



**Episode 1,037: A War on Terror Scorecard, with Scott Horton**

**Guest: Scott Horton**

**WOODS:** I'm telling you, Scott, you were a major ingredient in why the Contra Cruise was so successful. I mean, it was a lot of fun for a lot of reasons, but having you with us and your generosity with your time and your brainpower with everybody and staying up late and teaching people things all day long was just an indispensable part of that event. And it was an unforgettable time and you were a major, major part of that.

**HORTON:** Well, listen, I mean, I can't tell you how much I appreciate you inviting me along and having me there. I mean, really, if I sat and wrote about it, I don't think I could tell you how much I really appreciate it. It's really something else, you and Bob, too. And for all the people – I mean, I can't go down all the names or whatever, but I met a lot of great people. Boy, you turn out – and you told me before; you're like, *This is going to be a great crowd. You just watch.* And man, it was a lot of fun.

**WOODS:** And man, are they Scott Horton fans or what?

**HORTON:** Yeah, well, they are now [laughing].

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah, yeah, some of them were converted on the cruise, but others – I don't think they would mind my mentioning their names – the Haymans are such heroic people.

**HORTON:** Yeah, well, we're good friends from now on too.

**WOODS:** Yeah, exactly. Lifelong friends. They would crawl over broken glass if it would help Scott Horton.

**HORTON:** Well, I'll tell you what, too, man. I dream about being on that boat all the time.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Isn't that great?

**HORTON:** Yeah, I dream about looking out at the waves with Dave and Michael and hanging out and all that, but also, I keep having this recurring dream where I'm like walking around the dining room and I'm trying to explain to people, like, here's this one little thing that you can do to help end the war. And I don't know what the hell it is, right?

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**HORTON:** But it's like, *Oh, it's really fun and easy and you can all participate.* So yeah, I have no idea. And also, I feel like I'm rocking still like that George Carlin bit. I feel like you go out, spend a day on the high seas, and then there's still part of you inside that's still out there rocking.

**WOODS:** I know we've got to talk about the War on Terror, but honestly, that was such a fake world we lived in for that week, where your every desire is provided for and you're with great people and you don't want any of the days to end. And then to watch — Dave did standup for us that was tailored specifically for our group. It was just absolutely unforgettable. So if we ever do another one, people, I'm telling you, when we tell you it's a great event, we're not just blowing smoke. This is real, absolute truth. It was a fantastic event.

**HORTON:** No, it was so much fun. And Michael Boldin, he was really the life of the party the whole time, even more than our professional comedian, no offense to Dave.

**WOODS:** And by the way, the reason I —

**HORTON:** But nobody's got energy like Michael Boldin, man. I mean, that was so much fun.

**WOODS:** Yeah, the thing is I invited Michael, even though he's not as well-known, let's say, as Dave might be, but I invited him not so much for the Tenth Amendment stuff, although that was a bonus, but simply because he's such a fun guy to hang around with and I thought people need to see this for themselves. And they all walked away saying, "Yes, Michael Boldin has to be part of my life forever now." So anyway, the chemistry between everybody was just great. It was just amazing.

All right, let's talk — we have to get depressed again now. So you and I are going to do a little different episode today. Normally, we pick some topic, we go super, super deep into it to the point where people have to listen to the episodes 17 times. This time, we're going to try to spend just a little time in seven different places. And I'm going to go in the order in which you provided the places to me, because your — we're basically doing a scoreboard for the War on Terror and how it's going. So let's start with the topic of your book, *Fool's Errand*.

**HORTON:** Tell them how much you liked the book, Tom.

**WOODS:** I absolutely love — Okay, first of all, I love this book, but it's not just because, well, it's Tom Woods and he likes Scott Horton so of course he's going to like it. The people on the cruise were raving about the book like it was the greatest book that had ever been written. I'm not kidding you. And okay, it's got great endorsements and everything else, but it's so crushing and devastating that, after you read it, you feel like your mission in life is to get other people to read it. That's the kind of book it is. So when Scott gave his talk on the cruise, he brought a bunch of books to sell. The books were gone in like a 50th of a second as soon as they heard him talk.

So give us the update. What's going on in Afghanistan? Why do you say we're losing?

**HORTON:** Well, yeah, we are. So like I say in the book, we never had to have that war at all. We could have negotiated for bin Laden. But even if you think we had to attack to get al-Qaeda, we still didn't have to attack the Taliban. But even if you think, yeah, no, we had to attack the Taliban because that's what they get for harboring al-Qaeda, then we still didn't have to stay and install a government there. But then even if you say, yeah, no, we still, for whatever reason, we had to try to create a government there, we still didn't have to pick a fight with this Pashtun insurgency.

And then we did, "we" being the U.S. military and spies and Bush government, picked a fight with the plurality Pashtun population of the country, and now they can't defeat it. And so what they're on basically – they're in a situation where, as long as they stay, they never quite lose. And so that's what Donald Trump did at the end of August, was announce that, well, we're going to stay and keep losing slowly but without ever being forced all the way out of the country. That loss, in the words of President Bush, will be up to other presidents to decide some other time in the future.

And so here we are with at least 100,000 dead. Nobody really knows how many Afghan civilians have been killed in this thing. The longest foreign war in American history, 16 years on, and all they can do with their brilliant new strategy is say, well, we're going to bring the Indians in to back the government in Kabul even more than before when we've been asking for their help all along and getting them to buy Russian helicopters for us to get around our own sanctions and all this stuff. But all that's going to do, Tom, of course is provoke the Pakistanis into the same reaction. They're just going to increase their same reaction, which is to keep backing this Taliban insurgency resistance against us in order to prevent India and their friends from consolidating power over the country. So the whole thing is just a perpetual motion machine. We could have this exactly same conversation in another 16 years and it would be the same thing again.

**WOODS:** What do you say to people who argue that failed states become hotbeds for terrorist training and activity, and therefore –

**HORTON:** Quit making them.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**HORTON:** Yeah, quit overthrowing secular dictatorships – or even, you know, why overthrow the Taliban in the first place again? But then look at the terror war. Al-Qaeda attacked us, so what do we do? We're going to go down the list here. We attacked Iraq, overthrow the government, the secular government in Iraq, in Yemen, in Libya, and then half a regime change in Syria. None of these governments were tied to al-Qaeda at all. They were all governments that kept al-Qaeda down. And we overthrow them and create all this space. So I'm getting ahead of the game, but that's the terror war. We had 400 terrorists to kill, and instead we killed everybody else and turned 400 into 40,000.

**WOODS:** I know this has nothing to do directly with that, but the news is coming in that Mitt Romney is edging closer to a Senate run in 2018 to replace Orrin Hatch, whom we presume to be retiring. And you know, Trump's a big disaster in terms of expectations and not living up to them and being all over the map and whatever. And yet, the "never Trump" side on foreign policy is at least as bad. So in other words, here's your choice: you could have Trump or Romney. What the heck? This is terrible. Just terrible, unspeakable.

**HORTON:** Yeah, Trump is unpredictably but predictably bad on everything, but in sort of a seemingly unpredictable way. But Romney is just a walking prediction of everything wrong you could possibly do. I mean, that's it. He's bad on every single thing, and he even has read about it and knows a little bit about it, and that's why he's so bad on every single thing. So no improvement there, I'll tell you.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah, if there were a President Romney, you and I could do an episode on exactly all the things that he would wind up doing that were wrong. All right, well, what's going on in Pakistan then? Let's go to the next one.

**HORTON:** Well, so the drone war against al-Qaeda fighters in Pakistan really wound down years ago because they'd already won. I mean, they really did – I don't want to give them too much credit because there were a lot of consequences and a lot of innocent people killed, but the CIA really did hunt down and kill almost all of the real al-Qaeda guys hiding in Pakistan in, say, the first four or six years of Obama times. But Trump has started bombing them again, and I don't know exactly who he's bombing there but there are plenty of fighters in the Afghan theater who have safe haven hiding across the border in Pakistan and supported by the Pakistani state.

And as I was saying, American requests for help from the Indians for America's vision in Afghanistan only agitates our Pakistani allies and puts them in the position of increasing their support for our enemies in Afghanistan in the Taliban and the Haqqani Network. And so I'm not sure exactly who they've been attacking there, if it's the Haqqanis or who it is, but I recommend to people – because honestly, the worst blowback we suffer here from the war in Pakistan so far was the failed attempt to blow up Times Square in 2010, which actually could have been really bad, but the guy was unable to pull it off with his truck bomb there.

So this seems pretty far away to most Americans maybe, but I would encourage people to read *Living Under Drones* about what it's like to be a little girl growing up with just the buzz of Predator and Reaper drones in the sky for your entire childhood and then occasionally vaporizing people that you know and love and just the absolute – well, you know, the crack of the total shell shock that these people grow up with. It's the same in the Gaza Strip and wherever America and its allies have these kind of air wars against helpless peasants on the ground who can't even shoot back. And you know, it drives them absolutely out of their minds, so next time we do have bad blowback from Pakistan, don't be surprised.

**WOODS:** But if you're willing to concede that the CIA did get some actual bad guys, then how would you answer the neocon argument that, look, it's regrettable but how else do you expect us to get the bad guys? There are going to be some innocents who die.

**HORTON:** Well, the thing is they could have had the Taliban arrest them and hand them over back in 2001, and then when they refused to negotiate with the Taliban, they invaded. But then they focused all their efforts on the Taliban and not al-Qaeda, and they let al-Qaeda escape at Tora Bora. They killed about 300 or 400 of them, and then they let another couple hundred of them go. And these are the guys that they ended up having to mop up later.

And then now you hear them talking about – and I know you read this in the book – they talk about, *Oh no, ISIS is in Afghanistan, ISIS, ISIS*. Well, who's ISIS in Afghanistan? Well, they're Pakistani Taliban refugees from Obama's drone war in Pakistan that he waged in 2010. So when Obama escalated on the Pakistani side of the border, the Pakistani Taliban, which is a totally separate group from the Afghan Taliban, came across the border, settled in Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan, and then after a little while declared themselves loyal to the Islamic State. So they're actually still just local Pashtun fighters, but now they have the same brand name as international Arab terrorists, so we have to stay to fight them forever. But all they are is the consequences of the crackdown against the al-Qaeda guys in Afghanistan. You know, General McChrystal himself said – he called it insurgent math. He said 10 minus 2 equals 20. You kill 2 people, you create 20 new enemies. This is what happens, and this is of course what has been the case the whole time, is all of this is blowback from America picking these fights.

**WOODS:** I want to skip Yemen and come back to that later. Let's talk about Syria. Now, wouldn't it be plausible for somebody to say that the news headlines are all saying that ISIS is really shrinking and on the run, and so this is something that somebody can claim victory for, certainly? So why would you say we're losing?

**HORTON:** Yeah, well, of course the only reason ISIS came into existence was because America, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Israel supported the al-Qaeda jihadists and their friends Jabhat al-Nusra, that is, and Ahrar al-Sham and the Nour al-Zinki, the Farouq Brigade, and the Northern Storm, and all these so-called FSA groups who are basically all just a bunch of bin Ladenite terrorists led by Jabhat al-Nusra. ISIS is just a breakoff group from al-Qaeda. They're not the opposite; they're blood brothers. They're the Iraqi-dominated faction of al-Qaeda in Iraq from Iraq War II that, when Obama helped start the war in Syria in 2011, they came across from Iraq and started setting up their part of the war there. And then these guys basically stopped obeying Zawahiri and created their own little caliphate there, which lasted for three years and which, once the Islamic State spread from eastern Syria all the way into conquering western Iraq, oh, now they're a problem in 2014.

So then Obama had to start Iraq War III in order to smash them to drive them out of Tikrit, Fallujah, Ramadi, and Mosul, and Tal Afar, and basically all of Anbar Province and Nineveh Province in Iraq. This was all direct consequences of American intervention in support of the jihad of the first place. If America had not intervened and if Obama had told the Turks and the Saudis and the Qataris, *Oh no, you don't. We may all hate Assad, but America, we hate al-Qaeda more and we mean it*, then Assad would have crushed whatever uprising in 2011. There never would have been an Islamic State at all.

And then you're right that, yes, now that Iraq War III has been successful and America has helped the Shiite forces in Iraq again to defeat the Sunni-based insurgency there, now we set up for a brand-new conflict between the Kurds and the Shia in Iraq over who's going to control Kirkuk. Whereas before, that had basically been settled with facts on the ground and sharing agreements. So now we're setting up for Iraq War IV to take place, with America to back both sides of that one. And we still have al-Qaeda in western Syria in the Idlib Province, and we have the Saudis are trying to use them to try to pick a fight with Hezbollah in Lebanon. So you know, this is far from over.

And of course America has used in Iraq –and in Syria as well – has used the Kurds as our local militia backed by special operations forces on the ground. Well, guess what. They want autonomy. They want maybe independence. But that's only going to pick a fight with our NATO ally, the Turks, who want to crush them because the YPG, our friends the Kurds in Syria, are the enemies of the Turkish government. They're the friends of the PKK in Turkey that the Turks consider a terrorist group.

So any short-term success anyone can point at in any of these missions, particularly in the Levant and Mesopotamia, they're just blowing smoke and ignoring the context outside of their immediate field of vision. You know, *Look, we smashed IS in Raqqa*. Yeah, but look at al-Nusra in the Idlib Province. They're still there. And really, it was the Russians and the Syrian government and Hezbollah and Iranian Quds Force guys who ended up winning the war on terrorism there when Donald Trump finally stopped the CIA support for al-Qaeda in the last, you know, six months.

**WOODS:** All right, more spectacular failures to get to in just a minute after we thank our sponsor.

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All right, let's talk about Somalia. I mean, what libertarian discussion would be complete without a discussion of Somalia? What's going on in Somalia that has anything to do with the War on Terror?

**HORTON:** Yeah, great question. Listen, if people want to really know about this, I wrote a thing. Just type in "FFF," for Future of Freedom Foundation, "FFF Somalia" and you can read my article that I wrote, "U.S. Government Responsible for Somalia's Misery," where I try to sum all this up for you. But basically, after the advent of the War on Terrorism in 2001, the CIA started backing the warlords there, the bad guys from *Black Hawk Down*. Aidid and his son, basically, and his friends hunt down Islamists and kill them for us.

Now, it's the time immediately before this is when libertarians correctly say – and I mean real economists at universities and stuff have written studies and said when Somalia was anarchy land and no one ruled the place, that was when they were best off. And this is somehow a caricature that somehow we're supposed to ignore the fact that the USA has been turning that country upside down for 16 years straight now. The whole terror-war long, and we're supposed to say freedom is to blame for whatever's wrong in Somalia. That's the liberal cliché. *Oh, yeah, you want a free society, huh? Why don't you move to Somalia where everything is horrible?* Yeah, but USA, the most

powerful government in world history has been butchering people there this whole time, so that doesn't count.

It's the period before that is when there was no one collecting taxes at the port, there was no one regulating the creation of these new companies, and they had the greatest growth rate in technology and cell phone service and so forth at the time at the turn of the last century. It was the best time for a country coming out of communism like the Chinese, coming from basically nothing, from they'd been reduced to nothing, and they were doing great until America came and turned their country upside down.

So we started backing the warlords, which provoked a response, so we backed the warlords more, which provoked more of a response. And finally, what had been an anarchy formed in a crisis into a new state, the Islamic Courts Union, and they kicked the warlords out of the country and into Ethiopia in 2005. So Islamic Courts Union, *Oh no, it has the name Islam in it*. And yeah, they shut down a movie theater or two or whatever. They didn't have the power to be anything like an authoritarian dictatorship, and they were not al-Qaeda guys. And the Somali tradition is far from hardcore, bin Ladenite Wahhabism and all of this stuff.

America could have dealt with them, but instead, America hired the Ethiopian government next door, their historic rivals, a Christian army, to come in. And they committed scarlet war crimes, rape and torture and murder, and turned the country completely upside down. And you can go back and read about it at the time. Christmas 2006, it was CIA and special operations forces supported the entire thing, and rendition and torture and all of the rest of it involved. And then we've been supporting regional governments there, the Ethiopians, the Kenyans, the Burundis, and whoever in the African Union forces attempting to prop up a government and wage a war against the insurgency there.

And at the time that the war started, al-Shabaab – the Islamic Courts Union was 13 groups. Al-Shabaab, that's the youth. They were the smallest, least influential group. But then the war started, and of course, who does the fighting? The youth. So they're the ones with the AKs, and now they've inherited the power, and it's been back and forth and up and down.

But the chaos of the war has, during a time of periodic, severe droughts, has led to the deaths of certainly better than a million people who otherwise could have lived. But you know, the markets are completely broken. The farmers can't sow their crops. They can't harvest them. They can't take them to market. There is no market. There is no money. And so at the time that I wrote that article was back in I think 2013 – yeah, it was – and that was when half a million people had starved to death there. And it was true that there was a terrible drought, but the terrible drought in the Horn of Africa, it hit Somalia the hardest because of the state of war and chaos that America had sowed there. So I mean, it really is among the worst of the crimes of the history of the U.S. government, I mean up there with exterminating the Lakota.

**WOODS:** Well, of course I'm going to make it easier on people to find your article. I'll just link to it on the show notes page; that's [TomWoods.com/1037](http://TomWoods.com/1037). What about Libya? Aren't conditions at least improving since the depths of the chaos after getting rid of Qaddafi? Haven't things improved somewhat?

**HORTON:** Yeah, I mean, I guess so, but I don't know. It seems like there's a lot of violence. And far be it from me to complain they don't have a single central government, but the problem is there are two or three competing governments and they all want to be the central government. So there's a lot of fighting and there's a lot of foreign intervention. And I admit to you, I plead guilty that Libya is the one that I'm least good on.

The best interview I ever did is a lady named Bel Trew, and he had written this thing for *Foreign Policy* where she broke down all the foreign powers in the region and which sides they were on, the Egyptians and the Saudis and the Turks and everybody else. And as best I can tell, Tom, the Americans are behind the government in Tripoli while their sock puppet, Haftar, who had been living right outside of CIA headquarters for 30 years or something before they parachuted him in there in 2011, he has control of Benghazi. And there's been skirmishes and threats and all that. I guess nobody's really strong enough to go to total war against the other, but it's far from settled there. I don't know exactly the level of humanitarian crisis.

But also, I did read a thing a couple of months ago about, you know, everybody focuses on the east and the west. Well, there's a whole south of Libya too, and this thing was about all the jihadists and all the arms smugglers and all the lawlessness going on down there since the central government was destroyed and nobody's in charge. And what's really at least as bad as what's happened in Libya – and by the way, they're a huge anti-black province. The entire city of Tawergha was basically liquidated of its civilian population because all blacks were accused of being in on it with Qaddafi. And it's in Hilary's emails, not the Wikileaks ones but the State Department ones, where Sidney Blumenthal warned her, *Hey, the jihadist guys that we're backing here are rounding up and executing blacks, just so you know.* And yeah, well, they did.

And then anyway, the war spread to Mali. You're hearing about this story about two Navy SEALs murdered a green beret, special forces soldier, Army soldier in Mali. Well, what are they doing in Mali? They're chasing the consequences of Hilary and Obama's war in Libya where the Tuareg fighters went to northern Mali to declare independence from the south, and then the jihadists coopted their revolution back in 2012 and '13. So we're fighting there, and then as you also heard about our special forces guys getting shot and killed in Niger, where they're on missions hunting down wherever a guy claims to be a Muslim and has a rifle, well, that counts as al-Qaeda in part of the War on Terrorism, so we can spread our special operations forces all through Africa. And the terror war is – We've got drone bases in Chad and in Niger. There's already been blowback terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and I believe also in Sierra Leone. So this can just go on forever. I mean, if you've seen pictures of Africa from space, that's a lot of War on Terror you can wage forever if you want to, if you let them.

**WOODS:** All right, well, now let's talk about one of the crown jewels of the War on Terror, which is the war in Iraq. How is that shaping up these days? I mean, we launched it – "we." I hate that word – in 2003.

**HORTON:** I know, me too. And I know I've been talking like that this whole interview and everybody's getting annoyed, but it's English language and I'm stuck with it too.

**WOODS:** Yeah, no, exactly. I know it. I know it. There's nothing we can do — nothing "we" can do.

**HORTON:** [laughing] Yeah.

**WOODS:** So 2017 now, so 14 years later, what do we have to show for that? Saddam's not in power anymore. That's what Jonah Goldberg will tell you.

**HORTON:** Well, I mean, I've got to say this is just the original sin of all of this. I mean, of all of the horrible things — never even mind Iraq War I and Iraq War 1 1/2 under Bill Clinton and all of that, but just of all of the worst things that you did not have to do was invade and overthrow the government of Iraq.

And the bottom line is America still this whole time, we're fighting for Iran's friends, the Dawa Party and the Supreme Islamic Council. Those are the guys who are the political leaders of the Shiite supermajority in Iraq, and we've been fighting a civil war for them this entire time. We had finished kicking the Sunnis out of Baghdad — "we." They had finished kicking the Sunnis out of Baghdad by the end of 2007 and they had — really 2008.

And with the surge — it wasn't just the war, but especially the surge, the completion of that sectarian cleansing meant that the Shia powers were then permanently deprived of any last incentive to compromise with the Sunnis. They can all just bake out there in the sun. Screw them. They're the 20% minority. They don't have the oil. The oil is all the way down in the south and up in the north under the control of the Shia and under the control of the Kurds, and so what are they going to do about it, basically? And they just absolutely revolted. David Petraeus' promise that the surge worked was that the benchmarks would be accomplished, and those benchmarks were that they would be cut in on the patronage, and they just weren't at all.

And so therefore, in 2013, a year before the creation of the Islamic State, Patrick Cockburn was on my show saying, hey, the Shiite Iraqi army basically has no control over Mosul. The guys are AWOL. They're basically like on Fort Apache in a foreign country, way out far away on foreign territory. And they're AWOL. They're retreating back behind safe Shiite lines. There's no one in control. Meanwhile, America was supporting the terrorist war and the rise of the Islamic State in Syria next door.

And so that was why listeners to my show knew that they were going to create the — the Islamic State was going to change from the name of a group to the name of a place, that it was in the process of doing it. I spent a year and especially the last six months, the first six months of 2014 saying, *Oh man, the other shoe's going to drop*, right when Obama was saying, *Oh, ISIS, they're the junior varsity*. I was going, he is not taking into account that western Iraq is wide open. So that was the start of Iraq War III then, and then America fought another war on behalf of the Shia to help their forces kick the Islamic State out of all of the cities of the Iraqi west.

And so now, of course, if you listen to Jonah Goldberg and everybody who writes for him at *The National Review* and the rest of their neocon ilk, they go, *Oh my God, look, Tom. It's the rise of Iranian Shiite power in the region. How did that happen?*

*Who's going to stop them?* This is Jonah Goldberg, who wrote "Baghdad Delenda Est" in two parts. He said every ten years ago, America has to take some weak, crappy little country and throw it up against the wall just to prove we mean business, paraphrasing Michael Ledeen. And that was why we had to destroy the entire civilization of Iraq, never mind just overthrow the country there. That's why we had to raze their entire culture to the ground and kill a million people and create all this chaos.

And now they go, *Oh my God, the Shia now have a real crescent on the ground of power that connects all the way through from Tehran through Baghdad to Damascus and to Beirut.* And so now it's a whole new emergency, because history began yesterday and now who's going to confront the problem of Iranian power in the region, which America has aided and abetted this entire time?

And one more thing – and I told you this before – why did America support the al-Qaeda terrorists in Syria? Well, Obama told Jeffrey Goldberg in *The Atlantic* in 2012 – and the article is about Iran's nuclear program – "As president, I don't bluff." And he tells Jeffrey Goldberg, *That's right, Jeffrey Goldberg. If we get rid of Assad, that would help bring Iran down a peg because Assad is the only Arab state allied – you know, Assad's government in Damascus is the only government in the region, the Arab state allied with Iran. And so yes, we're doing this nuclear deal with them, but sort of in order to prove to you that we're not tilting toward them now.* Just like they said in their own plain language about Yemen, *We have to placate the Saudis.*

So at the same time we're literally securing their interests by scaling back the Iranian nuclear program, which was already a civilian program anyway, we have to placate their upset by waging these wars. And of course, Israel's a big part of that too because they're obsessed with Hezbollah. And of course, what's all occurred as a result of this? Hezbollah is more powerful than ever before, just like Iran is now more powerful than ever before.

**WOODS:** Now, I know Trump was pretty clear about his views on Iran during the campaign, so it's not a surprise that he's continuing with that – and it goes to show Horton's law, right? That the worst things they promise, they will keep those promises. The good things, forget about them. And that really has I think in large part come true under Trump. But with Iran, it seems like, given the bipartisan hostility towards Iran, it seems like the only possibility you'd have for some kind of work toward a true rapprochement with Iran would have to come from some kind of radical outsider with no connections to the regime. And yet Trump being that person nevertheless has zero interest in doing that. So that's maybe what's most discouraging about it.

**HORTON:** Yeah, no, I totally agree with that. I mean, I think the image of Donald Trump is perfect for this, and all the complaining about Russia, Russia, Russia notwithstanding, he's tall enough, he's Republican enough, he's a capitalist-from-Manhattan enough that if he took General Mattis with him – and for that matter, Rex Tillerson – and they went to Tehran and met with the ayatollah and worked out a deal, Nixon-goes-and-shakes-hands-with-Mao-Tse-Tung style, it would be fine. It would be perfect.

They could do the same thing in Pyongyang. *Hey, guess what, Kim. We're on our way. Clear space on your runway because Air Force One is landing. We're coming to make*

*friends. We're dropping sanctions. We're opening up relations. We're bringing our basketball teams with us. We insist on getting along now. Ceasefire's not good enough. Let's sign a peace treaty, friend.* And then what are you going to do? Attack him as being the weak, soft, hippie, liberal, Jane Fonda traitor? No, of course not. He's doing this because he's smart. He's doing this because he's brave and right-wing enough and nationalist and America-first enough to do the right thing and make peace and end the threat of conflict with either of these countries. But he won't do it because he just doesn't have the depth. He probably couldn't even really see what I just said.

I mean, he did tweet the other day, he said, *When are the fools and haters going to realize that it's a good thing to get along with Russia? We need their help to solve problems in Syria, Ukraine, and North Korea.* Like, hey, other than crushing Jeb and Hillary, that one tweet was the best thing about this guy in his entire life. Like, that is just absolutely true. Assuming that what you want in Syria, Ukraine, and Korea is peace, then how could you possibly argue with that?

Now, at the same time, he's escalating American force deployments in Eastern Europe and this kind of thing, so it's not like he's Ron Paul up there, really practicing what he's preaching 100%. But at least he's got basically the mindset that, who wants a fight with Russia? The Soviet Union is gone, 25 years gone. Whatever problem you have with Putin, we can deal. And as we've talked about before on the show, Tom, every major move Putin has made in this century has been in reaction to what America has been doing to pick a fight with them. And that's true in Georgia, in Ukraine, in Syria, and everywhere else.

**WOODS:** All right, well, finally let's turn to Yemen where you hear mainstream sources say that these people are on the verge potentially of a humanitarian catastrophe we can hardly begin to fathom. How did it get to that point?

**HORTON:** Yeah, well, so it's almost like a Somalia-type story. The entire War on Terrorism writ small. So first Bush, but then especially and Obama — we can fast-forward to Obama years — backed the dictator Saleh in order to basically bribe him to allow the CIA to target al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula there, the guy that sent the underpants bomber. All right, well, all that ever did was grow al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, not shrink it, again with the insurgent math as you know.

But at the same time, Saleh, the dictator that Obama was bribing, he was taking all his new guns and money and he kept attacking this group of Shiites in the north, the Zaidi Shiites, and this political group is called the Houthis. And he kept attacking them over and over again, which of course only made them stronger. They kept defeating him, four, five times. They drove his forces back and got stronger and stronger in the process.

Then 2011 comes and virtually all factions in the country are sick of Saleh. He's been our dictator sock puppet over there for 30-something years by then — 25 years or something. So Hillary intervenes and instead of just letting the process just work itself out in Yemen how it will, she intervenes, forces him out but keeps his vice president, Hadi. Except everybody hates Hadi. And Saleh, he doesn't respect American traditions and like go back to his farm in Missouri. He takes his army divisions with him, and he goes — turns out he's a Zaidi Shia all along; he's just not a Houthi. But he's actually

from the north. So he brings his loyal army divisions with him and goes and makes an alliance with the Houthis. Are you with me?

So then they start marching south, and by the end of 2014, beginning of 2015, they sack the capital city and drive the sock puppet Hadi out of power. And in doing so — and even Obama himself has admitted this on camera. You can see him explain that yes, it's a fact that the Iranians warned the Houthis — because they're friends — don't do this. You're going to provoke a terrible reaction from the Saudis. Well, that's exactly what happened. The Saudis freaked out and they wanted to start a war.

And by the way, this guy, this Saudi crown prince you're hearing everything about now, MBS, Mohammad bin Salman, he's the son of the ailing old king and trying to take his place before his uncles can. He's the one who started this war because he was the brand-new, 29- or 30-year-old defense minister at the time and needed the credentials, so he wanted to start this war. That was his own public choice theory inside Saudi for why he did it.

And then all you have to do is Google the term "placate the Saudis." "Placate the Saudis," that's all you have to do, and you'll find *The New York Times* where Obama's men told *The New York Times* — it wasn't a scoop. This was like a press release. And they said, *Listen, even though we knew the war would have an indeterminate ending, a long, bloody war with an indeterminate ending, we had to placate the Saudis —* because again, they were upset that we signed this nuclear deal with Iran, a nuclear deal, which, on the face of it and in reality, absolutely helps to secure Saudi's interests and protect them from the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon. But so we have to placate their feelings because they think they might be losing their place in the American Middle Eastern order, so we've got to do them a favor.

So this is March 2015, and America has helped Saudi bomb and blockade this poorest country in the entire Middle East this whole time. And you won't be surprised to learn, Tom, that previously, the IMF and the World Bank had gangsterized the Yemenis out of their local, traditional sorghum crops and whatever else they were growing and convinced them to all grow a bunch of coffee and a bunch of other things instead that they can sell on the global market, because, Welcome to the global economy, not in a free-market sense, but in an IMF, World Bank, gangsterization-through-political means sense.

And then guess what happened. We put them under blockade and they can't eat coffee. And so now here's a country, the poorest country in the Middle East, they were reliant on imports for 80 to 90% of their food, and then we cut them off. And so there's been at least 50,000, according to Nasser Arrabyee, a journalist in Yemen I talk to regularly — at least 50,000 or 70,000 people have been killed in the violence, but nobody knows how many hundreds of thousands of people are starving to death there. It's been two and a half years of this, Tom, and they are dying.

And there's a massive cholera epidemic. And you know what? I'll go ahead and ruin the fun we're having here and explain that the babies dying of cholera, they vomit and they diarrhea themselves to death. That's what kills them. And that's what the USA is doing to the poorest country in the Middle East, just across the Red Sea from Somalia, the second poorest country where we're doing the exact same thing.

**WOODS:** Yeah, I don't even know what to say.

**HORTON:** It's enough to make you believe in the devil, really. It's something else.

**WOODS:** Yeah, it's horrifying. And yet to think that the part of the political spectrum that I came from would have probably been – well, not probably – making excuses for this, cheering it on, or ignoring it. One of those three. And I would have just gone along with that, just because I've got to be against Hillary Clinton. But Hillary Clinton is also in favor of this, you know?

**HORTON:** Yeah, it was her president that started the war. I mean, she was involved. And if people just Google Hadi in Google images, you'll see the one man, one name on the ballot from her democratic election. She hailed it as the advent of democracy in Yemen in 2012. It was her coup that helped lead to this thing. And listen, what they'll say is Iran, Iran, Iran. Well, it's just not true that Iran backs the Houthis in any substantial way at all. Gareth Porter's disproven – most of the accusations rely on a couple of intercepted shipments of weapons, but those were not even from Iran to the Houthis in the first place. It's just made up. There's guns going from here and there.

And by the way, where'd they get all their guns? And this is all documented, too. You can read a ton about this, that they got their guns from Obama. It was America that armed up their government. As I said, Saleh took army divisions with him when he joined up with the Houthis. There's no question. Yemen is awash in guns like Texas is awash in guns. You don't need an Iranian explanation for these guys' AKs. It's just not true. It's propaganda. In fact, there's a great article by a real scholar named Joost Hilterman. It's called "The Houthis Are Not Hezbollah," which even Hezbollah is not Hezbollah in the sense of being a total sock puppet of Iran. But the Houthis, they're just not. It's simply propaganda.

And if you listen to these guys, they will say, *Oh yeah, Iran, Iran, Iran. It's the new Persian Empire. Iran, Iran, Iran.* And yet, who's left in the Middle East other than maybe the Saudi king that al-Qaeda wants us to overthrow the most? Iran, the mullahs in Iran. Remember when ISIS attacked their shrine in Tehran just a few months ago and then Trump came out and mocked them and said, *You support terrorism, that's what you get?* ISIS and al-Qaeda hate the government over Iran, first and foremost. That's what they want to see us do next.

**WOODS:** Well, I like to generally try and leave these on an up note, but I don't know how to do that. Is there any way?

**HORTON:** Yeah, no, I don't know. I know something funny is the new report is that Stiglitz was wrong, that kooky economist Stiglitz. He thought that this terror war was going to cost \$5 trillion and then later revised it to 6. Try 8, pal. And sorry, 8, that's just the interest on the debt generated to pay for the terror war over the next decades.

**WOODS:** No, it can't be 8 trillion of interest.

**HORTON:** Well, that was the recent story. It's actually on Antiwar.com right now. "Post 9/11 War Debt Will Cost 8 Trillion in Interest."

**WOODS:** I'm going to look that up.

**HORTON:** In Defense One, DefenseOne.com is the report.

**WOODS:** All right, let's look. Yeah, I'm looking at it now. Okay, so over the course of decades of servicing it – so they say, so far, the U.S. has paid \$534 billion in overseas contingency operations interest. So continuing this out, they're saying that ultimately, it'll wind up being \$8 trillion. Well, regardless of how much time that takes, that's still a lot of money to be spending. That's unbelievable. And the thing is, when Stiglitz made that prediction, he was ridiculed for that. *That's a crazy number. He couldn't possibly believe that.* I am sure he was ridiculed for it.

**HORTON:** I actually have a clip here somewhere – I won't bore you with it, but it's Paul Wolfowitz saying, oh yeah, no, the oil will pay for the war.

**WOODS:** Oh that, yeah, we definitely had that.

**HORTON:** Yeah, this will be a revenue-neutral imperial takeover of the Middle East. Trust me.

**WOODS:** Is it a general rule that when some reasonably credentialed person says such and such government thing is going to cost X and the government says, "What, are you kidding me? It won't be anywhere near X," they'll be correct about that. It won't be anywhere near X; it'll be like two or three times X.

**HORTON:** Yeah, I know –

**WOODS:** Is that just a general rule?

**HORTON:** Absolutely. I mean, when you hear them say, yeah, they're going to completely revamp America's nuclear weapons arsenal and it's going to cost \$1 trillion over the next decade, yeah, you can call it 3.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**HORTON:** Right?

**WOODS:** All right, here's some good news: how about the existence of the Libertarian Institute? That's something. Over at [LibertarianInstitute.org](http://LibertarianInstitute.org), that's Scott Horton's baby.

**HORTON:** I don't know what it is anymore. It was my opportunity to employ William Norman Grigg. Now it's me and Sheldon. And actually, you know what? I shouldn't talk bad about it. You know what? Honestly, I'll say that I did sort of not put a strong enough effort behind the launch of the institute because I was halfway writing this book, *Fool's Errand*, [FoolsErrand.us](http://FoolsErrand.us). And so it's really time right now to try to do a grand reopening and a relaunch and a doubling down. If there's any hardcore

libertarians who oppose things and want to try submitting some articles to the Libertarian Institute, I'm happy to take your submissions, editor@libertarianinstitute.org. And you know –

**WOODS:** And by the way, wasn't that a great bonus of the cruise, that one of your favorite contributors to the Libertarian Institute just happened to be a passenger on the cruise and you got to meet him?

**HORTON:** Yeah, Eric Schuler, he's just absolutely great on everything. And you know, Javi is now going to start contributing and writing about Peru and other Latin American situations mostly involving American intervention, I'm sure.

**WOODS:** Well, I know he was very glad to meet you. He was one of the musicians we had. I know he was very glad to meet you on board the cruise. Well, check out LibertarianInstitute.org. Scott is managing director there, and you will be able to support them while also getting a signed copy of *Fool's Errand*, which you should be reading not only because it's great and it's important and it shows you what a book can be, but secondly because you're supporting Scott Horton, who does all this thankless work for us, and all you've got to do is buy a book? I mean, give me a break. So head over to LibertarianInstitute.org because you can get a book with a – if your donation is big enough, you can get a book that way as well. FoolsErrand.us is the site that Scott has for the book. The maps there alone tell a very, very important story.

But anyway, I'm going to put all this stuff, Libertarian Institute, *Fool's Errand*, ScottHorton.org, *The Scott Horton Show*, all that stuff up at TomWoods.com/1037, as well as articles that we've mentioned. The one about the Houthis not being Hezbollah, I'll put that up. All this stuff, it's going to be the most incredible Scott Horton and Scott-Horton-recommended smorgasbord of all time at TomWoods.com/1037.

Let's help Scott out. Let me remind you guys I donate to Scott every month. I send Scott 100 smackers every month because I'm glad he exists, because we need people like Scott Horton who are knowledgeable, who work really hard, who study, who put out great content, and who are fighting for something that's really, really important. And I hope you guys will join me in supporting him and/or the Libertarian Institute where he's the managing director.

All right, Scott, thanks for this great conversation today.

**HORTON:** You're very kind, Tom. Thank you very much.