



Episode 1,227: The McCain Legacy in Foreign Policy

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: You're my natural go-to guy on John McCain. I actually had several people I thought about and I said, you know what? Screw those several people. Scott Horton is my man. So let's talk McCain. And you know what? Obviously, I want to talk primarily about the foreign policy record. That's why I invited you, because you could talk about McCain on domestic policy, and you could talk about him and Obamacare and stuff like that. And that's all valid, but it kind of bores me to death.

And now before I kind of turn things over to you, though, I also want to add something from an email that I mailed out to my mailing list the other day. You're all on that list, aren't you? You can get on it at TomsFreeBooks.com, get yourself a free book and you get on my list. Well, this is what I sent out the other day. It was not even so much about McCain as it was about the media and the creepy shows of affection and respect that we're seeing. Now, I get what people are going to say. *Well, the man is dead and you show your respect.* Yeah, yeah, yeah. But this is way, way beyond that.

And the only piece of evidence I need to show that I'm right is: imagine when Ron Paul passes on. Are they going to say, "What a maverick he was. He was an inspiration to us all. He loved his country?" You won't hear anything even approaching that, and yet all those things are far truer of Ron Paul than they are of John McCain. Because he was an actual maverick. McCain was a maverick, because occasionally he would swing from one wing of the establishment to the other wing of the establishment. *Oh, wow. Big maverick.* Whereas Ron Paul voted "no" in Congress more than — alone, by himself. He was the lone "no" vote more than all other congressmen combined. That's a maverick. Or he talks about the Fed when nobody's talking about the Fed. Or he says the whole empire is awful and needs to be stopped and we need to bring the troops home. He wasn't just saying this one intervention was the problem. That's a maverick.

Or I even gave the example of Pat Buchanan. I've got my differences with Pat, but the fact is, in the 1990s, he was the first political commentator I remember reading who said we've got to lift these sanctions on the Iraqis, because we're killing a lot of people, and there's no way anybody in good conscience can support that. Now, that's a maverick, because that went against both parties. That's a real maverick.

And yet you won't get anything like what we're seeing for McCain. The reason, I think, is that McCain fundamentally was a man of the state and a man of the empire, and that's the kind of man they want to encourage us to admire. They're perfectly fine if so-called conservatives are

supporting John McCain. That's just what they want. Somebody who's never offended *The New York Times* in his entire life. They're perfectly fine with that. So before we go into his foreign policy, what do you think of my analysis there?

HORTON: Yeah, I think you're totally right. I mean, all the praise for him comes from him telling the more right-wing of the party "no," for good and for ill, mostly for ill on anything they happen to be good on, and instead be bipartisan and work together with the Democrats to do things like campaign finance reform and support Obamacare, and, you know, oppose conservative immigration policies and whatever it is. So that to them is what's great, is that he's a liberal Republican in, you know, frankly, the George W. Bush, George Bush, Senior type model. And, I mean, that's the center, right? The conservative Democrats, the Clintons and Obama and people like that, and the liberal Republicans in the mold of the Bushes. And that's pretty much where McCain fits.

And I think a big part of the adulation about him really is just, I mean, in the most crass sense, just he's an anti-Trump Republican, so they get to kind of spin that as, wow, what an honorable gentleman he is for being against the current president that we don't like, which, you know, is pretty cynical but not that deep. But I think a little worse than that is how desperate they are to hold up anyone in national government service nowadays as being motivated by something other than their own kind of petty, self-interested corruptions and career advancements and whatever. *So here's a guy who invokes the high honorable principle of patriotism to do the right thing, no matter the consequences.* So they try to spin it like that, that you know, as you talk about on your show, how, in the way you phrase it, that we're supposed to have this fourth grade conception of what these political offices are.

And that's where they teach all about the Senate, right? I remember that, was in fourth grade, and the importance. And they show you a bunch of drawings of the founding era and the next couple of eras after that, and it's long enough ago that you can say, like, maybe those guys were honorable gentlemen, as far as I can tell, you know? They're back even before black and white photography. It's long ago enough in time that anything's plausible about them. They don't show you the current senators, because you take one look at them and realize they don't live up to their supposed high office. But here's John McCain as a caricature that they can sort of exploit to say — he would even pose for pictures looking far off into the future or whatever. It's the kind of thing that they can use on people to say that this is not a plot against you; this is all somehow for you. And it just goes to show how desperate they are, that that's what they have to resort to, is the guy who's indistinguishable from Joe Lieberman or any of the worst senators around.

But and you know, that's the thing too, is he exploited that prisoner of war status that he had, and rather than saying, *Look, I've been to war and war is hell, and that's why I'm here to try to make peace wherever I can* — instead, he just uses it as a shield, where you can't say anything bad about him because of what a great war hero is, as he does nothing but create more and more and more war heroes and widows and orphans and corpses and all the rest of it. And you know, Max Blumenthal has a piece today at ConsortiumNews.com, where they picked the best line out of the article to be kind of the sub-headline. He says all this adulation just presupposes that all the dead people from all of his wars, more than a million dead people, that they're just a statistic. They really don't matter. Only American lives matter.

And the same "All Lives Matter" crew — *Hey, all lives matter* — yeah, those same people, they don't care at all about what happens to Iraqis. They don't care about what happens to Syrians or Libyans or Afghans, as John McCain and his friends are carrying out their little sociology experiments and their war for Israeli and Saudi influence and our politics and all the rest of this corruption. You know, all that's fine. You know, besides that, yeah a million dead people and all of that, and all the people who cared for them. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But besides that, what a hero he was by working together with Russ Feingold to make it illegal for you to try to have an influence in a congressional campaign. Yeah, what a great, outstanding example of public service.

WOODS: Let me add to what you just said, something I wanted to say the beginning and I forgot. This young woman who is very likely to be elected to the U.S. Congress in the fall, who I believe identifies herself expressly as a democratic socialist this, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, this was shocking to me that somebody as — well, actually, it wasn't really shocking to me, because I expected Bernie Sanders to make some doltish comment about McCain and what a great guy he was also.

Again, I know there are going to be people who are going to pretend to not get the point here. If you want to just say, look, I knew this guy, and you know, he was a nice neighbor and he always took out the trash or something, then go ahead and say that. But to go over the top like Ocasio-Cortez and say, "John McCain's legacy — these are her exact words — "represents an unparalleled example of human decency and American service" — and it goes on from there. That isn't all she has to say. "An unparalleled example." Could you imagine her saying, "Ron Paul, in his search for peace, represents an unparalleled example of human decency?" When Ron Paul dies, she won't even acknowledge it. There's something creepy — "unparalleled." And some of her supporters are saying, well, she had to say something. Did she have to say "an unparalleled example of human decency and American service?" This is a cult. The regime is a cult, and they build up each other in our eyes so that we continue to be devoted to the cult. I don't get any other reason that somebody would make an inane remark like that about, of all people, John McCain. And so for Cortez — now, a lot of her supporters are hitting back at her on Twitter, saying, *You've already become part of the swamp, and you're not even in there?* So I give them credit for that.

HORTON: Yeah, that's good. Well, yeah, I mean, but that's the thing is, you know, a lot of this just kind of goes without saying for people. Somebody's the senator, that's the greatest thing in the world. Even Richard Nixon, he wasn't impeached for the secret war against Laos and Cambodia, where he's just slaughtering human beings, just tearing their lives apart. And nobody cared about that. That wasn't in there. You know, it was paying hush money for a burglary over some documents or whatever, you know, some garbage, some extracurricular thing, just like a deputy sheriff can kill six people and then go home, but then go to jail for beating his wife that night off the clock. It goes without saying that whatever these people touch turns to gold. Whatever it is, it's fine, or they wouldn't be doing it. And we wouldn't have elected them if they weren't great in the first place. And that's the point of view she's coming from, is like, just a government school education, that like, hey, look, a dead old senator. Let's all salute the flag and have a beer, go along.

WOODS: Yeah.

HORTON: And you know what too, is nobody knows about what he did in Syria, right? Nobody knows. You know, regular people don't know about that, and most of the media people don't

know about that. If anything, they go, *Yeah, he heroically pushed for Obama to do more.* But, you know, that's all. They have the most surface understanding of all these things. They certainly wouldn't blame him. You wouldn't see anyone on CNN blame anyone, especially a great POW hero like McCain, for example, for demanding that Bush escalate the war in Iraq after he knew it was lost and after James Baker was giving him cover to say go ahead and pull out now. And McCain said, no, we have to surge. The Kagans want us to surge. Give Petraeus a chance, where all they did was make everything worse, and we've talked about that, how they just made everything so much worse in that war. And then turn around and do the same thing again in Afghanistan under Barack Obama. We're going to go to war against you politically if you don't give us at least another 60,000 troops. And so look, Trump's surge is nothing compared to that huge escalation in that war. And you know, basically trying to frame it that anything less would be treason. Anything less is just handing victory to the terrorists, even though the war was already long lost by then.

But no one at any newspaper in America or any cable TV news channel in America would say he's responsible for getting those people killed. He's responsible for this massive horrifying violence against civilians. I mean, the idea is that if our government is inflicting the violence, whoever it is in that country, those are just the breaks. There's no limit on it. I guess we could just go ahead and use H-bombs and kill them all and, you know, as long as you're wearing camouflage greens, then that's your exemption to the "Thou shalt not kill" rule, and so it's fine. And so that's the worst stuff about him, is all the stuff that everybody else believes into or they wouldn't dare contradict it and don't know much about to contradict it, so it's just kind of off the table.

WOODS: Yeah.

HORTON: What do we know about him? Again, he was a great bipartisan guy. He made a great, interesting *Meet the Press* guest on Sunday morning, you know?

WOODS: That clip that you had the other day, I had not seen before, where he's out there talking about al-Qaeda in Iran or some ridiculous thing, and then Joe Lieberman has to lean over and correct him: *well, there are extremists there, but we don't believe it's al-Qaeda.* And so McCain had just gotten done saying this is very well known, and of course you know that he's BSing his way through. He probably knows he's making a controversial statement, but if he just calmly says it's very well known, that ought to shut the idiots up. And then it turns out he's the idiot [laughing].

HORTON: Yeah. And you know, here's the thing too. If you go back to 2002, John McCain was as important — or in 2003, etc. You know, in the September 11th era. He was as important as Paul Wolfowitz or Bill Kristol or any of the worst of the neocon ringleaders who got us into that war. He's massive pressure in the U.S. Senate, constantly demanding more and more, faster all the time. You know, in 1999 when Bill Clinton was bombing Kosovo, McCain said we need boots on the ground; Bill Clinton isn't a man enough to commit what's necessary to win this war now; I can't believe it's going on for weeks and weeks with just airstrikes. And that was always his position, and it's not like just that he helped to push us into Iraq War II, as I said. He pushed the whole time for: we have to stay, we have to do more, we need more troops, we have to do more all the time, we have to pass these new appropriations, we have to do the surge and double the war and make it that much worse and same on Afghanistan.

And then when Obama came in, same on Libya. You know, he was out front of Obama, pushing Obama on Libya, demanding, working with Petraeus and Hillary Clinton and them to launch that war. Which Obama, I don't know if you'll know this. Obama later said, quoted by Gates, who opposed the war but carried it out, so he didn't oppose it that bad. But he quoted Obama saying that, well, it was a 51% to 49% decision to launch that war. In other words, he's guilty of launching an aggressive war, which is, you know, the ultimate war crime. That 51 to 49 is the same as saying he didn't have to at all. But they did that, and it was a war directly for the Libyan veterans of al-Qaeda in Iraq from Iraq War II that was just winding down.

I mean, the troops were still in Iraq through the end of 2011, so they were still there mopping up the very end of Iraq War II, and Obama's already launching a war that McCain's behest as much as anyone's on behalf of the jihadists, you know, the Libyan jihadists from that war coming home, and turned that country into a state of civil war, which remains to this day, and including the mass reinstitution of chattel slavery, and including also the spread of the war down into Mali and Chad and Niger and Burkina Faso even, and making things so much worse in the Sahel region of Africa, making Boko Haram worse in Nigeria and giving an excuse of course then for the special operations forces to spread American drone wars and God knows what all across that part of Africa.

And then he was absolutely the worst on Syria. And as you point out in your article, Tom, his friends the Northern Storm Brigade, who were already on film, they had already told *Time* magazine on video — you can watch the video online — that like, *Yeah, we're veterans of the Iraq War II, where we fought with Zarqawi against the Americans there. But anyway, don't hold that against us, you know. We're the forces of the righteous now.* And these are the people that John McCain went to meet, and they were the kidnappers of the Shiite pilgrims from Lebanon, and they were falsely identified as — you know, one of the guys looks a little bit like Baghdadi, but that wasn't really right. But it doesn't matter, because same damn difference, because these guys were the ones who sold Steven Sotloff to ISIS. They were working in that same war basically as allies alongside the Islamic State and al-Qaeda against the Assad regime. That is, you know, John McCain is guilty of high treason and officially sanctioned by Obama and the CIA, but I don't think that's really a pass. And I am a Lysander Spooner guy, but these guys took an oath. They actually do owe allegiance. And that was the very worst thing and that got hundreds of thousands of people killed, support for, again, McCain's constant hectoring, support for the mujahideen fighters in Syria that led to the rise of the Islamic State and then Iraq War III, which of course he supported as well.

Also horrible on Yemen, which I urge everyone to read Daniel Larison at *The American Conservative* magazine every day. He's so good on Yemen, every day, day in day out, covering Yemen. It's one of the worst wars. And for partisan reasons, since Obama started it and Trump's continuing it, nobody wants to really talk about it without implicating — they can't without implicating their guy or being a hypocrite about it, so they everybody's letting it slide.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, exactly. All right, let me jump in here. I've got some episodes I'll link people to, by the way, if they want more on some of this stuff. So Yemen would be an example. I did an episode of Kosovo also, where McCain is also bad. But you just assume he's bad. In fact, it's hard to think — and I'm not saying this to be facetious, or I'm not trying to be funny. Is there a major or even a minor proposed intervention or an intervention that some people were just tossing around and barely even rose to the level of proposal, where you see

McCain on record being vociferously against? Any? Can you think of any? Because there could be.

HORTON: The only one I have heard of is, I don't really know this, but I guess I've heard that he was good on opposing — I guess agreeing with Ron Paul at the time — on opposing sending troops to Lebanon, which Reagan did and then lost 243 Marines and —

WOODS: Oh, so that was back in 1983. We have to go all the way back to 1983 to find an example?

HORTON: Right. You know what? People go all the way back to 1983 to try to come up with a reason to hate Iran [laughing].

WOODS: I know. I know, yeah, they —

HORTON: So this is what we have to do for McCain to come up with an excuse for him. But no, he was also bad on Afghanistan in the 1980s. He was totally for supporting the mujahideen against the Soviet Union, was bad supporting Saddam Hussein then, and then was also bad on Iraq War I when Saddam overreached after the end of that war. He was bad on inflicting the no-fly zone over Iraq and all the blockade and all the WMD hoax of the 1990s, the perpetual Iraq War One and a Half there under Bill Clinton. And so, yeah, no, he's bad on everything. Everything.

And in fact, Daniel Larison in his piece today shows three or four times where McCain is absolutely horrible on Yemen. It's not like he was just going along with it; he's one of the biggest cheerleaders for what they call the Saudi Coalition with USA in the front. Give me a break. In fact, there's footage today where, within eyesight of the city or wherever where they could easily be caught, at low enough altitude, there's footage of an American tanker refueling a Saudi fighter jet on the way to its target. That was put out Twitter that Daniel Harrison is linking to. And we've all known that *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *LA Times*, and *Washington Post* and everybody have covered, all the official sources have covered the depth of American support for the Saudi effort there. So we all know who's the superpower and who's the satellite. Give me a break, you know? It's America's war there, and he a big booster of that.

WOODS: What can you tell us about McCain's attitude toward Russia, specific policies that he favored toward Russia?

HORTON: Well, when it was just ten years ago, ten years and a couple of weeks, I guess, ago that Georgia attacked South Ossetia, which was a breakaway province, but was occupied by Russian peacekeepers, under a deal brokered with the European Union and American approval. And they lied — to this day, they try to lie and say that Russia started that war, but it's just not true. In fact, you know, it was all going on in the middle of the night there, but that's still the middle of the afternoon here. So we were all watching it break out, you know, as it — or it was early evening, I guess, here. We were all wanting to break out. The Georgians started it, attacked South Ossetia, and the Russians then just struck back and pushed the Georgians back out of South Ossetia and took a couple more miles and territory beyond that, a few more miles beyond that and stopped.

And McCain, you know, one of his aides actually had encouraged Saakashvili to do it. He was the president of Georgia. And McCain was saying, "We are all Georgians now," and so, you know, if he had beat Bush in the primary and he had been the president at that time, he might have gone along with Dick Cheney, who wanted to attack the Russians as they — they have tunnels under the Caucasus Mountains, and Cheney was urging strikes against them. There are two different pretty credible I think sources on that, that Cheney was urging strikes, and George Bush, Jr. at that point was like, *Yeah, right*, and didn't do it.

But McCain apparently would have and was always pushing for NATO expansion, all through the 1990s these including, you know, was a big promoter of bringing Georgia and Ukraine into NATO, which would basically mean war with Russia. Or at least Ukraine would be a war with Russia. Whether America would actually back them up like in the deal I guess would be a separate question. I guess we'd hope not. And they're still pushing for that right now. John Bolton's pushing for that in the Trump administration, even.

But yeah, and then on Ukraine, he famously went and posed on stage and talked and gave during the Maidan protest there, the Maidan protest, and he was there hanging out with I think it's Oleh Tyahnybok, who is the leader of the Social National Party, who's famously pictured giving the "Sieg Heil" and was close allies with the Right Sector and the Azov Battalion and the rest of the Nazis that helped to overthrow the government of Ukraine in February [inaudible] Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy and the rest have been pumping all of this money into so-called civil society that is anti-Russian political groups in the west of Ukraine, and \$5 billion worth, as Robert Kagan's wife, Victoria Nuland, who is on tape, caught red-handed helping to orchestrate the coup. And the Russians intercepted her phone call with the American ambassador. She was the Deputy Secretary of State for European Affairs, which is basically the ambassador to the EU. And she's on the phone with Gregory Pyatt, who was the ambassador to Ukraine, and they're plotting the coup and who they want to pick to be prime minister and what's supposed to happen with all these — which was exactly then what played out.

About a week later, they went ahead and did it anyway and then started a war when factions in the east of the country wouldn't go along with it. And then they lost Crimea, which they've been pissing and spitting ever since, claiming that this is Russian aggression, when not a single person was killed, and when the vast super majority of the people of the Crimean peninsula wanted to be reabsorbed into Russia anyway. It had always really belonged to Russia ever since the 1780s, and it was only Khrushchev who had gifted it basically to Ukraine in the 1950s. But so what's his word worth that we have to respect that to whatever degree? And at the time, it didn't make any difference, because everyone was answerable to the Kremlin anyway.

And then they kept their naval base at the Sevastapol area there on the eastern side of the Crimean peninsula. They kept that the whole time, and they didn't even seize it until it was quite deliberately threatened by the new coup government that McCain had helped to instigate in taking over the country. So this was all, even if you go, *Oh, Russia's really bad for changing their border without a UN resolution*, or whatever the problem is, you still have to admit that their worst thing that they did there was — and including in backing the so-called rebels in the east of the country, who refuse to accept the rule of the new government there — that the worst of what they're doing there is in reaction to what specifically John McCain, but the Obama administration really, had done there with his help.

And so you know, same thing with Syria, where the Russians have killed a lot of innocent people with their airstrikes. That's how airpower works. In bombing neighborhoods, people die. It's been horrible. They've committed war crimes. But what are they even doing there? They're trying to put out the fire that Obama and McCain started with support supposedly for these moderate rebels, where McCain said we can vet these guys, we can vet the moderates. So the idea was they're going to create a giant army of people who are not fighters, because if they're real fighters, they would be extremists. So instead, we're just going to find a bunch of civilians, and we're going to pay them, and they're going to take on all the al-Qaeda and Islamic State and Northern Storm Brigade and whatever jihadist extremists on one side, and they're going to overthrow the Syrian government and its army and take on Hezbollah and Iran as they come to supply help to the Assad regime. And this is all going to work out. It's all going to be fine — when we know, of course, that's not what happened at all. It wasn't fine at all. It was absolutely crazy to do in the first place, and it ended up being a total disaster. And it's still playing out. I mean the situation between the newly enraged Turks and the newly empowered Syrian Kurds is not finished. What's going to happen there is still way up in the air.

And anyway, so yeah, in other words, you couldn't come up with a worse foreign policy than all this. And John McCain is behind all of it. You know, you talk about that clip where he's accusing Iran back in al-Qaeda. He's trying to accuse Iran of backing Shiite militias, who of course America was on their side in Iraq War II, fighting against al-Qaeda. So he clearly is up to his eyeballs in accusations, but he can't remember which way is east and which way is west and who's on whose side here at all. And you would think that it would be his priority, if he's one of the foremost warmongers on the issue, that he would be an information monger too, and that he would really care and try to figure out who this Muqtada al-Sadr guy really is, if only so he can get his lies right. But instead, he's just like a bumbling fool up there, trying to — you know, in the middle of the worst war. And America was on the Shiite side in the civil war, and he doesn't even know who's on whose side. He didn't even know who's fighting for who over there, even though he was the biggest hawk on the issue in the Congress anyway the whole time.

WOODS: Can we back up for a second? I want to ask you how you answer a typical criticism. When you say the kinds of things you say about Russia, you know that their response is: well, you're some kind of a lackey of the Russians. Or that what they might say is that libertarians seem to be so attuned to the crimes of the U.S. government, that they seem to want to whitewash everything that other governments do. How do you answer that?

HORTON: Well, I think I just did, right? I mean, the worst you can say about them, what they've done in Ukraine, which is what they've done in Ukraine and what they've done in Syria — I guess what they've done in Georgia, for that matter — in all three cases, are direct responses to American intervention and picking the fight. And if not moral and just and wonderful, they are reasonable reactions that, no, we're not going to let you bomb Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia. We're going to put troops there and drive you back out again. Is that Hitlerian aggression or is that something else?

The same thing with backing the insurrectionists, whatever you want to call them, in eastern Ukraine. America sponsored a coup with a bunch of Nazis. And these people who had elected the government that had just been overthrown and had won the free and fair election said, *Oh, yeah? Well, then we're not going to let you be the government of us then. We secede from the union.* So then the Kiev junta, backed by America, went to war against them and

started slaughtering them. And then the Russians sent their special operations forces to help on their side. So again, I'm not saying that's great. I don't think anyone should have any special operations forces. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying: be reasonable about what's going on here.

And then, by the way, Russia wanted Crimea back, and so we're taking the Crimean peninsula back. The people there voted for it, and it was as smooth as that kind of thing could possibly go. Then the people of eastern Ukraine said, *Will it absorb us back in and make us part of the Russian Federation?* And Putin said no. They even voted to do it, and he was like, *No, I don't want you. You're more trouble than you're worth. I'll help you keep the Kiev Nazis away, but no, I'm not going to make you part of Russia and then risk a war with Kiev over that, like an outright war. I don't want to escalate that way, so forget it.*

And then, you know, Hillary said this is Hitler. This is what Hitler did over Crimea. I mean, no, that's not right. You know what she also said was: he's moving troops around right on NATO's doorstep. Well, she meant inside Russia. He's moving troops from base to base inside Russia. But that's right on NATO's doorstep, because her husband and George W. Bush, her political ally, and Barack Obama, her president, who she was serving as Secretary of State, they were working on this NATO expansion project the whole time. And she'd been that closely related to it the whole time. And that includes the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. We have troops right there on Russia's border.

You know, as Pat Buchanan always says, the line used to be the Elbe River halfway across Germany, that if you cross into Western Europe, we will stop you there, even if it takes atomic bombs. We won't let the Soviet Union roll into Western Germany. Now we've moved that line all the way to their border. I'm not saying we should invite Russia to invade the Baltic States, but I don't think they really want to anyway.

And I think that making a military alliance with those states — I mean, come on. Just be fair for a minute. Put down the flag waving for a minute. Put yourself in their position, the Russians, with America expanding NATO all the way to their border like this and then constantly accusing them of aggression on every front. Americans would be freaking out. What if they are overthrew the government of Canada? I think I might have said this on your show before, Tom. Forgive me. What if they overthrew the government of Canada twice in ten years. And the second time they did it, they allied with a bunch of Nazi thugs to do it. And then when the French Canadians in Quebec said, *Hey, we don't recognize this new coup d'état junta*, they sent the Nazis to kill them, to crush their terrorist insurrection. If Russia was behind that in Canada, right now, it sounds completely unreal, doesn't it?

WOODS: Yeah, of course.

HORTON: I say that, and it's just it's a cartoon. It's crazy, because that could never happen. Because what would happen? Russia knows what. America would nuke them. We'd go to nuclear war with them if they tried something like that in Canada. Simple as that. Ralph Nader would do that. Ron Paul would do that. Nobody's overthrowing the government of Canada, right? I mean, so now think about it from their position. That's exactly the kind of games we're playing on their frontier.

So look, I'm a Texan. I don't care about Russia. It's not like I'm taking their point of view for any other reason. It's not like I even read Tolstoy, right? I don't have a reason to take their

side, other than I've learned the lesson my entire life long that when Uncle Sam is demonizing a foreign enemy, guess who's the demon. Guess who's really the aggressor, who's lying virtually in every respect, on every occasion, you know? Again, look at this thing in Syria, where they hate Iran so much that they're willing to back al-Qaeda to try to overthrow Iran's friend in Syria. That's what that whole war comes down to. They're willing to commit treason on behalf of the guys who, just a couple of minutes ago, were Zarqawi's guys, al-Qaeda in Iraq, the world's worst terrorists in all history. Now they're the moderate rebels, helping us to overthrow this guy Assad, which in fact, didn't happen. They just got a lot of people killed. And I mean, that kind of thing is absolutely crazy.

WOODS: See, the thing is, Scott, as I listen to you talk, I'm left speechless, because what keeps going through my mind is: this is what Americans are taught to honor. This is what the political class honors that. They can overlook whatever sins they think McCain may have committed, because he made the — his priorities were right. The empire came first.

HORTON: Yeah.

WOODS: And on that, he was a reliable voice for intervention, and to strike down any dissension, anybody who thought maybe we should step back by 5%, he was always there to stomp that down. And this is the man we're — and I mean, I'm looking a — I did something the other day, Scott, that was a little bit, let's say, beneath the dignity of that article of mine that you read [laughing]. I was on Twitter and there was some CNN journalist who said — maybe you saw this tweet. She said, "The fact that every Washington journalist has a favorite McCain story says something about who the man was." And first of all, I thought, yes, it does but not for the reason you think. But secondly, I just couldn't help it. I just thought this is just getting out of control. So I responded with — because the tweet was about every journalist has a favorite McCain story. And I said, "You know what? My favorite is when he joked about bombing Iran, which would have led to a lot of dead kids. This is fun. Which one's yours?"

HORTON: Yep.

WOODS: I got a lot of response. I got way, way more likes on that tweet than she got in her original one. She's a CNN journalist.

HORTON: Yep. Well, you know, a big part of that is demonizing Iran always, hating Iran always, and being frustrated because we can't really have a war against them, because that would be such a pain. I mean, you're talking D-Day-level invasion or something to have a real war against Iran, unless you're just going to nuke Tehran. So we can't really have a war against them. And then after George Bush fought Iraq War II for them, the Americans are just — and led by McCain. They're just in this frustrated rage, that they're trying to check Iranian power. Every time they do, they make it worse and worse and worse, and they're even willing to resort to this kind of treason of backing al-Qaeda in Syria, like I say. And just everybody is willing to go along with it. And then the people who aren't willing to go along with it are sort of flabbergasted that, like, come on, some of this stuff is really over the line.

But then it's sort of — I don't know. See, I think you and I both are just too detached from this point of view that maybe we forget the level of inculcation from government school, or just, you know, how bad it really gets here. But this really is like a civic religion, where you have to have some kind of saints. You have to have some kind of, you know, something that ties it

all together for us to all believe in at once. And so, all this crazy stuff I'm talking about, about all the pain and suffering from the wars that this guy caused, I mean, that's just a difference of opinion. You know, like you said, as long as he's sticking up for American power overall, these questions about, well, okay, maybe we shouldn't have overthrown the government of Libya or something like that, that's as far as you're going to get, because these are just differences of opinion among gentlemen.

You know, I just read the galley version, I got the early versions Stephen Walt's new book, which is called *The Hell of Good Intentions*. And kind of the first premise of the whole book — and I really like Stephen Walt. I don't mean to talk bad about him, but just business is business, you know? The first premise of the thing is that all of these people mean what they say about spreading democracy, and all of them really feel that way, and they really mean it. And to them, this is not the blood-soaked American empire of corruption and venality and every other horrible, sinful way of taking on life and power. This is just a bunch of people, this is liberal hegemony. This is trying to spread liberalism. It's Jefferson's empire of liberty, basically, right? Trying to teach — as Wilson said about the Mexicans, we're going to teach them to elect good men, and we're going to go over there, we're going to make things right.

But you know, the problem is, is that doesn't really work very well, and it costs too much, and it ends up causing too many problems, and we're pushing our enemies into camps together when that's what we were trying to prevent the first place. But all of this is all just a well-meaning mistake. There's no reason, in the way he frames it, to think of this as anything other than academics arguing at a think-tank about what is the preferred policy here. And as I was saying before, if it's government killing people, sin isn't part of it. Morality isn't part of it. You can kill as many as you want, right? It's like the tapes of Kissinger and Nixon talking, where he's like, *Well, what if we just bomb the dikes, Henry, and drown them all?* And he's like, *Well, I don't know, Mr. President. That might be a little too far. Well, how about the A-bomb?* And he's like, *Well, you know, I think the world might consider you a butcher and maybe that'd be bad. And Nixon's like, Eh, come on, Henry. I want you to think big. This is state business here, you know? This is government versus government. Collateral damage is somebody else's problem. We might as well be talking about kicking over an ant pile. These people's lives don't matter in this context. It's just a difference of opinion.*

And now, I'm not saying that Walt — Pardon me. I don't mean to say that Walt says these people's lives don't matter. He does say that they do matter. But it's not really central and it certainly doesn't change the nature of the question that like — in a way, you could almost be talking about what's a better marketing strategy for some corporate brand or something. You know what I mean? Where it's not — it's amoral. It's not immoral; it's just business. But we're talking about, you know, how to rule the world well.

And so, yeah, I mean, that to me is really instructive. More than more than anything I learned in the book is like, I've learned that point of view about just how normal all this is, that to these people, Stephen Walt might as well be Ron Paul, who he actually I think unfairly disparages. But Ron Paul is, you know, he's our example of a noninterventionist, and people would — you know, I would say, Stephen Walt is like 90% our way compared to the way things are now. He has a policy of offshore balancing, where we only need to keep one power, one single power from dominating Europe, the Middle East, or East Asia. Other than that, we don't need to intervene anywhere, which is pretty good compared to where we are now. But he would be considered a completely far out, you know, almost a pacifist or something for taking that position that we don't need to rule everything.

And yeah, it's funny because then you and I talk about it. I guess that makes me sound like a real nut, right, where I'm counting all million dead in Iraq War II unnecessarily as individual murder cases. You know, think about how unfairly you would think you were being treated if that happened to your family, you know what I mean? Like, how come that's okay when it's our government doing it, that we just get to write these people off? And a lot of it is racism, but a lot of it is also just, it's kind of a failure of imagination, right? Like, the world is a really big place, and Mesopotamia and the Levant and Arabia and in Central Asia, that's all so far from here that —

WOODS: Right, right, right. And that just goes to show the people don't even — like as in the case of the Serbs, they can also be European, as long as they're sufficiently foreign-sounding, and you haven't met many of them, and you don't really know where they live. And then they can just get away with — well, you know, what they get away with.

HORTON: Right. Yeah, exactly. It's like just having an ocean between us makes them some other kind of lesser being. And that's in an era air travel. I mean, I have to say, in my own mind's eye, the earth is a lot smaller than it was when I was a kid.

WOODS: Yeah.

HORTON: When I was a kid, the earth, everything over there was much, much further away than it is now, you know, in just kind of my conception of it. And I don't know about kids growing up, how big or small it seems to them, but we're not that far removed. And, you know, this is the irony of the whole thing. We're off from John McCain now, but that's probably good.

It's the irony of our whole situation here, where we have independence here in America, these two giant oceans, two weak and friendly neighbors, and no threats, nothing to be afraid of. No fights, really, to get into. And for most of us, you know, our families came from people who just wanted to flee the crises of the Old World and come here and mind their own business and run their little business and live their life and be free and have a chance to take care of their family and this kind of thing. And so, you know, I really feel that way, too. The Old World, that we can lament that, yeah, things are tough over there, but what are we supposed to do? Solve every border dispute where the line is drawn in all the wrong places, according to everybody? Or do we just need to mind our own business and take care of ourselves?

So people more or less have my same sort of "mind your own business" view, but then refuse to recognize that our government is the world empire. Our government is the greatest purveyor of violence on the face of the earth. And that's why they hate us, and that's why they attack us, and that's what's wrong around here. And when we're chanting — you would think that people would figure out what when we're chanting, "We're the superpower. We're number one. No one can ever stop us," or whatever, that you know, that kind of is what the world empire would say. And that doesn't really jive very well with "let's mind our own business."

So instead, what we get is the worst both worlds. We have this constant war, but nobody cares. The American people been against the war in Afghanistan for ten years. But when they ask the open-ended question, not multiple choice but open-ended, what's your greatest concern politically going forward in the country, Afghanistan isn't even in the top 30. No one

even mentions that at all. It doesn't even show up on the poll. And it's just so far out of sight and out of mind.

WOODS: I know. That's —

HORTON: The thing could've been long over by now if it wasn't for John McCain and his friends who insisted on prolonging it, to tie that back. But you know, there's actually an article in *Foreign Affairs* this week that says, "Why has the Afghan war gone on so" — in *Foreign Affairs*: "Why has the Afghan war gone on so long? Because the American people have refused to y man up and take responsibility to force the government to bring it to an end. To force, you know, the writers and readers of *Foreign Affairs* to end the damn war. They're the ones with the power, but it's our fault, according to them.

WOODS: Now, and meanwhile, I guess, it's just — I can't put into words how bizarre the situation is that somebody like Max Boot is being interviewed about his opinions on John McCain, as if this in any way matters. Max Boot has been horrible on everything. John McCain had horrifically poor judgment on every major thing that mattered. Everybody is celebrating him, ignoring the elephant in the room, partly because most of the people celebrating him also supported at least 60% of his foreign policy, so they don't dare criticize them, because then they'll be criticizing themselves. But it's like we're living in some kind of bizarro world. I mean, we're living in a Kafka novel or something. We're living in a meaningless world surrounded by absurdity, and the only people who notice the absurdity are the ones who are called cranks and dismissed from the conversation. It's weird to live in this world.

HORTON: Yeah. Well, there never was any accountability after Iraq War II. I mean, that was really the kind a watershed moment here. Are we going to have mass resignations in the media and in the government, or are we not? Nope, we're not. Okay. And so now we took askew to a tangent off to this different reality where everything got much worse, because no one was really willing to hold anyone to account for what they had done.

And so here's something that is worth mentioning, too, is that John McCain was really, not just in the sense of the Syrian war where he took the side of al-Qaeda there, but in the whole era of the terror wars, John McCain was doing the dirty work of Osama bin Laden. I quote in my book where bin Laden's son talked about happy bin Laden was when George Bush won the election of 2000, you know, in the Florida recount, because he saw Bush, Jr. as a giant mark, that this is a guy who will take full advantage, take cynical advantage to get away with as much as he can get away with and most certainly will invade Afghanistan, which is what he was trying to accomplish. And John McCain's right there. The whole point of terrorism is to get your enemy to react, one way or the other. And clearly, in this case, the point was to get the U.S. to overreact. And I don't mean innocently and mistakenly, but bin Laden was trying to provide an opportunity for Bush and McCain to exploit, and then that's exactly what they did. They ran with as far as they possibly could, which is exactly what the enemy wanted them to do.

You know, if your interest was just the American interests, if you cared about the American people and what was going on, there would have never been a war on terrorism. Even from the first night, they said we're going to war against terrorism, not al-Qaeda, not this one little group of guys that we could kill and mop this whole thing up and be home by Christmas, really, and be done. But instead, we're going to use this as a blank check to exploit, to get

away with whatever we can, which is — whatever level of sin on its own, it's horrible, but it was also, in effect, they were committing treason on behalf of al-Qaeda, the enemy.

People were always so quick to dismiss, and rightly so, that al-Qaeda hates us for our freedom. That's not it. It must be that bin Laden just works for the CIA and they needed an excuse to invade Iraq. That's actually closer to the truth, right? It's more like the CIA and the rest of the government works for bin Laden. They're puppets on his string and exploiting the crisis that he created in order to get away with this giant campaign of murder-suicide, creating revolution and destabilization throughout the Middle East, while at the same time bleeding the American Empire to bankruptcy. And just look how well it's worked. I mean, even just in 2018, it's pretty early on for historians, but just looking back at what we've got right now. Look at how much American power has been diminished worldwide since Iraq War II.

And then especially Libya and Syria too, because that was the Democrats. That was the Center for a New American Security war scientist geniuses, and they knew what to do, and they blew it just as bad as Bush. And you know, their NATO expansion project was just as destructive as what the Republicans were doing. And so none of it has worked. Already that's the premise of Walt's book, too, is that: hey, look at what they've wrought, the liberal interventionists and their neoconservative confederates here. Look at what they've done they've completely destroyed American power and influence in the world by overreaching vastly.

And you know, McCain is the perfect poster boy for that. He is just as bad as any of them. I mean even Dick Cheney was only in there for eight years and then he had to go, but John McCain's just been sitting in the Senate this whole time, can't get rid of him. So you know, breathe at least some kind of sigh relief that at least the man's not a senator anymore. Lindsey Graham can't cause that kind of damage. Lindsey Graham, he was JAG lawyer or something, but he can't dress himself up as a POW and dress himself up as unimpeachable as he urges his worst of policies on everything.

WOODS: Scott, let me ask you, of all your online real estate, what would be the website you'd want to send people to first to follow you more?

HORTON: ScottHorton.org, that's where the show is.

WOODS: Okay.

HORTON: I guess that's — well, I do a lot of things, but that's basically the deal. 4,700-something interviews for you there.

WOODS: Yeah, it's unbelievable the work you've done. I mean, Scott Horton, there's a handful of people in the podcasting world who could make me look like a lazy bum, and Scott is I think first among them. I also want people to know, because I think since the last time you were here, you've created a Patreon account for yourself, and I want people to support you: Patreon.com/ScottHortonShow. You should go and help out Scott.

Now, I hope it doesn't embarrass you if I tell people that I support you. I think I've done that before. Even if it doesn't embarrass you, shut up for a minute and let me talk about this,

okay? Because I send Scott \$100 a month, and even though Scott and I are just like friends, so you might think that must be kind of weird, but it's not, because what he's doing is so important and I want to live in a world where, you know, if we have to deal with the warfare state, then at least I have a Scott Horton telling me about it and working as hard as he does and spending all that time getting all that knowledge into his head. I want to be a part of that. And so I hope people listening will join me in that, in supporting Scott. He's a totally worthwhile — and look, I like when people support my show, but I also like when people support things that I believe in, too, and I strongly believe in what Scott is doing. So do help him out over at Patreon.com/ScottHortonShow. I'm sure there's a donation link also at ScottHorton.org, but make sure and do that. If you you've been saying to yourself, *I've been meaning to do that*, or, *I've been meaning a think of who are some good libertarian content creators I can support*, today's the day, folks. Go ahead and do it.

Scott, thanks as always for talking me.

HORTON: Hey, thanks very much for having me. And yeah, by the way, anybody who signs up for just five bucks a month or more and you get access to the new private Reddit group. I'm copying your Facebook group model, but I'm doing it on Reddit: [/r/ScottHortonShow](https://r/ScottHortonShow).

WOODS: Excellent. All right, so everybody, go ahead and do that, and we'll talk to Scott again soon.