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Destiny of Civilization, Interview by Ben Norton

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BENJAMIN NORTON: Hey, everyone. I'm Ben Norton, and this is the Multipolarista podcast. And I have the great pleasure of being joined today by one of my favorite guests, one of I think the most important economists in the world today. I'm speaking with Professor Michael Hudson.

If you've seen any of the interviews I've done with Professor Hudson over the past few years, you probably know that he's a brilliant analyst. He always has, I think, the best analysis to understand what's going on economically and also politically, geopolitically, in the world today.

And right now is, I think, a very important moment to have Professor Hudson on today. We're going to talk about the economic war on Russia and the process of economic decoupling between Russia and China and the West, which is something that Professor Hudson has talked about for many years. And that really has accelerated with the Western sanctions on Russia over Ukraine.

We're also going to talk about the decline in U.S. dollar hegemony. A recent report from the International Monetary Fund, which is dominated by the U.S., acknowledged that the use of the dollar in foreign bank reserves is gradually declining.

Now, it's not going to disappear overnight. But even the IMF is acknowledging that dollar hegemony is eroding. And, of course, the IMF acknowledged that the Western sanctions on Russia are going to further erode the hegemony of the U.S. dollar.

We now see Russia doing business with China in the Chinese yuan. Russia is also doing business with India with the Indian rupee. And of course Russia has been telling Europe that if it wants to buy Russian energy, it has to do so with Russian rubles.

So there's so much to talk about today, Professor Hudson, but I want to begin in the first half of this interview today talking about a new book that you're just about to publish.

Today is Monday, May 9th. You said on Wednesday, May 11th, the book comes out. And it's called "The Destiny of Civilization: Finance Capitalism, Industrial Capitalism or Socialism."

And everything that I just prefaced this interview with, discussing the economic war in Russia and sanctions and decoupling, this is all deeply related to what you talk about in this book. And I had the pleasure of getting an early copy and reading through it. It's a really important book, I think.

And you talk about this fundamental divide internationally – and this is a divide that actually goes back historically as well – between these three models for different economic systems you discuss: finance capitalism, industrial capitalism, and socialism.

And your argument is that the U.S. empire has been a force for imposing neoliberalism, which is a particular form of finance capitalism, which is nonproductive, in which finance capital destroys productive industries in pursuit of rent-seeking, and what you call the rentier class.

So instead of producing, as the classical bourgeois economists had said capitalism would be a productive system instead, finance capitalism is fundamentally a system of destruction and debt.

And your argument is that this is deeply rooted in U.S. foreign policy. This is the U.S. foreign policy strategy for expanding its economic power, is imposing this finance capitalist model on the world.

So can you expand further on your argument about the fight between finance capitalism, industrial capitalism, and socialism, and why you decided to publish this book now?

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well the book came out of a series of 10 lectures that I did for my Chinese audience. I've been a professor at Peking University for a number of years in economics, and have professorships at other universities, Wuhan and Hong Kong.

And I have a fairly large audience of about 65,000 people per lecture there. And I was asked to give my general overview, sort of a history of economic development in the West, for the Chinese.

And in order to understand today's finance capitalism, you have to understand what industrial capitalism was, as it was described in the 19th century.

And it's often forgotten, or played down, that industrial capitalism was revolutionary. What it was trying to do – from the physiocrats in France in the late 18th century to Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Marx, and the whole late-19th century flowering of socialism – the ideal of classical value theory and rent theory, was to say what is the actual value, the cost value of producing goods and services?

And what is earned by the capitalist, when he employs labor to make a profit, and what is unearned? And what is unearned was the landlord class. That was the hereditary warrior class that conquered all of the European kingdoms in the Middle Ages.

And the attempt by England's industrialists was saying, look, we cannot become the workshop of the world; we cannot undersell foreign countries if we have a landlord class ripping off all of the money in land rent.

And if we have predatory banking, or the wealthy people just lend really for buying property, or making distressed loans or predatory loans that have nothing to do with financing actual capital formation.

Well, what made this capitalism revolutionary was the British industrialists and advocates of industry, even the bankers in Ricardo's time, said, well, in order to overthrow the landlord class, which controls the House of Lords and all of the upper chambers of government in Europe, we have to have democratic reform.

If we have democratic reform and give voting to the people, they're going to vote against the landlord class, and then we can have an efficient economy where our prices of our exports and our goods and services reflect the actual cost of production, not the rake off for the rentiers class, not the rake off of what landlords take, not the rake off of what predatory bankers take.

And the whole long 19th century leading up to World War One was this revolutionary value theory that depicted land rent and monopoly rent and financial returns as being unearned income and wanting to strip it away.

And all of this seemed to be moving toward socialism. The industrialists were all in favor of government public utilities, of government enterprise, because they said, if the government doesn't provide health care, then individuals are going to have to pay it, and it'll cost a lot of money, like it does in the United States.

And so you had the conservative prime minister of England, Benjamin Disraeli, saying, health, all is health, we've got to provide public health for the people.

And it was the conservative Bismarck in Germany that said, we've got to provide pensions. If labor has to save up for the pensions, then it's not going to have enough money to buy the goods and services that we Germans are producing. We have got to make pensions public.

So all of this move towards socialism was not only in favor of increasing living standards, which soared in the 19th century, but also in freeing the economy from the rentier class, from the landlords, from the bankers.

And for the classical economists, a free market was a market free from landlords, free from bankers, free from monopolists.

Well, needless to say, the rentiers fought back. And by after World War Two, we've seen a continual anti-classical theory replacing the classical idea of free markets with a value of free theory, saying, well, everybody earns whatever they they have. All wealth is earned, not unearned. And if Goldman Sachs partners are paid more than anyone else, that's because they're so productive.

So you had a move rejecting classical economics, a junk economics, and a kind of artificial economics that doesn't really talk about how finance capitalism has worked.

And as it turns out, the business plan of finance capitalism was so predatory that it was anti-industrial.

That's why President Clinton in the United States moved to invite China into the International Labor Organization, saying, well, we can fight wage rises in America by a race to the bottom. We can we can hire Asians to do work, and that will cause unemployment here. And that's wonderful for the industrialists. It will basically cut wages and keep American wages down.

Well, that basically is the strategy of finance capitalism, and the aim of finance capitalism is not to invest in factories, and plant equipment, and research and development, but to live in the short term, but to make money by financial engineering, not industrial engineering.

And it becomes predatory, and so you have the whole ideological attack on public enterprise. You have Frederick Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom," where you say, if government provides public healthcare, that's "the road to serfdom," where actually it's finance capitalism that is the road to debt peonage and serfdom.

And you have now a whole disparagement of government. And all of this is a counter-revolution to the revolutionary impetus of industrial capitalism in its early stages.

And it's true that corporations now are just as right-wing as the the banks and the hedge funds. But that's because corporate industry has been taken over by the financial sector, and the heads of almost every industrial corporation are rewarded the how high they can push the stock price, to exercise the stock options they're paid in.

And you increase the stock price not by investing more, not by hiring more labor or increasing productivity or increasing sales, but simply by using whatever income you have to buy back your stocks. And by buying back your stocks, this forces up their price.

And, most of all, by giving political contributions in this country to the Democrats and Republicans alike, who appoint Federal Reserve heads that have spent \$7-9 trillion buying up stocks and bonds to increase the price of buying a retirement income, to increase Wall Street prices, to increase housing prices, and make America even less competitive industrially.

So finance capitalism is what has essentially de-industrialized the United States and turned the Midwest into a Rust Belt.

Well, the alternative, obviously, are the societies that have not followed this neoliberal finance capitalist plan. And the most successful economy, obviously, has been China, which is why it has been spending so much time there.

And China has done exactly what 19th-century United States, Germany, England, and France did. It has kept basic utilities, basic needs, housing, and above all, finance and banking, in the public domain, as public utilities.

Instead of having an independent financial sector operating on its own self-interest, the Bank of China creates the money. And the Bank of China lends money by deciding, where do we need to have investment in real estate to provide housing for the population at as low a price as we can make it? How do we build up the industry? How do we provide an educational system with training? How do we provide health?

And the fact is that the central planning in an efficient socialist style, not the Stalinist planning that everybody refers to of Russia, but a mixed economy as you have in China, which is truly a mixed economy, with guidance, like the French planification.

Well, that is obviously the way in which you survive and you avoid the kind of overloading the economy with debt service, with high rents, with high payments to the health-care monopoly in the United States, by avoiding all of this payment to a rentier class that has what the classical economists call unearned income, predatory income.

And instead of unseating them, we've put them in charge, and made the banks and Wall Street, and the city of London, and the Paris Bourse, the central planners.

So we do have central planning much more centralized than anything that was dreamed by the socialists. But the planning, the centralized planning is done by the financial sector.

And financial planning is short-termism; it's short-term planning; it's take your money and run. And that's what is stripping and impoverishing the global economy today.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Absolutely. And, in your book, you write about the important distinction between the classical economic idea of a so-called free market, and how, you argue that, neoliberals turn that idea on its head.

So this is what you write in your book. And this is, again, Michael Hudson's new book, "The Destiny of Civilization," which is out this week. You write:

"The neoliberal ideology inverts the classical idea of a free market from one that is free from economic rent to one that is free for the rentier classes" – that is the rent-extracting classes – "to extract rent and gain dominance."

So they they completely flip the idea of what it means to have a free market.

And then you note that, "in contrast to classical political economy, this neoliberal ideology promotes tax favoritism for rentiers, privatization, financialization, and deregulation." And you discuss all of that.

That is, of course, what we could call the Washington consensus.

And then you argue that "U.S. foreign policy seeks to extend this neoliberal rentier program throughout the world."

And you have a very interesting section of your book where you discuss this concept as "free-trade imperialism."

So can you talk about what your idea of "free-trade imperialism" is and how it relates to U.S. foreign policy?

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well, the Nobel Prize is given basically for junk economics. And probably the worst junk economist of the century was Paul Samuelson.

He made the absurd claim that he proved mathematically that, if you have free trade then, and don't have tariffs, and don't have any government protection, then everyone will become more equal. At least the proportions between labor and capital will be more equal. Well, the reality is just the opposite.

And the term "free-trade imperialism" was actually created by a British historian of trade theory who pointed out that, wait a minute, when England went for free trade, the idea was, if we have free trade, we can stifle other countries from being able to industrialize, because if we have free trade, then we can tell America, we will open our doors to your markets – meaning the markets of the slave South, that Britain supported – and in exchange, you will open your markets to our industrial goods.

And America followed that until the Civil War, which was fought not only over slavery, but by the Republican Party after 1853 that said very explicitly, if we're going to win the election – the Whigs never could win – if we, the new party, are going to win the election and industrialize America, we've got to integrate ourselves with the anti-slavery issue, with emancipation, but for us, the economic war of America is a war of, either we're going to have protective tariffs in the North, or we're going to end up as a non-industrial, raw materials-producing society, as the South wants.

And that was the debate from 1815, when the Napoleonic wars ended and world trade began again, until really the Civil War.

And America became strong in the way that Germany became strong too, by having protective tariffs, in order to have prices large enough to nurture what was called infant industry, to nurture American manufacturing.

And I wrote a long book about this, published some years ago based on my PhD dissertation, "America's Protectionist Takeoff."

Well, the English tried to fight against other countries protecting their economy, saying that if you just have free trade, you'll get rich. Whereas the reality is, if we have free trade, you'll get poor, if you're not already able to have industrial and labor productivity and agricultural productivity on par with the most advanced countries.

Free trade was an attempt to prevent other countries from investing government money and building up their agriculture, and building up their industry, and building up their productivity, and creating a school system, to raise wages, to make wages more productive.

And the American protectionists said, well, we're going to have a high-wage economy because high-wage labor undersells pauper labor. And skilled, well-fed, well-rested American labor can produce much more than the pauper labor of other countries that have free trade.

Well, what the leading American protectionist economist, Erasmus Peshine Smith, went to Japan and helped industrial help Japan break away from British free trade, helped Japan industrialize.

And other American economists, other foreign economists, all picked up the ideas of the American protectionist, like Friedrich List went to Germany promoting protectionism.

And Peshine Smith's book, "The Manual of Political Economy," was translated into all the foreign languages – Japanese, Italian, French, German.

And you had Europe realizing that free trade polarizes economies. Well, it was this that after World War One, and especially World War Two, when you had orthodox economics turning into basically propaganda.

That's where you and Samuelson and others try to convince other countries, governments are bad, leave everything to the wealthy people, to the finance people, trickle-down economies, it's all going to trickle down, don't worry, just give more money to the rich, and don't have any government interference with markets.

Whereas America had got rich by interfering with markets, to shape them in the years leading up to World War One.

But after World War One, America had already achieved its industrial dominance. And it was after World War One that America said, ok, now our protective tariffs have enabled us to outproduce all the other countries, and our protectionist agriculture especially – the most protected sector in America, has always been agriculture, since the 1930s.

Basically it said, well, now we can outproduce other countries, we can undersell them, now we can tell them to go for free trade.

And after World War Two, the Americans created the World Bank for economic impoverishment, and the International Monetary Austerity Fund.

And the World Bank's leading objective was to prevent other countries from investing in their own food production.

The guiding line of the World Bank was, we've got to provide infrastructure for building up plantation agriculture in Latin America, and Africa, and other countries, so that they will grow tropical export crops, but they cannot be permitted to grow grain or wheat to feed themselves; they must be dependent on the United States.

And so the function of free trade, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund has been to finance dependency, backed up by the American support of dictatorships throughout Latin America who agree to have client oligarchies supporting pro-American trade patterns and avoiding any kind of self-reliance, so that the United States can do what it has recently done to Russia a English s, impose sanctions – say, well, now that you depended on us for your grain, we can now impose sanctions, and you can't feed yourself if you don't follow the policies we want.

That was the policy that America tried to use against China after Mao's revolution. And fortunately for China, Canada broke that monopoly, and said, well, we're going to sell grain to China. And China was always very friendly to Canada in those earlier decades.

So basically, free trade means no government, no socialism. It means central planning essentially by Wall Street – countries should let American firms come in, buy control of their raw materials, resources, control of their oil and gas, and mineral rights, and forests and plantations, and basically let other countries send their whole economic surplus to the United States, where it will be duly financialized to buy out other countries' raw materials and rent yielding resources.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Yeah, and in your book, you have a very funny passage that I think really encapsulates this ideology that you're talking about here.

You referred to Charles Wilson, who was the secretary of defense under Eisenhower in the U.S., and he was also the former CEO of General Motors.

And he famously said, "What's good for General Motors is good for the country." And that idea has morphed into the idea that, "What's good for Wall Street is good for America."

And then you note that "this merged with evangelistic U.S. foreign policy that says 'What's good for America is good for the world.' And therefore the logical syllogism is clear: 'What's good for Wall Street is good for the world.'"

And you describe this, you link it to the new cold war, this idea that what's good for the U.S. is good for the world and what's good for Wall Street is good for the U.S., therefore, what's good for Wall Street is good for the world.

You argue, "We must recognize how finance capitalism has gained power over industrial economies, above all in the United States, from which it seeks to project itself globally, led by the financialized U.S. economy. Today's new Cold War is a fight to impose rentier-based finance capitalism on the entire world."

And this is such an important analysis. Because among those very few people of us who talk about this idea of the new cold war and how dangerous it is, there are very few people who frame it in economic terms.

Usually we frame it in political terms, right, the geopolitical interests between the US and the EU on one side, and China and Russia on the other.

And going back to Brzezinski and The Grand Chessboard, his 1997 book, where he talks about the importance of preventing near strategic competitors from emerging in Eurasia. That's of course a geopolitical discussion and economics is part of it, but it's often not at the forefront.

But your analysis I think is even more important, and more accurate, because your argument is not only is it geopolitical, but the geopolitical struggle is rooted in economics. And thi struggle between systems.

So talk talk more about the new cold war and how you see it.

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well, as we're seeing now, the world is dividing into two parts. We can see that in the fight against Russia, which is also a fight against China, and against India, as you noted. And it seems Indonesia and other countries as well.

The United States is pushing a world that can be controlled by American investors. The ideal of the American neoliberal plan is to do to other countries what it did to Russia after 1991: take all of your public domain, your oil companies, your nickel mines, your electric utilities, give them all to the wealthy oligarchy, that can only make money once it's taken control of these companies, by selling the stocks to the West.

The West will buy out oil, just like Mikhail Khodorkovsky tried to sell Yukos oil to Standard Oil in the West. And we've got to put an oligarchy that will sell all of the national domain, all of the patrimony and natural resources, and all the companies, to American investors on the cheap.

The Russian stock market led all the stock markets in the world from 1994 up to about 1998. This was a huge rip off. The United States wants to be able to do that to the rest of the world.

And it was furious when Russia said, we've lost more population as a result of neoliberalism than we did in all of World War Two fighting against Nazism. We've got to stop.

And Russia began to say, we've got to use Russia's population, and industry, and natural resources for Russia's benefit, not for the United States' benefit.

Well, the United States was absolutely furious with this. And the fury has erupted in the NATO war against Russia in the last few months, and what's ongoing now.

And the United States says, U.S. State Department officials have said, what we want to do is carve up Russia into maybe four different countries: Siberia, western Russia, southern Russia or Central Asia, maybe northern Russia.

And once we've done that, we cut Russia off from China, then we go into China. We finance, we send ISIS and al-Qaeda into the Uyghur areas, the Muslim areas, and we start a color revolution there. And then we break up China, into a northern part, a southern part, a central part.

And once we break them up, we can more or less control them. And we can then come in, buy up their resources, and take over their industry, their labor, and their government, and get richer to obtain from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, and Iran the wealth that we're no longer producing in the United States, now that we de-industrialized.

So the world is dividing into two parts. And it's not simply the United States and its European satellites on the one hand versus the non-white population on the other hand; it's finance capitalism versus the rest of the world, which is protecting itself by socialism, which in many ways fulfills what was the ideal of industrial capitalism during the 19th century, when industrial capitalism was actually progressive.

And it was progressive. That's part of the whole theme of my book. It was revolutionary. It tried to free economies from the legacy of feudalism, from the legacy of hereditary landlords.

And now the financial class is no longer the landlord class, but the landlord class pays most of its rent to the financial class in the form of mortgage interest, as it borrows money to buy property and housing and commercial sites on credit.

And you have the kind of financialization that has increased housing prices in the United States to over 40% of income, that is officially guaranteed for mortgages. That has priced American labor out of the market.

Privatized health care, 18% of GDP, that is pricing America out of the world market. Debt, auto debt, student debt, which in other countries education is free; that's pricing America out of the market.

So you have a basically un-competitive economy that's committing financial suicide, following the same dynamic that destroyed the Roman empire, where a predatory oligarchy took over and maintained power by an assassination policy of its critics, just very similar to what America has been doing in Latin America and other countries.

So you're having history repeat itself with this same kind of world split. And this split couldn't have occurred back in the 1970s, with the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. There were other attempts by the Non-Aligned nations to break free of American imperialism, but they didn't have a critical mass.

So right now, for the first time, you have a critical mass. And you have the ability of China, Iran, Russia, India, other countries together to be self-sufficient. They don't need relations with the United States.

They can handle their own; they can create their own monetary system outside of the International Monetary Fund, which is basically an arm of the Defense Department. They can give loans to build up the infrastructure of countries outside of the World Bank, which is basically an arm of the Defense Department, the deep state.

So you have the American economy – essentially a merger between the military-industrial complex and the Wall Street FIRE sector, finance, insurance, and real estate – really cannot develop any more than the Roman Empire could develop, by trying to obtain militarily what it could not produce at home anymore.

Well, China and other countries, now that they have their industrial base, the raw materials, the food, the ability to feed themselves, the agriculture, and the technology, they can go their own way.

And so we're seeing in the last few months the beginning of a war that is going to go on for, I think, 20 years, maybe 30 or 40 years. The world is splitting away.

And it won't be a pretty sight, because the United States and its European satellites are trying to fight to prevent an inevitable break away they cannot prevent, any more than Europe's landlord class could prevent industrial capitalism from developing in the 19th century.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Yeah, and this is a good segue to what I wanted to ask you about, Professor Hudson, which is the economic war on Russia.

And I should say, of course, that today is May 9th. Today is Victory Day in Russia, celebrating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two. Not the US and British victory over Nazi Germany, the Soviet victory, in which 27 million Soviets died.

And actually I should say that, here on YouTube, in the comment section, there are some Russians who are your fans, Professor Hudson, saying they're thanking you for your cogent analysis of Russia.

But on the subject of Russia, Professor Hudson, we now have seen that since Russia's military intervention in Ukraine on February 24th, we saw really what could be referred to as financial shock-and-awe. That's a term that's been used.

Just as when the U.S. invaded Iraq, it waged a military shock-and-awe campaign on Iraq. Well, now it is waging economic or financial shock-and-awe on Russia.

And Russia has been referred to as the most heavily sanctioned country in history. Which I think is probably accurate, although maybe the DPRK, maybe North Korea, is more sanctioned. But I mean we're talking about levels of sanctions not seen against a country of this size ever.

And you can also refer to it as the contemporary equivalent of medieval siege warfare against Russia.

Joe Biden, in a speech in Poland, made it clear what Washington's goal is: it's regime change. The U.S. wants to overthrow the Russian government, as it did in the Soviet Union in 1991, and clearly install a a pliant alcoholic neoliberal puppet like Boris Yeltsin.

So can you talk about, from an economic perspective, what do you see as the effects of this economic war on Russia?

And specifically in terms of the concept of decoupling, which you have talked about for years, and you have said that the Western sanctions on Russia and China were accelerating that process of decoupling. And this was before the financial shock-and-awe we've seen.

So you talked about a move away from this neoliberal globalization where everything is interconnected, or at least capital is interconnected globally, to the creation of a kind of, what you could say is kind of an economic iron curtain.

But how do you see that also in terms of integrating the Eurasian economies more deeply?

And also what is the effect on the European economies, which my impression is that Europe is going to become what you call an economic dead zone, more and more reliant on the U.S., whereas Russia, China, and Iran, and even potentially India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia – we're seeing much more economic integration of Asia, which is, of course, where the majority of humanity lives.

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well you have used the words shock-and-awe, picking it up from the U.S. statements of shock-and-awe. There hasn't been any shock-and-awe; there's been a self-defeating piffle, and laughter.

That’s not all. There was an attempt to grab \$300 billion of Russia’s foreign reserves, saying, well, any country that leaves their reserves in American banks or in the American Monetary Fund to stabilize their currency, we can grab if we don’t like their policy.

So the idea was, now Russia is going to go broke. It can’t afford to buy anything without U.S. dollars. And the people are going to get so angry, they’re going to vote against Putin. And then we can pour in our money to twerps like Navalny and other right-wingers who have promised to be the new Yeltsins.

Well, it didn’t work that way. They did grab the \$300 billion of Russia’s reserves. Russia immediately said, ok, we have our own money. We now, fortunately, have enough oil and gas that we don’t have to sell to Europe and Germany. If they want to freeze in the dark and let their pipes burst when the weather gets cold, that’s their problem. We’ll sell to India, and China, and other countries.

And there was, for a few days, the ruble plunged, by saying, uh oh, what is Russia going to do? So all the foreign exchange traders thought, you can trust Biden to have a really brilliant policies.

I think Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize winner, said Biden is the greatest American president since Roosevelt, or since Truman, that he was so smart. Well, that’s why Krugman got the Nobel Prize, for making statements like that.

So immediately Russia said, well, obviously we can’t get paid in dollars anymore, or in euros, because, you’ll just grab them, so you’ll have to buy oil and gas in rubles. We’re going to price it in our own currency. Just like China had talked about pricing its exports in yuan.

And so what has happened is that immediately the ruble not only recovered, but is now selling at a higher rate than it was before the American sanctions. So there was no shock at all. The Americans felt shock.

The Americans are shocked. The Americans are awed. The Russians are laughing and everything is going their way.

So it’s almost as if – I would not accuse Biden of being on the pay of Russia, and I would not say that the leaders of Congress are the Russian agents, but if they were Russian agents, if they were paid by Russia, they could not have done a better job of helping Russia catalyzing its protectionism that it wouldn’t do itself.

The fact is that President Putin and many of the people around him still were neoliberals. I mean, they began as neoliberals, in the ’90s.

They began by hoping that they could make an arrangement with Germany and Europe, that Europe would develop their industry and make Russia as efficient an economy as Germany or the United States. Well, obviously that hasn’t happened.

All the same, they didn’t think of imposing protective tariffs as the United States did. They didn’t protect their agriculture. They bought grain, and cheese, and other agricultural products from the Baltics, and from other countries.

Well, now that, once the Americans put on the sanctions, beginning already under the Trump administration, all of a sudden Russia had to produce its own food.

And it did. It made the investment. It is now the largest agricultural exporter in the world, not a food-deficit country. It's not importing any more cheese from Lithuania and the Baltics. It has its own cheese segment.

And the sanctions are forcing Russia to do exactly what the United States, Germany, and other protectionist countries did in the 19th century, developing their own industry by isolating it from low-priced foreign imports that would be priced so low that the Russians otherwise could not afford to make the investment in factories, plants, equipment, research, and development.

So what the United States has done is actually catalyze Russia moving together.

And also, for three or four years, I have been talking with Russians, and with the Chinese, and other countries about the need to de-dollarize. If you want to develop your own economy, you have to develop your economy in your own interest with public spending and planning, independent from the United States.

Well, now everybody thought that, well, in a few years it may take a decade for China, Russia, Iran, all these countries to break away from the U.S. But America said, we're going to help you, we're going to speed up the breakaway process. We're going to isolate you. So you've got to band together against us.

So that's exactly what it has done. You can just imagine how the Russians are crying all the way to the bank about this.

And how China is watching what the Americans are doing to Russia, and listening to President Biden saying, you know, Russia is not our real enemy, our real enemy of China. And when we're finished with Russia, then we're going to go against China and do the same thing to it.

Well you can imagine what this is leading the Chinese government to try to plan to be sufficiently independent from the United States, so that similar type sanctions will not hurt it.

And President Xi in the last few weeks has said we've got to make China as independent as possible. We've got to make our own computer chips. We've got to not depend on the United States for anything, except maybe Walt Disney movies. That's basically about it.

So it's as if – you know, I had mentioned earlier that finance lives in the short term. American policy, being financial policy, lives in the short term. And it's looking at if it can make a quick, a quick victory, and forget about what's going to happen next.

I'm told that, years ago, already from the war with Iran, and then Iraq and Syria, in the State Department, if there were Arab specialists who spoke Arabic, they were all fired. Because they said, well, if you can speak Arabic, you must've learned Arabic because you're sympathetic with them. You're fired. We won't have anyone who can read Arabic here.

Well, now in the last decade or so, they fired all the Russia specialists from the the State Department and CIA, saying, well, if you can read Russian, why would you want to learn Russian? You must like something in Russia. You wanted to learn it. You're fired.

So they have people who have no idea of what's happening in Russia, no idea what's happening in these other countries. And they're blinded by their ideology.

And if anyone would say, wait a minute now, public planning and making education a public utility is actually making them more competitive, well, that's against the ideology. That's not the corporate type.

And they're taught, well, we really can't trust people, maybe they're tending toward socialism, and they're out the door.

So you're having American policy pretty much run by the blind, and the Europeans are simply taking orders, and money in little white envelopes from the United States, to just show their loyalty, and basically are willing to spend three to seven times as much for their energy, for their liquefied natural gas and oil, by buying from the United States, than they are by a long-term contract with Russia.

Europe is willing to spend now \$5 trillion on putting together ports that can handle shipping tankers for liquefied natural gas instead of relying on the Russian pipeline, the Nord Stream Two, that's already there.

So Europe is making an enormous sacrifice. If it doesn't have Russian gas, and it refuses to pay rubles, it says, if you don't give us our gas and oil for free, you're attacking us, because we've been getting all of your oil and gas for free, because all the dollars, all the money we pay, you've recycled to the United States in your foreign reserves. Thank heavens, the U.S. can grab it all. If you don't continue to give it to us for free, then you're attacking us.

To the United States, other countries protecting their economy, other countries trying to raise their living standards, and especially other countries undertaking land reform, are viewed as enemies of the United States, because they're an enemy of the neoliberal American financial system.

And the idea of the unipolar world where the United States gets all of the profits, and rents, and interests of the world economy, just as ancient Rome stripped its provinces by getting all of their wealth and income for themselves, not producing it at home, while impoverishing their own domestic population. It's just an exact parallel.

So Europe is willing to say, well, ok, if we don't have a Russian gas, well, that means that our chemical companies cannot buy the gas to make the fertilizer to make our crops grow, and our agricultural productivity is going to fall by about 50%.

We're also going to spend a lot more money on America's military, NATO arms to support NATO. So higher food, higher military spending, higher energy costs.

This ends Europe as an industrial rival to Asia, and Eurasia, I should say, because now the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and other spending investment, capital investment, throughout Western Asia is creating a new productive plant that is not only self-sufficient, but is leaving the United States and

Europe without any industrial competitive power. They've priced themselves out of the world market. They're no longer competitive.

So the world is developing. And I'm sure the only way that the NATO countries can fight against it is militarily, by threatening to bomb. But they can't fight economically. They can't fight financially. They tried by disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT system. It put it in its own system very quickly.

It really is left without a strategy, except that it's done a wonderful job of controlling the public relations dimension of this war, making it appear as if somehow other countries are the aggressors, in not letting America exploit them, and making it appear as if Russia is the aggressor in Ukraine, instead of NATO prodding and prodding Russia to say, we're going to capture your port at Crimea, and we're going to attack the Russian-speakers if you don't fight back, and we're going to keep bombing them year after year, from 2014 on, we're going to keep bombing them until you protect them.

So all of this is treated as if America is purely defending itself. Well, this is what the Nazis said in World War Two. Hitler and Goebbels said, we can always mobilize a population to support our war by saying it's a war to defend ourselves.

And that's how the United States in Europe are doing it. Not only are they pulling a strategy out of Goebbels' Nazi book, but a few weeks ago, Germany went to the museums, the military museums, where they had the old Panzer tanks from World War Two, and they sent the Panzer tanks, the Nazi tanks from World War II, to Ukraine, saying this is symbolic, now we can fight Russia with the same German Nazi tanks run by the neo-Nazi groups, that Zelensky is supporting, the same Nazi fight against Russia. We can reenact World War Two with the same tanks, even symbolically, to show that this is a fight of Naziism, and neoliberalism, against Eurasia.

BENJAMIN NORTON: We've also seen Germany not only re-militarizing, but also boosting its relations with Japan. There are some terrifying echoes of of World War Two.

But you mentioned something that I want to analyze a little bit more, which is the strength of the Russian ruble. I talked about the concept of financial shock-and-awe that was waged on Russia. And President Biden said, "the Russian ruble has become rubble," he joked. He said the Russian ruble has become rubble.

Well, that's actually not at all what happened. This is the value of the dollar to Russian rubles, right now [showing a graph]. Russian rubles are at 69 to the dollar. A few days ago, it was at 64, or 65 to the dollar, which is actually better than it was even before the Russian war in Ukraine, which began in February 24th.

And it did spike, and there was a peak here, at which it was devalued to 139 to the dollar, about half the value it has now. But in the months leading up to the Russian military intervention, in November and December, it was around 75 to the dollar.

So the ruble has actually strengthened despite these sanctions. And here's a report from Reuters from five days ago, that was May 4th: the "Rouble leaps to over 2-year high vs dollar, euro as EU ups sanctions." So the ruble is doing quite well.

And you talked about the Russian mechanism to force Europe to buy energy exports from Russia in the Russian ruble. And this graphic here, for people watching, it's in Russian, but really it just shows this mechanism in which a European firm that wants to buy gas from Russia's state owned gas giant Gazprom, it has to send the money in euros to the Gazprombank, which is the obviously the bank that works with Gazprom, and then it puts it in a special account in euros, and then that is sold in the Moscow exchange for Russian rubles.

And then those rubles are put in another special account, called a K account, that belongs to that European firm. It has two accounts, two special accounts with Gazprombank, one in euros, one in rubles. And then this special ruble account sends that money to Gazprom. And then once the money reaches Gazprom, that's when Russia considers that the payment officially went through.

So this is the mechanism by which Russia is getting paid in rubles. And much of Europe claimed at first that they would not do so, but eventually they gave in. So that's an incredible development.

And related to that, what I wanted to ask you about, is I think another reason that the Russian ruble has strengthened and stabilized is not only because Russia continues to maintain constant exports of energy to Europe and other parts of the world.

You can talk about the central bank policies. But one of the policies is that the Russian central bank has basically put the ruble on gold, which I think is a very interesting and historic development.

And we saw that from the beginning of April until the end of June, the Bank of Russia says that it's going to buy gold at a fixed price of 5000 rubles per gram of gold. And then the question is whether or not in July, when this policy ends, if it's going to continue, and if the ruble will basically become fixed, it become pegged to gold like the U.S. dollar was up until 1971.

So you don't think it will be? So talk about this policy. Do you think that that the gold standard is going to come back? Or apparently you don't think so.

MICHAEL HUDSON: No, Russia is not going on on the gold standard. What it is doing is investing, its foreign exchange in the only way that is not grabbable. It's investing it in gold; it's putting gold in its reserves.

It is not setting its exchange rate according to the price of gold, but it is buying gold with what it has been getting.

I want to go back to your talk about rubble. You talked about, "from ruble to rubble," what President Biden said.

There have been a lot of pictures of rubble in the news for the last few days. For instance, there are talks of, here's a Ukrainian picture, and look at this picture of a Russian tank, we shot it down, it's rubble. Turns out it's a Ukrainian tank, that they just say it was the Russian tank we shot down.

So basically, they're taking their own destruction, and they're saying that, while they're being destroyed, they're saying, no, this is a picture of Russia being destroyed, Russian assets, not Ukrainian assets being destroyed.

Well, the similar thing is with the Russian ruble. America says, look, we've isolated the the ruble. Well, what has happened? If you isolate the ruble and you say we're not going to export anything more to Russia, so it's not going to be able to spend any of its rubles on buying American or European products.

Well, meanwhile, Russia can continue to earn rubles from Germany and Europe, and it can continue to earn foreign exchange from other countries that it's selling its agriculture to at rising prices, its oil and gas at rising prices, too. So obviously, the balance of payments is going way up.

And they believe that what is in store is a new monetary system that is an alternative to the dollar IMF system.

And in this system other countries will hold their reserves in each other's currencies. In other words, Russia will hold Indian rupees and Chinese yuan. China will hold rupees and Russian rubles.

There will be the equivalent of what Keynes thought of as something like artificial special drawing rights that the banks will be able to create to help fund governments to undertake capital investment.

But for settlements settling balance of payments deficits among countries, once they don't have enough foreign exchange to make a swap, they will use gold as the means of settlement, because gold is a pure asset. It's not a liability.

Any foreign currency basically is held in a foreign country that has the power to do what America did to Russia and just grab it all, and say, we're just wiping it all out.

It's as if you have a bank account, and the bank says, we've just emptied out your account to give it to one of our friends, and you don't have it anymore. You can't do that if gold is held in your own country.

Venezuela made the problem of keeping its gold in England, trusting England, saying that, even if there is war, they'll never interrupt gold and finance. And England just grabbed Venezuela's gold.

So, obviously, countries are not going to leave their gold in other countries. Even little Germany has asked America to begin sending back the gold that it has in the Federal Reserve Bank of America because it's worried that what if it ever buys Russian gas again? America will grab all of Germany's gold, grab all the German money, and it'll be like World War One all over again.

So this act that America did of grabbing Russian money, Afghanistan's foreign reserves it grabbed, this is telling all the other countries, pull all your money out of dollars. What are they going to put it in? There's not that much they can put it in that it is absolutely safe.

So gold is a flight to safety today, because it's one of the things that all of the world realizes as having an international value for settling balance of payments deficits, that is independent of world politics.

So that's the explanation. Russia is not going on gold. It's going on an independent standard from the United States with gold as an element of its foreign reserve, just as it's holding Chinese yuan and Indian rupees.

It's not going on the rupee standard. It's not going on the yuan standard. And it's not going on the gold standard. But these are elements of its foreign reserves.

BENJAMIN NORTON: I have a question for you. It's kind of a more technical question that I've always wondered. And I've tried to do research on this, because there's not much information.

So we know that that the U.S. and European Union have frozen over \$300 billion from Russia's central bank foreign exchange reserves. And of course they did this after doing the same to Iran, to Venezuela, to Afghanistan, which is now threatening a famine in Afghanistan that could kill more people than died in the 20-year NATO-U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan, which is another topic that really needs to get more coverage.

And I should add, by the way, that the US and the EU, they've frozen nearly half of Russia's central bank's foreign exchange reserves, and are now saying they're not going to give it back. So they stole it. I mean, they stole half of its reserves.

My question is, what is the mechanism by which they effectively freeze and steal those reserves?

Because my understanding is that there is of course a physical element of those reserves, which you're talking about, which is gold. But not all of the \$640 billion in Russia's central bank reserves is physical currency, right? A lot of it is just computerized? It's number in computers and bank accounts.

So when when the U.S. and the EU steal this money from central banks like in Russia or Afghanistan – obviously in the case of Venezuela, as you mentioned, they physically stole the gold. But if it's not gold, is it physical cash stored in Moscow, like physical dollars and euros? Or it's mostly just numbers in a computer, which is why they can steal it?

MICHAEL HUDSON: Every country needs to manage its exchange rates, and there's always like an up-and-down and a zigzag in the flow of payments for imports and exports, investment, capital movements, debt service, all of that.

So countries want to stabilize their exchange rate. How do they do that? Well, most of the big exchange markets are in New York and in London.

So countries would leave their money in correspondent banks. Like when Iran, at the time under the shah, kept that foreign reserve in the Chase Manhattan Bank. So when Iran, after the revolution and Khomeini came in, and Iran wanted to pay interest on the foreign debt that the shah had run up, they told Chase, please, here's our bondholders, please pay them.

Well Chase was told by the Treasury, don't pay them, just take the money and hold it. So Chase said, we put a freeze on your account. And so Iran defaulted, and then Chase and the State Department said, oh, Iran defaulted, it missed the payment. Now, all the money that it's due for foreign debt has to be paid all at once. And Chase paid all of the bondholders off. No more money in the account. It was all emptied out.

Suppose you had an account in Chase Manhattan. And they said, ok, now you've done something really bad, you put Michael Hudson on the show. We're going to grab your account. We're going to give it to Mr. Guaidó, because he needs the money in Venezuela because the people still are not voting for him. So all of a sudden, you won't have money in your account. It'll go to Mr. Guaidó's account.

Well, that's what happened with Russia. They took the money. They grabbed the money from Russia's account. And they said, half the money we're going to give to, I think, to the 9/11 people, because we all know that it was Russia that bombed the World Trade Center on 9/11.

And we're going to give it to all sorts of other people who suffered all over the world. It's all Russia's fault.

BENJAMIN NORTON: But Professor Hudson, when you say that they seized Russia's assets, you mean the assets held by the Russian central bank in foreign bank accounts?

MICHAEL HUDSON: Yes, yes.

BENJAMIN NORTON: And these are not physical assets, these are numbers in a computer, right?

MICHAEL HUDSON: In Venezuela's case, Venezuela had used some of its oil company earnings to buy oil stations and refining companies and the United States actually grabbed the ownership of the gas stations and the refineries and distribution system that Venezuela had in America.

BENJAMIN NORTON: It's called Citgo.

MICHAEL HUDSON: Citgo, yeah. Russia doesn't really have any capital investments in the United States. It did have bank accounts, and that was all that the United States could grab.

BENJAMIN NORTON: So when you say that, when Russia, at least for now, the central bank is allowing convertibility of rubles at a set rate into gold, that's a temporary policy to make sure that they have a physical asset that their central bank can hold on to, because if they have dollars or euros in their reserves, my understanding is that's not physical cash, it's actually just numbers in a computer, so they don't have it physically in their bank reserves, so it's easy to steal that money.

Obviously, if they had billions of dollars worth of cash, of paper cash, it would be much harder to steal it, but if it's just on a bank account, if it's numbers in a computer, then they can just freeze it.

So I think this is also a reflection of a point that you've also made about the financialization of the economy, is it's also just a lot of this capital is not even physical capital.

MICHAEL HUDSON: Yes. Savings take the form – one person's savings is another person's debt. So these are Russia's deposits in American banks that it used to buy or sell rubles, or to buy goods from America, or to receive payments in, if Russia exports something such as oil. Americans buyers of Russian oil would put the money into the Russian bank account.

They never dreamed that this would be grabbed. But now Russia says, ok, you've grabbed our money, now that means that we get to grab all of your assets in Russia. This is great! All of your stock holdings in nickel, and Yukos, and all these other companies, ok, you've got the money, we have the assets, look at us as just buying the assets on the cheap.

And the Western investors in Russia have all been selling their Russian assets to show that they're good American citizens in NATO, and the Russians are buying up these European and American assets on the cheap, largely by borrowing money from the banks, that get the money from the central bank, now that they're so wealthy, and all of the foreign exchange reserves is a result of the American shock-and-awe statement, that's sort of shock-and-awe in reverse.

So Russia is coming through just fine. And you can imagine how the American strategists are gnashing the teeth. They don't understand how Russia was able to avoid being bankrupted by this.

They really are not economists. They're not really financiers. They're foreign-policy strategists. They're ideologues that are not very well educated in how to think about the future and how to recognize the fact that the world can actually change from what it is today into something else. And sometimes that change is not in America's interests. That is sort of not a permitted thought over here.

So essentially, Americans and Europe are operating in the blind, and Russia and China, and Iran, and India, are all looking at how are we going to restructure the world so that we come out of it more prosperous than we were before, not more impoverished. That's really what the world is dividing into.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Professor Hudson, I don't know if this is directly related, but it's it's something that's always been a very curious question in my mind.

Germany, back in 2016 and 2017, it moved, physically moved, its central bank's gold reserves, which had been stored in New York, London, and Paris, and it physically moved those reserves, those gold reserves, to Frankfurt.

Now this was before the U.S. and Britain stole Venezuela's gold reserves and other reserves. But do you know anything about what motivated Germany's central bank to move the physical location of its gold reserves into Germany itself?

MICHAEL HUDSON: I don't think it's all moved yet. It's still going on. Gold is very heavy, as heavy has lead, basically. And America said, well, we can only do a little bit, trickle by trickle. So America has been returning the gold very slowly.

So I think Germany, with all of its history of hyper inflation, I think just realizes that, now that gold is not used to settle balance of payments deficits anymore – the gold that Germany had in America was all of the exports that it made to the United States during the Vietnam War. This is Vietnam War gold.

You remember that President de Gaulle would every month cash in, the dollars that America spent in Vietnam would all be spent from Vietnam to Paris, the dollars would end up there, the central bank of Paris would essentially buy gold on the London exchange and keep the gold either in New York or in London.

Well, Germany, because America defeated Germany, and it wasn't going to keep its gold in Russia, that defeated it even more, it said, well, ok, we're cashing in our surplus dollars for gold, but we're going to hold the gold in America.

But now it says, well, America is never going to settle its balance of payments deficits and its foreign debt in gold again, because it doesn't have any balance of payments surplus, any ability to do that.

It's going to spend its export surplus and its investment surplus on war. So it's never going to be able to pay. That's obvious. Let's get the gold back.

That was the calculation that every country was making already a decade ago. They realized that America can never repay its foreign debt, unlike other countries.

When other countries can't pay their foreign debt, they have to go to the International Monetary Fund, that tells them, well, we'll make you a loan, but you have to sell off your natural resource reserves to the Americans, or we won't lend you the money.

Well, basically, that's not going to happen anymore. They realized that America is just going to say, haha, we're just not going to pay.

Well, now other countries are saying, wait a minute, if America's never going to repay its foreign debt, why do the Global South countries have to pay their debt to the IMF and the World Bank, all this dollar debt to dollar bondholders?

If America won't pay, we don't have to pay. Let's have a clean slate. Let's start from the beginning. And we're only going to have debt and credit relations with friendly countries, not countries that want to go to war with us like America did in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and now Russia.

So that's basically what's happening.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Great. And just to wrap up here, I have another question. And I know your time is limited, so I really appreciate you being here.

I have a quick question about the decline in U.S. dollar hegemony. We were talking about the strength of the ruble, the economic war on Russia; we talked about the bilateral trade that's growing between Russia and China using the Chinese yuan, between Russia and India using the Indian rupee. And Iran also is talking about doing business with a basket of currencies.

I want to point to a report that was recently published by economists who work with the IMF. And I published an article about this over at Multipolarista.com, "IMF admits US dollar hegemony declining due to rise of Chinese yuan and sanctions on Russia."

And there is this report that was published by the IMF, by these economists, and I cite you, Professor Hudson, in this report. It's a working paper from the IMF, published in March, titled "The Stealth Erosion of Dollar Dominance."

And here's a graph, for people watching, here's a graph from the report. And it shows not a large, but a noticeable and consistent decline in the use of the holding of the U.S. dollar in the foreign exchange reserves of central banks around the world. So this is around the world.

And it has declined in the past years from about 70% of central bank exchange reserves to about 60%. So a 10% decline. That's not massive, but it's steady and I think it's going to acce

And at the same time they've also found an increase in the use of what they call "non-traditional currencies" in the foreign exchange reserves of central banks around the world.

And here you can see this graph. I mean it looks like a significant influence because if you look at the y-axis it's only from 90 to 100. But there is a significant increase in the use of other currencies in foreign exchange reserves, aside from the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Japanese yen, and the British pound. And the currency that is increasingly popular is the Chinese yuan.

So that's one half of my question. The other half is about this interesting report that was published in the Financial Times, and it's titled "Russia Sanctions Threaten to Erode Dominance of Dollar, says IMF."

And the FT interviewed the IMF's first deputy managing director, Gita Gopinath, who acknowledged that the sanctions imposed on Russia over its military intervention in Ukraine could lead to what she says "fragmentation at a smaller level."

And she did say that the dollar is eroding influence, but "would remain the major global currency."

So, that's a two part question. I'm wondering if you could talk about the decline in U.S. dollar hegemony and how the sanctions will potentially erode that. And then the other half of the question is, can you comment on the declining use of dollars in foreign exchange reserves?

MICHAEL HUDSON: Well, this is what my book "Super Imperialism" was all about. When I first published it in 1972, I could see how the whole thing was unfolding for the next 50 years. And we just published last year a third edition of it, bringing it up to date.

Dollar hegemony means America's entire balance of payments deficit in the '50s, '60s, and '70s was military. So the dollars that were being pumped into the world economy were the result of military spending.

But the dollars would end up in foreign central banks, especially from Asia to France, Germany, others. What were they going to do with it? Well after 1971 they could not buy gold anymore, so all they could do was buy U.S. Treasury securities. IOUs.

And so they re-lent to the Treasury all the money that America was spending militarily. And the more money America spent in waging its cold war militarily against the world, the more money central banks would lend to the U.S. government to finance the U.S. deficit that was spent largely on the military-industrial complex and foreign military operations.

So dollar hegemony was a free lunch financing America's almost 800 military bases across the world, to fight against communism, defined as any country that doesn't let American industry and finance buy control of its raw materials, agriculture, resources.

And this has now come to an end. Right now America has grabbed Afghanistan's, and Russia's gold. All of a sudden it's obvious that, this summer, there's going to be an enormous squeeze on Third World countries, on the Global South.

Their energy prices are going to go way up, and that's going to hurt them just like the oil shock of 1974 and 1975 did.

They're going to have to pay higher food costs, because of food prices are going to go way up now that the Ukraine war is erupting.

And a lot of their foreign debt, dollarized debt service, is coming due. And they're facing a choice: if they pay the foreign debt, they can't afford to buy the oil and energy that they need to run their factories and heat their homes. They can't afford to buy the food to feed their people. Whose interests are they going to put first?

Well of course their leaders are going to put America's interests first, and their own interests second, because their leaders, if they're a client oligarchy, are put in power by the U.S. military, as sort of miniature Pinochets, throughout Latin America and other countries.

So suppose other countries decide, well, we're going to feed ourselves and we're not going to wreck our economy just to pay foreign bondholders. We're a sovereign country. We're going to put our national interests first.

Well, then the United States can say, aha, we're going to grab all of your foreign assets in the United States.

Well, other countries can say, oh, they're going to do to us just what they did to Afghanistan and Russia. Let's move our money out of the United States quickly. If we don't have dollars, well, it's true, we can't pay our dollar bondholders, but at least we can, in international markets, we can buy the food and the energy we need.

And so the tensions, the disruption of world prices, and inflation, and trade that is a result of the NATO attack on Russia, now threatens to drive all of the southern hemisphere countries into an alliance with Russia, China, India, and all the rest.

So America basically is creating a new Berlin Wall, but the wall is isolating itself from other countries, and driving other countries all together into what I hope will be a happy, self-sufficient, non-U.S. globalized economy.

BENJAMIN NORTON: Well, I want to thank you, Professor Michael Hudson. It's always a real pleasure having you. I know you're very busy, so thank you for giving us so much of your time.

I'll say that the comment section here on YouTube has been very vibrant, with some interesting conversation. And what's nice is there are people from all over the world, from the U.S., Latin America, Europe, and from Russia. So it's good to see a mix of people.

And for anyone who wants to listen to this, you can check out the podcast version if you look up Multipolarista on Spotify, and iTunes, and all the other podcast platforms.

And I'll just say, while I wrap up here, that today we were talking about, at the beginning of this discussion, a new book that Michael Hudson is publishing this week. It is called "The Destiny of Civilization: Finance Capitalism, Industrial Capitalism, or Socialism."

It’s a very good book. I had the privilege of getting a review copy early. So definitely check out that book.

You can also find all of Professor Hudson’s writings at michael-hudson.com.

Thanks, Professor Hudson.

MICHAEL HUDSON: It’s really good to be here. It was a good discussion.