



WOODS: You continue to be a presence in *The New York Times*. I am very impressed by this. And you write really, really interesting pieces for *The New York Times*. So you know, I don't know what lesson there is to draw here. Perhaps there is no lesson, but congratulations to you that that continues to go on. And I read you all over the place. I read you in *The Spectator*. You continue to be editor of *Modern Age*?

MCCARTHY: That's right. Yeah, I like to keep busy.

WOODS: Okay. Yeah, in fact, somebody in the comments section of a Facebook thread said, "Do you ever sleep?" Sort of reminds me of the old Woods, who is now new and reformed and much lazier than he used to be.

So there are a few topics we might hit, but they're all really going to revolve around Trump. And so the big thing on everybody's mind obviously is impeachment, so I was reading a piece of yours – and I'll link to all of these at TomWoods.com/1545, everything I'm mentioning – about the Democrats not really wanting to remove him from office. And I've wondered about that myself. Do they just want to weaken him? But on the other hand, they're playing with fire here, because in the case of Bill Clinton, he faced the same sort of situation, but the Republicans got pummeled after they did that. So it's a tricky thing they're playing with. So how do you come to that conclusion?

MCCARTHY: Well, that's right. You've got the sort of activist base of the Democratic Party out for blood, and Nancy Pelosi, who's generally a much more Machiavellian and sort of rationalistic figure, she feels as if she has to give the sort of bloodthirsty base what it wants, and that's why we have impeachment. But I think Pelosi is well aware that moderate Democrats are very afraid of the way that impeachment might play out. And in fact, you're seeing a number of reports saying that the moderate Democrats who did quite well in 2018 are actually a little bit hot under the collar about impeachment, about the idea that this is defining the Democratic Party now as much as it's defining Donald Trump and his administration. And that's not necessarily working to the advantage of people who actually have competitive races in 2020. It's fine if you're kind of a left-wing insurgent, but it's not so great if you're a moderate Democrat.

And I thought it was very interesting that the sort of first House-wide vote they held in order to make these formal impeachment investigations, you actually had no defections on the Republican side, but you did have two Democrats who voted with Republicans, basically to say we shouldn't have a formal impeachment proceeding. So what that means is that I think the Democrats are a little more frightened of the way things might get out of control here than the Republicans are.

WOODS: The way that's being interpreted – namely, this fact of there being no Republican leakage and the Republicans holding together on this – this is being portrayed as just evidence that the Republicans care nothing about the rule of law, that if this were a Democrat president in office, well, you would see some Democrats voting that way, because the Democrats are impartial and they favor the Constitution and so on and on. I assume that's not your analysis of the situation.

MCCARTHY: Well, it'd be a really remarkable thing, because you have quite a few Republican members of the House of Representatives who have decided not to run for reelection in 2020. So they are completely unbound, basically. They can do whatever they want. They can vote their conscience. And yet, even though many of them really dislike Donald Trump, people like Representative William Hurd, for example, from Texas, you still had a solid sort of Republican bloc that was not willing to proceed with an impeachment inquiry here. And I think that it's because they understand this is just a fishing expedition, much like the Mueller report was — in fact, this is even worse — and it's just going to go out there, and they already have their verdict; they just need to find the evidence in order to justify — you know, the Democrats need to justify bringing actual charges. And that's what this whole adventure is all about.

WOODS: And let's talk a bit about that, about what it actually consists of, what it is they're accusing him of having done. We keep hearing the phrase "quid pro quo" used, and people know that it has something to do with Ukraine. But what you remind us of in one of the pieces I'm going to link to in the show notes page is that history did not begin with this telephone call that everybody is scrutinizing with Donald Trump. But to the contrary, the folks in Ukraine, let's say, do have an interest in how elections come out in the United States, because, well, if there is a candidate who indicates that he may want to thaw US-Russia relations, well, that's not necessarily music to the ears of Ukraine. So they may well want to have some influence. And it turns out that, as I say, history began before 2019. What exactly is that history?

MCCARTHY: Well, in 2016, the Ukrainians made it clear both publicly and privately that they didn't much like Donald Trump and that they had an interest in seeing Hillary Clinton prevail in that election. In private, what they did is that they seem to have provided some information to Democrats about Paul Manafort, who of course was at one point Donald Trump's campaign manager, and who had very questionable business ties back in Ukraine. And then publicly, the Ukrainian government was able to say a few things that indicated their discomfort, basically, with Donald Trump and their much stronger comfort with Hillary Clinton.

So that's all quite small stuff, but it's enough to raise a few questions as to how money that the United States or that US taxpayers give to Ukraine might be used, how it might turn around politically, whether Ukraine is sort of meddling in our elections in a way that we would find rather embarrassing. So I think it's quite sort of fair and proper for any presidential administration to ask Ukraine, kind of, what is the relationship here? What is your government willing to do? How are you involving yourselves in our elections? And also, how have you involved yourselves with our political figures and your business community, which is where this whole Hunter Biden and Burisma oil company question comes in.

You know, Ukraine is a country that is in a very hard place strategically. They're right next door to Russia. They've sort of been dismembered by Russian forces. They've got serious problems. But it's also a very corrupt country. It's a country that you can't simply write a blank check to or even a check for a defined amount to and think that the money is all going to go to good uses. So it seems to me any administration, including Donald Trump's, is quite right to ask questions before releasing funds to them.

WOODS: And yet, this is being portrayed as the most outrageous thing of all time. And I'm somebody who's fairly critical of almost everything government officials do, and I just cannot bring myself to become outraged at this. Of all possible things to be worried about, it seems to me virtually certain that if the people complaining about this felt like they had Donald Trump in their pocket one way or another, if they felt like they were dealing with a Mike Pence, who's just going to go along with whatever the establishment wants in foreign policy and other things, this wouldn't even be an issue. Maybe I'm being cynical on this, but what do you think about that?

MCCARTHY: No, I think that's exactly right. In fact, what's really at the heart of the matter here is the question of what US foreign policy should be and who should make it. So on the one side, you have Donald Trump and you have the American electorate that put Donald Trump in office. They believe that the elected head of the executive branch should be the one deciding on some of our relationships with foreign governments and that there are questions that our executive can rightly ask. And that in general, Donald Trump was elected in order to have a more restrained foreign policy, a foreign policy that was a little bit more transactional and less inclined to kind of hide the dirty realities of world politics behind the sort of idealistic rhetoric that we heard from presidents like Bush and Obama, which actually, of course, that idealistic rhetoric led us into disastrous engagements, certainly in the Middle East, but even in in terms of other places as well. So Donald Trump was elected in order to reform our foreign policy to change its direction.

And yet the American Foreign Service and State Department officials and many other officials have this built-in sort of Bush-Obama orientation. They basically look at the world, and they see it in terms of the American political establishment as they've seen it for the last sort of 30 years or so, where Russia is a permanent enemy, Russia is a dangerous threat to us, NATO must constantly expand, and Ukraine is a battleground, where basically the forces of liberal democracy are fighting the sort of revived forces of tsardom or communism or whatever label they want to put on Vladimir Putin.

And so at the heart of this impeachment imbroglio is a fundamental question of whether the permanent bureaucracy and the establishment is going to make our foreign policy or whether, on the other hand, Donald Trump and the voters who put him in office are going to be the ones to reorient things away from conflict and towards a more sort of negotiated kind of relationship.

WOODS: Now, let me just say in parentheses — this gets us a little bit off the precise line of argument we're taking — but there have been some people, and I myself am included, who say that there have been some good things from Trump, mainly what he's been saying. Like he went on a tear on Twitter some time ago, talking about how bad — I think this was when, really — I'd like to say when the hysteria was at its height, but how can you quantify this? It seems like it's always at its height — but against him, he was lashing out against the deep state and lashing out against the military industrial complex, which he rewards heavily, by the way, which is such a bizarre thing to me. But he was saying just about the utter foolishness of the present foreign policy. He was just a tear on tweets. And people say, yeah, but he hasn't delivered quite as much as we would like. And I agree with that, but my view is, I'd rather have words and no action than no words and no action, because the words get people thinking.

Now, there have been areas where he's been, at least okay, in that for one thing, he hasn't launched any new wars, which in this day and age is actually an accomplishment. But still, the whole Syria alleged withdrawal was followed up on by, well, now we're going to send more troops to this, that, and the other place. So really, how do you evaluate his foreign policy?

MCCARTHY: Well, as you'd said, not only is it better to have words that are good and no action as opposed to no words or no action, but it's also better to have words that are good and no action or very little action, as opposed to no words or words but bad action. So I think you're exactly right, that the fact that we haven't started a new war on the scale of the Iraq war that we got with George W. Bush in his first term, or the Libyan catastrophe that we got in the first term of Barack Obama, that by itself is an achievement, not having something quite like that with Donald Trump.

But clearly he has been losing his battle with the deep state here. And he will express his views. He'll say he wants to get out of Afghanistan, he wants to get out of Syria, and it won't happen. And partly that is his fault for not following through, but he really is up against the

entire apparatus of government. And not only the apparatus of government, but also the media and every other component of the establishment, which jumps in every time he makes one of these statements or tries to change policy, and basically says well, you are abandoning the Kurds. You are cozying up to dictators. You are going to destroy the whole world, basically, if you don't not only reverse yourself, but actually send in more troops now and restart all of the military operations that the establishment prefers. So this is a case where Donald Trump is a beginning, but you need a lot more than this if you're actually going to change the way our foreign policy is oriented.

WOODS: Let's talk Democrats now. I saw that you also were doing a post-debate analysis for *The New York Times*, who you thought did well and who did poorly. And I watched the debate also. I've been watching all these debates, and all I can say is I complained about the Republican debates, but I'll take that one any day compared to these, partly just for interest and partly because I spent so long attacking the neocons, I forgot how awful the left is. I temporarily forgot. Now, you have a piece also related to this about who you think Elizabeth Warren fundamentally is and will indeed turn out to be before Americans' eyes if she should become the nominee and indeed the president. And you have a rather, maybe not cynical view, but not a particularly flowery view of Warren. There are people who listen to her and, at face value, they think she is a by-the-book progressive. And you're not convinced. Now, why is that?

MCCARTHY: Well, I think she's just a very Machiavellian and power-seeking politician. And I think she is obviously left of center, but if you look at something like foreign policy, for example, she's been quite cagey as to where she actually stands. And it seems to me that she is the kind of politician, much like Bill Clinton, who is willing to tack left or tack towards the center, towards being antiestablishment or pro-establishment, depending on what's going to be advantageous to her in the long run.

And you've seen this throughout her career with these rather mythological or fictional claims about her biography, about being an American Indian, one of them of course, but then also a lot of claims about the circumstances under which she lost a job once. She said it was because she was pregnant. The facts don't really seem to back that up. She really does seem like an almost sociopathic politician.

And I think she's dangerous because she's highly intelligent. She is quite left-wing, but whereas I can look at someone like Bernie Sanders, and yeah, his ideas are awful and he's dangerous, nonetheless, I at least credit his sincerity. I think, well, I know where he stands on things. He's not going to suddenly turn out to be even worse than I expect. With Elizabeth Warren, I have no such expectations. I think, actually, she could wind up being both more intelligent, more effective, and more dangerous in ways we don't even count on right now than any of us expect, especially in something like foreign policy. She could turn out to be much, much closer to Hillary Clinton than we've had any reason to believe before this.

WOODS: Now, that is the first time I'm hearing this, but apparently you're not alone. There are others who think this way about her, as well. Do you have a prediction right now? First of all, where do you think Bloomberg is going to fit into this? Here's my prediction. I broke this out the other day. Obviously, he was elected mayor of New York, so he can get elected to something. But if you were looking for somebody with less charisma than Hillary Clinton, you found him, because I find him to be somebody who generates zero excitement whatsoever. He's passionate about finding things that give people pleasure that he can ban or restrict in some way. Like, that seems to be his motivation. He's absolutely not compelling in any way. So my view is that he could spend all the money in the world, and I just don't think he's going to catch on. I'm happy to be corrected on this, but I welcome your thoughts.

MCCARTHY: I agree. He's a vanity candidate. No, I think the Democratic field right now is very hard to predict. I had been thinking that Elizabeth Warren was going to overcome Joe Biden and would probably be the nominee, but she's actually lost a few points in the polls since the

last debate. And not just because of the debate, but because the other candidates have been wearing down on her, pointing out that the claims she makes about the policies she's going to deliver are completely unrealistic, and that seems to have sunk in with the voters. So right now, she's still quite a tough and effective candidate.

Pete Buttigieg, who is also awful and is also I think a kind of sociopathic, unpredictable candidate in some ways, he's rising right now. He's doing very well in both New Hampshire and Iowa. Joe Biden continues to hang on to about 20 to 30% of the vote. And then Bernie Sanders is starting to stage a comeback, as well. So it's really a four-person race right now. I hesitate to say who's going to come up on top, although I'm starting to think that maybe the conventional wisdom was right a few months ago, and that Joe Biden is actually much more durable than I'd expected. He's lost some momentum, but it's surprising the degree to which he's been able to sort of cling to the support he has.

WOODS: Do you want to predict who the nominee will be? I mean, I'm asking you something totally unreasonable, but why not? It's fun, right? It's fun.

MCCARTHY: Well, like I said, I mean, right now, I would say it's almost a 25% possibility of each of those four.

WOODS: There's no way to know. So at this point, anything could tip the scales? Or it would be that it's just extremely close between those four.

MCCARTHY: I think it's very dynamic and that some of the things I was predicting earlier, at one stage, I thought that Elizabeth Warren was a much more disciplined candidate than any of her opponents and that that was a reason why she was going to get the nomination. But it's turned out that Buttigieg has been quite effective, as well, so I no longer have this sneaking suspicion that Elizabeth Warren is going to be the nominee. And Biden, I keep expecting him to just fall over, and that'll be the end of his campaign, but instead, he is resilient. So yeah, I think you could have a hung convention at this point. You could actually have the Democrats not having a clear winner as a result of their primaries and caucuses, and then they have to hash it out. So that's a long-shot prediction maybe, but it's very hard to see how any one of these four candidates or any of the others is going to break away from the pack and just consolidate support.

WOODS: Do you have a theory as to why Deval Patrick jumps in so late?

MCCARTHY: Well, again, it's vanity, and the fact that none of the other candidates has been able to consolidate momentum means that all of these Deval Patricks and Michael Bloombergs and who knows who else might do it. Hillary Clinton, perhaps. They all see this opening that they didn't see a few months ago. They think the field is weak and that there's some space for a new entry, which, the field is already overcrowded, so I think they're probably wrong about that.

WOODS: Which ones do you think are the toughest for Trump to handle? Of the plausible candidates, who'd be the toughest to handle and who would be easier?

MCCARTHY: Well, I think the toughest are, on the one hand, Joe Biden, because he does seem to resonate with blue-collar, Rust Belt workers, the kind of people that voted for Donald Trump in 2016. He could easily win a place like Pennsylvania. He could win in some of the states like Michigan and Wisconsin that Trump won. Biden might even have a chance in Ohio. So I think Biden would still be very dangerous.

I mean, Bernie Sanders potentially could be dangerous if he's able to say that — if the economy goes south, for example, in 2020, which is always a possibility, then Bernie Sanders could be the kind of "throw the bums out" candidate. He could be the new insurgent and the guy kind of stirring up a class war and getting a lot of momentum from that.

As far as the less dangerous candidates go. I think Pete Buttigieg just doesn't have the pull with the core of the Democratic base, with African American voters in particular. I mean,

Buttigieg has had absolutely ridiculous sort of scandals and gaffes with regard to black voters, such as using pictures of Africans as sort of images of his supposed African American supporters. I mean, it's clownish [laughing]. So I think Buttigieg is not a big danger to Donald Trump. Buttigieg is like the perfect candidate of sort of the namby-pamby establishment that wants to have someone who's very smart, which Buttigieg is, someone who's not very ideologically defined, which again is Buttigieg, that appeals to a lot of suburban voters. But I don't think he appeals to blue-collar voters or African American voters or the people that Buttigieg would need to win in order to defeat Trump.

And then Elizabeth Warren, I'm starting to think is also quite vulnerable. The left remains kind of suspicious about her, at least the real sort of Sanders left is suspicious of her. And it seems to me that there's plenty of Wall Street people who also don't like her, so she may actually not be able to consolidate the Democratic coalition either.

WOODS: Let's go back to the impeachment, because I'm not following the proceedings at all. I feel like watching all the blankety-blank Democratic debates is enough of a sacrifice that I make for folks. I'm not sitting through this. But I do see a lot of headlines, and I see some commentary on Twitter from people critical of the President. And the way they make it sound, it's just one testimony after another and one bombshell after another, and the cumulative effect of this ought to be, in their view, to make people highly, highly suspicious of Donald Trump, if not conclude that he certainly is guilty of something significant. Are you saying they're just blowing smoke on all of this?

MCCARTHY: Well, it's a lot like the Mueller report was and a lot like all of these other claims of wrongdoing on the part of Donald Trump, whether it's the Emoluments Clause or the idea that something is lurking in Donald Trump's tax records. You've seen these relentless drumbeats emanating from the press and from Democrats over the last three years, and none of it has panned out. And so currently every little detail that one of these witnesses brings forth is now going to be something that's going to convict the President.

But none of it actually demonstrates the President was doing what he did in order to mess around in the 2020 election. I think that's the thing they really have to prove. If Donald Trump have gone to a foreign leader and said, *Look, I want you to fabricate a charge. I want you to say that one of my rivals or one of my rivals' family members committed murder and like did something really like that, and I want you to come out and talk about this*, that would I think be a clear, impeachable offense.

If Donald Trump is going out there and saying, *Wait a minute, what were the circumstances under which this prosecutor got fired, that Joe Biden went out and boasted about getting fired? What was that all about? If he says, What is the nature of American political families getting sweetheart deals with energy companies in your country, even though there are these political ties between us where your country is also getting taxpayer money from Americans? What is that all about?* it seems to me these are legitimate questions, and saying that Donald Trump might have somehow stood to gain in 2020 as a result of them is kind of beside the point, right? I mean, these things were covered by the media. In some cases, they were things that even the Obama administration had asked questions about.

I think these are fully legitimate, and having the impeachment proceedings bring out witness after witness to say, *Oh, yeah, Donald Trump actually did have some questions, or we did understand that Donald Trump wanted to hold up the military aid until we heard from Zelensky as to what he was going to do*, I mean, all of that is beside the point. I mean, what they have to prove is that there was actually some sort of criminal intent going on here

WOODS: All right, one last thing. I saw on Drudge yet another headline that says 50% want removal. So I assume 50% of people polled want the president removed from office. What does that portend for him? I don't know what the similar results were for Bill Clinton at this time in his presidency, but isn't that a pretty bad number? Does he recover from that?

MCCARTHY: It's not that bad of a number. Basically, half the country likes Donald Trump and half the country doesn't. So what that impeachment number is telling us is what we already know, which is that there is this close divide on the question of is Donald Trump doing a good job and does he deserve to be reelected. And now impeachment is simply a proxy for those other questions.

You'll notice that Donald Trump's favorability rating has remained between about 40 and 45% throughout the last two weeks, and it went a little bit up and a little bit down, but really has been very little affected by the impeachment proceedings. It seems to me that all of this is just signaling that you're going to have a really big fight in 2020 when it gets to the voters. Of course, you need to have a two-thirds majority in the Senate to remove a president from office as a result of impeachment, and if you have less than a two-thirds bloc of voters in polls saying that they want the president removed, it seems to me that senators take note of that. So if you have 50% saying in some polls that they want the president removed, well, the question is: where are those voters? Are they in California? Are they in the solidly blue states? Are they in the states where the senators actually have to worry about getting reelected?

So no, I don't think 50% is a particularly shocking number. I think it's probably a little inflated in that particular poll, but I suspect it's somewhere a little bit north of 40%. And what it just tells you is that, yeah, 40% of the country are Democrats and a half of a percent there may be never-Trump Republicans like Bill Kristol, and they really hate Donald Trump and they want to see him gotten rid of one way or the other. They're happy to see that happen through impeachment. They'll try to do it at the ballot box if that fails. Whereas the other half of the country is open-minded or actually supporting Donald Trump, and at least 40% of the country is behind him.

WOODS: Let's say a quick word about ModernAgeJournal.com, which is the website for *Modern Age*, the venerable periodical that you edit. Now, can you tell us a little something about maybe some interesting pieces in the most recent issue that might whet people's appetite to go check that out? Because I'll also link to ModernAgeJournal.com at TomWoods.com/1545.

MCCARTHY: We have one of the greatest Austrian economist cultural thinkers who's ever lived in the pages of the current issue of *Modern Age*, and that would be Paul Cantor. Paul Cantor is a professor at the University of Virginia, and he actually knew and studied with Ludwig von Mises himself. And Cantor applies his understanding of culture and human nature to the study of the TV show *Deadwood* in this issue of *Modern Age*. *Deadwood* is an HBO Western that's been a critical rave, and recently the series was concluded with a TV movie that came out through HBO, so Paul Cantor takes a close look at that, and I think listeners to this podcast would very much enjoy that.

We also have an essay, really the lead essay of the issue is by Michael Anton, writing about imperialism and self-government and why imperialism has always been detrimental to self-government. And this is something that classical sources such as Xenophon recognized, it's something that early modern or Renaissance sources like Machiavelli recognized. So it's really showing some of the anti-imperial critique that's very familiar to listeners of this podcast in a new light, in the light of these classic texts. And it's even coming from an author who has a certain degree of sort of Straussian DNA within his background, but nonetheless even from that perspective, says that empire is a terrible and destructive thing to any kind of republican virtue.

WOODS: Well, that is ModernAgeJournal.com where you can find those things, so folks should check that out. This journal has been around I think since 1957, if I'm remembering this right. Was that it?

MCCARTHY: That's correct, yeah. So 62 years.

WOODS: Yeah, so quite a long time. And I believe, if memory serves, it was founded by Russell Kirk and initially edited by him? Is that right?

MCCARTHY: That's correct. Yeah, Russell Kirk founded it with help from Henry Regnery.

WOODS: All right, yeah, so this goes back a ways, and we've got some illustrious people associated with it over the years. So check it out at ModernAgeJournal.com. And as I said, articles by Dan related to what we've been talking about will be linked at TomWoods.com/1545. Well, Dan, I appreciate you coming on at the last minute. I had somebody fall ill, and I've got Thanksgiving coming up, and I don't know what I'm going to do to replace them. And well, Dan McCarthy, I wanted to have you on anyway, and you came through for me at the last minute. I appreciate it.

MCCARTHY: Oh, you're most welcome, Tom.