

Richard Wolff: The New Atlantic Hierarchy - Europe From Ally to Vassal

Prof. Richard Wolff discusses how the economics of a dying world order, the US descent into authoritarianism, and Europe becoming a vassal of a US tributary system. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We have the great pleasure today of being joined by Professor Richard Wolff to discuss the current world order being shaken. Many people speak of a possible breakup between the US and Europe, but at the most basic level, we should understand the fundamentals of the post-1945 order. So in this regard, you recently penned a great article, and this is really what I want to talk to you about today. That is, how do you – I guess if we go back to the formation of the political West – how do you see the post-1945 world order being shaped?

#Richard Wolff

Well, I believe it was shaped – if I had to pick an overview kind of approach to it – as the transition from one empire to another. Or maybe, to be a bit more precise, it was the coming to full power of the American empire that had been emerging anyway. The contestation among the colonial powers was a bitter, long process that, in my judgment, culminated in World War I, and then very quickly a kind of continuation, World War II. And the end result of those cataclysmic wars was basically the end, the absolute end, of the British Empire. But likewise, nothing was left after those two wars of the German Empire, of the French Empire, Belgian, Dutch, whatever you want to – however you want to put it – the earlier demise of the Spanish and the Portuguese, and so forth.

Out of that cataclysm, the United States came away relatively unscathed. The protection of two oceans—the Atlantic from Europe and the Pacific from Japan—and all that that meant, and the fact that military technology then wasn't good at managing distances. Or to say the same thing in simple English: no missiles yet, no drones yet. And so the oceans were very, very helpful. You know, the Americans learned that there was a bomb dropped on Pearl Harbor at the beginning of World War II for America, but that was it. No other bombs ever fell. No factories were destroyed. No railroads were destroyed. No cities had to be rebuilt.

And in fact, to make the irony richer, it was the war, World War II, that brought the United States out of the Great Depression. It was an economy that got much stronger as a result of the war, not the other way around. By the way, something that should have stayed in people's minds because it might have allowed them to imagine or at least ask the question: might the war in Ukraine do something like that for Russia, rather than be a destructive activity, or at least be some of both? In any case, the United States took off. And I should explain, I'm a child of that period. I have lived my whole life here in the United States in this fulsome period, 1945 to, say, 2010 or 2015.

#Richard Wolff

And I would call that the rise, the triumph, and the peaking of the American empire. And the only, the only—and I am exaggerating if I say threat—it wasn't a threat, but we made out as though it were a threat in this country, was the Soviet Union. It was never an economic threat, and it wasn't seriously a threat any other way. But in America, because of our nation's origins in the savage, two-century-long genocide against the native population here, people need to understand that it has left, to this day, very deep scars on the psyche of the American people. We are a country that, more than others, constantly needs a savage enemy against whom to militate.

It is a rationalization of the fact that the Europeans were the savages when it came to the people they found here, but they had to project that the other way around in order to psychologically accomplish what they set out to do. In any case, this is a period when the American empire had to be characterized as a struggle against a savage opponent. The savage opponent was the Soviet Union and the Communist parties allied to the Soviet Union, including in the United States. We should remember that coming out of the Great Depression, the socialist and communist parties became very powerful, important institutions in this country. And after the war, that became the great issue.

The business community, the religious community, every conservative community in this country went to work against communism, portrayed as an unending savagery, a kind of archaic return to dictatorial horror, against which the United States was the shining democracy bringing enlightenment. It was as stark as you could imagine. It went to extraordinary lengths. For example, I'm a product of the elite schools here. I went to Harvard and Yale and Stanford, the only institutions I ever attended. They're like Oxford and Cambridge in England and all of that. We were never taught anything about socialism or communism. If they were treated at all, it was brief and dismissive. When I tell this to my European friends, they always look at me.

I got a PhD at Yale, and I was never assigned one word of Karl Marx's writings. Not necessary. Nothing there. No critique worth thinking about. No tradition. No literature. No experience. Nothing. A need to demonize. Well, you all see it in this generation. You know, Saddam Hussein is Hitler. You know, Mr. Putin in Russia is just another Stalin. It's the need to do this. Okay, and it went finally with the notion of an American exceptionalism, that we are just something else. We are going to bring our ultimate goodness not only to overcome the savagery around us – think the colonial arrival

of Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries – we are going to vanquish them and replace them with copies of us.

We are going to bring it all. And the destruction will be the destruction of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the Communist parties everywhere, starting at home. And that's what we did. And for 70 years, the Europeans were afraid of the communists at home, remembering the importance of the communists in the opposition to Hitler and the opposition to Nazism. You know, my family, which is partly French and partly German, full of stories of all of that. I grew up with that, even though I grew up in the United States. My parents—my mother was born in Berlin, my father in France.

And so I had this cultural connection. How shall I put it? I was inserted into European ways of thinking. And the United States became the leader. It would help the Europeans get rid of the communists. It would then, with the Europeans, overwhelm—or if it couldn't overwhelm, at least contain—the Soviet Union. George Kennan: we will contain them as if they were a kind of disease around which we could build a wall. A metaphor keeps returning to American culture. And so, the reason to spell it out a little bit like this is because—and this is so crucial—I am now persuaded—it took some time to persuade me—but I am now persuaded that that period is over for the United States. We have begun a serious process of decline. It is cumulative. It's getting worse as each day, week, or month goes by.

And it has reached a kind of historic moment, I think, in this confrontation, on the one hand, with Iran, which says no and is able to make the no stick. And not only make the no stick, because in a way, Vietnam did that. In a way, Afghanistan did that. In a way, even Iraq did that. But this is different because it is affirming that a small country, relatively, a part of the Global South, an ex-colonial territory—it is that this anti-colonialist universe that we are now living in, an era a hundred years old in the making of all of the anti-colonialism—one of those ex-colonies has now stood up and not just broken away, but turned around and said, we are now going to reorder global economic development from the Eurocentrism it was to something new.

And I see it here mostly in the agony at the highest level of the United States that this little country is going to have nuclear anything, but even more, that it will determine a crucial aspect of the global oil market, of global trade on the ocean. It will decide who passes. It will decide what fee they have to pay. You know, Iran, if you think of it, in 1953, they discover they're one of those places under whose soil there's lots of oil. And they want to develop it, as everybody did at that time. But they were a colonial or a subcolonial territory. They couldn't. And then Mossadegh tried—tried to suggest, let's nationalize, let's make the oil work.

No, the big oil come—BP and all the others, Shell and all the—no, no, no, no, no. And the CIA and MI6 clean that up, get rid of Mr. Mossadegh, bring in the Shah for a generation in order to show that we in Europe will go to where the oil is so that we can run it for the whole world and profit from it. Your job will be to pay what we charge for it. And they are now going to change that. They are going to say, no, no, we in the Global South are going to do it. It is, I think, monumental. And the

incredible, incredible chaos in Washington, which has been on display in the last 74 hours beyond even what we got used to. I mean, we were having a new negotiation. It was getting better and better.

And just at the culminating point, when delegates from Iran are heading to Doha, the United States begins to bomb Iran and Israel, Lebanon. You can't figure it out. It is so crazy that you don't know quite where to go with all of this. But I think—sorry for the long-windedness—we are seeing a change. And I thought it was remarkable that when Trump visited Xi Jinping, Xi Jinping should tell the Westerner about Thucydides, the great Greek thinker who tried to understand the transition from the empire of Athens to the empire of Sparta and what that meant. And are we again in one of those moments? It was hopeless. You cannot educate that man, Mr. Trump, but it was a remarkable moment—an acknowledgment that the Chinese also understand what's happening.

#Glenn

What's interesting, though, is how the European empires were replaced. Because, again, we can trace back to the beginning of the 16th century, when the European maritime powers began to connect the world through imperial means. Of course, this was fueled again by the Industrial Revolution, giving more capabilities. But after the Second World War, both the United States and the Soviet Union framed their push towards decolonization in the language of human freedoms. But to a large extent, both the United States and the Soviet Union, after dismantling the European empires, built their own. But then we saw the Soviet Union fall. Now, well, as you're saying, I think it's quite evident that the U.S. is—if not in absolute decline, I think that's possible as well—at least in relative decline compared to the other powers in the system.

But what exactly does this mean? What would it be replaced by? Because, as you say, the Iranians are now in control of the Strait of Hormuz. They can now begin to more or less dictate how states should behave in the region—if they're going to get access, in terms of who can host bases in, what currency they should sell their oil in, whether or not they're putting sanctions on the Iranians or threatening them. But you see other places as well. The Russians and the Chinese are building or developing the Arctic Corridor. You see the Chinese developing competitive or leading technologies, new transportation corridors with the Belt and Road Initiative, new development banks, they're trading in their own currencies, new payment systems. I mean, are we seeing new empires being born, or do you think this is something fundamentally different?

#Richard Wolff

I don't know. I think where we are, though, is at a point where that question will have more power than it has had before. I think before it wasn't asked, or if it was asked, only by a few people in a fleeting few moments. I think now it'll be a little different, for a number of reasons. Nuclear war being the price of a mistake here is no minor matter, and there's a constraint that operates pretty much at all levels. Not that it can't be put aside, but it is a powerful constraint. I also see it as a

historical continuum. I think the horror of World War I provoked the effort we call the League of Nations, and the horror of World War II, coming so quickly after World War I, gave a stronger impetus to the effort we call the United Nations. Yes, they both fell apart—the League of Nations literally, the United Nations all but equivalently.

I think the Chinese will have in front of them, and likewise the larger BRICS community will have in front of them, a choice. Are we going to become, create, embrace a new empire—an empire of the East? Or are we in a position to try and do better at a multilateral global community than has ever been done before? We have the technical means to do it. We have levels of communication far more developed than they were at the end of World War I or World War II, with more to come. It's possible. Will people grasp the opportunity? Will they see it as an alternative? My hope is they will, if only as an alternative to a level of conflict and trouble that is already, at least on this side of the Atlantic, a reality. People here talk about it all the time—the level of tension, the level of conflict, the hostility in relations between Republicans and Democrats, between Southerners and Northerners.

We've had divisions all along, but they are exaggerated. They are overblown. They are wildly intense. Mr. Trump is going from remarkably broadly liked to remarkably broadly hated. I don't know how far that will go, but it's gone further than I thought it would. His own base is in serious internal conflict that looks like it will get worse between here and the next elections we have, which are only a few months away at this point. I think also that the warfare is very, very significant. I don't just mean Iran or Ukraine. I mean all the impending wars—the Taiwan lunacy, the Cuba menacing, the ongoing tensions that are building in Venezuela. And then let me pick something that might seem to you to be tangential, but I don't think it is.

For the last six months, the United States has systematically singled out and executed fishermen in the Caribbean and on the eastern coast of the Pacific Ocean in Latin America. These are little boats. They have five to ten people working in them on average, and the American military approaches them and then, either with drones or missiles, destroys the boat in the water, killing all the people involved and sinking the boat or destroying it. The president announces that these are narco-terrorists, meaning they are drug dealers of one kind or another. Let me make it clear: here in the United States, it is illegal to deal in drugs, or many of them.

If you are caught doing that, you are arrested. Under American law, you are given a lawyer. You can go to trial. You have the right to look at the evidence. You have the right to bring witnesses in your defense. If you are found guilty, you are given a prison sentence. Drug trade is not a capital crime in the United States, where we have a lot of it, a lot of the crime, but no one is executed for that crime. Whereas these people are executed—no lawyer, no jury, no trial, no evidence, no appeal, no nothing. Until six months ago, if the Navy believed there was a boat, it would stop the boat, board the boat, inspect the boat.

If it was found to be carrying illegal material, then it would be towed back to where it came from, and there'd be some legal procedure. Something became necessary for the United States to do that

it hadn't done before, blatantly against international law, blatantly against its own law. And basically, there are a few exceptions, but with very few exceptions, nobody says anything. It just happens. By the way, the people bombed on the coast of the Strait of Hormuz over the last 48 hours, the Iranians refer to as fishermen in their boats. I think this is extremely important because I think that you're getting, if you see it and you face it, and it's ongoing as we speak.

To my knowledge, no procedure has begun, neither in our courts nor in our Congress, to stop this. There is a lawsuit by the widows of the men who were killed in one or two of the boats. They have gotten lawyers and they are proceeding. I don't know where that stands. It will take years, whatever the outcome is. I want people to understand this is an expression of almost childish rage. You can't control the world the way you thought you could. You're not the unipolar powerhouse that the collapse of the Soviet Union made you imagine you would now be. You're not. You're not very powerful at all.

You can't dominate Iran, let alone the big boys, Russia and China. So this is the rage, the bitterness. We're not bound by anything. It's the law of the jungle, and the military is what we still have, we thought, and so we could prevail, and we will prevail unhindered by law, by tradition, by morality. No, no, no, no. Listen to Mr. Hegseth. He's not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he does reveal the kind of mentality that's up there, and they're going to swashbuckle their way through. The rest of the world must understand, must understand how serious this is as an experience. This is a culture that has not prepared its people to be a declining empire. It has been working without resting for a century that the Americans are the exceptional, we are God's chosen people, more than the Jewish ones who find it in the Bible.

We really are. We're bringing goodness and Christianity and everything else to the whole world in a nice democratic package. Last point I would want to make: for Europe, this has been a blunt lesson. We don't care. Same lesson that is being given to Canada and to Mexico. None of those were constraints. We are an empire that now has to put aside the constraints and go to make sure it lasts forever. It's a scream against its own decline. In that moment—last point, though—in that moment, Europe has done something that I find deeply depressing, having been kicked in the face by the United States, told that the alliance has been a burden, a one-way burden, that the United States has carried Europe all that time, which is silly. But having been told that, what did the Europeans do?

They remain slavish towards the United States while erecting a fantasy to tilt against. They have decided, after the Soviet Union disappeared and became another capitalist country like Russia has, to demonize Russia even worse than they did before. What are they doing? You have hitched your future to a horse that doesn't want you, that has kicked you, that is crafting plans that don't have any room in them for you. The joke in Washington that I hear is that in the future, Europe will be a tourist distraction. People around the world will visit Europe to look at the chateaus on the River Loire or the Schloss in Germany or the fjords in Norway or whatever. It's going to be irrelevant. It is pushing you off the world stage. Meanwhile, you demonize Russia. It is a spectacle. Anyway, that's what my article tried to get across.

#Glenn

Well, I was going to say something that reminded me of what was written by Emmanuel Todd, the French writer who predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union already in the '70s. And I thought it was interesting that when the U.S. looked like it was at its strongest in the beginning of the 2000s, he argued that it was already in decline because he looked at all this—he called it micro-militarism—and all this excessive violence, and he saw this as being a sign of decline masquerading as strength. And you can't help but see now this more chaos unraveling, that it kind of follows an expected trajectory. But I did want to ask you about the Europeans, because I'm glad you finished on that.

As you know, after World War II, when Europe had burned itself down, the Americans essentially offered an extension of Europe's life. That is, the US emerged as a powerful empire. The Europeans thought, you know, we'll hitch our wagon to the United States. And after the Cold War, the goal was essentially seeing the United States as being this global hegemon. And the idea was, you know, we'll make it a collective hegemony of the political West, which can stand on two legs—the US and the EU, and Europe. The Europeans would aspire essentially to pursue some kind of equal standing with the United States. Not something the US had signed off on, but that was more or less the idea.

But what happens now that the U.S. is coming... well, it's not coming to an end. The U.S. will always be there, will be a strong, formidable, great power. But it's not going to be this global hegemon anymore. So how do you see the Europeans reorienting themselves? Or what are the possible futures? Because I would have expected for Europe to be rational, that if the U.S. doesn't really want to be in Europe anymore, then the rational thing would be to say, okay, well, then we can abandon the bloc-based system which brought the United States into Europe. We can, you know, overcome the dividing lines of Europe.

Because Europe can only really prosper and be secure if we recognize that the largest country in Europe, Russia, also has a role. But we're doing the exact opposite—confronting the Russians, as you said, demonizing them. But by picking a fight with Russia, we're becoming more dependent on the U.S., which doesn't even want to be here. So it can start to dictate horrible trade deals for the Europeans. It can extract any concessions it wants. So it looks like a dead end. So what do you see in the cards for Europe then? Because if it can't link itself up with the United States for relevance, what is the direction? Will it essentially become this tourist destination, which they refer to in Washington, or do you see some other futures?

#Richard Wolff

Here's what I see. I think that the crucial thing to keep in mind was the response of von der Leyen when Trump threatened some months ago to raise the tariffs even higher than before, after the Supreme Court had denied him the use of the tariff tool. And he threatened Europe with big tariffs. She came to Washington, and they cut a deal. The tariffs would only be 10 or 15 percent, and she

committed Europe to do two things: to buy, I believe it was in the neighborhood of \$700 billion worth of liquefied natural gas over the next X years, and to invest that much, or maybe even a trillion dollars, in the United States in a variety of ways over the next several years. Okay, that's called a tribute system. That is as old as Methuselah. That's when one dominant country simply owes wealth out of another one.

I mean, you can tell me better than I can tell you what it would look like in European politics over the years ahead if the leadership is taking huge amounts of money out of the European economy to place investments in the United States. At a time when phrases like "deindustrialization" apply to Germany, this would be quite a spectacle. I doubt a serious politician would think that's a place you want to be. So tribute is the future that the United States has in mind for Europe. Number two, everything changes because of China. China means all these conversations have to be rethought. As usual, the capitalists are ahead of us. The major American capitalists now deal with China as an integral part of their planning. I know these people.

When they get together to work out large investment programs for the years ahead, China is right in the forefront of what they're going to do. Where are we going to locate production? Where are we going to locate warehousing? Where is the market growing? How do we handle that? The political universe, in this delusion that we're not a dying empire, imagines that it doesn't have to deal with China. It's constantly surprised that the Chinese have done this or the Chinese have done that. They don't pay attention — the political. The economic are busy making deals. You can get a sense of it with Mr. Trump, when he went the other day to China. At the last minute, he took with him the leading executive from NVIDIA, our biggest chip maker, who wasn't on the plane but met the plane, I believe, in Alaska to make the final trip into China so they would arrive together.

Why? Because the United States wanted him there, and he wanted to be there, because it's crucial for NVIDIA not to disappoint the people who have bid the stock price out of this universe, to face the fact that they now have serious competition from China. And Mr. Trump said to Mr. Xi Jinping, at least that's what's been reported, we are now ready to give you a license to get these advanced chips that NVIDIA has produced. And to the surprise of everybody, Xi Jinping said, no thank you, we now produce them ourselves. Okay, this is the umpteenth time this has happened. They're not ready. Americans aren't stupid. There's something going on here that is impeding your normal rationality.

I think that what happened to Europe was that you are governed—and I'm thinking of Starmer, Macron, Merz more than anybody else, those three—you are governed by people who, like me, are products of the rise and peaking of the American empire. The Americans have been dominant, super powerful. They can't, we call it here, think outside of that box. And they don't care how often you punch them in the nose and tell them this is over. Oh no, that's how I got to be this big politician. That's how I'm in the Élysée Palace. I've been a good, loyal, pro-American politician. Starmer for sure, Macron for sure, Merz is BlackRock. Merz is literally an American corporate character. I think they are just unable to think through any way of solving Europe's problem.

And so they've come up with a way to hold on to power. They are going to remedy the loss of American military protection. All of Trump's comments—I'm not sure, you know, about Section 5 of the NATO treaty, whether I'll come in and help you or not. And so we Europeans are going to do something about armament, because that looks like an area where we are badly deficient relative to the U.S., Russia, and China. I find this crazy. You are not going to—way too late for that. You have been a vassal of the United States for the last 70 years. You are not going to catch up. You don't have the money. You don't have the money. You don't have the technology. You don't have the manufacturing base.

Meanwhile, the United States, Russia, and China will be roaring ahead with more to throw into this process than you do. What a strange strategy. But it keeps them in power if it can be made political. How do you make rearmament, crazy as a military strategy, necessary politically? The demonization of it. You've got to have an overwhelmingly terrifying enemy. And you have spent 75 years teaching people to be fearful of the Soviet Union. Okay, it's still Russia. Okay, a little complication. It's not the Soviet Union, but it's still Russia. So you can rev all that up. And you can make sure that the war in Ukraine lasts as long, down to the last Ukrainian, in order to keep it front page that we are endangered by this thing. For me, that's what it is.

It's a political gambit of a group of leaders who do not want to face that they're patroned. The Americans are in decline. And either you come to terms with that, or you enact a proposal that it's otherwise. Last point. I have friends in the United States who see it slightly differently, and who equate Europe with Israel. Israel is also dying. It cannot survive. Israel is an attempt at settler colonialism four centuries too late. In an era of anti-colonialism, they're trying to expand their colony. It is absurd. And that kind of absurdity produces genocide. It produces Gaza. It produces a militarization that is hysterical at this point. Okay. But there's, of course, logic in there too.

What is the logic? The logic is we can only survive if we bring the United States into our military program. And so it is with the Europeans. Maybe the game here, my friend would tell you, maybe the game here is to provoke conflict with Russia as the means to bring in the United States. Much as Israel provokes conflict in one country after another to bring in the United States. It is widely believed here, among many of Mr. Trump's advisors, that his decision to invade Iran was made by Mr. Netanyahu, that Netanyahu, persuaded, convinced, has been trying for 40 years to bring the United States in to fight its Middle Eastern wars, surrounded as it is by enemies.

And now they finally succeeded, and so the Europeans think, aha, we will do it with Russia, and that will bring the United States in, because it has to choose sides. This strikes me—I don't know, of course, if this is valid or not—but I am watching the Europe I grew up in, with my French father and German mother, in a period of decline that is really very sad. I think my biggest emotion is just a sense of sadness. Europe isn't developing the technology it needs to survive. It can't do the military—that's too late. It has to trade on its intrinsic ability to be a vibrant economic and social unit, but it's not taking the steps to do that either.

To be a lame latecomer to the military race around the world, what a terrible choice for the leaders to make. I understand it's justified by the demonization of Russia, but that strikes me as crazy as well. The Chinese have made a decision: Russia is their friend. And the Chinese are in a position to help Russia in a way that no one is going to help the Europeans. And they're going to do it alone? They can't get together on anything anyway. That's half the problem they've had, being splintered up among so many countries and languages and traditions. A luxury you were able to indulge in, in part because of the colonialism that is now taking you down.

#Glenn

I think for the Europeans, though, it's difficult to appreciate the time they're living in because for 500 years they thought they were sitting at the table. The rest of the world were pieces on a chessboard—they were moving them around. And it's hard for them to recognize that they no longer have a seat at that table, that they have become chess pieces being moved around. Yeah. You know, so I think for the past 80 years they were still able to have a seat at the table because of the partnership with the U.S. But whether it was, you know, the Cold War era with the two centers of power or the hegemonic era after the Cold War with one center of power, you know, both of them put the Europeans in the camp of the dominant Americans.

And now they kind of thought, OK, we've run into conflict with the Russians. And with the rise of China, everything should be seen through the same Cold War prism. That is, well, we're a liberal democratic West, so we'll band together against the authoritarian East, as if this is the only variable. This is how they dumbed it down. I don't think they appreciate that the world has many centers of power now. So it doesn't necessarily make much sense for the United States to do this. Why should the U.S. spend all these resources in Europe at a cost, which would only then push the Russians toward the Chinese? I don't think the Americans want to finish the war in Ukraine.

I think they're looking to outsource it to the Europeans. But again, this is a... I think the more the Europeans think that if they can drag, if they push towards war with Russia, the Americans will come in and the political West will be reborn. I think it's the opposite. I think the more they push for war with Russia, the more they put themselves in a vulnerable position, more and more dependent on the United States. And the U.S. can essentially dictate the terms of the transatlantic partnership. And that means the Europeans can become the new Ukrainians—that is, they should fight to the end while America looks at other places. So, no, I think they're making a huge mistake.

I wish at least there were some debates in Europe about the path we have chosen and the paths we have not. But again, there's a strong ideological commitment to this idea that we can revive the political West if we just demonize the Russians. And I think, ironically, if the Europeans would want to become relevant, we should have ended the dividing lines, because if we could have cooperated with Russia—with its resources, its technological sovereignty, its massive territory, transportation

corridor—I mean, Europe could have a new era in the sun. But instead, we're making enemies with the largest country in the European family. So it's a tragedy, but I don't see any wiser voices appearing. Any final thoughts before we end it?

#Richard Wolff

Here's a final thought to add to this mix. Nothing stands still. You know that. I know that. The United States is changing internally also, and it is very dangerous not to see that. I'm going to give you just two or three little things. Number one, the level of inequality in this country is spinning out of control. We literally have a few hundred billionaires and two-thirds of the population in economic distress, and the distress is getting worse. One of Mr. Trump's biggest problems is that we are a culture that has developed over the last century so that where you live is distant from where you work, and both of them are distant from where you shop. And there is no public transportation in 95% of our country worth anything. Nobody uses it, bus or train.

We are an automobile culture. And if you have to have an automobile, you are now confronted with the fact that it is becoming too expensive, and you're hit by this oil price, which makes the gasoline unaffordable. And yet people have to have it to keep the job, to get the food on the table, to go to work. You are putting people under too much stress here. And there is already the sign of a massive turning away from the Republican and the Democratic parties. I'm sitting here talking to you in New York. We elected last November a young man with a beard. His name is Zohran Mamdani. He is a Muslim socialist. In New York City, if you had told me two years ago that we would have that, I would have told you that you're on the wrong planet.

That can't happen here. Why did it happen? Why did the Jews of New York City—more Jews in this city than any other in America—they voted for him too. He has said that if Netanyahu visits New York, he will have him arrested. That's his public position. The Jews voted for him too. Why? Because there's a level of alienation and bitterness about what's going on, capped now by this crazed president who, you know—the most popular phrase to describe who runs this country now is called the Epstein class. That's the attitude of the people. It's all Epsteins, you know, grubby, ugly, violent, misogynistic, rich people. You're going to see big changes in this country. Turmoil, bitterness, hostility—that's going to shape a lot of this as well.

And the Europeans are making a terrible mistake in not understanding that as well. It is an extraordinary exercise in blindness. We are becoming very authoritarian. The last two talks I've been asked to give at two different universities here in the United States, both without knowing about each other, asked me to speak about the tendency to authoritarianism here in the United States. Without knowing it, they are reacting to the killing of those fishermen that I spoke to you about a few minutes ago. They see what's happening. The private police called here the ICE are deporting people and abusing people in a way that, you know, is reminiscent of the Gestapo, which is what they are, basically.

#Glenn

No one believes they're limited to illegal immigrants.

#Richard Wolff

They are the personal police of the folks at the top. The government is subsidizing businesses, handing out trillion-dollar deals, you know, in the way that a country would that is congealing around a small group at the top. And everybody knows it. Every comedian is full of stories about Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos or any of the other billionaires that are in the news all the time. But there's a hatred for them that is not yet political, but it is coming, and it's going to change everything.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for, yeah, fleshing out some of your ideas in the article and then some more. So, yeah, troubling times ahead. Thanks again.

#Richard Wolff

You're very welcome. It's a pleasure, Glenn, and thank you for all the work you do as well.