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Why War with Russia Is Becoming Inevitable

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Richard D. Wolff: Welcome, friends, to another edition of Global Capitalism. This is an every-other-month presentation, organized by Democracy At Work and by the Left Forum. Together, those two organizations make these presentations available, circulate them, and hope that they will drive interest in the issues raised. And in the output of videos and books and other activities that both Democracy at Work and Left Forum produce separately and together. I want to begin this one with a little caveat. I want you please to remember: I'm just the messenger explaining and trying to understand something going on, I am not the cause of that which I try to explain. And that's particularly important because I'm going to be talking today about war – the war that is currently going on between Europe and the West on the one hand and Russia on the other. Yes, I know. We think of it and we deal with it in the United States as a war between Russia and Ukraine, a war that started in February of 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, from one perspective, or much earlier, in the so-called revolutions that happened years earlier in Ukraine, in which the West and Russia were busy already fighting over the government, and undoing it, etc., etc. It is an old story and it is – it is in a new situation.

So I want to begin historically because it's always the best. Historically, the last two or three hundred years have seen wars between Russia and the West. Napoleon invaded and was defeated by the Russians and was sorry he did it. It. In World War II, in World War I, invasions of what was first Russia in World War I and then the Soviet Union in World War II, devastating to Russia. I want to remind people that Russia lost an estimated 23 to 25 million people in World War II. Much, much more death than was suffered, for example, by Germany. Much of the 19th century was a struggle between the British Empire on the one hand and a Russian Empire pre-1917 on the other. And there were skirmishes of all kinds, battles over Crimea, for example, among other important struggles. The British never were able to conquer Russia or even to defeat Russia in these wars. The interesting question is, here we are again facing a war, it may have begun with Russia invading Ukraine, if that's the way you want to see it, but it is a very old problem. And the causes of this war and the ingredients of this war are really to be understood best as continuations in a new set of conditions of a very old set of conflicts.

So let's begin by updating everyone so we're all on the same page about this war. It started in February of 2022. It is continuing as I speak to you right now. So clearly, four and a half years running. During that time, there has been a steady escalation of the conflict. What do I mean by that? One set of weapons limited in their scope, replaced by another set of weapons less limited in their scope. And the initiation here has in most cases been from the west, up the escalation ladder, but with a particular emphasis on the West that has undertaken this. Almost from the beginning, it was crystal clear that this would be a very short war if it were Russia, a very large country, against Ukraine, a much smaller country. It quickly became clear, and it is very clear now, that the rest of Europe, and on again, off again, the United States was supplying Ukraine with the money and the weapons it couldn't in a thousand years have provided for itself. Very quickly, therefore, the war became not really a war between Russia and Ukraine, but a war between Russia and Europe, or really the collective West, would be a better way to put it. Different countries gave more or less. Some gave more earlier, less for a while, then more again, including the United States, with Mr. Trump being a bit on again, off again about Ukraine and all of that. But nonetheless, we sit here now at the highest level of escalation, which is why I am talking about it with you today.

The most recent escalation has been providing Ukraine with the opportunity to build a new long-range drone and missile capabilities. These products are produced in many different places, but particularly Western Europe, and then provided to Ukraine. Basically the money to pay for them is likewise provided by the West to Ukraine. It has led to ironic joking that this is a war between Russia and the West, fought to the last Ukrainian. The damage to Ukraine is unspeakable to its people, to its countryside, to it's economy, you name it. The wars between the West and Russia, all the way back to Napoleon, have been devastating, above all, to Russia. So we are today at a point where almost every day we see in the newspapers signs of the escalation. Drones and missiles hitting deep inside Russia. Earlier in the war there were no such things. And Russia, absorbing most of that, knocking down many of the missiles and drones. This war has become a heavy missile and drone affair. The activities on the ground have slowed down. Russia has moved from its border in the east and now controls about a quarter Ukraine's territory, the so-called Donbass area most of all, and continues to move slowly, slogging it eastward over more and more Ukrainian territory.

So in a sense you have two wars going on. A war on the ground, the battlefield, which Russia is winning, has been winning for a long time, continues to win. And then a war in the air with drones and missiles in which the Russian advance has been slowed by the Ukrainians and they are able, the Ukrainians, to boast about and to publicize hitting a refinery somewhere deep in Russia or a gas station or a building and so forth. The Russians have done some retaliation. They've been using drones and missiles very effectively for quite a while. But they have limited them to Ukraine. Recently, Ukraine began to send missiles and or drones from or through the airspace of other countries in Europe, the Baltic states in the north and others. And the Russians have reacted by saying if that continues, if that escalates to anything beyond what you're doing now, we will retaliate. And the meaning is unambiguous. They will hit the places that produce the weapons being shipped to Ukraine. They will attack any facilities used to help Ukrainian missiles and drones make their way into and across Russia, and so on. In other words, we are very close to an all-out war between Russia on the one hand and Europe, so far, with the United States in the shadows, not directly involved, the United States is still making intelligence available to the Ukrainians crucial for this air war and for much else. And money. And the Europeans are providing money and weapons and may well be buying American weapons and also delivering them to Ukraine.

But we are on the edge of a war, of another major war. I want to stress that in the entire 70 years of the Cold War, post-1945, all the way up into this present century, we were able to avoid another European-based conflagration. The last two spread to the whole world. That's why they're called World War I and World War II. So if you're wondering, are we on the edge of World War III? The answer is: Yes, we are. And this time with combatant countries that either have or have access to nuclear weapons. And a conversation about their use now is underway. Mr. Putin in Russia has spoken of it. Other global leaders are talking about it. Some in secret, sometimes it leaks out. But we can see the conditions. We've been here before. You might have thought we learned certain lessons, and the answer is, it doesn't look like it. So therefore, I am going to set myself a task with you in an hour. I'm going to try to explain to you how it comes to be in this period, 2026, that we are on the cusp of a World War III, that we're in the middle of an increasingly escalated conflict that could at any moment spill over the boundaries now around it and become a conflagration for everybody.

I'm going to begin with Europe, and the reason I do that is, as best I can tell, looking at the evidence I can gather, that the initiative for all of this lies with the Europeans. I know that for some people it's controversial – blaming Russia is a pastime that has indulged Americans for the last 75 years, pretty much without exception. We may have naively thought earlier that it had something to do with capitalism versus communism, but Russia long ago got rid of whatever communism it engaged in. That happened around 1990. And here we are, 35, 36 years later, and we're more at enmity than we ever did when it was against capitalism versus communism. Now it's one capitalist country against another. And that shouldn't surprise us because that's pretty much what World Wars I and II were about as well. So here we go.

What's the problem? Why is Europe doing this? The "this" that I would urge you to understand is Europe has a terrible crisis on its hands, a crisis long-standing. You may not have noticed it, you may not have paid attention to it, but let me underscore what that crisis is. Europe is the birthplace of modern capitalism, from England in the 17th and 18th century, spreading to Europe and eventually all over the world. And here's what I mean by capitalism, so we're all clear, since there are multiple definitions: I mean arranging for the production of goods and services and their distribution by means of things called "enterprises", or if you like, "businesses". And they're organized as follows: They're pyramidal, they are hierarchical. At the top sits the owner, the board of directors, if it's a corporation, the major shareholders, the people who may have started it or have purchased it or inherited it. They sit at the top, a very small number of people, relative to population. And they engage, they hire, enter into a relationship with a very large number of people. And we all know them, those are called workers or, if you like, employees – capitalists and workers, employers and employees.

People in it make money and people in it earn a living. Not the same in a relationship that's unique, different from master and slave, that's an earlier relationship. Or lord and serf, that is the relationship of the previous feudalism. No, capitalism, in the last few centuries, organizes the economy differently from the way people did before, into an employer-employee relationship.

And Europe was the place. Those kinds of economies grow if and only if the mass of people produce an output when they work larger than what they themselves consume for their standard of living – their clothing, their shelter, their amusement, their food, and so on. If they produce more than that, a surplus above their own consumption, that goes to the people who set the business up. That's why they did it. They want to get their hands on that surplus. And the way the system works, that's how it works. The workers work, then they go home. They leave behind, when they go home, what they helped to produce with their brains and their muscles. That belongs instantaneously to the employer. The employer sells that output and takes the money. And what does the employer do? Replaces the tools, equipment, and raw materials used up with part of it, pays the workers the wages and salaries promised to them with another part of it, and then there's a remainder, and we call that, for lack of a better term, profit. And that goes to the people who run the enterprise. They run it to maximize their profit. That's what they do. And their society is successful, or not, depending how well they do it, how well do they generate a profit. Of course, for the workers, you can see they're in a kind of a different position. They push to have higher wages and salaries, but the employer pushes back because he wants higher profits, not higher wages and salaries. There's a conflict there. And it means that the capitalist is always pushing to get more profits because that's why he's there. He's going to use the profits to make even more money. Right? That's the system. And in Europe, it worked very well. For two or three centuries, they transformed Europe from the old system, feudalism that existed there, to the new capitalist system, and they generated a lot of wealth.

But a little problem: they found themselves struggling, these employers, against one another. See, it turns out to make money you needed to grow your business, so you bought more inputs and you hired more workers. But so did the other capitalists around you. And if you ran out of something important, or you ran out of workers to hire, you began to compete. The only way to grow then was to get a worker to leave the other place and come to yours to get the source of a crucial raw material into your hands, not the other capitalist who needed it. In other words, the growth of capitalism, which always goes on, never stops, bumps up against limits, and so it is always seeking to overcome the limits. And here's how Europe did it, particularly in the 17th, 18th, and 19th century. They took over the rest of the world. That's how capitalism spread. We call that colonialism or imperialism. It was when the Europeans literally, exploding in capitalism, solved for a while the problem, by bringing masses of other people in to be put to work, making a surplus, making a profit for their employers. Sometimes these people did it "voluntarily". Why this ""? Because often their conditions of living in peasant villages before were impossible. They couldn't survive. They had to go and get a job for an employer. Often this was involuntary. We have a name for that – slavery. How did you build up the wealth of the United States in its first century? By having slavery, producing the cotton that everybody in the world was buying for all kinds of reasons. Colonialism, slavery, they happen together. But then another problem was reached eventually, one you could kind of think of and predict. The colonial empires bumped up against each other. The rigor of capitalism that we have to expand, have to get make a profit and fold it back into the business and build it up and increase it – this kind of crazy built-in drive to grow, drive to grow, eventually brought the empires in 1914 to clash when they couldn't anymore carve up the world because they had carved it all up. And then the culmination of capitalism and colonialism blew up: World War I. A devastating mutual destruction of all the colonial empires. Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Holland, Russia, they all blew each other up. A few years later, because they hadn't been able to resolve the problem by doing this, they did it again. Two world wars in a very short time.

And when it was over – here comes now the important point: when the dust cleared in 1945, every one of the participating countries, all the old empires, were finished. This time including the new ones: Russia, 25 million dead people; Japan; and then of course Britain, France, Germany – all wrecked. The only country to come out of the two world wars relatively unhurt, the United States. And that's why for the last 75 years we, the Americans, inherited the broken, lost empires of the Europeans. And Europe, it's got nobody to exploit except its own people. It can't rip off the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Why? Because they took advantage of the two world wars to become independent, to break away from their subordinate, exploited situation in world capitalism. It's not so clear what they're going to do in its place. It's not so clear in many of these countries. But they don't want to be colonies anymore, that's crystal clear. And that means the Europeans have a real problem, because their capitalism had become used to the colonial empires that weren't there any more.

And it was a particular problem for the ruling classes, the employer class in Britain, France, Germany. Without an empire, what were they going to do? How were they going to run their society? They were used to being very wealthy, a small wealthy class of people, and an army of their own workers in their country and their colonial workers, many times larger in number. They lost that last big thing and they're never going to get it back. And so begins their relative decline. Right away after 1945, they deferred to the United States, because if Russia lost 25 million people in World War II, what would be the number of Americans who lost their lives in World War II? 400,000. You understand? 400 thousand, 25 million. No comparison. Russia was in no position to threaten the United States in 1945, but the reverse was not true. And yet we built a culture in this country worrying about the Russians, therefore begins already a program that we're seeing the end result of now.

So what happened to Europe? It just began a long, slow, steady decline. The decline would have been quicker, but the United States offered them a deal at the end of World War II. That's very important for you to understand, because Mr. Trump broke that deal. Here was the deal: You don't have an empire anymore, we're taking over. We, the Americans, we're going to make money from Asia, Africa, Latin America. We're not going to take over a country, but by financial means and by trading arrangements, we'll pull wealth out of those countries, which we have done. You're not going to get it, we get it. But don't worry, we're going to take care of you. You're going to be able to still be wealthy, still have a lot of profit, because there's one thing you're not going to have to worry about at all, and that is you're going to get military protection from us. You don't have to develop an army or a navy, or to be more accurate, you can have a very small army and a very small navy and a small air force, which is what Europeans have. Very small. They couldn't fight the Russians now for love or money. They're much too small. The Russians are much too strong for them.

That's why it's even possible to talk about one country, Russia, and all of Europe having a war, and it's not at all clear which one will prevail. My money would be on the Russians, because of their focus on the military, which they have had to learn over 300 years. The Europeans would be protected by the Americans as long as they became the junior partner. If the United States has to have a war somewhere, it can have a coalition of the willing. That's the dutiful behavior of the British, above all, and a few other Europeans, doing whatever it is the Americans want them to do. In Vietnam, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, you could see who's in and who isn't: You're the junior partner. We will help you. We will make sure that nobody bothers you. We will protect you. Most of all, we'll save you the money for the enormous cost of defense. We like it in this country because it allows the Americans to subsidize their own military, to make it enormous, to keep people working because the military is forever upgrading its weapons. It's a great way to stimulate the economy, because it sounds patriotic – "we're developing our defense". Meanwhile, you can cut the deal with the Europeans and keep them on your side, so they don't go left-wing. And remember, in 1945, what's left is the Soviet Union – badly damaged, but very powerful. And the Soviet Union, to protect itself – that's what's going on now – takes over the countries of Eastern Europe, from Poland in the north to Bulgaria in the south, to protect itself from yet another invasion like World War II, like World I, like Napoleon, like the struggles with British colonialism.

So we have a deal. The Europeans, afraid of the Russians, now afraid of Eastern Europe – and I want to remind those who don't know their history, that when the Nazis took over everywhere in Europe, they faced resistance. Norwegian resistance, French resistance, Italian resistance, everywhere. And much of that was led by socialists and communists. So when the war was over, Socialists and Communists had very powerful political movements and parties inside Europe, and the capitalist employer class of Europe was very worried about them. Plus, Russia was just a few miles away to the east, and there was a worry that there might be some kind of coming together of their own socialistically organized working class and Russia. The United States would protect them.

And so it became the United States footing the bill for the reconstruction of Western Europe – that's called the Marshall Plan – and the Marshall plan required: We'll give you all this money, we'll lend it to you, but it can only be used by buying American equipment. So they made sure that the American economy got the ultimate benefit of all that money. American money went to Europe to pay for American exports to rebuild Europe, but without a military. We would provide the military. This is important. Why? Because the decline of Europe didn't stop. Yes, they were protected by the United States, but the United States is where the money was. The United States is where the wealth of the colonial empires was, still existed as economic dependence, even if they were politically independent. The United States became wildly wealthier from 1945 to now, as every one of the people in America watching this program knows from their own family history. We had a good time. We cashed in on what was left of the old empires.

The Europeans couldn't – nowhere near what they once could. So they declined, even with that deal with the United States. They liked it because the money they didn't have to spend on defense, they could spend on keeping their rich people rich. And how did they do that? By buying off the anger of their own working class. They provided public services to their working class, to their employee class – way better than what the United States provided to its workers. Higher education in Europe is basically free. Everybody has a health program from birth till death. We don't have those things in the United States. They've had them in Europe for 50 to 75 years, if not longer. They take all that for granted. Americans can't imagine it. Most Americans don't even know about it. But that worked. It bought off the working-class radicalism. It kept the rich, rich. It kept the Left at bay. But it didn't stop the decline of Europe, which kept on going.

But the Europeans knew that too. What did they do then? Well, there's nothing they could do during the Cold War. That's when they focused on building this alliance with the United States, buying off the Left wing in their own countries – communist and socialist parties were in the governments of Italy, France and so on after World War II. That's what they worked on. Then when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, the Europeans saw their chance, the employer class: Now we can recover some of what we lost in our empires. And the way we're going to do that is to colonize Eastern Europe. NATO, which had been an alliance between the United States and Western Europe aimed at the Soviet Union, began what it had promised the leaders of the Soviet Union it wouldn't do. It moved eastward. So NATO absorbed Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria – steady since the 1990s.

One of the theorists of all of that, a former Eastern European himself, Zbigniew Brzezinski, some of you know his name, no longer with us, wrote in the 1990s a glowing series of articles and books in which he imagined Europe recovering by taking over, the West taking over Eastern Europe and including – here we go now – the breakup of Russia into maybe a bunch of littler countries that could then be folded into a new colonial empire for Europe. Maybe not like the old one, where you don't take over the country, you let it be independent. The United States had shown how to do that. You make them politically independent, let them be, but economically, you still have them, you still squeeze the wealth out of them and take it back. That was the idea. And the Russians, so disorganized and so weak after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991, were in no position to stop it. Told them, don't do this, don't do it, we can't take the chance, we can't, once again, be vulnerable to yet another European attack, like Napoleon and the British Empire and the First World War and Adolf Hitler's Operation Barbarossa. The West didn't listen. The West was excited. The Europeans saw their only chance, and now they're hysterical with it. You know why? Because they noticed that their decline over the last hundred years, ever since those wars, blew up the colonial capitalist system. Their decline has now become grotesque. The world economy, if you look around, has shown the Europeans that the center of capitalism's growth is in Silicon Valley of the United States or in Beijing and other parts of the People's Republic of China. In fact, the world economy is devolving into the United States and whatever allies it can hold on to and China, the BRICS, as the growth of the world economy. Where does that leave Europe? Answer: You're a distant third, and you're falling further behind.

What could prevent that decline from continuing? A war that dissolved Russia, that allowed the Western Europeans to do to Russia what they have been doing to the Eastern European countries that they have moved into economically – Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, and so forth. How are the Europeans going to fight this war? If the leaders there told their people what I have been explaining to you, their own people would not allow it because they know that if their employers can make lots of wealth in other parts of the world, they're going to be harsher on their own working classes. They know that if the Europeans want to be able to fight a war, they're going to have to do what many of them have already started doing, building up their military way beyond what they ever did over the last 75 years. The Germans just decided basically to build an army five times what they were before, to spend hundreds of billions of dollars in the years ahead. Where's that money going to come from? All working people know: It's going to come from their social welfare. You're not going to have free education anymore. The government isn't going to use the money to give you a free education or medical care from birth to death. It's going to use the money to build more missiles.

How are you going to do that? The mass of your people will turn against you and you won't have the social position to do what you're trying to do. You've got to come up with some story to tell your people that will get them behind diminishing their own standard of living, risking the future of themselves and their children, in order to allow you to build up the military. Why? Because Mr. Trump, whose own economy, the US, is also declining, whose empire isn't what it was – the Americans lost the war in Vietnam, they lost the war in Afghanistan, they lost the war in Iraq. They can't. They just lost the war in Iran when their allies discovered that having an American military base in Bahrain or Kuwait or one of those other places isn't a way to protect you, it's a way to become a target for the missiles of Iran. That's not just a story of Iran, that's a story of a declining American Empire. And Mr. Trump knows it. And so Mr. Trump is going to save money. Where? On Europe. He's not going to fund NATO anymore. We can't afford it. The Europeans go: oh, but that was the deal. No, said Mr. Trump, you ripped us off in that deal. No, say the Europeans, you ripped us off. Nice conversation. Not much of an alliance left there, is there?

And so how do the Europeans present all this to their people? After all, the leaders of every European country built their personal careers over the last 50 years by being loyally devoted to the deal with the United States. Starmer, Burnham, Macron, Merz – these are all people who are that close to the United States because they have been all their lives. To be a successful politician in Europe most of the time over the last 70 years has been to be America's good friend, because you didn't help your career as if you weren't. So the Europeans are left high and dry by Mr. Trump's withdrawal, and so they're desperate. If they don't find some way to stop their decline, they really are finished. The world will go on. There'll be two powerful economic forces, a still strong US, but declining and an ever stronger China rising. Europe will be for tourists. But not if they can do the following, which is what they've been doing from the day this war started: demonize Russia. Make Russia out to be a terrible, horrible, dangerous, monstrosity threatening Europe so that we can explain to the European people why we're taking money away from their needs, their well-being, their standard of living in order to build up a military. Can't do that any other way. You can't honestly do what I've tried to do here, explain how we come to this position. You cannot engage the mass of the European people in a discussion, which you could have.

How do we handle the decline of the empire? We're never going to get an empire back, and we don't want the war to make the effort to do it. If we do have a war – and at this point, we're all wondering how the Russians will retaliate to these missiles coming into their country. Up till now, they've kept the fight in Ukraine. They know that Europe is supporting Ukraine. At some point, they're going to hit targets in Europe. Then what? Do the Europeans really imagine they're going to make a war with Russia that isn't devastating like the last two world wars were? They want to administer a Russia that, even if they win, will be resisting them every step of the way for generations to come? Really? That's what you want? No. Ironically, here is a class struggle. It's a struggle between the interests of European employers and the interests of their own workers. And, you know, ironically, that's what it is in Russia, too. Because Russia, which we need to analyze also, brings its class struggles to this war. Russia made many changes in 1917 – many. The biggest one, a role for the government that many people still think is what socialism means. And for many people it still does. The government takes a bigger role. Not the definition I use and that I offered you at the beginning. If you define capitalism as organizing things between employer and employee, that arrangement, that's what you had in the Soviet Union, and that you have in Russia today. It, too, is a capitalist country. It's organized that way. Sure, it has a bigger role for the government, not as big as the one in China, but big, bigger than the one in Britain and the United States. But that's a different kind of question.

The Russians, too, have to take care of their working class and have to maintain their capitalist class, because that's the system in which they formulate their idea of how the world should be. Are there people who want to go beyond that in Russia? You bet, like every other country. Capitalism produces its own critics just as well as it produces its own celebrants. Russia is terrified that the capitalism it has will be subordinated to the Europeans if there's a war. They don't want to be anybody's colony. They know what that means. That means you can squeeze your workers, but the colonial power will get the bigger share. You will be left with whatever little bit of profit is left. That's not what the Russians want. It's not what the Belgians want. It's what the capitalists in any country want. It is not what capitalists in the United States want, either. They make a lot of money dealing with China, American capitalists. But they are worried that if the Chinese continue what they've been able to do for the last 40 years, that the American capitalist will become a junior partner of the Chinese. And what model would that follow? Europe, which has been a junior of American capitalism and therefore doesn't get the kind of profits you get in the United States. Cannot invest them, therefore, in building up their technology the way the United States could, the way that Chinese have learned how to do with a somewhat different system.

So here we have it again: Capitalists in Russia, squaring off against capitalists in Western Europe, abetted by the United States, unable to work out the contradictions among them and therefore marching to war as if World Wars I and II, when they did this before, never happened, never left them with a lesson to learn. And you know it's not the capitalists who die by the millions during these wars. It's the other class, the employee class. It – or to be more blunt – we have the incentive to see it for what it is, to not let it happen. And that requires that the employee classes of Russia, of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the United States understand that the capitalist system, this arrangement of employer-employee, rather than making workplaces democratic communities where everybody who works gets together and decides how to run this business, to what ends to run this business – as long as we don't do that, we are allowing war to become the logical endpoint of capitalism.

A few weeks ago capitalism showed us yet another one of its horrific flaws. It was announced with great pride by Elon Musk and an awful lot of other people that he has now become the world's first – ready? – trillionaire. He's been a billionaire for quite a while. Before, a few weeks ago, his wealth was estimated at three or four hundred billion dollars, making him the richest man in the world. And so how does modern advanced capitalism in the United States work? Here's how it works: It made the already richest man in the world, Elon Musk, even richer than he had already been. So now he has a trillion dollars. Several hundred billion more dollars are his than were a few weeks earlier. Now you and I know, everyone knows what kind of improvement for millions of people could be achieved if those few hundred billion dollars were made available for healthcare, for education, for transportation, for housing, for all the things the human beings need and deserve. But they're not going to be made available for that. They're going to be made available for whatever the richest man in the world feels like doing with that money. For example, exploring outer space. This is a more grotesque abuse of the community than any king ever achieved. We're going backwards into the era of the pharaohs.

The same capitalism that delivers this obscenity of making the rich richer is delivering us to a situation where Europeans are pushing ever further, threatening Russia yet again with yet another European invasion. And the Russians saying, we will not become subordinate, we will not. And so we will have a war. Just like in World War I, Germany and England went to war against each other and drew Russia and France and America into it. Really? We're going to let this happen again? We're watching, folks, as a train loaded with explosives rushes headlong down the track to where a stone wall is located. We see the train, we see the explosives, we see the wall. We know what will happen if that train hits that wall. We have some time and we have our brains and muscles to enable us to intervene to make sure that doesn't happen.

At the beginning of this presentation, an hour ago, I asked you not to get upset with the messenger, but do get upset at the message. Above all, you Europeans, who went through the worst of World Wars I and II, don't become the agent of yet another one. After those horrible wars, your ancestors set up the League of Nations, trying to make sure it didn't happen again. When it did, after World War II, your parents' generation supported the United Nations as a better effort to make sure it doesn't happen again. Before World War II, Germany, Italy, and Japan pulled out of the League of Nations. In recent years, the United States has all but pulled out, refusing to fund, refusing to acknowledge or participate. Are we really, really going to do this again? I'm an American citizen. I was born in the United States, lived and worked here all my life. But my parents were Europeans. My father was born in France, my mother in Germany. Most of the rest of my family was killed in World War II, or in the tensions leading up to it. Destroyed, first by World War I, which shook my families in those two countries, and then World War II, which literally wiped them out. I hope it's not necessary for anyone else to go through such experiences, such family histories to avoid a hysterical absurdity from becoming our reality. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to speaking with you again in two months.

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