

Blame Russia: The Lie Holding the West Together | Prof. Yakov Rabkin

If all else fails, go to war with Russia. It's an age old European strategy to keep their own population from revolting against their economic slave-masters. And sure enough, the 21st century is no exception. The elites would rather have a nuclear war with Russia than admit that their economic policies at home are ruining the continent. For this, one only needs to reactivate age-old Russophobic tropes. And here we go. Like Anti-semitism is wielded against the enemy within, Russophobia has a very specific political purpose to rally people up against the external enemy. That dynamic is now in full swing.. Dr. Yakov Rabkin, emeritus professor of history at the University of Montreal, discusses the links between Russophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, and war. He explains how stereotypes turn groups into simple enemies, block public debate, and support militarization. The conversation also covers colonial ideas, economic inequality, "demodernization," Israel and Zionism, and why diplomacy is being replaced by deterrence. Links: Yakov Rabkin website:

<https://yakovrabkin.ca/> Yakov Rabkin on Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/YRabkin> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Russophobia and anti-Semitism 00:07:11 Nazi racism and colonial thinking 00:13:25 Racism, essentialism and inequality 00:19:29 Demodernization and private anger 00:24:46 Why elites need enemies 00:35:04 Stereotypes, diplomacy and deterrence 00:46:51 Anti-Semitism, Israel and public debate 00:54:09 Empire, culture and racism

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today again with the always brilliant Dr. Jakob Rapkin, an emeritus professor of history at the University of Montreal. Jakob, welcome back.

#Yakov Rabkin

Thank you.

#Pascal

Jakob, we recently met in Russia, where we were at a conference about Russophobia, and you made a very important observation — that the stereotype of Russophobia we talked about has a lot of resemblance to the stereotype of anti-Semitism. You yourself wrote a lot about the topic of Israel, about the way Israel uses and abuses a couple of stereotypes, and we should probably discuss this one. What are these resemblances between the two stereotypes?

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, if you permit, I'll start with a joke. It happens in Berlin in 1938, after the pogrom of Kristallnacht, and two Jews meet in a street in Berlin. One of them notices that the other one has a copy of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the notoriously anti-Semitic newspaper. He says, "How can you read this?" He says, with a lot of indignation. The other replies, "Look, it gives me solace. It's so bad around here, and I open this newspaper — we are the most powerful, we control the world. It really is very pleasant." And this joke really illustrates the same thing about Russophobia. So, on the one hand, Russia is a retarded, underdeveloped, cruel entity. On the other hand, it can't win in Ukraine; it's losing the war.

But on the other hand, militarized because it's about to invade Lisbon. So you have these incompatible messages that are broadcast in the case of anti-Semitism and Russophobia. And they don't seem to disturb a lot of people because they are essentially irrational. They work on your emotions. Therefore, your rational analysis, which really is not particularly complicated, would say, well, you can't have an army that is so retarded and uses chips from washing machines for the military and at the same time is about to invade the entire Europe. And no one asks the question, why? What's the purpose? And I think this characterizes the times that we are living in. While anti-Semitism has been discredited after the Second World War, Russophobia wasn't.

And both of them originate, well, I would say in the 19th century. Definitely, the two terms, Russophobia and antisemitism, emerged in the 19th century. In one case, it was a Jewish Viennese intellectual who introduced the term "antisemitic prejudice." And Russophobia was introduced by a Russian intellectual and writer, poet Tyutchev, pretty much at the same time, in a letter to his daughter. He wrote that there is a certain—if you allow me, I think I'll quote it directly from the letter because it's interesting. It's quite interesting that he was writing in a private letter. He was saying to his daughter in 1867, a contemporary phenomenon which takes a more and more...

#Yakov Rabkin

Pathological character. It's Russophobia in certain otherwise honorable Russians. I quoted it in the original French because that's how the intellectuals in the mid-19th century communicated with each other. And it is very telling that Russophobia was first coined as a term in Russia, with respect to Russians who hate themselves, so to speak. Again, we are talking about another 19th-century term, which is more often used with respect to Jews—self-hate. So you have those two phenomena, Russophobia and anti-Semitism, emerging. Of course, the word Russophobia in English appeared earlier. What I found is that it was John Stuart Mill who criticized the government at the time for unnecessarily inflating the British military budget to counter an exaggerated threat from the Russian Empire. Does it sound familiar?

#Pascal

Copy-paste? Two hundred years and nothing changed. Yes.

#Yakov Rabkin

So, Mill stated, I quote, "The real cause, however, is one which would not have been convenient to evoke. The ministers are smitten with the epidemic disease of Russophobia."

#Pascal

You know, we've discussed this a lot, and it is really fascinating that you have, again and again, these stereotypes coming up, right? Of what the Russian is, the Russian and the Jew. These are quite important figures—straw man stereotypes—in order to ratchet up political favor on the other side to then counter that, right? That's also what the joke you quoted alludes to, right? So you need to create something that is at the same time ridiculous but scary. What other kinds of parallels are there, and do you think that this contemporaneous nature of the two stereotypes is coincidental, or do they actually go together? Because, like, Russia, the lands of Russia and the Slavic lands were, of course, also largely populated with quite a big proportion of Jews compared to, let's say, Western Europe at the time.

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, definitely. And if we look at the hatred of the Jews, anti-Semitism and Russophobia, they merged in the minds of the Nazis.

#Pascal

Hmm.

#Yakov Rabkin

Because they were fighting against Judeo-Bolsheviks. For them, Bolsheviks were Russian, and the way they presented Russians—and of course, they rarely used the term "Soviet." They used "Russian" when they were invading the Soviet Union. They considered the Russians as Mongols, Asiatic hordes, and they said they attacked the Russians so that they should not invade the pristine, cultured Europe. So the whole idea of attacking the Soviet Union was wrapped in Russophobia and, of course, anti-Semitism.

And the orders that the German military received as they invaded the Soviet Union were, well, it's going to be a different war. It's not the same war that you waged in France. Here, it's a Vernichtungskrieg. That's the extermination war. And they were quite true. For once, they didn't

mislead anyone because, and this is very important, there were at least 10 million Slavs—Russians, Poles, others—who were killed by the Nazis, civilian Slavs. But somehow, it passes under the radar of our historical memory. We focus on the 6 million murdered Jews.

#Pascal

Six million.

#Yakov Rabkin

Yeah, six million. But we somehow forget about the others who were, well, the Gypsies. But today we are talking about Russophobia, so I'm putting emphasis on the extermination of the Slavic population. And that Slavic population had to be exterminated because they were presented as untermenschen, as an inferior kind of people. And moreover, these so-called untermenschen had to be eliminated because the fertile lands were to be colonized by German peasants, and they didn't need so much labor there. So you have to exterminate the population to make room for the onset of civilization. That's how it was presented. And I think it is very important to understand the, I would say, equal opportunity genocide that existed during the Second World War.

#Pascal

You're putting it into very provocative words, but equal opportunity genocide being then, of course, the genociding of everybody on these lands, right? Not just the Jews. I mean, you get rid of the others too. And in a very sad way, this is, you know, it's not that different from this idea of Lebensraum in America, of the West, of manifest destiny. That's where one is supposed to go. And over there, the result that we see is, of course, the one that was described by Hitler for the East, with a completely new population then taking over the lands and today living on those lands. So in a very sad sense, what we're seeing is just a continuation of the European approach to colonizing lands, don't we?

#Yakov Rabkin

True. In fact, the first genocide that the Germans committed was not even in Europe. It was in Southwest Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. Right. But that didn't register in the collective memory of Europe.

#Pascal

In Namibia, right? The Namibian genocide.

#Yakov Rabkin

Very, very little. So I think that the colonial attitude, the racist attitude, is very deeply ingrained in European history. We talk about, even though today often you hear that American troops were fighting against forces of racism in Europe, well, the American army was segregated. And when, I think it was de Gaulle who asked Eisenhower at the liberation of Paris that the French units should be the first to enter Paris rather than the Americans, the answer was, okay, provided they're white. And there weren't too many white Frenchmen in the army at that time.

#Pascal

The racism at the core of these kinds of European projects, be it whichever it is, is quite staggering. And the thing, though, is that the memory about it today tries to portray everything as an anti-racist struggle, when in fact, if we look at the sources, as you're doing, you see, like, no, there was racism on all sides embedded in it. Do you think, though, that the racism—because one of the things that we also came to, of course, in the conference—is that Russophobia, just like anti-Semitism, is a form of racism. Do you think that these two types of racism, though, kind of stand out, or not stand out, but are different from, like, let's say, the racism against Blacks or against Asians? Or are they more or less the same?

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I tend to think that racism includes different kinds of discrimination and negative attitudes and so on. And it's based on essentialism. What is essentialism? When you ascribe certain qualities, properties, certain modes of behavior to groups, and you say, well, Jews are—and then you put adjectives that you like. And the Russians are so-and-so. And the Blacks are—you know, it's the same thing. Now, the good question is, why did the murder of Jews attract so much attention, whereas the murder of other people in Europe and outside of Europe didn't? It didn't. And I think that here, I think it was Aimé Césaire, a Martinican intellectual, who wrote in 1955—and I'm paraphrasing—he said, the reason we focus so much on the Holocaust is that for the first time, mass murder of Europeans took place, whereas in previous cases in Africa, Asia, Latin America, they were killing non-Europeans and no one paid attention.

#Pascal

But that definition of his actually excludes the Slavs from the group of Europeans too, right? Because they are Europeans, and he forgets about those as well, as you just pointed out earlier.

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, you see, all these categories are social constructs.

#Pascal

Yes, of course.

#Yakov Rabkin

So, of course, both Jews and Slavs were presented, and the Russians were presented as Asians. And that was very easy. Actually, if you look at the propaganda films during the Nazi period, they chose Soviet soldiers from Central Asia, prisoners of war, to show, well, these are the Asiatic hordes that we're facing. So they were really presenting them as non-European, as Asians. And of course, at that time, and I would say till today, this kind of exclusion appears legitimate because, look, the way immigrants are hunted in the United States—it's largely racial profiling. I mean, that's very clear how it works.

Also, the war on terror that was inaugurated in 2001 had a lot of racist overtones. And today, I think racism is flourishing to a large extent because of, I would say, macroeconomic and macrosocial issues. Now, we are talking about a world in which 17 individuals hold as much wealth as one half of the Earth's population. This kind of inequality definitely undermines any pretense of democracy. You cannot have a democracy with this kind of polarized economic situation. And that explains why people who are frustrated, who are unhappy, their anger is directed toward the other. And the other could be a Jew.

It could be a Russian, it could be an Arab, it could be a Muslim. In other words, this is a manifestation of a phenomenon that I believe I outlined in the book **Demodernization**, and that's what we talked about at the conference. You cannot detach it. The way to look at both anti-Semitism and Russophobia is to see them in the context of a very serious crisis that makes people susceptible to this kind of scapegoating. See, you scapegoat because you prevent the masses from acquiring a certain class consciousness and directing their anger at the exploiters, not at people who are even more exploited than themselves.

#Pascal

We definitely need to discuss this. And, you know, I will also ask you about the political abuse of all of this, because what you just described now, you know, the psychological element of this, I think, is intuitively kind of easy to grasp—why then, on an individual level, people start taking refuge in racism in order to deal with problems in their lives. But what you also allude to—let's maybe discuss the political use of racism later—but what you also alluded to is this very important issue of demodernization, which you discussed brilliantly in that conference.

And with demodernization, if I remember correctly, what you mean is all of these kinds of modern concepts that we developed, especially within liberal democratic societies and so on, that are now bit by bit being undone or turned into their opposite. And I think recently we're seeing another one of these—for instance, this chat control in the European Union, which is the reversal of the secrecy and privacy of the letter, of messages, of communication between people. Can you maybe speak a little

bit also about this demodernization and in what sense it is a reflection of the tremendous crisis the West is currently going through?

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I think after the Second World War, there was an awareness that the world was changing and we had to improve the world. And that was the awareness in the context of the Cold War, when formerly colonized countries were acquiring independence and choosing a way to modernize. So there was a proliferation of modernization theories, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union. But they were, to a large extent, similar because they were preaching reducing economic inequality, education, healthcare, rational debate, informing policies—all of these good things were supposed to help the new nations develop and become self-sustaining. Except that, of course, Americans privileged private property, while the Soviets were talking about a socialist mode of production, but in other ways, they were very similar.

Now, when in the late 80s you observe the beginning of this rapid polarization in terms of income and wealth, you see that many of these features begin to decline. And again, what happened in the former Soviet Union is perhaps more graphic because it happened more rapidly. But the same phenomenon happened elsewhere. What happened very rapidly, of course, is the pauperization of the population and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a handful of people in today's Russia, Ukraine, Central Asian republics, and so on. So the masses are pauperized, and a very small group of people become ultra-rich, in a society where there was really no economic stratification to talk about—very little of it, at least.

And in the Soviet Union, particularly in the former Soviet Union in the 90s, you have a proliferation of all kinds of irrational beliefs, all kinds of gurus that appear on television and promise you happiness. It had never existed there, but it erupted because there was a need for an irrational explanation of what is going on. And there was also a privatization, not only of industry, but also a privatization of anger. Rather than—well, let me explain—rather than acquiring a class consciousness and saying, well, you're being exploited, someone is stealing the wealth you developed, it says, no, you have to look into yourself and develop psychologically. In other words, it's all a private issue. It's not a social or political issue. You're turning it towards yourself.

#Pascal

You need the wealth mindset. If you've got the right mindset, money will come. If you don't have money, you don't have the right mindset. That's kind of scapegoating the victims, right?

#Yakov Rabkin

Right. So it's called the privatization of anger. So it becomes a private issue. It's no longer a class issue. It's no longer a political issue. It's no longer a tax issue, because people talk about this

economic injustice as if it is a natural phenomenon, you know, just happened. It's a tsunami. Well, you're in Japan, so a tsunami happened—nothing you can do about it. But that's not the case. This polarization is handmade. It's made by people who profit from it. And these people have to be kept accountable. And racism, antisemitism, Russophobia are precisely the means to prevent this accounting.

#Pascal

So perfect. In order to now talk about the political use of these concepts, right? And we've had other discussions. Alexander Mercouris gave a very good presentation on how this Russophobic stereotype has been used time and time again, especially in British literature. He also gave counterexamples because Russophobia and antisemitism are never total, right? You will always find counterexamples of people who will speak well about that group. But you also find the undercurrent.

And the thesis there is that the undercurrent is very much politically motivated because it fulfills a purpose. And you're saying one of the purposes is to prevent a class consciousness from emerging, right? But on the other hand, we also see people who clearly have a desire to resolve certain issues through war, and they use it as a pro-war narrative. Can we maybe speak about that a bit, and how, again, Russophobia, antisemitism, and maybe also Islamophobia these days are playing into exactly that kind of understanding of where the enemy is?

#Yakov Rabkin

Yes, and I will bridge from what I just said into what you're asking me. It's precisely because there is an economic crisis that they are seeking war. It's precisely because of that, that the only way they think they can lift Europe in particular, but also the United States, from the crisis of the political West is by militarization. And for militarization, you need the enemy. And the enemy is, of course, Russia. It doesn't take much because the decades of the Cold War presented the Soviet Union as Russian, and it was menacing. But again, in both cases, in the Cold War and what's happening today, there was no rational debate. It was assumed that Stalin was about to invade the entire Europe.

And therefore, as early as August 1945, General Patton was writing to his wife that Russians are underdeveloped and he is not interested in understanding them. He is only interested in knowing how much steel it takes to kill one. We're talking about August '45, when the Soviet Union was an ally of the United States. Actually, if I remember correctly, it's the 8th of August. And it's a very telling date because it's between two nuclear explosions in Japan — the 6th and the 9th. Yeah. So, and again, I can give you a lot of examples; I'm about to write an article about it. When, to justify war, you have to present the enemy, you know. And in December 1945, the chief of staff received a paper on plans to subject Soviet cities to nuclear attack — in December 1945. We are talking about two months after the end of the war.

So we're talking about the construction of the enemy, which is essential. And I think that there were some sober minds who realized the danger of it. One of them was General Eisenhower, who, in his parting speech at the end of his mandate, pointed to the danger of the military-industrial complex, which today is, I think, as Jeffrey Sachs says, the military-industrial-digital complex. So we are talking about the need to present the enemy, just as the Nazis did — presenting Russians and Jews as Asians that have to be exterminated. They have to be, because they're about to attack. They're about to control the world. They're about to subjugate us. And they are qualitatively different. They're ontologically different. They're Asians.

#Pascal

This racist discourse is fascinating, you know, how it is useful to different political strains within society. And of course, what you outlined before, a lot of Marxist scholars would immediately say, yes, of course, we told you for a long time that it is the economic structure that determines whether or not countries go to war, or to rape power, or whatnot. But as soon as you have a struggle, an economic struggle emerging, the natural tendency of capitalism is to focus its violent tendencies to the outside. And for that, you need these ways of transmitting it, right? The pathways. So in this sense, Russophobia and anti-Semitism are pathways of doing that. And of course, also the very convenient way of having an enemy on the outside and an enemy on the inside that you can also fight against whenever something is opposing that kind of structure, isn't it?

#Yakov Rabkin

Definitely, because in both cases, if we're talking about what's going on today, you have to mention also a different kind of political use of Russophobia and anti-Semitism. In the case of anti-Semitism, it's really on the surface. You can see it because the state of Israel and those who support it try to cast any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic. And therefore, the purpose of that is to stifle debate, to stifle rational discussion by pointing at your adversary as unacceptable in polite company and therefore an illegitimate argument. Now, with Russophobia, there's something similar happening. As soon as you personally, and some of your interlocutors on your channel, start talking about understanding the Russian position, understanding the Kremlin, that by itself becomes a source of accusation of treason. Dirty. It's a dirty thing to do.

#Pascal

Sorry? It's a dirty thing to do, especially in German. I mean, in the German language, "Putin-Versteher," an understander, is something negative. By default, you don't even need to prove it anymore. It's quite fascinating.

#Yakov Rabkin

No, but I think that again, you stifle rational debate.

#Pascal

Right.

#Yakov Rabkin

In both cases, you stifle rational debate. And I think it is very important to discredit Russophobia just as anti-Semitism is discredited. As I mentioned before, it has to do with the historical memory of the Europeans and countries of European settlement — you know, the United States, Australia, Canada. But, and it's very interesting, Russophobia cannot be found outside of these bounds. It's an entirely political West thing. Because there was a survey around the world on attitudes towards different countries, and you see that as soon as you leave the political West, attitudes towards Russia become positive.

#Pascal

I am working on a paper that I call "The One West" in order to make one distinction with the concept of the political West, which is that the political West usually even includes countries like Japan and South Korea, but there it doesn't apply. I contest that in Japan we do not have Russophobia in any way, shape, or form the way that we have it in Europe and North America. We just don't. So there is this one kind of grouping of Western countries that has very, very specific racist stereotypes about the others, and they deploy that. And the others, you know, they might have other problems, but not that one. And maybe—yeah, no, I'll let you reply to this first, and then I have one more thing to add.

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I just said that countries of Europe and European settlement, and that doesn't include Japan and Korea. Right, right.

#Pascal

They were not settler colonies.

#Yakov Rabkin

No, but there was a certain logic of settler colonialism that I mentioned with respect to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union or the Israeli, Zionist settlement of Palestine. And there are many other

examples where you have to use prejudice. You have to explain why what you are doing is legitimate. And it's legitimate because you bring culture, or you bring Christianity, or you bring civilization. The white man's burden or the responsibility to protect — I put them all in one basket.

#Pascal

I think they belong together. They're shaped by the same way of understanding the world. And while we are at it, I have one thing to add or to ask you about, which is this difference between the sin of trying to commit—committing the sin of trying to understand the Russian, trying to understand Jews from, you know, from within and understand how it works, versus knowing the Russian and knowing the Jew and then being able to apply the stereotype, right? That's what we are seeing at the moment. You're not supposed to understand. You're supposed to know how Putin works. And then you've got a lot of people on TV who will tell you, with the veneer of experts, that they will tell you because they know, they know the Russians. And then usually what comes is a very Russophobic statement about very specific stereotypes. So this would just add additional kind of support to what you said, right? We need to prevent people from trying to understand, and we need to impose the stereotype as hard as possible.

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I think that's what essentialism is. When someone says the Russians, the French, the Swiss are like that, it means that they're attributing certain values, modes of behavior, and certain ingrained or genetic predispositions to groups. This is called essentialism. The essence of the Russian is—fill in the blank. The essence of the Jew is—that's that. Now, what is very important in any rational discourse is to be aware that within the Jewish culture, population, there's tremendous diversity, and you can see it today. And that's why anti-Semitism, which is raising its ugly head in many countries, is really misdirected. In many countries, they accuse Jews of the crimes that Israel has been committing in West Asia. Jews are very much divided about it.

The fact that Israel claims that it represents all the Jews shouldn't be convincing, because the majority of Jews today in North America, maybe in Europe, realize that Israel is committing crimes. And you see, well, the support for a Muslim anti-Zionist socialist, Mamdani, as mayor of New York—he was supported by huge numbers of Jews in one of the, I think, most Jewish cities in the world, New York. So it's very important to understand that there is diversity among Jews, just as there is diversity and debate within Russia. You see, again, Russia is presented as a monolith, with Putin sitting on the top.

He decides no one discusses anything, just everyone obeys. Well, it's just enough to open the magazine **Russia in Global Affairs**. It's in English, and you can see different opinions there about the conduct of this war. And they called it a war way before Peskov recently admitted it. So there is

debate. There is debate in foreign policy circles in Russia about Russia, the position of Russia in the world, about the attitude towards the United States. So it's a diverse society. Some people support this war. Some people don't support this war. So it's a very, very complex picture.

But racists don't like complex pictures. For them, it's clear. I understand the Russians, and then fill in the blank. And therefore, we have to militarize. We have to ensure our security by deterrence and by military means. What used to be the case before, that diplomacy could lead to mutual security, is discarded—totally discarded. And again, it's discarded because there is a need to militarize. There's an economic need to militarize. There's a social need to militarize. And in order to make it happen, you cannot have a rational debate about exactly what is the menace, what are we trying to defend from?

#Pascal

And there's an epistemic need to militarize. I mean, I think in Europe we are at that point now because I had this discussion just last week with a Swiss journalist. And she asked me, very seriously and very honestly, isn't it the case that small countries just need larger countries to be their protectors, to be there to give security guarantees to them? Otherwise, the small ones will necessarily die. And I had to explain to her, look, if you only have friends in the international environment, if nobody wants to attack you, that's the best kind of security you can get.

The fact of the matter to me is that at the moment in Europe, everybody has stopped thinking about how to cooperate and thinks solely in terms of deterrence. How to deter, how to deter. Forgetting that the Germans and the French don't deter each other anymore, because they manage their relationship by being in a good relationship with each other. But Europe thinks itself so far into this deterrence structure that they lose, at the moment in my view, a lot of them, the ability to think outside of the security paradigm, the deterrence paradigm. And the Russophobia, I think, is a major reason why you got people epistemically that far down the rabbit hole.

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I think I would like to defend European politicians.

#Pascal

Really?

#Yakov Rabkin

Indeed, their intellectual quality leaves much to be desired. Their knowledge of history leaves much to be desired. But they're taking in a structure of the European Union, which originally was meant to ensure peace in Europe, particularly, as you mentioned, between France and Germany. And this

vocation of the European Union has been totally forgotten. And the European politicians that I'm trying to defend are not even aware of their national interests. They are talking about Europe, and the European Union, particularly after its expansion to the east, has become really a subject of the United States. So these politicians who grew up in total submission to the United States, in total submission to a centralized structure of the European Union, no longer even think of national interests.

They were not educated this way. If you take even during the Cold War, there was NATO and there was the European Union, but there were politicians who had a concept of national interest. You may agree or disagree with de Gaulle. You may agree or disagree with Margaret Thatcher. I mean, they are not necessarily my heroes, but they had a concept of national interest. Today, you have these politicians who really are not impressive, and they are not impressive because there was a selection, a natural selection, if you like, to be obedient to the United States, to be obedient to this collective West, if you like, without any democratic legitimacy. And today, you see it, as I said in the very beginning, when you have such tremendous economic polarization in the world, you cannot expect to have democracy.

So you have political leaders, or political—well, let's call them leaders for lack of a better word—like Merz or Macron, or the old or new British prime minister, it really doesn't matter. They are extremely unpopular. And yet they're making fateful decisions about dismantling the welfare state in favor of militarization, without any democratic mandate to do so. You know, it's particularly absurd in the case of Canada, because the only country that has threatened Canada several times was its southern neighbor, the United States. Trump keeps saying that Canada should be the 51st state of the United States. So I understand the Canadian establishment is worried, and they try to defend Canada against Russia and China. Now, again, it's absurd. And even though Canada is trying to diversify its economy, it keeps purchasing military equipment.

So they buy from Sweden and Germany, but they still buy an awful lot from the United States, the only country that threatens the existence of Canada. So that shows that national interest is not a concept; it's rather submission to the will of the collective West. And you see, I'm saying that not even the United States. Because we have to realize that apart from the political establishment, there is a financial establishment which has to think differently. Whereas politicians get elected or not in four years, seven years, depending on the country, Goldman Sachs has to plan decades ahead. Big financial institutions have to be very rational in what they're doing. And it's precisely their rationality that has to be transmitted to the population in extremely irrational terms.

#Pascal

I very much like your concept of the unimpressive by design. And the design is, of course, one that then allows for the entire political developments that we are seeing. And it's not necessarily that it is the United States or the president of the United States who holds all of the strings in his hands. No, it's more like the entire system. And this is why I would like to call my essay "The One West," you

know, the group of people who jointly profit from the way the system is set up, and who then explicitly and implicitly start cooperating and collaborating throughout the ranks in order to perpetuate that system. And within this perpetuation, what we see time and time again is the political use of these racist stereotypes.

Can I maybe ask you about one thing? Because I think one way in which Russophobia and anti-Semitism differ is the way that they developed after the Second World War. Russophobia stayed very much on point with what it did before, whereas anti-Semitism then started, I mean, played this very important role for Israel, which is itself a settler-colonial project. But it then started taking a different... a different end. Like before the Second World War, it was like, let's get rid of the Jews — that was the point of anti-Semitism. And then after the Second World War, it became a way to defend the occupation of Palestine. Do you have any thoughts about the way that anti-Semitism changed its nature?

#Yakov Rabkin

That political name. No, antisemitism didn't change. Antisemitism is racism against Jews, against the Jew. And there are a lot of people who believe that. So it hasn't disappeared. It hasn't changed. What has changed is that antisemitism was discredited after the Second World War, and therefore it became an accusation that makes people step back. And since Israel presents itself as the Jewish state — and we can talk about how legitimate that claim is, that's a very problematic one — therefore, Jews become hostages to Israeli policies, Jews elsewhere, not only. And for people who are not very educated, and for people who look for simple solutions and who are antisemitic, they would attack Jews elsewhere, wherever they live, because they think that they're helping Palestinians, or they think that they're helping world justice, and so on.

So antisemitism hasn't changed. What has changed is the fact that the Israeli government and the Zionist establishment, including many Christian Zionists, use the accusation of antisemitism in order to stifle debate about Israel. And Israeli politicians are very open. You know, today there's one advantage of today's world — there's a clarity. You just have to read what people say, you know, Israeli politicians, and you don't have to guess anything. It's all there. And when they're accused of genocide, oh, it's a blood libel, it's an antisemitic accusation. So whenever there's a criticism, it's always deflected or dismissed as antisemitism. And that's very dangerous because antisemitism is losing its sense, its meaning, if it's misused this way.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, I agree, which is why it's important, time and time again, that we drive home the differentiation between Judaism, Zionism, and Israel as a political project — which is basically Zionism — but we differentiate this because otherwise we fall into the other side of the trap, right? Conflating Jews with Zionists. It's actually part of the trap.

#Yakov Rabkin

Yeah, well, you know, I think there's one aspect that I mentioned briefly in the beginning — the self-hate.

#Pascal

Right.

#Yakov Rabkin

And I think it is important to understand it as well in the context of both antisemitism and Russophobia. Now, I remind you that in his letter to his daughter, Turgenev wrote about Russophobia as a disease of the Russians.

#Pascal

Mm-hmm.

#Yakov Rabkin

And John Stuart Mill referred to this as the disease of the British. So it's really, it's very interesting. So what do I mean? I mean that there is a concept of self-hatred. And it's very common in colonial contexts when natives educated in Europe start to despise their own group because they're not cultured, they're not civilized. And this is how you have both, in the case of Jews and Russians, significant numbers of people who would transmit these antisemitic or Russophobic clichés. You know, if you look at the writings of the founders of Zionism and the state of Israel, it's full of antisemitic clichés.

Jews are unproductive. They're exploitative. They're degenerate. I have it in my book on Jewish opposition to Zionism. But you find very similar things among Russians who were imbued with European culture. Today, they are pro-European, pro-American, pro-Western, and they would despise everything Russian, saying that they would repeat this Russophobic cliché. This also exists on the level of these groups within themselves, and both of them have to do with a colonial mentality. In other words, you have an encounter of cultures, and you consider the other culture to be superior to yours.

#Pascal

There are entire YouTube channels.

#Yakov Rabkin

Sorry?

#Pascal

Sorry, there are entire YouTube channels by Russians who live in the West who will explain to you all the things that are wrong with the Russians. It's quite fascinating.

#Yakov Rabkin

Right, right. And they're credible because they're Russians, and they must know what they're talking about. And the others are Jews. They must know what they're talking about, Jews. So you have... But again, it's essentialism, it's irrationality, it's demodernization. I'm always bringing this together. You are looking for non-rational explanations for serious problems that you face. And these people from within those groups provide those irrational explanations.

#Pascal

And these irrational explanations, or these explanations that cannot be approached through rationality, then help the political elites that are fostered through the system to direct the violent potential of society into conducive ways, right? Conducive to them, to their self-preservation. So, to the outside or to the enemy within?

#Yakov Rabkin

Right, right. And I think there has been discrimination against Russian artists and the renaming of Russian paintings. I was in New York recently, and I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which I love. And I saw a painting by Ilya Repin, known as a Russian painter. He lived in St. Petersburg. A Ukrainian painter, a Ukrainian artist, because he was born in the territory of today's Ukraine.

#Pascal

It was called that. It was written there: Ukrainian artist.

#Yakov Rabkin

It was written, "Ukrainian artist." I shrugged. But I wonder if, in the collective memory of the Europeans and in the countries of European settlement, the pogroms that happened in the Russian Empire will be remembered as Ukrainian pogroms or Moldavian pogroms rather than Russian pogroms? No.

#Pascal

And you made a point just before we started recording, actually, also about the siege of Leningrad, which gives kind of an insight into how other places approach warfare. And I think the example you made is that during the siege of Leningrad, St. Petersburg, they never actually stopped playing Beethoven and German composers.

#Yakov Rabkin

Yes, and I think there was a German film made about the Siege of Leningrad, a fiction movie. And there were two German generals during the Siege of Leningrad. They listened to Leningrad radio and they heard Beethoven. They said, look, these Bolsheviks are playing our music. So for them, it was something like, how dare they do this? But I think it's very important. Racism can be found in many countries. But we have to say that Western Europe, in the context of its colonial adventure, has been particularly racist. And I think it is important to understand, because it's not only the fact that the Leningrad Symphony was playing Beethoven during the Siege of Leningrad, but also the fact that the expansion of the Russian Empire was a land expansion.

It was not, and therefore they integrated the ruling classes of those countries into their own. If you were a Georgian prince, you would be a prince in St. Petersburg, and many of them actually became prominent generals and so on. So the Russian imperial history is different from Western European imperial history, in the sense that you had integration of different groups, and many Russian aristocrats have family names like Yusupov, clearly of Tatar origin. But they're perceived as Russian aristocrats without any hyphen. So in that sense, perhaps the Nazis were right — they were Asians in the sense that they integrated Asians as well. Whereas for the Europeans, and the Nazis were Europeans, the racial distinction is very important.

And that's why I think that this racial distinction you find also in the novels of Benjamin Disraeli, the British politician, a Jew who converted to Christianity. And he wrote about—well, he wrote novels, among other things—and the racial dimension was very present there. And Hitler in 1941 writes that, you know, we, the Nazis, also understand that race is the key concept for understanding, like this Jew Disraeli wrote in his novels. So you have to understand that when Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, wrote, "Anti-Semites will be our best allies and friends," he knew that what he was founding was congruent with the anti-Semitism in Europe.

#Pascal

You know, we're reaching the one-hour mark. It's been fascinating, and we'll probably have to continue this another time to talk about these different versions of empire — integrative empire like the Russian version of it versus ethnic empire, based on expansion of the race versus expansion of the territory with whoever is there. But that would take us too far. Jakob, is there something we didn't touch upon that, in closing, you would like to state?

#Yakov Rabkin

Well, I would like to say that racism should be understood in a broad sense, not in terms of color of the skin, but, say, there was anti-Irish racism in the British occupation, in the English occupation of Ireland. There is—maybe it's a myth, but you hear it a lot in Montreal—that there were times in Montreal when someone would go into a department store and speak French, and the answer would be, "Speak white." Both were obviously white. And of course, Russophobia and antisemitism deal with white people. So racism, as I said before, is an equal-opportunity phenomenon.

#Pascal

Thank you very much for making equal opportunity even less attractive than before. Oh my. Jakob, people want to find your writings. Where's the best place to go?

#Yakov Rabkin

I have a website, which you can put there. And I'm trying to create a Substack, but so far my technical skills haven't allowed me to do so. And there's a site on Academia. So I'll send you both, and you can put them in the recording.

#Pascal

I'll put them in the description box below, and we will certainly talk again soon. Professor Jakob Repkin, thank you so much for your time today.