

Richard D. Wolff & Michael Hudson: Middle East Exploding, Ukraine Crumbling! the US Take Action

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXDz1PdMWao>

NIMA: So nice to have you back, Richard and Michael. And let me just manage this. And let's get started with the main question here that would be: Why is the United States not interested in putting an end to the conflict in the Middle East and in Ukraine? Which we know in both of these cases, they're capable of doing this.

And before going to the answer of this question, I'm going to play a clip that the foreign minister of Lebanon is talking with Christiane Amanpour about his point of view and why they couldn't reach a ceasefire.

[Video Clip begins]

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: ... I spoke with Lebanon's Foreign Minister, Abdallah Bou Habib, who's in Washington to meet with American officials and he joined us for his first interview since the latest escalations. Foreign minister, welcome back to the program.

ABDALLAH BOU HABIB: Thank you. Thank you.

CHRISTIANE: Things have reached a major crisis in your country since we last spoke. And I want to ask you, you are in the United States right now. You know that several of the administration officials agree with Israel's ground incursion into your country. What do you make of that as you're in Washington trying to get support for a ceasefire?

ABDALLAH: Well, they also agreed on the Biden-Macron statement that calls for a ceasefire and that calls also for the implementation of a 21 days ceasefire. And then Mr. Hochstein would go to Lebanon and negotiate a ceasefire. And they told us that Mr. Netanyahu agreed on this. And so we also got the agreement of Hezbollah on that. And you know what happened since then. That was the day we saw you in New York.

CHRISTIANE: I know. And you were talking about going into the Security Council for this ceasefire. And barely 24 hours later, the head of Hezbollah was assassinated. Are you saying Hassan Nasrallah had agreed to a ceasefire just moments before he was assassinated?

ADBALLAH: He agreed, he agreed. Yes, yes. We agreed completely; Lebanon agreed to a ceasefire by consulting with Hezbollah. The Speaker, Mr. Berri, consulted with Hezbollah and we informed the Americans and the French that [that is] what happened. And they told us that Mr. Netanyahu also agreed on the statement that was issued by both presidents.

[Video Clip ends]

NIMA: Yeah. Here is the question here, because if you remember, with the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh while they were talking with Ismail Haniyeh, negotiating with Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar, they assassinated him.

And right after they reached some sort of agreement with the government in Lebanon and just Hezbollah said, okay, we're going to go with that plan, they assassinated him.

And the question right now is here, why is this with the United States, Michael? Go ahead.

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well, the United States doesn't want a ceasefire because it wants to take over the entire Near East. It wants to use Israel as the cat's paw. Everything that's happened today was planned out just 50 years ago back in 1973 and 1974. I sat in on meetings with Uzi Arad, who became Netanyahu's chief military advisor after heading Mossad.

And the whole strategy was worked out essentially by the Defense Department, by neoliberals, and almost in a series of stages that I'll explain.

[Henry Martin] "Scoop" Jackson is the main name to remember. Scoop Jackson was the ultra right wing neo-con who sponsored them all. And he was the head of the Democratic National Committee in 1960 and then worked with military advisors.

I was with Herman Kahn, the model for Dr. Strange Love, at the Hudson Institute during these years, and I sat in on meetings and I'll describe them, but I want to describe how the whole strategy that led to the United States today, not wanting peace, wanting to take over the whole Near East, took shape gradually.

And this was all spelled out. I wrote a book about the meetings that I had at War College and the White House and various Air Force and Army think tanks back in the 1970s.

The starting point for all the U.S. strategy here was that democracies no longer can field a domestic army with a military draft. America is not in a position to really field enough of an army to invade a country, and without invading a country you can't really take it over. You can bomb it but that just is going to incite resistance. But you can't take it over.

The Vietnam War showed that any attempted draft would be met by so much anti-draft resistance taking the form of an anti-war [sentiment] that no country whose leaders have to be elected can ever take that role again.

Now it's true that America sent a small army into Iraq, and there are 800 U.S. military bases around the world, but this wasn't a fighting army – it was an army of occupation without really much resistance of the kind that Ukraine is experiencing with Russia for instance, as we're seeing there. That situation in the Near East is very different.

The anti-war students showed that Lyndon Johnson in 1968 had to withdraw from running for election because everywhere he'd go there would be demonstrations against him to stop the war. No such demonstrations are occurring today, needless to say.

So I won't call the U.S. or the European Union democracies, but there is no government that has to be elected that is able to send their own soldiers into a big war.

And what that means is that today's tactics are limited to bombing, not occupying, countries. They are limited to what the Israeli forces can drop the bombs on Gaza and Hezbollah and try to knock out things, but neither the Israeli army, nor any other army, would really be able to invade and try to take over a country in the way that armies did in World War II.

Everything has changed now and there can't be another occupation by the United States of foreign countries, given today's alliances with Russia and Iran and China.

So, this was recognized 50 years ago and it seemed at that time that the U.S.-backed wars were going to have to be scaled down . But that hasn't happened. And the reason is the United States had a fallback position: it was going to rely on foreign troops to do the fighting as proxies instead of itself. That was a solution to get a force.

"The first example was the creation of Wahhabi jihadists in Afghanistan, who later became al-Qaeda. Jimmy Carter mobilized them against secular Afghan interests and justified it by saying, 'Well, yes, they're Muslims, but after all, we all believe in God.'"

So the answer to the secular state of Afghanistan was Wahhabi fanaticism and jihads, and the United States realized that in order to have an army that's willing to fight to the last member of its country — the

last Afghan, the last Israeli, the last Ukrainian — you really need a country whose spirit is one of hatred towards the other, a spirit very different from the American and European spirit.

Well, Brzezinski was the grand planner who did all that. The Sunni Jihad fighters became America's foreign legion in the Middle East and that includes Iraq, Syria and Iran and also Muslim states going up to Russia's border.

And the aim of the United States was, oil was the center of this policy. That meant the United States had to secure the Near East and there were two proxy armies for it. And these two armies fought together as allies down to today. On the one hand, the al-Qaeda jihadis, on the other hand, their managers, the Israelis, hand in hand.

And they've done the fighting so that the United States doesn't have to do it.

The foreign policy has backed Israel and Ukraine, providing them with arms, bribing their leaders with enormous sums of money, and electronic satellite guidance for everything they're doing.

President Biden keeps telling Netanyahu, "Well, we've just given you a brand new bunker, cluster bombs and huge bombs – please drop them on your enemies, but do it gently. We don't want you to hurt anybody when you drop these bombs."

Well, that's the hypocrisy – it's a good cop bad cop. Biden and the United States for the last 50 years has posed as a good cop criticizing the bad cops that it's been backing. Bad cop ISIS and al-Qaeda, bad cop Netanyahu.

But when all of this strategy was being put together, Herman Kahn's great achievement was to convince the U.S. Empire builders that the key to achieving their control in the Middle East was to rely on Israel as its foreign legion.

And that arms-length arrangement enabled the United States to play the role, as I said, of the good cop, designating Israel to play its role, and Israel has organized and supplied al-Nusra, al-Qaeda while the United States pretends to denounce them. And it's all part of a plan that's been backed by the military, the State Department, and the National Security Operation.

And that's why the State Department has turned over management of U.S. diplomacy to Zionists, seemingly distinguishing Israeli behavior from U.S. empire building. But in a nutshell, the Israelis have joined al-Qaeda and ISIS as troops, as America's foreign legion.

NIMA: Yeah. As you were talking about, the question was: why is the United States not interested in putting an end to the conflicts in the Middle East and in Ukraine? And Michael was pointing out the endgame of the United States in this type of behavior. And what's your take right now?

RICHARD WOLFF: Well, I think in the case of Ukraine, at this point, it is merely a kind of vague, left-over desire to weaken Russia. It isn't working very well, so my guess is it'll be over pretty soon. And in the case of Israel, I think, Michael is right, that this is a deal: the Israelis, hopefully, will give the Americans some kind of leverage over what happens in the Middle East, that they wouldn't have if they didn't have Israel. Otherwise I do not understand why the United States allows its policies to be made by Mr. Netanyahu. We have the strange situation that the people holding back Mr. Netanyahu are Israelis, not Americans, which given that it's two different countries is rather strange, Americans feel more difficulty in opposing Netanyahu than Israelis do. But I don't want to take away from the fact that there is a mutuality of interest in shaping the Middle East and hoping to be able to do it.

But I don't think this is working very well. And I think my suspicion is that they are going, particularly after the election, to do a lot of rethinking about all of this, because this is not going well.

NIMA: Yeah. And Michael?

MICHAEL: Yeah, I think we can use more of the context. Because after I mentioned that the U.S. realized it needs foreign troops, it also realized that the only kind of full-scale war that democracy could afford is atomic war. And the problem is that that only works against adversaries that can't retaliate.

But in recent years, U.S. military policy has been so aggressive that it's driven other countries to band together and back their allies with nuclear powers. So all of the countries of the world now are associated with nuclear backups. And we've discussed that before

The result is that today's military alliances mean that any attempt to use nuclear weapons is going to risk a full-scale nuclear war that's going to destroy all the participants and the rest of the world as well. So what is left for the United States? Well, I think there's only one form of non-atomic war that democracies can afford, and that's terrorism. And I think you should look at Ukraine and Israel as the terrorist alternative to atomic war. I think Andrei Martyanov recently has explained that that's the alternative to atomic war. And this, unless NATO-West is willing to risk atomic war, which it doesn't seem to be willing to, then terrorism is the only alternative left to it. And that is the basis of the regime change plans that the United States has in countries bordering Russia, China, and other countries that it views as adversaries. That's what we're seeing in Ukraine and above all in Israel, as it fights against the Palestinian population in Gaza.

The whole idea of the Ukrainians and Israelis is to bomb civilians, not military targets, but civilians. It's a fight literally to destroy the population under an ideology of genocide. And that is absolutely central. It's not an accident – it's built in, built into the program. And Lebanon, even though it's largely Christian, is part of that.

So the other weapon that the United States has is economic. And that's oil and grain – it was decided way back in 1973-74. That was right the time of the oil war, when oil prices were quadrupled in response to the United States quadrupling its grain prices. So the United States said, well, “the way to avoid a war, terrorism, regime change, is just to starve countries into submission – either by cutting off their food supply or cutting off their oil supply. Because without oil, how can they run their industry, heat their homes and produce electricity?”

And oil is the largest private sector monopoly in the country. The seven sisters controlled the oil trade ever since World War I, and England have been their coordinator.

And after the oil war, Saudi Arabia promised – sort of was told, “you can raise your oil prices as much as you want, but you have to keep all of your export earnings in the United States. You can buy treasury bills, you can buy corporate bonds, you can buy stocks, but you cannot use more than a portion of it for your own development; you have to turn it over to the U.S. financial sector. So Saudi Arabia became the key and the result was the petrodollar that was put into U.S. banks and just increased the liquidity, the whole growth of third world debt that exploded in the 1970s, leading to the debt crisis of the '80s was all of that. And basically the United States realized, “okay, we want to extend control to conquer the Near East, conquer countries that have vital raw materials; we want to use the World Bank to make sure that global South countries don't feed themselves – we'll give money for plantation export crops, not for food.”

The condition of foreign Latin America and Africa being an ally of the United States was not to grow their own grain and food, but to depend on U.S. grain export. You know, that's the sort of economic plan that goes together with the military plan to be the organizing force of the American empire.

RICHARD WOLFF: Let me introduce a couple of other considerations, just to add to the stew here. It is my understanding that many forces in the American political establishment interpret the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, '90 and '91 as the fruit of a long-term U.S. policy that included the arms race and other mechanisms where the Soviet Union could not afford the level of military activity that the United States could afford, but for political and military reasons could not afford not to do it.

And so the Soviet Union tried to ride that either-or and collapsed between the demands of the nuclear arms race, the cost of their occupation of Afghanistan. They couldn't do it. And they scrimped here and there and they didn't quite fulfill the consumer growth plan that they had promised their people and they couldn't do it.

If you believe that that's what went on, then you might try to understand that what they're doing with Russia now is the same policy. In other words, it's again the arms race, but this time not to fight in Afghanistan, but to fight in Ukraine. Fight them there, draw them out, cost them a fortune and assume

that they cannot manage all that they're doing and that it's much easier for you, being a richer – much, much richer – country to do this than it is for them.

And the big mistake here was not to understand that the Russians were acutely aware of what their shortcomings were and have worked very hard in the last 25 years not to be in that position again. There's an aphorism in military thinking: "Everybody fights the last war." That you got to fight this one, not the last one. The winner of the last one thinks they found the magic bullet. The loser of the last one realizes they have to do something different. Russia is surprising everybody by the extent of its military capability and its military preparation. They're winning the war in Ukraine because of it. That's a miscalculation here.

Okay, that's the first thing. And I suspect that not only is Ukraine re-running the old strategy, but that they hope that by imposing a kind of arms race on the Middle East, partly an arms race between Israel and the Arabs and the Islamists, but also arms races where they could between Shiite and Sunni.

Remember, the war in Iraq and Iran, by splitting them up, by buying off Abu Dhabi or Dubai, or all of the machinations that are going on – they hope that they can fund their ally -Israel- and exhaust all the enemies of Israel, forcing them eventually into some sort of deal with Israel. And Israel has to be very, very careful: it needs to appease the United States to make these deals, but it also has to try to make sure these deals don't work out, because it wants to be the American agent in that part of the world.

And so my last point. Here's another similarity between Israel and Ukraine: Mr Zelenskyy in the Ukraine, and Mr. Netanyahu in Israel have no hope of prevailing, given the odds against them – the sheer numbers. And let's remember, Americans are not understanding: it's not just now that Israel is at war with Hamas – whom they have not yet defeated in the Gaza – and they are at war with Hezbollah on the West Bank and in Lebanon, but they are at war with the Houthis in Yemen and they are at war with the Iranians behind all of that, and they are at war, more or less, with the Lebanese.

And then there are the Shiite militias, which are very close to Iran, and are very powerful in both Iraq and Syria. Well, I got news for you: that's too many enemies. The Houthis recently showed they can send missiles into Israel. My guess is all of the others I've just named either can also do that already or will soon be able to do that.

Israel can't fight five wars at the same time. It's a small country. God knows what has happened to its economy, which has effectively shut down in order to fight a war. Their only hope is to bring the United States in; it's the only hope for Ukraine. Otherwise, Ukraine will lose quickly and Israel will lose slowly.

That's how it looks to me and that's for me what governs the hysteria around trying to figure out what to do. But it leaves me also with a question: Why is Israel unable or unwilling to cut deals? My sense is, the Egyptians would cut them. And my sense is, many of its neighbors would at least in principle be willing to

sit down and at least try to reach some. And then Israel, instead of expanding geographically would go up, build high rises. What are you doing? Stealing land from Palestinian peasants. What are you doing? Is your future agricultural? Don't be silly – it isn't; it doesn't need to be.

It's as if we were suddenly confronted with Luxembourg demanding pieces of Belgium or Netherlands or France or something because they had to expand. They've been perfectly happy building vertical rather than horizontal. For many, many, many decades longer than Israel has been concerned. So what is this?

Anyway, I thought these would be, you know, I'm trying to learn how to think about this in ways that are not constricted by the way the mainstream media analysts do, which is useless.

MICHAEL: Well Richard, you've described exactly what's going on and you've shown how fighting to the last Ukrainian is now being superseded by fighting to the last Israeli. Why are they doing this? Well, the answer is: If they were peace – if Egypt and the other countries that you mentioned were to make a peaceful arrangement with Israel – then there'd be no war. And with no war, how could the United States take over the other countries in the region? The U.S. policy, as I said, 50 years ago, and I'll go into that more now, was based on the U.S. actually taking over all of these countries, again using Israel as the battering ram, as what the army called "America's landed aircraft carrier" there. Well, all this began to take place in the 1960s with Henry "Scoop" Jackson.

It initially, Israel didn't really play a role in the U.S. plan. Jackson simply hated communism, he hated the Russians, and he had got a lot of support within the Democratic Party. He was a senator from Washington State, and that was the center of military-industrial complex.

He was called, nicknamed, "The Senator from Boeing," for his support for the military-industrial complex. And the military-industrial complex backed him for becoming chair of the Democratic National Committee. Well, he was backed by Herman Kahn – as I said, the model for Dr. Strangelove – who became the key strategist for U.S. military hegemony and the Hudson Institute – no relation to me, an ancestor discovered the river we were both named after. They used the Hudson Institute and its predecessor, the Rand Corporation, where Herman came from, as its major long-term planner.

And I was brought in to discuss the dollar exchange rate and the balance of payments. My field was international finance. Well, Herman set up the institute to be a training ground for Mossad and other Israeli agencies. There were numerous Mossad people there, and I made two trips to Asia, as I mentioned, with Uzi Arad, who became, as I said, the head of Mossad.

So we had discussions about just what was going to happen for the long term, and they were about just what's happening today. Herman told me over dinner one night that the most important thing in his life was Israel. And that's why he couldn't get military information even from U.S. allies, like Canada, because

he said he wouldn't pledge allegiance to their country or even the United States, were he to swear loyalty to any other country. And he described the virtue of Jackson for Zionists was precisely that he was not Jewish, but a defender of the dominant U.S. military complex and an opponent of the arms control system that was underway. Jackson was fighting all the arms control – "we've got to have war." And he proceeded to stuff the State Department and other U.S. agencies, with neo-cons, who were planned from the beginning for a permanent worldwide war, and this takeover of government policy was led by Jackson's former senate aids.

These senate aides were Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Pearl, Douglas Fife, and others who were catapulted into the commanding heights of the State Department and more recently the National Security Council. The Jackson-Vanik amendment to the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 became the model for subsequent sanctions against the Soviet Union.

The claim was it limited Jewish immigration and other human rights. So right then, the State Department realized: here is a group of people who we can use as the theoreticians and the executors of the U.S. policy that we want – they both want to take over all of the Arab countries.

On one occasion, I'd brought my mentor, Terrence McCarthy, to the Hudson Institute, to talk about the Islamic worldview, and every two sentences, Uzi would interrupt: "No, no, we've got to kill them all." And other people, members of the Institute, were also just talking continually about killing Arabs.

I don't think there were any non-Jewish Americans that had that visceral hatred of Islam that the Zionists had, or also the visceral hatred of Russia, specifically for anti-Semitism of past centuries, most of which was in Ukraine and Kiev, by the way.

Well, that was 50 years ago, and these sanctions that Jackson introduced, the U.S. Trade, became the prototypes for today's sanctions against all the countries that the neo-cons viewed as adversaries. Joe Lieberman was in the tradition of the Jackson Democrats – the word for them – the pro-Zionist Cold War hawks with this hatred of Russia, and that made Israel the cat's paw for these Cold Warriors.

They were completely different from most of my Jewish friends, who I grew up with in the 1950s. The Jewish population that I know were all assimilated – they were successful middle-class people. That was not true of the people Jackson brought in. They did not want to be assimilated, and they said just what Netanyahu said earlier this year, that "the enemy of Zionism are the secular Jews who want to assimilate – you can't have both." This policy of the 1970s has split Judaism into these two camps: assimilationists, who are for peace and the Cold Warriors, who were for war. And the Cold Warriors were nurtured and financed by the United States – the Defense Department gave a big grant of over \$100 million to the

Jackson Institute to help work out essentially race-hatred military policies to use to spur this anti-Islamic hatred throughout the Near East. It's not a pretty sight.

There are not many people around today that were there then, and to remember how all of this was occurring, but what we're seeing is, as I said, a charade that somehow what Israel is doing is "all Netanyahu's fault, all the fault of the neo-cons there," and yet from the very beginning they were promoted, supported with huge amounts of money, all of the bombs they needed, all the armaments they needed, all the funding they needed, and Israel is a country whose economy needs foreign exchange in order to keep its currency solvent. All of that was given to them precisely to do exactly what they're doing today. So when Biden pretended to say, "can't there be two-state solution?" No, there can't be a two-state solution because Netanyahu said, "we hate the Gazans, we hate the Palestinians, we hate the Arabs – there cannot be a two-state solution and here's my map," before the United Nations, "here's Israel: there's no one who's not Jewish in Israel – we're a Jewish state" – he comes right out and says it.

This could not have been said explicitly 50 years ago. That would have been shocking, but it was being said by the neo-cons who were brought in from the beginning to do exactly what they're doing today. To act as America's proxy, to conquer the oil-producing countries and make it part of greater Israel as much of a satellite of the United States that England or Germany or Japan have become. The idea that they will continue the U.S. policy to receive all the support they need has become a precondition for their own solvency that, as Richard has just said, looks like it's not working anymore. It isn't solvent – there's no solution to the black hole that Israel's painted itself into.

And yet, there's no willingness to have a single state because Biden and the entire national security council – Congress, and the military, and especially the military industrial complex, says there cannot be any common living between Palestinians and Israelis anymore than there can be in Ukraine, Ukrainians speakers and Russian speakers in the same country. It's exactly the same, it's following exactly the same policy and all of this is planned and sponsored by the United States and funded with enormous amounts of money.

NIMA: Yeah, Richard.

RICHARD WOLFF: Yeah, let's take a look at this from the Israeli Zionist perspective because it takes two to tango: whatever the American goals were, they also have to somehow mesh with what the Israelis -at least those in power- are trying to do or else it doesn't work.

Put yourself in the position of a Zionist: you've left the European Asian origins. You've left and you've resettled thanks to the Balfour Declaration and the British Imperialists. They gave you other people's land

there in the Middle East in Palestine. Fundamental recognition: the independent existence of a state of Israel is fragile.

It is logical to understand, if you're a Zionist, that given the disagreement of large numbers of Jews around the world with the whole idea of a country and the fact that the majority of Jews of the world didn't go to Israel even when they could have. They know that their support from the rest of the Jewish community is mixed.

They also know that the only country that could sustain them, that they could rely on after the war in Europe – the Second World War – was the United States. It was certainly the one they would want to rely on, because it came out of the war basically richer than it went in with no competitor. Why would you choose England or France, even if it were possible, if you could have the United States? Okay, now they have to worry – and I believe they do, deeply – that sooner or later, the United States, for its own reasons, will realize that the better bet for the future is on the Arabs, not the Israelis, because the Arabs are many and the Israelis are few, and the wealth gap between them is not working in Israel's favor. It's going the other way.

A few weeks ago I learned about a meeting that was held not so long ago. In Beijing, the Chinese government invited all of the factions involved in the Palestinian movement to send representatives for a meeting to unite them all – that included Hamas, Hezbollah, and a whole bunch of others. And they had those meetings in the sponsorship of China. That's got to worry Mr. Netanyahu, that's got to worry him a lot.

Why? Not because of some fanciful notion that the Chinese would enter. They're not going to do that. But that the Chinese, in their complicated negotiation with the United States, will eventually come to agreements by sacrificing somebody else and getting along with each other that way.

How do I know it? Because it's the subtext of half of Europe's anxiety – that Europe will be the fall guy, that Europe will be carved up in the interests of the United States and China, much as Europe carved up Africa in the interests of its conflicts. So now the Israelis desperately need... what?

They need an ongoing economic, political, and military support from the United States. And they will be willing to do anything and everything to secure it. If you remember, not that many years ago, there were heavy rumors that the Iran-Contra scandal was brokered by Israelis; that secret support for the apartheid regime in South Africa was coming from Israel. Recently there was a claim – I don't know if it's true – that the Russians discovered a Israeli mercenary operation within the Ukrainian army. Okay, I'm not surprised at any of that. That's what a country like Israel offers: it will be the bad guy; it will say the unsayable; it will advocate for the United States; it will take the heat, including the rage of the Arab world and the rage of

the Islamic world. Because if it weren't focused on Israel, where the hell do you think it would be focused? Here. 9/11 happened here. It was celebrated around the Islamic world for that reason. So there's what the French would call "un mariage de convenance."

There's a marriage of convenience here between the Zionists who feel that they are dependent on the United States – and they are. That's why their major push diplomatically in the United States of their personnel is not in the Jewish community – they don't get the support they want – it's in the evangelical community. They found that scriptural arrangement in which when Jesus returns, he has to find the Jews in charge of the Holy Land. Oh good, the Jews discovered that in that New Testament story they could build an alliance. The biggest festivals every year of Israeli films are held in mega-churches of the Protestant faith in this country, not in synagogues. What the hell is going on? The Israelis are desperate to have support here. And they're constantly frightened – the very evangelicals who they counted on are going more towards Trump, and they're worried about that. Right?

It's the irony: the Jews go more the other way, the Jews seem more interested in helping Ukraine, the secular, the non-Zionists. So this is a constantly shifting scenario. But my guess is, and Michael, maybe you know about this, my guess is that there are voices – no matter how strong Henry Jackson was or his progeny had become – that there are also voices pretty high up that keep wondering out loud whether the United States isn't betting on the wrong horse in the Middle East. And whether maybe there's someone you can find to do the job better than the Israelis Zionists.

The minute that happens, Mr. Netanyahu disappears. And the person who worries a lot about that is Mr. and Mrs. Netanyahu.

MICHAEL: Well, you've described exactly the dynamics that are as work.

And for the last few weeks, Nima has had numerous guests on who have been explaining that the opponents of all this are the U.S. military, because every war game, according to his guests, that has been done, the U.S. loses in the Near East. Every war game that it does in Ukraine against Russia, the U.S. loses.

So obviously there is an opposition right now between the army – we'll call them the realists – who say that if you really want to extend the war, it's not going to work. But against them are, as you point out, not only a logic of the American Empire, but a virtual religion, a religion of hatred. Zionism has been Christianized – it's accepted all of the hatred of the other that has taken place. And U.S. military strategists don't want to put an end to the war in Asia and Ukraine, because if there was an end, as I said, then the status quo remains. And the United States couldn't take over these countries as satellites. Peace would

mean dependent country – Iraq would regain independence; Syria would; Iran would be left alone to be independent – that would not give the United States personal direct ownership of the oil.

And if you look at the neo-cons, they had a virtual religion. I met many at the Hudson Institute; some of them, or their fathers, were Trotskyists. And they picked up Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution. That is, an unfolding revolution – what Trotsky said began in Soviet Russia was going to spread to other countries, Germany and the others. But the neo-cons adopted this and said, "No, the permanent revolution is the American Empire – it's going to expand and expand and nothing can stop us for the entire world."

So what you have is a more or less realistic military -if not at the top, which is sort of a political appointee, at least the generals who have actually done the war games – is realism against a religious fanaticism that has been back because fanatics are more willing to die to the last Israeli or the last Ukrainian than realists who look at the situation and try to do what, let's say, President Xi and China talks about: the win-win situation. Well already, when this split began to occur in the 1970s, I actually heard discussions of the idea that: let's rethink World War II, that it was really fought over was "what kind of socialism is going to be after the war? Is it going to be national socialism -Nazism- or democratic socialism emerging out of the dynamics and self-interest of industrial capitalism?" Well, much of the government was backing from 1945, the minute of peace, the American government began supporting Nazism. We talked before about this.

The government recruited Nazi leaders and put them, if not in America, throughout Latin America, to fight the communists. As soon as the United States decided, "we've got to destroy the Soviet Union," they found the Nazis to be the fighters who were willing to die for their belief. Not sit and think, "is what I'm doing rational? Is it going to work?" So one of the problems with Israel is, just as Richard has discussed, that it's not taking a path that is going to lead to the survival of Israel as an economic state. It's already been put on rations by the United States economically, financially and militarily, just as England was put on rations after World War II and all of Europe was put on rations after World War I. Trotsky wrote an article -America and Europe- and said, "America has put Europe on rations." Right around 1921, he wrote that.

So again, you could say that the Nazi spirit has won -the spirit of trying to extend an empire by "it's us or them" – it's a spirit of hatred and a spirit of terrorism, personally by assassination and anti-war crimes, is the alternative to well-to-atomic war. The Americans realize "well, we really don't want atomic war, but we can come as close as we can to it by terrorism." And that's why the United States today is backing an openly Nazi regime in Ukraine and similar terrorists in Israel to make essentially West Asia part of greater Israel over time. That is a mentality and almost a religious war that we're in.

RICHARD WOLFF: Again, let me extend it a little bit, and let me pick up on something you said, Michael, earlier at the beginning, which I agree with: that the anxiety in the United States is a long drawn-out land war for fear that the American population will not tolerate it beyond a few months or something like that.

Well, the Israelis can't survive where they are without these military explosions. We've had the Yom Kippur war, the '67 war, the '73 war – I mean, we keep having wars, every one of which is justified -at least on the Israelis side- by the need for peace and security, which clearly these wars do not secure.

And so they have another one. And now they have the biggest and the worst one ever. And why is there any reason to believe it's not going to continue? And what are they doing about it? Well, they're widening the war, they're doing much more terrible destruction in Gaza, and now they're widening it to Hezbollah and to Yemen, they're bombing and all of that. Okay.

The only way they can not be producing their own demise – literally organizing the cooperation, first among all the Shiite communities, and then eventually beyond that with the Sunni and the broader Islamic communities – their only hope in that eventuality to bring the United States in. As I've said, just like Mr. Zelensky has no hope unless he brings... Even this latest business with getting the authority to send missiles deep into Russia, that's not going to work either – the Russians have hidden those, their missiles, or moved them further away so they can't be reached. So there's nothing left.

There is nothing left, but to bring the United States in. And yet your argument is: the United States looks at that situation and says, "We can't do that. It's not that we don't have missiles – we do. It's not that we can't do much damage – we can." Well, we can't make a quick winning of this war.

Lord knows we couldn't do it in the poorest countries on Earth, like Afghanistan and Vietnam. Be sure as hell are not going to do it in Europe or for that matter in the Middle East, which means that the only success of the Israelis is to bring the U.S. in and the U.S. can't go in because of the constraints it feels.

And that means that at some point something's got to give here, and wouldn't the logical thing be to expect that the United States will have an epiphany moment in which it decides that Arabs are better allies for us than Israelis. And that if that requires purging the highest levels of government of neo-cons, well, we know after World War II, they know how to purge if they want to purge – they can do that and go after them as Jews, if that's there, or as Zionists, or as mistaken advisors. There's lots of ways of doing it. It's just that a decision has to be made.

And maybe, I think if that's what I heard you say, the obvious hesitancy of Lloyd Austin to authorize anything – to almost openly now be a voice saying, "don't go there, don't do that" to his fellow advisors of Mr. Biden, suggested maybe we have a point in what we're saying here.

MICHAEL: Well, you've said it wonderfully, Richard – that's exactly the point.

What does it mean to bring the United States in? It's not going to send troops, because you can just imagine how the American troops, either in Ukraine or in Israel, where many of them would die. You can imagine what that would do to the Democratic administration that would be sending it there. So they can't do that.

They've tried terrorism and the result of terrorism is to align the whole rest of the world against us. But still, we're in a pre-revolutionary situation. The rest of the world is appalled by the terrorism that it sees, by the breaking of all of the rules of war and rules of civilization that the United Nations wrote into its original articles of agreement and is not following. So what you're seeing is a whole breakdown of the ability of the rest of the world to enforce civilization. And of course, the hope of you and me is that somehow there would be right-thinking people in the U.S. government.

I don't see many people in Congress supporting the candidacy of Jill Stein, who's against the war. I don't see Congress being reasonable. I think that the State Department and the National Security Agency and the Democratic Party leadership, with its basis in the military-industrial complex, is absolutely committed to "if we can't have our way, then who wants to live in such a world." Well, you remember how President Putin, when threatened with American atomic war and people were saying, well, would Russia really retaliate atomically? And what Putin said was, "well, who wants to live in a world without Russia after all?"

Well, the neo-cons and the Senate and the House of Representatives and the President and the Press and the campaign donors to both parties say, "well, who wants to live in a world where we can't control? Who wants to live in a world where other countries are independent, where they have their own policy? Who wants to live in a world where we can't siphon off their economic surplus for us? If we can't take everything and dominate the world, well, who wants to live in that kind of a world?"

That's the mentality we're dealing with. And I'm watching what China is doing and Iran is doing: they kept hoping, for instance two days ago, when Iran sent missiles to the United States missiles against one of the airfields in Israel that had the F-16s and other airplanes, it let the United States know -and warned Israel- that Iran's going to blow up your airfield. You better get all the airplanes in the air.

Well, Iran said, "oh, we don't want to upset anybody. Can we just show them that a war doesn't make sense?" Well, and then now there's an argument in Israel saying, "wait a minute, these airplanes that you didn't blow up are now going to be flying over Iran and dropping bombs on us."

The country that does the first strike is going to get an advantage – we had a chance to wipe out the air force so they could stop bombing Lebanon, stop bombing Gaza Strip and other countries and stop bombing us and we didn't do it because we wanted to keep showing the world that we're the good guys.

Well, it's like you're a good guy naked walking right up against the Nazi tanks that are coming right at you in World War II, or today in the Ukraine – that's really the problem.

RICHARD WOLFF: If we're right, then why isn't... or are we missing it? Where's the evidence that the United States understands it's being pulled in a direction it really doesn't want to go. Just to pick up on your last point, Michael, hear me out for a minute.

The United States understands... let's suppose they understand it the way you do, that they got the notification -and I picked up on that too- that the Iranians told the United States beforehand that they were going to do it, giving them the time to let the Israelis know.

Okay, where are the Americans who are saying "they did us a service," because had they not, had they not, had they wrecked the Israeli Air Force or whatever, then the Israelis would have come to us requiring us to give them even more immediate massive support – and this isn't good; this is dangerous.

The next step will be for the Iranians to target us. Look, the Houthis who are, if I understand correctly, supported by Iran, have been rocket-missiling American warships. Okay, it's getting close, it's getting close that you're drawn in and then your own internal politics will make you respond and then you're in, and then the Israelis have won, they've got you in there. And now it has its own logic, its own escalatory mechanisms and you've got what everybody thought you were committed never to do: a land war in Asia that cost you your own troops. Every president after Vietnam said they would never do that again.

There were some who even said it after Korea, because they understood. So I would be more comfortable that we're onto something, if I could see some sign that there are American voices that sense one or another version of this that we could point to.

MICHAEL: Well, I think there has been a change of consciousness, but it's been mainly on the Arab and Persian side. I think now that they didn't shoot down the airplanes. Now, I think the Iranians are saying "no more Mr. Nice Guy." They made it clear exactly what they can do to retaliate; they've said that if Israel tries to attack them or if the United States tries to attack them, they're going to wipe out the American military bases in Iraq and Syria, which they've already shown they can pinpoint and do very well. I think in Iran's mind, what they've achieved is showing the rest of the world, saying "the United States has been trying to goad to the war for the last half year, just as the United States has been trying to goad to Russia in the war in Ukraine," and Putin has been able to resist that because he's the longer he takes – he's winning the war; Europe is being pulled apart.

Well, similarly, the Iranians can say: "the United States would have attacked us and said we're only defending the poor little Israel because of the Iranian attack. But now that the Iranians did the attack - without killing civilians, first of all only bombing the military sites- whereas the Israeli wants to kill people;

they want to kill Arabs, because they hate them. The Iranians only hit military sites, not the population. So now there's no question, I think, that the whole rest of the world -China, Russia, the global South, the global majority- is not going to fall. It has deprived the United States military and state department from the ability to claim that they are responding to Iran's unprovoked attack on Israel and to the Gaza, unprovoked attack on Israel that after 100,000 Gazans were killed, a few Israelis were killed. And Russia's unprovoked attack on the Ukrainians, who were killing the civilians in Luhansk and Donetsk.

They've deprived the United States of any pretense of having any ideology or foreign policy besides terrorism and destruction and violating every civilized rule of war that is under land international law for the last few few centuries.

So the United States is in a war against civilization, and the rest of the world is realizing that. And so you're right, where is the voice in the United States saying what you and I are saying, why somebody like us in a position of authority? Well, we're on a Nima's show, not in the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal; we don't have any money coming to us from the military-industrial complex, from the non-government organizations that the State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy fund; we're by ourselves and people who think like that find themselves obliged to resign from the State Department, resign from the CIA like McGovern, resign from the army like the guests that Nima's had – Colonel MacGregor and Scott Ritter – they've been excluded from the discussion. That's the tension that the world's in today and that's what makes it so violent.

Are these people really... will the Americans really force atomic war by saying, "oh, we're only using tactical weapons?" That's really the question – the Americans are taking a position against the most basic principles of civilization. What are other countries going to do about it? Are they going to realize the threat? Or are they going to say, "let's explain to you what your self-interest is America: your self-interest is doing what Richard suggests – work with the Arab countries, work with us, it's a win-win situation."

Who are the Americans, who, with their donors backing them, who are going to say, "yes, we prefer saving civilization to making money this week and next week for living in the short term." The American point of view is short term; the rest of the world is taking a longer term position – who's going to win?

RICHARD WOLFF: Well, the irony is if the history is any guide, they will make a war and then it will drag on and then all of these arguments that we're making now will find their voices and will have it, you know, will have the argument and then the hard decisions will be made.

The problem is that there are many dimensions of the United States, waltzing itself into a dead end and that has its own dangers and dynamics when there is no way out. If it is correct that after Netanyahu bombed Beirut, his polling numbers in Israel improved dramatically, which I read they did.

That is a very serious fact because it means that one cannot see this as just a right-wing government doing X, Y, and Z. One has to see a right-wing government that has been able to bring its people along with it at least so far, which is what we have to say about the Democrats and Republicans in this country who have done that too.

And that's frightening because that suggests there are some more steps that they're going to be able to take, and they probably will, and we will be left as I have been in the last two weeks, I don't mind telling you, genuinely frightened about where this is going and how close we are coming to something to unspeakably stupid and unspeakably destructive.

The only thing that I can say is that the glib disinterest in all these questions, evidenced by what comes out of Trump's mouth or Harris' mouth or Vance's or Wolz's... these people are all pretending that the Pax Americana is alive and well and that we can talk endlessly about border incursions and the ingestion of cats and dogs and other minor matters because the big ones aren't a problem and you and I and all three of us have just spent a long time dealing with all the other problems that they don't feel the need to talk about ever... it's remarkable.

MICHAEL: We're sitting right here in New York, underneath the bomb, you know, whoever wants to live in the world once it's fallen.

You used the word right wing, and it's very humorous that the anti-war candidates in Europe are all called right wing – it used to be left wing. Austria has just had an election where the right winger won opposing the war in Ukraine. We've had three German elections, the right wing is one basically all three for opposing the war in Ukraine – the German government has found, you know, their true Naziism and said "we're going to ban the AFG for opposing the war," they're calling it a right wing government. So you're having the Nazis in Europe banning the anti-war parties and yet the anti-war is called "right wing" and the Nazis are called "Democrats and the social Democrats". That's what's so amazing – the whole language is part of this – the world being turned inside out.

RICHARD WOLFF: Not only that, everybody is saving democracy from everybody else. You know, it's the deterioration... anyway, yes, yes.

MICHAEL: Well, I know you and I like the word "oligarchy."

RICHARD WOLFF: Yes. But unlike you, I reserve it for only in Russia – they have oligarchs; we have captains of industry.

MICHAEL: Yes.

NIMA: So nice to come to this and then thank you so much for being with us today, Richard and Michael. That was so great to talk with you.

RICHARD WOLFF: Okay. Thank you also. And it's a pleasure to be part of this ongoing three-way conversation.

MICHAEL: You've got to have 200,000 views of this Nima.

NIMA: By the way, I don't interfere because I do find that you two talk to each other, it's just perfect, it doesn't need me to be there. Yeah, it's just going well. Thank you so much.

RICHARD: Okay. Bye bye.