



Episode 1,373: Scott Horton on Yemen 4th Anniversary and Afghanistan Peace Talks

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: First of all, it's been a long time since you've been on the show, and that's my fault. But secondly, you had a bit of a tech issue for a little while that made you kind of drop off the radar. People were getting worried, and I felt like getting you back on my show would help to just jumpstart your return back online and let everybody know everything's up and running, and you should go back to listening to Scott Horton.

HORTON: Great, thank you for that. I appreciate that. Yeah, it's the most ridiculous thing in the world. I had my own server, and it decided that it would just ruin my entire network and kick me offline for 45 seconds every two minutes. And this went on for about three or four weeks. I had all the ATT&T guys, out all different server geniuses trying to figure out exactly what the problem is. Nobody actually really finally even resolved what was happening, but I'm on my fourth new modem now, and my server is gone. All of my websites, the Libertarian Institute, ScottHorton.org, all the audio files are all on a proper professional server out there on some cloud or whatever kind of thing. So the websites are fast, the websites are good, and they are not going to be down all the time, like in the era leading up to now. So that's all good.

WOODS: All right, well, that's great to hear, and I know your well-wishers are delighted to hear that. All right, we're going to talk today about some foreign policy as usual, but in particular, we're going to talk about what's going on first in Afghanistan. Let's start there. There are peace talks going on in Afghanistan, and the conventional wisdom is that the chance of some kind of breakthrough seems slim. And then this morning, I'm reading a story about deteriorating relations between the US government and the current Afghan president, who's basically been shut out of the negotiations, and feels like, first of all, there's a problem with that, but secondly, that what's really happening is the US is one way or another going to be paving the way the return of the Taliban in some form. Tell us what's happening.

HORTON: Yeah, well, I mean, that's it. The fact of the matter is, as I make the case in the book *Fool's Errand* – audio book available now too – that the war is lost. And I don't know exactly what's happening. The following is pure speculation. But the guy in charge of the peace talks is Zalmay Khalilzad, who is an OG neoconservative who studied under Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago with Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz and all of those guys back then; worked for Scoop Jackson; helped write the Defense Planning Guidance of 1992 with Scooter Libby and Paul Wolfowitz; is the guy who picked Hamid Karzai to be the sock puppet dictator in 2001 in the Bush administration. So the fact that he has the job of negotiating with the Taliban and the fact that they have had repeated talks in Qatar for going on I guess about a year now implies to me – I infer from that, Tom, that Trump and Khalilzad had a serious

conversation about how we're leaving and you're going to help me save face, you're going to help me America save face on this, pal, but this war is over, and so go and get it done.

And then Khalilzad must have said to him, *If you swear to God, you back me up, I work for you, not Pompeo or not anybody else, and that this is really the deal, I'm completely* – again, just making that up. But I'm just saying there's no other way that I can explain the amount of progress that has been made, that this is not some show. Like this is not some ridiculous failure, like when the Obama team literally negotiated with a complete imposter for nine months, a guy pretending to be Mullah Mansour, who wasn't even him at all –

WOODS: What?

HORTON: Oh, yeah, it's in *Fool's Errand* there. So this is not that. This is some serious – I believe that Trump must have said: You are getting me out of there. And so the only sticking points left are, of course, that the US military wants to stay, at least at the Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul, forever. And the Taliban, of course, all along have insisted and continue to insist that, no, you've got to pull all your troops out. In fact, they have insisted up till now that they won't even talk to us until we pull our troops out, so at least we got away with that. But they're not going to back down from that demand, that they're going to keep fighting until all American troops pull out. And I think that Trump and Khalilzad probably are for that; it's really the military that are digging in their heels on that, because they're announcing in *The New York Times* alternative plans. *Yeah, we're going to leave, but it's going to take us five years to leave*, and this kind of thing, and that is not what Trump is pushing for here, clearly. That's the military being insubordinate right there.

In fact, General Votel, Tom, just last week, the commander of CENTCOM, essentially just announced: *belay that order, we're not going anywhere, and that, you know, the conditions aren't right. Until he makes the conditions right, we can't leave.* Well, that's – I mean, Trump should have fired him immediately like Truman firing MacArthur. I mean, he should have absolutely just cashiered him immediately for insubordination for that. It is clearly against the wishes of the president that he was going there. I mean, that was his point, was that, *The president doesn't know what he's talking about. We're not doing that*, was essentially what he was saying. It's a really huge, like American historical thing. In fact, I saw Lew Rockwell on his website back a few weeks ago, there was another example very much like this, where he was like, *Wow, this is really like a military junta, where these men think that they get to contradict the president of the United States.* Really?

WOODS: Well, do you mind if we shift actually for a minute over to Syria, because that same kind of thing seems to have happened? We got excited about Trump saying we're pulling out of Syria, and then the ne cons more or less said not so fast. And then it looks like he backtracked. I didn't keep track of what actually happened there. What did happen?

HORTON: Okay, so Trump announced in December, and he got out in front of all of his staff so they couldn't short circuit it and said we're leaving. He gave a speech in the White House driveway and put it on Twitter, and said, you know, for the love of our soldiers, we're getting them out of Syria. And we all celebrated that, wow, that's a pretty big thing. It's going to be hard for him to climb down from that one, kind of thing. And as I told you, at the time, I think ISIS was essentially defeated. At that point, America was really standing between the Syrian Arab Army and the last of the ISIS guys there. And so if we had only just gotten out of the way, that would have been fine. Instead, they went ahead and finished the job. They finally

went ahead and just in the last couple of days, they roused the last little redoubt bases of ISIS fighters hiding out there in the eastern desert of Syria. So the war against the Islamic State Caliphate is 100% over now. That pretext to stay in Syria is over now.

And so they've already shifted gears, of course. I mean, why was all about backing al-Qaeda in Syria in the first place, that led to the rise of the Islamic State in the first place? It was all to check the power of Iran. Well, it backfired, of course. Iran and Hezbollah, their other allies, have a greater presence in Syria and more power and influence inside Syria than ever before now. And they are, in fact, reopening the highway, remember, George W. Bush gave Iran's best friends, Baghdad, in Iraq War II. And they now are building what the neocons all call a "land bridge" — you know, a road — a "land bridge" from Tehran to Beirut. The highway goes all the way through now because America let the neocons implement their stupid clean break. And so all it did was make Iran more and more powerful all the time, not less and less. And so now they say we have to stay at the Al-Tanf base, which is down at the southeastern corner of Syria right near the Iraqi and Jordanian border, right on the Jordanian border near the Iraqi border. And from there, apparently, a few hundred troops are supposed to limit the ability of Iran to send their trucks through there to further arm the Syrian government and from there on into Lebanon to bolster Hezbollah.

And so just like with any government program, right, what they do causes worse consequences, exactly the opposite effect of what they said was going to happen. And so now that's the reason that history just started yesterday, and now they have to have a whole new policy to correct the problem that they just created. And you know me. I gave the speech — you saw the end of the speech in New Hampshire that day. You can go all the way back to Woodrow Wilson in no time, that this is all just correcting the mistakes from the last guy, correcting the mistakes from the last guy, all the way back for the last hundred years. And at any point, we could stop, of course.

But so now Trump has given in and said, okay, well, I guess we've got to keep a few hundred troops in the south. And then they tried to say in *The New York Times* that, well, we want to leave a few hundred troops up in the northeast with the Kurds as well, and then the White House contradicted that and said no. And there is a report, too, that when Trump visited Iraq at Christmastime that he met — this was Mark Perry in *The American Conservative* — that he met with the generals there, and they're running the Syrian war from bases in Iraq, on the Iraqi side of the border. And that he said to them, "How many ISIS guys are left?" And they go, "Oh, you know, a few hundred here and there in the Euphrates Valley in Syria." And he says, "And how long is it going to take for you to finish killing them all?" And the general said, "Well, a few weeks sir," and he said, "Okay, and then we're leaving. That's it. We want out."

And the way that Mark Perry told the story was that, to these generals, contrary to the narrative in Afghanistan here, these specific generals in Iraq, their attitude was, *Pssh, the president of the United States just told me something*, and so they wouldn't even imagine that they had anything else to say to him except, "Sir, yes, sir." They told *The Wall Street Journal* when John Bolton came out and told the Israelis that now we're adding all these conditions and all these things, one of the generals told *The Wall Street Journal* that, *We don't take orders from John Bolton. They do, in fact, take orders from Trump, and he said he wanted them out.* And so but then the fight is within the White House of whether they can get him to back down or not.

And Lord knows, just like in Afghanistan, just like everywhere else, there are negative consequences for everything that has been done up until now all over the place. And so in any one of these circumstances, if you pull American troops out, then yes, you put the hawks in the position of being able to claim that it's pulling the troops out that caused whatever problem rather than their intervention in the first place. And there are so many hawks compared to doves that that narrative almost always takes hold, just like they say it was Obama pulling the troops out of Iraq that caused the rise of ISIS, when it was Obama backing al-Qaeda suicide bombers in Syria for four years that created ISIS and created the Islamic State. And then yes, it's true, American troops weren't in Iraq in order to attack them as they were invading or whatever. But the other part of the story is the bigger part, but it's the part that's left out.

So as far as what's going to happen there, I mean, it looks to me like they're at least going to leave 1,000 or a few hundred troops at that Al-Tanf base and for the express purpose of picking a fight with the Iranians, they say, which is crazy and it is going right back to the policy that Trump changed. I mean, again – we talked about this before, not today – but about six months into the presidency, in June, July of 2017, Trump officially ordered an end to the CIA operation to support the al-Qaeda terrorists there. And that really happened. That really ended when he ordered it, it ended then. So this would be just essentially reversing that, maybe not that specific thing, but it'd be turning back to that side of the strategy, that the biggest problem is not the al-Qaeda terrorists; it's the Iranians and their friends, the ones who did not attack us on September 11th.

WOODS: I know you know Stephen Walt of Harvard. You've had him on your show, and I've had him on my mine. I had him on three to four weeks ago, and I was just – because of course, part of his book is about how insulated the foreign policy elite is from any real consequences to anything that happens under their watch, and that we don't really have a real debate. It's a phony debate between people who share almost every premise in common, that US hegemony is a good thing; it's just a question of how we want to implement it. And you very rarely get a bomb thrower, so to speak – you know what I mean, rhetorically – who comes in and shows everybody the emperor has no clothes.

HORTON: Right.

WOODS: And so what he was trying to say was that, although we might want to see Trump do more, or any particular president do more, even Obama, do more for the cause of peace, the problem is, within the foreign policy community that the president is expected to draw from, there just isn't anybody competent or known who actually shares that kind of view, and so he's kind of stuck. And that just seems fatalistic to me. What do you think about that?

HORTON: Well, it's almost entirely true, except that, I mean, our current situation really shows the exception that proves the rule kind of a situation, because for quite a few of us, actually, when it was clear that Trump was winning, was going to win or maybe I guess after the election, you know, we started working really hard on an America-First, essentially right-wing, peaceful cabinet, the "America First" cabinet, and we came up with a whole list of guys. And it's true that we do not have a very deep bench, but we've got one good bench worth of guys who are, one, good on this stuff and, two, have the credentials to have a position there. And it's pretty simple. I mean, Stephen Walt is one of them, although he and Mearsheimer's book about the Israel lobby makes them kind of radioactive in terms of politics. No question about that. But to me, that's all for the good. Let's fight about it. But anyway,

but there's of course Andrew Bacevich. There's the entire Cato squad of foreign policy experts there, especially Doug Bandow. I'm committed now to saying his name right. I'm so sorry. I've called him Bandow 10,000 times, including on my show.

WOODS: Me too.

HORTON: It's Bandow.

WOODS: And by the way, it shouldn't be. He should change the pronunciation, because I think it's the more natural one [laughing].

HORTON: I'm kind of with you on that, honestly. It looks like "ow" to me.

WOODS: All right, we'll talk to him about that later.

HORTON: But he and Ted Carpenter are just perfect. I mean, they're just great. And Doug has been all over the world, and Doug has "former Special Assistant to Ronald Reagan" at the top of his credentials. I mean, he is the man. You could put him right there as National Security Advisor or probably better as Deputy National Security Advisor, running the NSC in the White House. He got Colonel Douglas McGregor, who would make a perfect National Security Advisor or a Secretary of Defense, who is right-wing and antiwar, essentially, right, kind of a paleocon. And then Chris Preble and Trevor Thrall and the rest of the Cato guys could fill out the national security staff in the White House. I would say Carpenter or somebody like that, or Rand Paul, probably, for Secretary of State. He wouldn't be good at defense, but he could be Secretary of State. I don't know if he'd want that. But that's not too bad of a position to run for president in the future from, you know? There's just enough guys. There's just enough guys that if Donald Trump was like six points smarter and three points more curious about stuff and just would bother to even know that he could read *The National Interest*, he could read *The American Conservative* magazine, he could find one solid dozen good, right-wing peacemongers to put in power and to implement a policy of retrenchment.

And that's what he feels like he wants; he just doesn't know anything about it. He doesn't know that Bandow writes from that America-first, why-should-we-subsidize-the-Japanese point of view every day of his life, right? Why do we still have NATO? Why are we expanding NATO? Why are we picking a fight with the Russians? That's Doug Bandow every single day, and yet Trump's never heard of him. But if he had heard of him, if he knew of the Dougs McGregor and Bandow, we could have an entirely different foreign policy immediately. And for all the people who say, "Yeah, but they shot JFK in the face," or whatever this, that, and the other thing, I heard a great counterpoint to that, which was that there were a whole mess of generals who told FDR, "We're not going back to Europe." And FDR said, "You're fired. You're fired. You're fired. You're fired. You're fired. Now, who's going to Europe?" And the next guy in line said, "I'm going to Europe," and then that was it. When you're the president — hey, Tom Woods, if you were the president, you would say, "Those are your orders. That's what goes." And the military would obey. When it comes down to it, they will obey if the president actually orders that kind of action.

WOODS: Right, right, right. And that's what I said to Walt, was that I said I understand why an Obama, who, you know, he's got his principles, but he strikes me as weak. He strikes me as easily steamrolled. I get why the generals run roughshod over him. Even when his probably

wasn't even in the Afghanistan war, they got their way. In the case of Trump, it's not that he's a marshmallow necessarily, but it's that he's not as informed and grounded as he needs to be to be able to refute these people.

HORTON: Yeah, exactly.

WOODS: But so I said to him, look, if a Ron Paul or for that matter a Tulsi Gabbard got in, I think they would say, "Look, this is not happening, period. I don't care what any of you people think. I don't care if all of you resigned. This thing is happening." And he's sort of conceded that if you had a personality as extraordinary as one of those, you might be able to do it.

HORTON: Especially a Republican.

WOODS: Unfortunately, that's not what we have.

HORTON: Especially a Republican.

WOODS: Yeah, especially a Republican. A Democrat, Tulsi would have a much bigger time, because man, the Republican hawks would just have a field day.

HORTON: Except, of course, she's a combat veteran, so she can always say, "Oh, yeah? Well, in 2006, I was in the Anbar province. Where were you, pal? That's what I thought." So if she wants to be tough like that and play that card, she can play it and win it for sure. But I think Donald Trump actually is even better than Ron in the position — you know what I mean? Ron is too genuine of a person. Ron can't lie. Ron can't build up a line of schtick because he's just too true of a human being to ever do that. But Donald Trump, he already talks like this anyway, right? He could sit there and say, in the purest Trumpian terms, "The American GIs currently in the US Army and Marine Corps, etc., they are the bravest men who have ever existed. They are second only to Jesus Christ Himself in terms of greatness, and we love them so much. And that's why we're ending all the wars right now." And he could just do that.

And of course, if it was Ron, Ron would say, "Look, the Constitution describes a limited republic. It doesn't matter how much money we make. It doesn't matter if we can afford to take over the whole planet. We've got no right to, and that is not our mission. That is not the government the Constitution describes. We're going to show the world by example, and that's the end of that. We're bringing our troops home." Constitution, constitution, constitution, all day. And you know what? The military would rally to that too. I know you know the military voted for Ron Paul, more active duty and retired military people donated to the Ron Paul campaign. He raised more money from them than all other candidates combined. And that's true in 2012 when Obama was the sitting president. And you counted in Obama with all the Republicans, Ron outraised all of them for military sources. And why? Because he was right-wing for peace, essentially. He was saying, you don't have to be Jane Fonda, you don't have to be a liberal to be antiwar. You can be you and be antiwar. You don't have to believe in this stuff. And they said, "Phew, thank you, Ron."

So there's a whole giant angle to attack the right from the right on the war. What's conservative about world revolution? What's conservative about doing whatever Osama bin Laden wants you to do and overthrowing everybody he wants you to invade? And what's so conservative about running up the national debt into the 20 trillions of dollars and all these

things, this remaking Afghanistan into a Westphalian, West European nation state and all this stuff? There's nothing conservative about that. That's insane. That's like some junior college sociology class run wild.

WOODS: Scott, I mean, you and I know how, in a way, it would almost be fun to get up and make that case. I would find it exhilarating to get up and make that case. I personally have thought — but unfortunately, it can't work. I've thought that if Glenn Jacobs, you know, the wrestler Kane, who is now mayor of Knox County, Tennessee, if he is successful, you know, who knows? Maybe he runs for governor. I don't know what his plans are, and I haven't talked to him about it, so I'm not broadcasting anything to anybody. But I was thinking that he would be a plausible presidential candidate because of his celebrity status. He would also have political experience. He's a total Ron Paulian, total anti-intervention guy. And if you're going to say that Glenn Jacobs, who is the size of a house, you're going to try to portray him as a wimp? Good luck. Good luck. That's why — but the problem is he was born in Spain, so not being a natural-born citizen, he's not eligible to run.

HORTON: Well, did he have American parents, or his parents were Spanish?

WOODS: Oh, that's a good question. I don't know.

HORTON: Because if he had American parents who just were living over there for a short time or something like that, that'd be fine. He's within the loophole.

WOODS: That's a good point. Yeah, I better look into — I now have a tiny — .3% more hope than I had before this conversation.

HORTON: Yeah, and you're right that he's a great character. And I've read his articles before, so I know he's a real Rothbardian. He cares about this stuff. He understands this stuff. He writes about this stuff. I'll tell you right now, man, I'm supporting Jacob Hornberger for president. I want him to run and get the Libertarian Party nomination, and he is thinking about it. I have permission to rumormonger about it. And Jacob Hornberger is absolutely as principal as hell. He's a radical minarchist, hates the state, and is absolutely against all of the very worst things the most. So he hates the empire. He hates the CIA. He hates central banking and the boom and the bust cycle. And you know, what else do you need? He's hates the war on drugs, hates all this centralization of power. And I'm not just saying he's for liberty. He is absolutely for liberty. He's got libertarian ideology as good as any of us. He can teach it as good as any of us. But also he is truly outraged by every horrible thing going on, and he writes every single day. Everybody can sign up for that FFF newsletter, Future of Freedom Foundation newsletter. He writes an article every single day about every outrage in the world, and he's good on everything. You can count on him like you can count on Ron Paul to say the right answer on virtually any libertarian question.

WOODS: All right, this is another episode. I love Jacob, too, and —

HORTON: Okay, I want people to start getting excited about that, because we haven't had a Libertarian presidential candidate to be happy about since Harry Brown.

WOODS: My only friendly advice to Jacob or Bumper, as he's sometimes known, would be this. And he's been on the show. It was a long time ago, but he's been on, and I've written for his

publication, and after 9/11 a lot of libertarians went silent, or they were slightly waving the flag in dangerous directions. He was just hardcore Harry Brown style, and it hurt him in the pocketbook to do it, but he did it anyway, and you've got to really respect that guy.

HORTON: Yeah.

WOODS: My only bit of advice would be that, in your public speaking, you've got to — I know that in your heart, you've got that fire. I know that, because I've read you for years, and you're willing to take unpopular positions and everything. I know you've got that fire, but other people won't, and the only way they're going to know is in your style. And if being over the top and passionate isn't your style, make it your style, because that's what will win people over. You've got the knowledge. No one can stump you. But also, you've got the fire. That's what we've got to make sure and convey. All right, that's a separate matter. You and I will talk about that separately. And I'd love to get him back on if he wants to talk. But is there anything — do we want to tie up the Afghanistan thing before moving on to Yemen?

HORTON: Yeah, I actually didn't finish answering about poor old Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan, is being left out in the cold here. The Taliban won't negotiate with Kabul. The Taliban's attitude is that Kabul is a sock puppet, pretend regime, propped up by the Americans. It does not exist. It has no legitimacy. Which is true — well, not entirely true that it has no legitimacy because there are people who support it as better than what's going to replace it at this point. I guess that much is true. But it's also true that it cannot stand without American support. It is an American sock puppet regime and that kind of thing. And the Americans realize that if they include the Afghan government in the talks, then they'll go nowhere.

Now, I have to say from my own point of view, I think the target they should be working for is autonomy. They should be saying, listen, man, let's not have another civil war after America goes. Let's let Pashtunistan be Pashtunistan, and let's let the Hazara-Tajik-Uzbek alliance in the north have their area and their security forces. And it can be federalism. It doesn't have to be the separation of the state, because they don't want that. Pretty much all factions agree that Afghanistan is Afghanistan. But they could have separate states in the union, so to speak, and respect each other's independence from each other and autonomy from each other, in a way. And yet, they're not doing that. They're not saying that like, hey, wherever the lines are now, let's more or less kind of pencil them in as soft, American-style state borders within a federal nation. They're not doing that. They're saying — I guess just because of the religion of the central state, right, like these guys are all New Dealers in their hearts, and so "somebody has to run everything out of Kabul" is the starting point from the American point of view too.

And so they're telling the Taliban that, or they're acting like that the future is going to be to allow the Taliban to just become a new political party and to participate in the parliament and to just share in the democracy that's been established in Kabul with everybody else. And I think that that is just crazy. I mean, maybe they'll settle for that, but I really don't think so. I mean, it's true that everybody there is tired of fighting at this point and that if the Taliban wanted to try to conquer the rest of the north, go back to where they were when America intervened in 2001 in trying to conquer all the ethnic minorities in the north there, that that is going to be so costly for everyone. And another ten years of fighting and God knows what, I mean, I don't know. I think that there's really room for compromise and that the Americans aren't taking advantage of that properly, really, that they're actually setting everybody up for

another fight over who's going to control the capital city. And once you let all the Taliban come walking back in to Kabul, they're just going to own it. They're just going to take the damn thing over. They might walk in instead of marching in.

But I don't know. As I say in the book, there's going to be hell to pay. I'm not saying that if we leave, things are going to work out great. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that, essentially, American intervention here is just like American government intervention in the marketplace here, picking and choosing winners and losers. All they're doing is setting us all up for a correction to come. The natural amount of power that these different groups have, all other things being equal, has been distorted way out of balance, and so they're due for a crash. And once the Americans, with their paper money and their US Army, stop propping up these groups, then things are going to be really bad, at least for a while. That's my prediction, and then that way, anything better than that is a great relief. But I don't think that things are going to be pretty there.

But this also goes to show though, right, that if the year is 2019, and that's the reality, then that would be the same reality if we were having this conversation in 2029 or in 2039, that we've had every opportunity in the world to set everything up so that it'll stay up when we walk away, and yet, for some reason, American military and foreign policy central planners have not been able to do a good job of that.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding. So the problem, though, is it seems like it would be harder, as you say, for a Democrat. But gosh, at some level, it's got to be hard for Trump to face a situation in which the Taliban more or less have returned. The neocons will be screaming bloody murder.

HORTON: Right. Well, here's why he should have from the very beginning, he should have said, "That idiot George Bush and that weak loser Obama, they got us into this mess, and they ruined it, and they made it impossible, and there's no way that we can put it right at an acceptable cost. And so, not my fault, and that's it." He should have made a clean break from that right away, because after all, he's not Hillary Clinton. He didn't vote for that war, right? He wasn't even a governor at the time, right? He had no government authority or responsibility for any of American policy this whole time. And we know that because of his tweets, that he's been raging against the war in Afghanistan from the start of the Obama surge. He attacked Obama for escalating the war. And in fact, he stood up for Obama when Obama was facing down the generals at the end of the surge and holding them to their timeline. Trump stood up for him, who he hated Obama's guts personally so bad, but he said he hated the Afghan war more, essentially. These generals need a button their lip and do what they're told. It's time to get out, he said, back in 2013, 2012 and '13. And so he should have come in and made a clean break immediately.

But you know what? He's still Donald Trump, so he can still flip flop all over the place. He can say whatever he wants and do whatever he wants, essentially, right? And so what he could do is essentially say that same thing, and then even add one more chapter to it: "And I let James Mattis and H.R. McMaster have their shot at it, And I gave them a year and a half, and they did nothing but fail. It's too late. The Pashtuns will be independent, and they might just conquer the north. And we can stay forever at the cost of umpteen trillion dollars forever until America falls apart like the Soviet Union fell apart, or we can just go ahead and cut our losses now." And again, he can frame it all in the point of view of saving soldiers' lives. And you know what? Honestly, seriously, I mean, we're talking geopolitics and all this crap here,

but let's get literal. We're talking about some guy's son is over there in the Marine Corps fighting in the Helmand Province today, right now, for nothing. Their most dangerous position they can be in is training the Afghan army that likes to shoot them in the back because they hate them so much. That's the guys we're putting in power there. And so right now at that base in Helmand Province, where you have American sons, Marines, training these guys, there's also a sniper up on the roof, a Marine sniper on a tower called the guardian angel, and his job is to point his rifle at the backs of all the guys that his comrade is training, in case they try to betray him.

And what kind of betrayal is that? You know, John Kerry famously said, how can you ask a man to be the last one to die for a mistake, for something that is not right, talking about Vietnam. How in the world can we ask Marines to keep dying in the Helmand Province? Green Berets right now dying fighting in Nangarhar against some local Pashtun insurgents waving an ISIS flag. It's wrong. That's all Trump has to say. And he can say: come on, ISIS in Afghanistan, they're nothing but local Pashtun tribesmen, and the Taliban hate them, and they can take care of them anyway. That's part of the deal the Taliban have already agreed to, that they will never let al-Qaeda or ISIS —

WOODS: Yeah, he needs to be briefed by a Scott Horton to tell him how to craft the message, because no one's going to help him craft that message.

HORTON: What he needs is Doug McGregor and Doug Bandow. I mean, look, I dropped out a junior college and I say the F word all the time, and you can't —

WOODS: Yeah, I'm sure Trump never says that [laughing].

HORTON: You ain't going to be able to put me get me past the background check. But McGregor and Bandow, those guys could save the world. I swear to God, the two of them on the National Security Council is all we need. That's my dream come true right there.

WOODS: Let's wrap up by getting an update on what's going on in Yemen. We hear these numbers all the time about the potential and ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, and if things aren't changed, this many people could perish. But it seems like if we keep saying everybody is starving, at some point, there has to be mass death. I mean, what are we looking at in terms of the scale of this thing?

HORTON: Mass death. Yeah, we're going to find out at the end of this when they do the excess death rate comparison from before and after the war, we're going to find out that very high hundreds of thousands of people starved to death, were deprived to death, and maybe more than that. And this is absolutely the worst thing that America is doing right now is at least equivalent to Iraq War II or Obama's support for al-Qaeda in Syria. This is just — if any other country in the world was doing what America is doing to Yemen right now, they would be the absolute perfect hate figure target on American TV for our next regime change. It's genocide, Tom. It really is. It is a deliberate medieval starvation campaign against the poorest country in the Middle East. That's what it is. And on a set of goals that can never be accomplished, full stop, scientific fact. The war cannot be won on its own terms. And now it still just goes on anyway. We're four years into it, and it's really ugly.

And in terms of what American citizens – other than just the absolute humanitarian catastrophe and innocent civilians being killed in this way. Besides that, in terms of America's selfish interest here, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the guys that bombed the USS Cole in the year 2000, the guys that tried to blow up the plane over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 with the underpants bomber, the guys that did the Charlie Hebdo attack in France and tried to do the package bomb plot on the planes, those guys have been empowered by 100,000%. They were this tiny little group of guys. A few dozen guys, probably less than 100 guys, group of little bandits just like the old al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, a group of outlaws. And Obama started this drone war against them, and a few dominoes since then have fallen down to the point where now we are on their side, fighting against their worst enemies, the Houthis, the Shiite faction from the north of the country that took over the capital city four years ago, which again, is just a direct consequence of American intervention. I'm giving you the short version here. But now, America is on the side of al-Qaeda.

And again, this goes right back to the whole Sunni-Shia split and all that. Remember, none of the 9/11 hijackers were Shiites. None of them were from Iran. None of them were Hezbollah. None of them were from Iraq or Syria. They were from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Now, it wasn't the government of Egypt and Saudi Arabia that attacked us. It was some people from Egypt and Saudi Arabia that attacked us because we were too close to their governments, because we supported their tyrannies. But America still supports their tyranny. America is still close to those governments. America still prioritizes Saudi priorities. And Saudi priorities are, for example: back al-Qaeda in Syria against Assad, back al-Qaeda in Yemen against the Houthis. The Saudis don't really have a land army. They have al-Qaeda suicide bomber shock troops. And that's the side that America is on, especially after Bush scored that massive own goal for Shiite power in Iraq, after Obama scored a massive own goal for Shiite power in Syria. Well, they're really doing the same thing in Yemen now, trying to kill the Houthis in order to limit the influence of Iran, when Iran is hardly present in Yemen in the first place at all. It's mostly mythology that the Houthis are some sort of Hezbollah-like force, backed by Iran, like that fronting for Iran. It's not even really true at all.

And yeah, and so even CNN and Amnesty have us a new report out and whatever, whatever, where American arms are given to Saudi and are given directly to al-Qaeda guys. You have al-Qaeda guys driving around in MRAP armored personnel carriers, not that they stole, but were given to them because America is part of their alliance. And there's a Middle East expert named Michael Horton, no relation to me, he's a serious expert with real credentials and these kinds of things. And he wrote in 2002 – no, pardon me. He told Mark Perry, the great journalist Mark Perry – why did I say 2002? Pardon me. In 2015 when this war started right around this time four years ago, he told Mark Perry, you know, John McCain complains that we're flying as Iran's air force in Iraq right now – which is of course true. We're helping the Iranians again fight the Islamic State, and that's all John McCain's fault, so screw him. But anyway, John McCain complains we're fighting as Iran's air force in Iraq right now. But we're flying as al-Qaeda's air force in Yemen. What is going on here? And Mark Perry had quotes from all these generals who sounded just like me on the issue, who were just absolutely beside themselves for this.

WOODS: All right, well, then let me ask you: where has Trump in on this issue?

HORTON: Worse. He's only just come in and taken the gloves off. Now, on the one hand, he told the Special Operations guys: go ahead and attack al-Qaeda too. Gloves off for attacking al-Qaeda. So we're fighting for and against both sides, in a sense, and that was true in the

Obama years too, that the CIA drone war against AQAP continued, but not really and not that much. As Nasser Arrabyee, the Yemeni reporter, put it: what do you think they're doing, drone strikes on the United Arab Emirates mercenary army down there? No. The al-Qaeda guys are fighting as American-backed troops on the ground there. So maybe when some of them are caught at home away from the others or something they get targeted. But in fact, the war against AQAP has mostly been called off because they are serving in the ranks of the Saudi and UAE forces on the ground there. It's crazy. It's treason. It's treason. It's genocide and treason. And it's all because, essentially, mostly, because the Zionists in America and the neoconservative movement, they want us all to confuse Osama bin Laden with the Ayatollah Khomeini.

WOODS: Well, they wanted us to confuse him with everybody they've targeted –

HORTON: But especially with –

WOODS: They wanted us to confuse him with the Iraqis and Mohamed Atta and all that.

HORTON: Right, especially with Iran. They want Americans to hate and fear the Iranians. But the Iranians, they hated the Taliban. They still hate al-Qaeda. They were the guys that we backed against ISIS after Obama created ISIS to spite them. Oops. It blew up so big in his face, he ended up backing the Shiites against ISIS to destroy them again, because in fact, they were the real danger, a bunch of bin Ladenites who created their own state there. At the end of the day, Hezbollah is not a danger to the United States. They never did anything to us. They are a bother on Israel's northern border, and so, therefore, Tom Woods, you are supposed to hate them more than Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri's guys. That's why I'm always harping on: Bush gave Baghdad to Iran and all that. It's not that I care about that. It's so that people try – you know, I'm trying to get people to understand, in the broad scope of the Middle East, why are we backing al-Qaeda guys. Because Bush gave Baghdad to Iran. And so they're trying to make up for that by backing the al-Qaeda suicide bombers everywhere to try to limit Iranian influence, which of course never works and only backfires too. And so on and on down the spiral they go, getting madder and madder and committing worse and worse war crimes the further they go into it.

And seriously, I want to go back to the humanitarian thing for a minute here. These people are starving to death, okay, for real, and there's plenty of great journalism about it. Anybody can look it up. It took *The New York Times* years before they ever cared, and then when they finally showed up, they were like, *Oh, my God, look at these starving babies. This is absolutely insane.* And you know what? I interviewed this lady named Martha Mundy, who's a professor from I think the London School of Economics, but who's an anthropologist and an expert on Yemen. And she did this report recently a few months ago that I interviewed her about, that talked about how they absolutely are deliberately bombing flocks of sheep. They're bombing the grain silos. They're bombing any manmade or natural irrigation systems for the crops. They're waging a deliberate war against the very basics of the food production systems in that country. That's USA doing it. They say "the Saudi-led coalition." Oh, yeah? Who's the empire and who's the satellite? Give me a break. It's the US Navy enforcing that blockade, not the Saudi Navy. The Saudi Navy is nothing but a finger nail on America's naval military global empire here. It's the American Air Force that spent four years – they only just stopped refueling all the Saudi jets, because now the Saudis have their own Boeing, midair refueling systems that America gave them. So there's that little loophole.

And I'm telling you, and it'll be my new book coming out. I have five — I don't know exactly what you call this. There must be like a full house or a shuffle or this or that or whatever. There must be a name for this, when a radio host has five different journalists who each have one source, saying — in other words, not enough for them to really report it, each, but each saying that there are white boys sitting in the backseats of those F-15s, holding the Saudi princes' hands all the way to the targets there, committing these war crimes. Whether they're current active duty US Air Force or whether they are former Air Force F-15 pilots who are now working as mercenary contractors for the Saudis, that essentially these little princelings can't handle an F-15. They don't do their own maintenance. They don't read their own homework. And so the Americans have to do it all for them, including helping them fly to their targets. And I can't prove that, but I have a lot of sources with one source each, including one of those is not a journalist but a former ambassador in the region there, Dan Simpson.

And so yeah, man, I'm telling you, this is as bad as Iraq War II. And you see why nobody cares, right? It's because of the perfect bipartisan symmetry of the thing.

WOODS: Yeah, okay, in fact, yeah, that's where I want to — because I know we're actually coming up against your time limit, because you have an interview to go do.

HORTON: Oh, that's true.

WOODS: So let's transition right there into just a few words from you on Russiagate, because I think that is partly, as Glenn Greenwald has said, partly the explanation for the fanaticism behind Russiagate, because a lot of the people who fell for it, they wanted to have something to hit Trump with that they had also been guilty of. You can't hit Trump with Yemen when your guy also did it. You can't hit him with X and Y and Z. So if we come up with this wild scheme — and so what it meant was the things you could legitimately criticize him for went more or less ignored in many cases because of the obsessive focus on Russiagate.

HORTON: Absolutely. And in fact, you know, just the fact that the genocide in Yemen is a crime of state. It's the military and the CIA who are carrying out Trump's orders to do this, so the parallel is perfect. You know, Bill Clinton can send the Delta Force to massacre all the Branch Davidians, but what he can't do is lie about a private affair off the clock. Richard Nixon can murder 2 million, Laotians and Cambodians with no legal authority to do so whatsoever, no Gulf of Tonkin Resolution whatsoever authorizing that, and then get impeached or removed or forced to resign for paying hush money to E. Howard Hunt over a burglary at the Watergate. So oh, yeah, we can talk all day about Donald Trump laundering money for Russian gangsters in 1997 or some kind of thing like this, but if he kills a million babies, who cares about that? That's red, white, and blue American flag and olive green and all of this stuff and beyond question. But a side deal with the Russians? There's a real good one.

And so yeah, no, that's absolutely the correct analysis, and that's what I've said all along, was that: here's a guy who's guilty of genocide and who's getting away with it, because all of these, essentially, especially the institutional liberal Democrats have such an interest in, as you put it perfectly, finding something that they can use against him that doesn't implicate their side in any real way.

And then I've got to say about this, I think — you know, I'm not sure what all is being said. There's so much partisanship wrapped up in it all. But you know me. I'm though partisan. In

fact, my rant to you about how much I hate Hillary Clinton is now its own separate YouTube clip. It's probably as viral as I've ever gone, actually, is that clip of me telling you how much I hate her. But I'm here to say that – and you know what? I'm not exactly sure what are the Murray Rothbard, Hans Hoppe, Bob Murphy rules about this when it comes to democracy, Tom, but I think that an elected president who was the target of a putsch by the FBI and the CIA to try to stop him from being elected and then to try to prevent him from winning the election, then try to prevent him from getting his electoral college votes – remember, they did that. They came up with a scheme to try to get the electoral college to throw the election to the House. And it sounds crazy and silly like I'm wrong, but no, that's real. It's in *The New York Times*. They wanted to throw it to Paul Ryan or Colin Powell in the House of Representatives.

And then when that didn't work, then they announced this policy – this is in CNN just a couple of weeks ago and they said it themselves – the policy was to hem him in, to smear Donald Trump not as a criminal, as guilty of the highest treason in cutting a corrupt deal with not just a foreign government, but the Russians in the Kremlin, to overthrow American democracy and usurp Hillary Clinton's rightful throne and steal this illegitimate power for himself, which was the most dastardly lie. And the Democrats – I mean, that is as bad as lying us into Iraq. I mean, not in terms of consequences yet necessarily, but I think we're going to have to wait and see. But this is huge, where the Democrats say that democracy means when they win, and when you win, they will make up not just a lie, but they will accuse you of treason. And they will use the CIA and the FBI to try to cancel the results of the election that they don't like and that they'll break their spines bending over backwards to run with any kooky theory that helps to bolster it, like Richard Perle lying us into it Iraq. You mentioned Mohamed Atta and all this kind of thing. Russiagate is just like that in every way, and it's been as obvious and as transparent as can be from the very beginning that this whole thing was put on.

And Donald Trump called it treasonous and vowed revenge against the guys who did it, and as you and I know, as sticklers for what the Constitution actually says, that's an overuse of the term treason there. And yet, boy, it's sort of, kind of something like that. Unlike Lysander Spooner, *No Treason*, these men do owe allegiance to the US constitutional law, which creates this government and allows their jobs to exist in the first place. And there's no FBI and CIA even described in the Constitution whatsoever. For these men to think that they have the right to launch this kind of putsch against the American people's elected choice – and I'm not a democrat. I'm an anarchist. I don't believe in the state. But if there's a comparison between the legitimacy of power of Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton in his exact same position, versus John Brennan and James Clapper and Michael Morell and James Comey and Andrew McCabe pulling this Gestapo stunt against them, forget about it. And the Democrats deserve to lose every single seat they've got in both houses for this. And I, of course, am of the same opinion that Trump should be immediately impeached and tried for war crimes and put in prison with Barack Obama on entirely separate issues. And Republicans deserve completely to lose almost just as badly for what they've done in Palestine, for one thing, and their danger of war with Iran for another.

But these Democrats, what they have done for the last two years, it is – you know, I hate to use the terminology of such evil statist, but it is the worst sort of sedition against the system that they have, in fact, sworn oaths to. When they lose an election, they're supposed to take it on the chin just like when the other side does and wait and bide their time and try again for better for next time. Hillary Clinton in 2016 denounced, and Obama did too, denounced

Donald Trump for daring to suggest that the election could be rigged, that the election result could be illegitimate, that there would be reason to protest after he lost that something unfair had happened. That's not what you do in a mature democracy, she said.

You know, when Jack Kennedy outright stole Illinois and Texas from Richard Nixon in 1960, Richard Nixon said, *Grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble*, and went home to California. And said, for the good of the country, I'm not going to sit here and have a fight about this, not in front of the Soviets, I'm not. Well, so where's Hillary Clinton's class compared to Richard Milhouse Nixon, when it comes to the fact that she got stomped, because she's horrible? And instead, they tried to — I mean, this is the scandal of the century. This is the hugest thing in the world. And they're absolutely, as long as we're going to have this kind of national security state at all, one of these departments should be in charge of stringing up Clapper and Brennan and Comey and McCabe and Morell and the intelligence and FBI and Justice Department officials who put us through this is. It is absolutely as criminal as criminal could be in terms of acts of the government itself against the right of the people to elect who they choose.

WOODS: Well, Scott, we're going to leave it there. I'm going to pick this topic up in tomorrow's episode, but I know you have to run. So I want to urge people, you should be listening to *The Scott Horton Show*, and you should be reading *Fool's Errand*, an absolutely outstanding book. FoolsErrand.us is a little website where you can find it. Of course, it's on Amazon. And by the way, the audiobook version, if you haven't yet joined Audible, you can get the audiobook version for free and Scott still gets his royalty if you use the link TomWoodsAudio.com. So do that, and then you can find out how all these names are pronounced. That's another benefit of that. And Scott, what's the easiest way for people to start listening to *The Scott Horton Show*?

HORTON: Okay, I'm at ScottHorton.org. If you're in LA, I'm on Sunday mornings at 8:30 on KPFK 90.7 FM in LA. And then also I run the Libertarian Institute with the great Sheldon Richman, and I post all my shows up there as well. And what am I leaving out? Oh, all the articles I want you to read are in the viewpoints section every day at Antiwar.com.

WOODS: Ah, there you go. Yeah, Scott is a busy man doing great work for us, which is why I support — I know you have to go, but I need to tell people this is — why I support Scott. Now, Scott and I are friends, like friends, friends, like I can talk to him about whatever. So you might think it'd be kind of weird and awkward that I just send him 100 bucks every month, but it's not, because I want his show to prosper and I want him to not just be able to support himself, but also, there are expenses that come with doing this stuff, and it's great to have a lot of passion, but you do need the wherewithal to do it. And my feeling is, if there's somebody I get value from that I enjoy listening to and I know is doing really important work and making a lot of sacrifices, then instead of sitting around thinking, well, somebody else will support him, you're the somebody else. You yourself should do it. So you can support Scott, you'll find on his website, you'll see a link to support him, at ScottHorton.org. Now, Scott, you've got to go do that interview. I'll talk to you soon.

HORTON: Okay, thank you so much again for having me, Tom. I really appreciate it a lot.