strong enough yet, because the political class comes out of the American alliance and is dependent on it. Their careers were built on that. They've made countless compromises as they went up the ladder to become prime minister. All those compromises were about playing the game of Anglo-American dominance.