



Episode 1,309: The Syria Withdrawal: Three Cheers

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: All right, I need to talk to you. The world needs to hear from you at a time like this, because, I mean, people have lost their freaking minds. I need you to hear what — this is on my feed here — what Mia Farrow said just yesterday. Now, Mia Farrow was like some love child of the '60s, and here she is repeating neocon talking points. She says, "As Trump pulls troops out of Syria, we must acknowledge the enormity of the world's failure to halt a humanitarian catastrophe. US exit benefits Russia, ISIS — still active — Iran and Assad. Was this agreed to during Putin/Trump's two-our Helsinki meeting without witnesses."

HORTON: Oh, God. Enough already, Tom. Are you trying to kill me?

WOODS: I know. I know. I'm sorry. I really am. If you go to her Twitter feed, she twice retweets Lindsey Graham.

HORTON: Yeah, of course. Well, that's how you know she's right, yeah.

WOODS: These are the love children of the '60s, so even they —

WOODS: You know, Eric Garris actually just put in my instant message thing here, CNN, quote, "Greatest blunder of his administration." The worst thing he's done so far is announce that he wants to pull the troops out of Syria.

WOODS: Yeah, now look, Scott, I realize that some of these people are ideologically on the side of the war party. I get that. But these people have to be in the pay of someone for it to be so unanimous.

HORTON: Nah, man, it's just partisanship. Partisanship makes people so stupid. So stupid.

WOODS: I can't get over — so we've got that. We've got — I mean, of course on the right wing, naturally, I expect — well, you know what? I'm going to read —

HORTON: Well, the entire country is freaking out. I mean, there are articles all over the place, in AP and Reuters and whatever, whatever, where every "expert," they are just beside themselves. And they're all, you know, bleeding out the same incomprehensible nonsense that you were just quoting from right there. You know, ridiculous Mia Farrow she might as well be a Kagan, because that's where — I mean, she's just parroting their talking points.

WOODS: Right, right. So we're going to get into the details of that in a minute. But all right, I get that – and I know we want to talk about the fact that the center, the establishment, everybody's nuts about this. But here's the mainstream conservative movement. This is S.E. Cupp, whom I think is a complete airhead. She has had Dave Smith on many times. That's her one saving grace. I think she's a total airhead. She's the only talking head on TV whom I was watching once years ago, and I felt like she was so unbelievably uninformed and stupid, I had to go and look up who the heck she was. I've never felt that way before, and that's saying something. But anyways, here's what she says – this is like right out of Mia Farrow – "US withdrawing troops from Syria would not only embolden ISIS, but signal a victory for Assad, Russia, and Iran. Make no mistake, this would be catastrophic." Now, there's no sense that, okay, I'm supposed to be antiestablishment, supposedly, and I'm on the right, so I'm suspicious of these foreign policy consensuses that exist, and I'm suspicious of the mainstream narrative. Nope, I'm going to parrot it. That is the conservative movement these days. That's what it amounts to, is that right there.

So what I need to do, Scott, right now, is have you walk us through the reality of the situation. Now, first of all, the very first thing I want to do is have you try to explain what it is you think the US was trying to accomplish in Syria.

HORTON: Okay, well, first of all, S.E. Cupp is really bad. She's not just a parroting puppet on this. She's been really terrible on Syria. And in fact, someone showed me a video where she was the host of a bunch of the very worst hawks up on a stage doing a big conference about how we need to intervene there with strikes against the Syrian state, I think, just earlier this year. So she is committed to regime change in Syria, and I don't know exactly who it was that convinced her of that, but she's made herself very useful to the war party on this issue.

It's the same story I'm always telling. I hope that people are, one, getting sick of it, but also, two, figuring this out now, that this really makes sense, right? We have this giant Sunni-Shia sectarian war in the Middle East that George Bush touched off. I mean, the whole thing – and people say this goes back thousands the years. No, it doesn't. This goes back to 2003, when Bush – it wasn't supposed to work out this way, but when he put this super-majority Shiite population in power in Baghdad at the end of Iraq War II, what he'd basically done was fought an entire war for Iran. He had reversed Reagan's policy of backing Saddam to contain the Iranian Shiite revolution, and instead, he'd given them Baghdad. So now everything in the Middle East going on since then is essentially the redirection. Everyone, please read that article by Seymour Hersh, "The Redirection." And what that is, is when the Bush, Jr. administration said: oops, we really thought we would have dominance with the super-majority Shia, but the Iranians do instead, so now we have to make it up to the Saudi and the other Arab kings, the Sunni kings and tilt back toward the Saudis and the Sunnis to try to make it up for them.

But the problem is the Saudis don't have an army, really. The only army they've got are al-Qaeda suicide-bomber-type shock troops. And so when it came to – and this started in the Bush administration. They were backing Jundallah in Iran and backing Muslim Brotherhood groups in Syria. But when Obama came in, he picked up the same policy and just doubled and tripled it. As I say every time, Obama said to Jeffrey Goldberg in 2012, about a year into the beginning of American and allied support for the revolution – so-called – uprising in Syria, was: *that's right, Jeffrey Goldberg. This would be a great way to take Iran down a peg, if we could get rid of Assad in Damascus.* So in other words, we can't undo Iraq War II, start that all over again, and kick all the Shiites out of the capital city and give it back to the Sunnis or

anything like that. It was a mixed city before, but — We can't undo that and recreate the Baath Party dictatorship. But as a consolation prize, maybe we can take out Iran's, second-to-last now, allied state, Syria.

And so beginning in 2011 — and we covered this on my show all along, and there are great journalists who covered this from the very beginning of the Arab Spring. Beginning in 2011, America started intervening with our NATO allies, especially with the French and then also with the Turks, the Saudis, the Qataris and the Israelis, to arm and finance the rise of, essentially, a clone, the Syrian clone of the Sunni-based insurgency that had been the enemy in Iraq War II when America was on the Shiite side, which had been led by — or not led by, but was associated with al-Qaeda in Iraq, led by Zarqawi, the head-chopper, suicide-bomber crazies. And these were the guys who basically Obama — the local Iraqi Sunnis — really quickly, the local Iraqi Sunnis had basically really suppressed them. They were more trouble than they were worth, and at the end of the civil war, they basically marginalized them. David Petraeus took credit, called it "the awakening," but it was the local Iraqi Sunni tribes and Baathists got sick and tired of the jihadists and started shooting them.

So they were virtually eliminated, which is like a miracle, the greatest stroke of luck ever. Bush gives western Iraq to bin Laden, but then the local Iraqis take it back from the crazies again. Then Obama gives them the electric paddles to the chest and revives their entire movement and gives al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was already calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq — starting in 2006, they were calling themselves that. He gave them a new lease on life and gave them a new battle space to fight in Syria. And then for five years, America and our allies, CIA and their allies, supported the jihad. Now, they always said we're backing the moderate rebels, but there really were no moderates, and even Obama himself admitted there really was no moderate army to back. The so-called moderates were basically the jihadists who were willing to work with the white Americans, who were coming and giving them guns and money. The moderates were essentially the gun runners for the crazies who dominated the fight.

And then in 2013, al-Qaeda split. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the more Syrian-dominated branch, stayed loyal to al-Qaeda, where the Iraqi-dominated branch of al-Qaeda in Iraq decided to go ahead and create their caliphate now. So in 2013, they consolidated the east of the country. And then a year later in the summer of 2014, they marched right into western Iraq and seized the whole thing and created the Islamic State. Then, talk about blowback. This is backdraft, just extreme, blowing-up-right-in-your-face policy that, you know, the Islamic State, they were supposed to seize east Syria. They weren't supposed to seize western Iraq. So then America launched Iraq War III, again on the side of the Shiites that they hate and wish they hadn't fought for in Iraq War II, to kick the Islamic State back out of Iraq. And that's the war that Obama started in 2014 and Donald Trump finished in 2017. We could have gone ahead and pulled the troops out of there at that point, but certainly this year has left the Islamic State fighters in very small numbers, way out in the desert. Their state is completely smashed. They're nothing but an insurgency now, and a fairly low-level one at that. So if there is a time for America to get out, it's the perfect sort of lull in the conflict. Now ask me about the Kurds and all that if you want.

WOODS: Okay, I can do that, but really want to focus on Mia Farrow. And I can't imagine myself ever thinking I would want to say those words up till today. But I want to know, given that Mia Farrow and S.E. Cupp are reading from the same playbook — this is a weird situation.

This is bizarre. And the mainstream news doesn't find this interesting at all, whereas I find it fascinating that they're all acting this way.

HORTON: Well, you know, I don't think it's that bizarre. I mean, the center-left in the center-right, i.e. the neoliberals and the neoconservatives —

WOODS: But Mia Farrow is not center-left. Like, these people aren't center-left. They tend to be very left, but I think it's just they're so anti-Trump, they're willing to be center-left for a while. They're willing to work with the center-right.

HORTON: Maybe. I mean, I don't know enough about her personally —

WOODS: She's willing to retweet Lindsey Graham. She would never retweet Ron Paul. She's willing to retweet Lindsey Graham?

HORTON: Right. At the same time, though, you know, it seems to me like the real leftists hate the liberals and hate the Democrats and hate imperialism and war and all this stuff. So like for example —

WOODS: I agree. I agree. But I thought Mia Farrow would be an example of one of them, and I have a funny feeling that, at least in the entertainment world, where you would think there are some genuine leftists there, they're probably all on the same page on this.

HORTON: Well, you know what? I mean, part of it is the Obama effect, right? That they made their peace with the empire as long as he was in charge of it. And now Trump is such a hate figure to them, and the entire narrative about what's wrong with Trump, that the worst thing about him is that he's an agent of foreign power. He's not an American patriot. He doesn't care about any of us, not even just some of us. He cares about what Putin wants, and he's trying to weaken to destroy America and empower Iran and empower Russia and empower our enemies — and it's basically like an Obama birther-level, completely retarded conspiracy theory.

WOODS: Exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's exactly the reverse. This is exactly how the worst conservatives sounded.

HORTON: And so but they're relying then on the Pentagon and the CIA to protect us from the elected president. They're rallying around the empire and the permanent national security state, because without them, Trump could do whatever he wants. So once they're stuck in that mindset, this is where it leads them, essentially.

WOODS: Yeah. All right, so now let's try and understand these claims and whether they make any sense at all. They're saying that, first of all, it is grossly premature for Trump to say ISIS is defeated. So why don't we start just on that one point alone? He's saying ISIS is defeated; that justifies our departure.

HORTON: No, he's correct, and they're not. I mean, essentially you could never completely eliminate them, because it's just an insurgency. A Sunni grabs a rifle and says he's ISIS, he's ISIS, right? There's no real way to stop that. And if anybody could — I mean, in fact, the current policy has been, essentially — and I don't know exactly what all is behind this. People

can take a cynical view or a much more benign view of this. I'm not really taking a position on exactly why it's like this. But essentially, America has been standing between the Syrian Arab Army, the Assad army, and ISIS, and saying to Assad's army that they may not go east to the Euphrates River, that this is where America and the Kurds are dominant now, and leave ISIS to us. And so they've been kicked out of the capital city, but they still have some fighters kind of out there in the desert. I think there was a pretty good battle for Deir ez-Zor or near Deir ez-Zor last week or the week before that. So there still is some fighting going on. But the Syrian state is the state of Syria, not the USA. And if, in effect, at least, America has been protecting the Islamic State, the fastest thing that we could do to hurt them would be to get out of the way and to let the Syrian Arab Army recreate their monopoly on force inside that country.

WOODS: I have to stop my whole line of discussion here because I was keeping my Twitter feed open so that I could refer to it in this conversation. And somebody has responded, and I just — Scott, I don't know what to do here. He's responded: "A haphazard withdrawal puts troops in danger. It also leads to enemy combatant seizing materiel. We've seen this before." What do you say to that?

HORTON: Well, bring your materiel with you. I mean, Obama and Bush had left an entire army worth of equipment in western Iraq where they had created this super-duper majority Shiite government and Shiite army, and then they created all these bases and left all this equipment in the West. And this is getting kind of complicated, in a sense, but the Shiite government that America put in power, the Iranian-loyal one that America put in power there, they didn't really have much of an interest in trying to rule over western Iraqi Sunnistan. That would be biting off more than they could chew. They just wanted to take the new kind of Shiitistan from Baghdad down to Kuwait and over to Iran and just run off with that, essentially, and leave the Sunnis to their own devices, in their own kind of no-man's-land out there.

And so there was not much of an Iraqi Shiite army military presence in the West. The government was the government of Ramadi and that kind of thing, but Patrick Cockburn had reported on my show a year before the fall of Mosul that the Iraqi army is AWOL from Mosul. They basically feel like they're in a foreign country. They're out there on Fort Apache in somebody else's territory without enough supply lines to make them feel confident for force protection and all that, so they were AWOL and going back behind Shiite lines, which was the start of my worst paranoia in predicting what exactly came true a year later, that the Islamic State — which calls themselves the state and kind of telegraphing their intentions there for you a little bit — that western Iraq is wide open for their taking. And so it was. And then they did get all of that equipment. But that's American foreign policy as a Bill Hicks joke, right? There's no threat to us anywhere, I mean, other than the countries we don't arm first. Then they're a threat for like a week until we finish blowing up all the arms that we gave them in the first place, and then we're done again. And so that's not much of an argument, really.

And, in fact, they keep saying — in fact, I think Lindsey Graham said: to leave Syria, that would be a Barack-Obama-like thing to do, right, because Obama left Iraq, and then, ISIS. Like that's all you need to know. But Obama left Iraq because that was the law. That was the deal that George Bush had signed. After putting the American empire's enemies in power there, they said: now get out. Thanks for your help. Now beat it. And time was up on Bush's presidency, so we left. And Obama tried to read negotiate the deal to stay, but then Chelsea Manning heroically liberated the WikiLeaks, the State Department cables and the Iraq war

logs that showed more American atrocities, where American soldiers had massacred this one family, including executing a baby at point-blank range, and then called in an airstrike on the house to try to cover it up. But the air strike hit the wrong side of the house, and so the bodies survived, and then they had to do this whole operation to make it seem like it never happened. And all that was in the news in Iraq. All that was a huge deal in the news in Iraq at the end of 2011. And so that really made it impossible for Obama to renegotiate the deal with the new sovereign government of Iraqi Shiastan, anyway, to stay.

And the other part of that is – and Trump used to get this right in the campaign. Trump used to say – remember this? – Obama created the Islamic State. And every started screaming and crying, *Waah, how can you say that?* And then he nailed it. He goes: well, he back the jihadists in Libya, and then he backed the jihadists in Syria, and he pulled all the troops out of Iraq, so when they invaded Iraq, there was no one there to stop them. So when you put it all together like that, that much is true, right? But then later, he ended up dropping the most important part of that, which is Obama spent billions of dollars and worked with all of our allies spending billions of dollars to support an al-Qaeda terrorist suicide-bombing campaign against the government of Syria. And that is what led to the rebirth of al-Qaeda in Iraq and then the split and the rise of the Islamic State, as we discussed before. That is the cause of the Islamic State. Not just, you know, leaving anywhere, ever, which unfortunately, has become absolutely the talking point on this and on Afghanistan and everything else. wherever we are, we have to stay, supposedly.

WOODS: I want to get back to the something you said earlier, because there's no way we can have this discussion without mentioning the Kurds, so now I do want to do that. And I want to bring it up to you by mentioning something you probably saw a couple of months ago, that Noam Chomsky, who's pretty good on foreign policy most of the time, says, "In my opinion, it makes sense for the United States to maintain a presence which would deter an attack on the Kurdish areas. The idea that they should be subjected to an attack by their bitter enemies, the Turks, or by the murderous Assad regime, I think anything should be done to try to prevent that." So even a peacenik like Noam Chomsky thinks that the US role – there's a case to be made for US role there protecting the Kurds. So what do you say?

HORTON: Well, I absolutely disagree with that. I'm sad to hear that. I had heard that at the time that he said that and had forgotten about that, actually. I'm glad you reminded me about that. That can never be the answer, should never be the answer for any antiwar people here. All these messes are American-created, as I'm he would agree. America got the Kurds into this mess.

But let me agree with him that America has really gotten the Kurds into a terrible problem here. The Syrian Kurds we're talking about here now, so that's the northeastern corner of Syria, essentially. Again, when our allies supported the rise of these jihadists and the breakup of the state there – so once Assad – you know, Damascus is sort of in the southwest of the country, and most of the east of the country is desert. There are a lot fewer places out there and that kind of thing. So once he was bogged down fighting against Sunni jihadists, backed by the CIA, he just withdrew his forces from Syrian Kurdistan. And the Syrian Kurds, I don't think they outright declared full independence –maybe they did. But they certainly took advantage of their autonomy.

And they started calling their land Rojava, and basically – you probably know about Murray Bookchin, who was a kind of anarchosyndicalist. I think he was a former communist. Sort of

like Noam Chomsky, right? A left-anarchist type. And the Turkish PKK, communist, the Turkish Kurdish group, the PKK, which was a communist group, their leader Öcalan from prison read a bunch of Bookchin and said: hey, everybody, we're abandoning Marx, and now we're Bookchinists. And they were like, okay. And so that makes them much less totalitarian in a sense, or at least they're trying to be. You know, pretty good for the region, especially, in terms of promoting liberty and women's rights and all these kinds of things. So they declared their little autonomous zone there for a while.

But then, of course, they were in the way of the Islamic State. When the Islamic State was seizing eastern Syria, they started attacking the Kurds in northeastern Syria. And there was a terrible siege of a town called Kobanî, where thousands of people were killed and where the Syrian Kurds really held them off. The YPG is the name of their group. It's basically the Syrian version of the Turkish PKK. And they held them off. And then the Americans finally came to help. I guess after the seizure of western Iraq, the Americans came. Special Operations Forces and I think mostly Marines embedded with the YPG and used them basically as in the British style, right, white officers and local brown militiamen as the foot soldiers, and used them to fight against – and of course, with American air power and equipment and stuff helps – and used them to fight the Islamic State in eastern Syria and used them really to help crush them and force them out of the capital city, what they call their capital there, the city of Raqqa, in eastern Syria, and have been very helpful in all of this fighting in Deir ez-Zo and this and that.

And of course you've heard the one and we've talked about before, I think, that we see: what's this where the DOD-backed troops are fighting the CIA-backed troops? Well, that was when the YPG, backed by the DOD, was fighting against al-Qaeda, that that time they called themselves Jabhat al-Nusra, and now they're Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. But it just means loyal to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the butcher of New York City. And you had the military guys fighting against those jihadists.

But now the situation with the Kurds is that essentially the dictator of Turkey, Recep Erdoğan, who of course, Turkey is a major NATO ally, has been since the creation of NATO, I believe – that he has a real problem with the PKK and a real problem with the YPG. And the PKK does commit terrorist attacks inside of Turkey, although I don't know that there's been very many in quite a few years now. And they're not like suicide bombing a school and stuff like al-Qaeda does; it's more like set off a bomb outside of a building and maybe kill no one, that kind of thing. You know, like a bomb in a backpack type, symbolic, more like communist terrorism during the Cold War, where it's more symbolic than really deadly. But anyway, they're considered major enemies of the Turkish government there. And the Turkish government has been threatening – including very recently, including last week – to invade Syrian Kurdistan and crush the YPG. So when Chomsky or Lindsey Graham or anybody else says that he's putting the Syrian Kurds at risk, that's really true.

Now, the reporting is that – and there's a brand new Mark Perry piece at *The American Conservative*. I'm about to interview him after this interview of me, in fact, all about this – where he says that this all really came about from a telephone conversation between Trump and Erdoğan, where I think – and this is kind of vague, and I need to really nail this down, but I'm getting the drift – I guess I can say, Tom, that I think what happened was that Erdoğan promised that, okay, if you guys leave, we won't just go in there and slaughter everybody. That would be too bad PR for a betrayal. I mean, America is bound to betray these Kurds sooner or later in favor of our NATO ally. Only question is how badly, you know?

But so if Trump got real assurances from Erdoğan that he's not going to go in there and slaughter them all, then that would be the most important part of that.

And then the second, you know, for the long-term-effect part of that would be for America to help to negotiate — this goes to a Chomsky saying: how about do everything you can except staying militarily? How about that? But how about America helps, or at least suggests or at least stays out of the way, tries to facilitate a deal, where the Syrian Kurds make a new deal with the Syrian government in Damascus, that: you let us have semi-autonomy and a strong federal model, but we'll let you have troops and stand between us and maintain the borders of the Syrian state and keep the Turks out and have the Turks agree to that, that as long as the Syrian army is there, making sure the YPG isn't crossing the border and causing problems inside Turkey, that the Turks will leave them alone.

But otherwise, I mean, this could be really bad. And America does this Bay of Pigs kind of thing a lot, where, *Oh, we support you. We love you. Rise up*, and then let people get slaughtered. And I'm not saying follow through. I'm saying don't make those promises. But this is the trouble that America has gotten these Kurds in. Again, this whole war is America's fault. They want to say pulling out of Syria is what Obama would do. How about backing the terrorists for five years in the first place is what Obama would do, deliberately creating an Islamic State in eastern Syria that I think accidentally, unintentionally by the Americans, ended up blowing back into western Iraq and seizing the land and a population the size of Great Britain and holding onto it for three years? That's what Obama would do. Oh, and then launch a war against them, Iraq War III, to destroy the mess that he made. That's what Obama would do. They want to act like Obama's some peacenik, some wimp who, what, he's responsible for the fall of Saigon or whatever? I don't remember history that way at all, in fact.

WOODS: That's all interesting to hear, because I was a little thrown by that Chomsky thing, in fact, not that I follow Chomsky super closely, but I really cannot remember a time where he has said: I think there should be a US presence in such and such place.

HORTON: Yeah, I can't think of any other analog to that either. In fact, I had a cool Chomsky story from this week, which was, I was looking for a footnote about how George Bush, Sr. refused to negotiate with Saddam after Saddam invaded Kuwait, but before America attacked Iraq in 1990, and I couldn't find the footnote. So I emailed him, and he turned me on all kinds of great stuff to read.

WOODS: How about that?

HORTON: So that was my cool Chomsky story from this week, but you've really kind of deflated it with your "US Marine Corps should not be abolished" statement of his there.

WOODS: Yeah, I'm sorry about that.

HORTON: I mean, I'm a Ron Paulian. You know, Ron Paul told *The Washington Post* in '08 when he was running for president, he goes: *Oh, come on, we can defend this country with a couple of good submarines. We don't need any of this*. And people are supposed to get all emotional, especially big, tough, right-wing conservatives get all emotional and start weeping if you tell them that like: Hey, tough guy, we don't need a Pentagon at all. We don't need a

military at all. And the only reason we would need one is because Israel is worried about Iran's presence in Syria. But Iran is only there to help defend Assad from the CIA's al-Qaeda terrorists. So no, we really don't need them at all.

WOODS: Did you ever manage to get — or did you ever try to get Chomsky on your show?

HORTON: I did interview him one time. I can't remember what all about, actually. I know we talked about Palestine a little bit.

WOODS: Did it go well? Were you happy with it?

HORTON: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. It's in the archives there.

WOODS: Could you dig up a link and I'll put it on the show notes page?

HORTON: Yeah, sure.

WOODS: Because I think there'd be a novelty to hearing Scott Horton talk to Noam Chomsky.

HORTON: And, you know, listen. Actually there was this thing at *Counterpunch* right around the time Bush, Sr. died, and it was way over the top. It was like me praising Ron Paul, where you're like, *All right, all right, enough already*, you know what I mean, where this guy was way over the top in his praise of Noam Chomsky. But he was saying: *haha, George Bush is dead, and Chomsky still lives. Here he is, 90-something years old*. But he went on to really talk about the importance of Noam Chomsky. And I really realized in reading that what an important influence he's been on me, especially in that kind of Bill Hicksian way, which I'm already like this anyway, I guess. But Chomsky, I think, is great reinforcement for the whole perception or the whole kind of attitude that, *No, I don't respect the Pentagon. No, I don't respect the claims. Let me tell you for the following 150 reasons why that's just not true, okay?* And just take an axe to him, relentlessly. No due respect, because none is due. America's the greatest purveyor of violence on the face of the earth. The American government is the greatest purveyor of violence on the face of the earth, virtually every bit of it unjust and unjustified.

And Noam Chomsky is just not having it, other than in this horrible exception of a case that you mentioned here. And he wins all his fights, because he knows more about it all than everyone. He footnotes everything to death. He beats you to death with facts. And like a good, old-fashioned communist, he's not caught up in all this identity stuff about whose skin color is what and whose sexual gender is called what and this and that, because to him, it's all economic. To him, it's all big business in alliance with big government to mass murder foreigners for money, which is 100% correct. And so libertarians, I think we have — well, you know, Murray Rothbard wrote about class war, right? It's not the same class war theory as the Marxists or the Bookchinists or whoever else, or the syndicate lists. But it is a class war theory, and there's a lot of important overlap in there, and there's a lot of just ground truth about how cruel —

You know, one more thing about this. I think he shows in there a clip where some smarty pants is interviewing Noam Chomsky. And he says: *Noam Chomsky, you once said that by the Nuremberg standard, every single post-World War II American president would be hanged for*

war crimes. And so I mean, come on, how can you justify that? And he's like: *Well, okay, Truman.* And he goes through Truman, Ike, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and then the clip especially that he had cued up was like, *How can you say about George W. Bush?* And Chomsky's like, *Oh my god, I don't know where to begin.* And he goes through. And this is really true. This is really true, that by the Nuremberg standard, all American presidents going back at least that far are guilty of crimes against humanity. And don't you like the unapologetic, kind of, *Hey, I'm from here too, but that's just the truth,* kind of attitude that he brings? And I realize in reading that article praising him that I really owe him a debt of gratitude on that too. I think my writing style owes a lot to that too, of trying to just bury them with facts.

WOODS: Yeah, but that's good, because our side needs it, because we're up against — you know, it's David and Goliath here, really.

HORTON: Yeah.

WOODS: We're against overwhelming odds, and the people we're fighting against are in all the so-called respectable quarters. So yeah, we need a barrage of facts that we can bring forward.

HORTON: All right, now ask me about: *This is going to help Iran and Russia.*

WOODS: You just took the words right out of my mouth. I was going to say: I want to get to the other part of the Mia Farrow tweet, which is that it signals a victory — well, in fact, that's also the S.E. Cupp tweet. I cannot even distinguish these people anymore — that this would signal a victory for Russia and Iran, etc., etc. How do you respond to that?

HORTON: Well, the first thing is that, like I just said, Iran is only there to help defend the Assad government from American-backed terrorists. They had been friends — this is the motive for the Obama administration support for this jihad in the first place, was that the Assad government maintains a friendly relationship with Iran. In fact, this is at the heart of the "clean break" strategy of David Wurmser and Richard Perle from 22 years ago, when they advised Netanyahu that Israel's greatest security threat is that Iran — well, I think the way they put it is: Syria helps Iran back Hezbollah, and that this is their Shiite axis of danger and evil that they need to protect from. Then they insanely and stupidly say that: so what we should do is get rid of Saddam. And then we saw exactly what happened. That only empowered the Iranian alliance system in the region, such as it is, by giving them Baghdad. They thought it was going to give America dominance over Iran, over the Iraqi Shia and over Iran, but it didn't play out that way at all. But this was their concern.

But Iran didn't have like ground troops there. They may have had an advisor or two, but there was no violent conflict that the Syrians were involved in. The reason that the IRGC is there now — that's the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, with their special operations forces — the reason that they're there is not to threaten Israel; it's to help Assad defend himself from Israeli, American, Turkish, Qatari, Saudi, UAE-backed terrorists, Sunni jihadist bin Ladenites. And so I don't know why Assad would want Iran to stay after the conflict is over — which, it's not all the way over. Al-Qaeda groups still control the part of the Idlib province. They have kind of a ceasefire going on now, but they refuse to negotiate. Russia and Turkey and Assad all agreed to this over their dead body. They don't really have a say in this, but they're not willing to negotiate themselves. They haven't laid down their arms yet. So the al-Qaeda guys

are still there. As I was saying, there are still very small numbers of ISIS fighters out in the east of the country out in the desert there. So Iran might stay to help clean that up, but if they leave somewhat of a presence after that, I don't know what difference it makes. The Israelis claim that the Iranians are there, because they want to move all of their best missiles into Syria and target Israel from there. I have no reason to believe that that's true whatsoever.

And as the Israelis have shown this whole war long, they're willing to bomb whatever they want in there. Anytime they say that, *Oh, look, Iran is giving missiles to Hezbollah*, they bomb a convoy. The Israelis have attacked inside Syria maybe hundreds of times, certainly scores and scores of times, through this whole war. And the Syrian military and the Iranians haven't done a thing about it, because what are they going to do about it? Seriously, the Israelis have them far overmatched in conventional military power. They have their hands full with everything else.

And now as far as the Russians, the Russians, first of all, let me just say they've killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians in their air campaign against American-backed terrorist forces and also against the Islamic State as well. And so those are war crimes. It's basically impossible to wage an air war in a populated area without massacring women and children. And we're not talking about just they lay down and die like in an old Western where the guy just grabs his heart and there's no blood. We're talking about tearing them apart with high-velocity explosives and shrapnel and stuff, like when the Americans do it. It's really, really violent, what's happened to these people.

And yet, it has to be said that the only reason that the Russians are there — I mean, they've had their little naval base, but they've had no other major presence in Syria or major influence in Syria since the Soviet Union dissolved. They're here basically because Obama rolled out the red carpet for them. And John Kerry himself is the source for this. He was meeting with some so-called moderate Syrian rebels in Britain, and one of them secretly recorded him, and this got leaked. It's on the internet. You can listen to this whole thing. And *The New York Times* wrote it up but left out the good part, surprise, surprise.

But essentially, John Kerry says to the rebels that: *Look, there's nothing I can do for you now. You want more money? You want more guns? Syria's lousy with guns. We sent so many guns in to help you guys.* And he says — John Kerry, Secretary of State, Obama's Secretary of State, former senator, former presidential candidate — he says, *And we saw the rise of Islamic State, but we thought we could manage. We thought that that would help to put pressure on Assad, so that he would step down.* Which is just crazy. These people are such idiots. And then he says: *But that didn't happen. Instead Assad went to Moscow and asked Putin for help, and Putin took them up on it.* So at this point, in other words, our bluff is called. Our plan didn't work, and now the Russians have come to crush whatever forces were having real success, and so: *I can't do nothing for you, man, at this point. Basically it's all downhill from here guys. I'm sorry*, is what he's saying.

But think about that. *We saw the rise of the Islamic State. We thought we could manage. We thought we could use* — this is not the direct quote part, re-paraphrasing, restating. *We thought we could use the rise of an actual bin Ladenite caliphate*, which used to be Osama bin Laden and George Bush's ridiculous fantasy of impossibility in a million years. *We thought we could actually help to facilitate the creation of such a thing* — because it would encourage Assad to step down? When there was always a question — I don't know exactly what

the answer is, but certainly question of whether the government would survive Assad leaving power. You might have a collapse of the state entirely. And then a bunch of al-Qaeda and Islamic State fighters descending on Damascus, where they already were in the suburbs. They were in the east of the city already.

And real quick on demographics here. The government of serious controlled by the Alawites, a very small faction. They're sort of, kind of a break off of the Shiites, but also they sort of predate the Shiites, but there's kind of a very close relationship with the Shiite Arabs there. But the Alawites, they're really like the ruling cast since, I don't know, the last 40, 50 years anyway. And they have an alliance with the Shiite Arabs, with all the different kinds of Christians, the Maronites, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, and probably leaving some out, I don't know. And as I said, the Kurds, they kind of had their independence, but they never fought against Assad. They never considered Assad the enemy; they always considered the jihadists to be their enemy. And the Druze are there, and the Druze are kind of a mix between Islam, Christianity, and Greek mythology, according to a Druze friend of mine who told me that – so that's what I'm quoting; I'm not expert, but that's what he says. So the Druze are there as well. They all support the state.

And then guess what, Tom. This is the minority coalition. The super-majority of the population of Syria are Sunni Arabs. So you might think that they all supported this uprising and the jihadists in order to overthrow the government, but you'd be wrong. In fact, the majority of Sunni Arabs sided with the state, because on the other side wasn't freedom and Sunni Islam. On the other side was a good head chopping and an endless conflict at the hands of these suicide-bomber lunatics.

And so the officer corps of the Syrian army is made up, I don't know primarily, but in huge numbers, of Sunnis. They're at least a major minority if not the majority of the officers. And they're the super-majority of the Syrian Arab Army and always have been. So they might try to spin this like, oh, it's this small sectarian minority coalition ruling over the super majority. Well, that's kind of right, but that doesn't mean that that super-majority backs the uprising and is trying to change the situation certainly not in this fashion, by letting a bunch of al-Qaeda kooks take the lead and create an even worse situation for everyone. And the al-Qaeda guys, their slogan was: *Christians to the sea; Shiites to the grave*, or Christians to Beirut and Shiites – yeah, something like that. Anyway, so I mean, their idea was, when they took over, your choice is either convert or die. In fact, there was a huge massacre of Druze who refused to convert at al-Qaeda sword point. That was the future that Obama was trying to create for Syria.

And so then – oh, and to be more specific, back to that question, the Russians did not intervene, as John Kerry was saying – they did not intervene until the end of 2015, right around November, I guess. 2015 is when they finally came to save Assad's bacon, and that was when ISIS was marching on Damascus. They had severed the highway between Damascus and Aleppo, and that was basically the red line for Putin to come in.

So fast-forward to six months into Donald Trump's administration – and by the way, I denounced Donald Trump on your show before he ever became president, but I also told you on the show before he ever became president: he is less worse on Russia and on Syria and maybe on Afghanistan. But on Syria, he had made himself pretty clear that he was for the war on terrorism, but he was against the war *for* terrorism, which is not true in Yemen. He keeps backing al-Qaeda in Yemen. But anyway, at least in Syria, he was acting like, *Look, the era of*

overthrowing the secular dictators and replacing their countries with Chaos-istan has got to come to an end. I don't want to do this anymore. And so six months into his presidency, he did call off CIA support for the al-Qaeda fighters there. And at the time, *The Washington Post* headline was: "In a move sure to please the Russians" — this was the news headline, not the op-ed page.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah.

HORTON: This was the news headline: "In a move sure to please the Russians, Trump calls off support for rebels." And then you read the article: al-Qaeda in Syria. And I asked Phil Giraldi, the CIA officer, I said, when that happened, what was the reaction back at CIA headquarters? Were they mad about that? And he said, no, not at all. The CIA rank-and-file guys, they always were opposed to this mission that the Obama guys had given them. I mean, some of them must have liked it, but you know, most of them looked at it like this is backing a worse enemy against a lesser enemy. And to be perfectly clear, al-Qaeda has shed innocent American civilian blood. Iran never did anything to us. Iran is the enemy of the American empire in their part of the world, but that's not the same thing as a threat to the American people in any way.

WOODS: But, of course, it's the job of the establishment to conflate the two. Let me read to you a tweet of my own, if I may, because today, we're reading a lot of people saying, in addition to what we saw Mia Farrow and S.E. Cupp saying — and I've chosen those two people at random, those poor folks. But we're also seeing people say: *Isn't this typical of Trump? He doesn't even consult his top brass before he goes off making a decision like this.* So somebody says, "He is making military decisions without consulting his military." And I responded this way, Scott. I said, "He is making a political decision that being involved in Syria is pointless, counterproductive, and idiotic, and something only the D.C. establishment cares about in the first place. That is a judgment civilian leadership can make. Deranged to think you have to consult the military for something like that."

HORTON: Absolutely right.

WOODS: Do I have an endorsement of that?

HORTON: Absolutely. And you know, as I said, he's been for the war on terrorism. Wherever the US is bombing ISIS or al-Qaeda fighters, he's escalated all of that. He's told the generals to devolve command authority all the way down the chain as low as they can go so that the local sergeant on scene can call in whatever air strike without having to consult the lawyers and this kind of deal. And he's also told them, you know, gloves off on the rules. Whatever extra layers of red tape are in there that maybe the Obama people had put on or anything like that, as far as who's allowed to call in an air strike on which kind of targets when — say like in Afghanistan. Can you call them in preemptively before you attack a village or before Afghan forces attack a village, or can you call in an airstrike only in defense of American troops on the ground, these kinds of things. Trump said from the very beginning to the generals: *You guys figure it out and everything, but devolve those rules as far as you can, legally speaking. Hands off.* And that's absolutely a political decision too, that no one's going to ever accuse him, no matter how many wars our military loses, no one's ever going to accuse him of micromanaging tactical decisions on the ground in that Lyndon Johnson fashion. And so if it's anybody's fault, it's theirs whenever anything goes wrong. He's really completely taken the gloves off on that tactical stuff.

But then when it comes to strategy, it might be a good idea to consult his generals, but their job is carrying out the orders of the civilian government of the country. You know what this really reminds me of, is after the Arab Spring in Egypt, where left and right and everybody overthrew the American-backed military dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Then they instituted a new democratic regime. They elected a parliament, and they elected a president in real elections. And the Muslim Brotherhood won parliament and the presidency, but just barely. Like bare majorities. And so then the liberals and the socialists, the labor union types and these and those that you'd count as the Egyptian left, the Democratic Party, essentially there, if the Muslim Brotherhood are the crotchety old conservatives — instead of saying, *All right, well, at least we have a democracy now, and at least we have a system of regular elections now, and so now we need to form parties and see if we can win next time* — instead, they turn back to the military and said, *Hey, military, we hate the conservatives more than we hate you. We would prefer a military dictatorship to a system where we could possibly win our own democratic elections against the conservatives in just a short amount of time.*

And that is the same mistake that the liberals are making here, where they hate the conservatives. They hate right party and Donald Trump so much that, to them, it's essentially treason for him to do something that his Secretary of Defense or generals would advise against, as though, *as though, as though* their job isn't to click their heels and say, "Yes, sir," to the elected president of the United States. It's crazy.

And by the way, they're completely wrong. America was always going to abandon the Syrian Kurds. America is not NATO allies with the Syrian Kurds. The only reason they allied with the Syrian Kurds is when the Islamic State doubled in size more than it was supposed to, and even then they dragged their feet and allying with them. This was always bound to happen, and if you read Mark Perry's article at TheAmericanConservative.com today — in fact, I saw the preview last night. The original title was, "Scaparotti's Revenge." And this is the— it's now called, "Trump's decision to leave Syria was no surprise." The subline is, "To say it was impulsive or that the entire military opposes it would be grossly misreading the situation," writes the great Pentagon reporter, Mark Perry. And so in other words, some of the generals have been saying it's time to do this for quite a while now. And the technicality was, well, we still have some ISIS fighters to fight. As soon as we're done fighting ISIS, then, okay, we'll go — which is different than we have to stay to limit Iran or whatever garbage. Basically, the time was up on that. And so what Trump is doing is he's choosing one group of generals over the other group of generals. He's choosing one group of generals over the Israel lobby and the neoconservatives in Washington, D.C.

And by the way, go and look at *Haaretz* and go and look at *The Jerusalem Post* and Ynet and the reaction in Israel over this. It's funny because just in the last few weeks, they were writing about how — in *Haaretz*, for example, the liberal daily, kind of *New York Times* analog there in Tel Aviv. They were saying that Trump's decision to stay in Syria has Netanyahu's fingerprints all over it. And then there was another one: Trump wants to leave Syria, but Israel is insisting that America has to stay to protect us and this and that. Now that Trump has made the decision, they're freaking out.

And there's one by Chemi Shalev; I'm not sure if you're familiar with him, but he's an Israeli national security beat reporter and has done good journalism in the past, on some issues anyway. And he has this opinion piece where he's freaking out, and he's lambasting Netanyahu for telling "us" — quote, unquote, the Israelis — that Trump is this huge friend of Israel and

that moving the embassy to Jerusalem is this meaningful thing and goes to show just how loyal to Israel Trump is. But now we see that where the rubber really meets the road, when Israel must have American troops stay in Syria to limit Iran, Trump betrays us and hangs us out to dry, and then Netanyahu dares to tell us that everything is fine and blah, blah. And he keeps going, and you can just see how angry he was when he wrote the thing.

But just the whole narrative there is so pregnant with all this information that is left out of the debate in America over all this stuff, that why are we doing this at all? You know, Israel is not a state in the union. And in fact, we have no treaty of alliance with them, because they have no defined borders, because they're still in the process of stealing the last 22% of historic Palestine. And who knows? They'll probably want to go to Baghdad one day. But we have no actual alliance, no legal alliance with Israel. And even if we did, we wouldn't be bound to fight aggressive wars for them to occupy countries where we're the ones who created the problem there and the Islamic State in the first place, with their help. And then we just invade the country basically not to fight the state, but to fight this group that we created, our side created in that country.

But unlike the Russians and the Iranians, the Americans are not invited by the Assad government. We have no — I don't even know if the UN could even try, if the Security Council can even try to pass a resolution authorizing such a thing. The Americans are twisting and taking the AUMF from 2001 and saying that it applies to the Islamic State, the al-Qaeda breakoff group, and just using the barest fig leaf. They even tried to half invoke the authorization to attack the Saddam Hussein regime in 2002, that AUMF from 2002, as part of their excuse for waging war in Syria in 2017. Yeah, right. We have no legal authority to be there at all. And you know, again, as Trump told Goldberg, this will weaken Iran and that'd be good for Israel. That was what all this was about in the first place. So you know, all of these anti-Iran hawks, whenever you hear him ranting about Iran, about Hezbollah, and about Assad, this whole narrative comes from those who put Israel first. It wasn't Hezbollah that knocked down those towers in New York. It wasn't Hezbollah that hit the Pentagon. And that was why, as I was saying Giraldi was saying, the CIA didn't really want to back al-Qaeda in Syria so much as that was their job. But the actual guys doing it, you know, were pretty resentful about it for obvious reasons.

WOODS: Scott, just as we wrap up here, I've got this tweet from Trump himself saying, "Does the USA want to be the policeman of the Middle East, getting nothing but spending precious lives and trillions of dollars protecting others, who in almost all cases do not appreciate what we are doing? Do we want to be there forever? Time for others to finally fight." All right, well, that's not pure Ron Paulianism, but close enough. I'll take it.

HORTON: Pretty good, yeah, and especially the whole policeman of the world thing and this and that. And so I'm glad you mentioned that, because I had forgotten to say — and this is really the most important thing. I should have said this at the very beginning — is that libertarians and antiwar right-wingers, especially, any combat veterans or whatever, any era military veterans in your audience especially, but right-wingers and libertarians — and leftists too, liberals too, but especially the right — needs to come out in support of this in every way we can. Send the man tweets telling him how fantastic and classy and wealthy and successful it is that he's leaving Syria.

And I was even thinking — I'm not the guy to organize this, and I'm not sure if Trump has a reelection committee yet or anything, but there should be a Trevor-Lyman, Ron-Paul-style

moneybomb here. There should be a reaction, because the echo chamber is all of how this is all treason on behalf of Russia and Iran and whatever, what have you. There should be a reaction from the American population, from the right half of the American population that no, we support this. We don't want to be the policeman of the world. We're tired of the American government doing these horrible things to try to weaken Iran and then making them more powerful anyway and then crying about it and then doubling down and then making everything worse, that we just have to go. We have to absolutely call it off. Not only should we get out of Syria; we should absolutely get out of Yemen and get out of Somalia and Afghanistan and Libya immediately, get out of Iraq. We're fighting Iraq War 3.5 right now. There's still a Sunni-based insurgency there. Get out. All of it. Just called the whole thing off. And maybe that's the second part. Maybe we should all really focus on supporting him on this, and then get to the rest of that later.

But let them know. Call right-wing talk radio. Write in the comment section at *Breitbart* and whatever right-wing sites you can find. Do whatever you can to especially let Trump himself know, but let it be known in the media that there's a huge part of apparently Trump's base who really support this. This is apparently why they voted for him, was no more Bush and no more Obama and no more policeman of the world. We don't want to do it. Because I think he has some good instincts. I don't think he knows enough to really win these battles standing on his own two feet very well. Oh, and I should say I'm actually worried, because John Bolton apparently was there when he was on the phone call with Erdoğan and was saying, *Yeah, we could get out of Syria. No problem.* And you know, John Bolton's position has always been: *Why mess around with Assad when that's just hacking at the branches? We've got a strike the root in Tehran.* That's always been his position. So this "get out of Syria and focus on the real bad guy, the enemy Ayatollah in Iran" could be the other side of this. We sure don't want that.

So anyway, whoever in your audience, politically active people who want to do anything about this, call your Republican congressman's office and tell them: *Man, we support Trump on this. I don't want to hear it about Iran. Iran is only there to defend against Obama's al-Qaeda guys anyway, or something.* I don't know. Tell them something. Tell them you support the president on this. Because what if the opposite? What if Trump is sticking his neck out, and then as far as anyone can tell, no one agrees with him?

WOODS: Yeah.

HORTON: I mean, that would be really bad.

WOODS: I know, exactly. You do not want that. And I'm thinking to myself: well, let's see. I'm in Florida I could call up Marco Rubio.

HORTON: Yeah, that's not going to do much for you.

WOODS: [laughing]

HORTON: But do you know who your House member is? I don't, and I know he's a Republican, but I'll call him. And just sound as right-wing as you can.

WOODS: Yeah.

HORTON: And go: You know what, man? As Trump says in his little video message, Our young people are dying in these wars. And so the deal is supposed to be that we would only ever ask that of them if it was really, really, really necessary; otherwise, we would not, right? And this is not necessary.

WOODS: I've got a Democrat so-called representing me in the House, but I don't know enough about his foreign policy views. But you know, couldn't hurt. I'm not the call-your-congressman type, but I get the idea they need to hear —

HORTON: But you know what? I'm not a call-your-congressman type either, really, but I'm not the kind of person — and I know a lot of libertarian anarchists just eschew anything ever approaching something like that. But I don't think you have to buy into the idea that this government is legitimate at all or that democracy is great or that people should participate in it to make things their way or these kinds of things. I don't think you have to buy into any of that to say that, listen, this is an emergency, okay? Our government is creating the most horrible circumstances for the people of these countries, and they're ruining the USA. They're driving this country into the ground, that empire essentially is murder-suicide and that this has to be stopped.

So when we have an opportunity like we did last week, two weeks ago, to support this coalition of senators trying to stop the war in Yemen, which is absolutely the worst thing that America is doing in the world right now, an actual genocide, a deliberately inflicted famine on the poorest country in the Middle East, we have no excuse in the world to stay out of that when we can make our voices heard there, when we can let people know in media and in government that we don't care what anybody says; we want an end to this right now, no matter what, because at the end of the day — as Ron Paul says, at the end of the day, by and large, the people of whatever country, even the Soviet Union, they get the government that they demand. When the people of the USSR refused to participate in the USSR anymore, it ceased to exist. So I'm sorry, because I'm a Nazi on the word "we" and "they" and all those things. The English language is a very communist language. It makes us speak in such collectivist terms all the time. But, you know, at the end of the day, all of us in this society do share some responsibility for what our government does, especially maybe, I don't know, if only because we do have the ability to have an effect on it, right? So it's not that it's our fault, but it is our responsibility to try to stop it any way that we can, peacefully of course.

WOODS: With that, we're going to say thank you to Scott. And you know, increasingly, Scott, my outro on the show about becoming a smarter libertarian in just 30 minutes a day, that's becoming laughable. My episodes are drifting, drifting, drifting to be longer all the time. But this one had to be.

HORTON: I'll take responsibility for that. I'm pretty longwinded.

WOODS: Yeah, that's fine. That's fine. But really, this topic had to get a response, because everybody who's so-called respectable has a different view, and so we had to get the thoroughgoing response, and we got it.

HORTON: Well, I hope it was helpful.

WOODS: It absolutely was. I'm thrilled to be able to call you a friend and to be able to call on you for last-minute favors like this. I wrote to you late last night and said, "Hey, can you come on tomorrow morning? We'll talk about what the heck's going on in Syria." You said, "Sure, yeah, no problem." So you're a good man.

HORTON: I am your humble servant, Tom Woods.

WOODS: So your two action items, folks, here are: get Scott's book *Fool's Errand* about the war in Afghanistan. You can get that at FoolsErrand.us. And secondly, you've got to start listening to *The Scott Horton Show* too, and you can find out all about that at ScottHorton.org.

HORTON: Yeah, sign up for feeds, y'all.

WOODS: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And sign up to support Scott. I mean, look, 'tis the season right? And I support Scott every month for the reasons you just heard today, so you should do the same. All right, thanks again, Scott.

HORTON: Thank you, my friend.