



Episode 768: Syria, Russia, and the American Candidates: Scott Horton Gives Us the Scoop

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: It's been ridiculously long since I've had you on, so I'm glad we're rectifying that injustice. And you know, as I was making my notes, I was writing down "Episode 768," I thought, the only person I have an inferiority complex with when I write down "Episode 768" is Scott Horton. You're the only person who can remotely compete with that that I know of in the libertarian world, anyway. I don't know, maybe Molyneux. I don't know if he numbers his episodes, though. Anyway, before we talk about the meat of today, and we've got a lot of stuff people are very interested in, tell me about this Libertarian Institute I just told the folks about.

HORTON: I've got a brand new institute, Tom. It's called the Libertarian Institute. Isn't that a great name for it?

WOODS: I don't know why no one thought of that, but good for you in grabbing it.

HORTON: Yeah. Actually, somebody did, but he never really did anything with it, so I'm running away with the name, and I'm going to try to convince the guy to sell me his old URLs. But yeah, so it's a thing, man. Me and Will Grigg – the great Will Grigg – the heroic Sheldon Richman too, and then we've got Jared Labell. I'll tell you about Jared Labell in a second.

But Will Grigg of course is the former John Bircher who was kicked out of there for basically not being a Mexican-hating racist back ten years ago and has become much more plumb-line libertarian since then and has really come to specialize in stories of local police abuse and false convictions. And your audience I know is very familiar with Will and he writes regularly for LewRockwell.com, and he has his own blog; it's called Pro Libertate. So I think that's really great. I mean, I've been reading Will since I was a kid. But I really like it, because what seems like supposedly a left-wing or liberal issue, local police abuse – right-wingers are only supposed to hate the ATF and worship all other cops and soldiers or something like that, but not Will Grigg. And so he comes at this topic from what I think is a real valuable point of view. And I could go on and on and on about him.

And then Sheldon Richman of course is to me the most libertarian man in the world. He's been a libertarian for 40-something years, and he's a master at history and economics and ideology and has written 10,000 polemics before, of course is widely respected from all parts of the libertarian movement, etc. And so I was getting

this going. I said, hey boys, how about we do this thing together, and they said, okay, that sounds like a good idea, let's do it.

But then I told Jared Labell about it, and Jared Labell I guess stewed over it for about a week or something, and then he called me back. He couldn't contain his excitement anymore. He said you three are my favorite libertarians in the whole world; as long as you're doing this, I want to be part of it, and I want to help make it a success, so what can I do. So he was already the executive director of Taxpayers United for America, Jim Tobin's group up there in Chicago, and he basically just said, listen, man, you need somebody to run your institute; I'm your guy. And ever since then he's just been turning keys and making things happen.

WOODS: That's how I know him, because I had Jim Tobin on the show, who's –

HORTON: Oh.

WOODS: And you know, a lot of times these tax activists are just full of it. They don't really want to do much of anything.

HORTON: Right.

WOODS: But that guy's the real thing.

HORTON: Yeah, absolutely.

WOODS: He's the actual real thing. So that is really great. So now I do know everybody who's involved in this. That's absolutely great. But let me just ask – I mean, I know this sounds almost like we rehearsed it, but we didn't actually. Okay, we have a lot of libertarian organizations, so why do we need one more?

HORTON: Well, the first thing is I needed one so I can do my own thing, because I've kind of been – I mean, I've been doing my radio show and all that, but I'm sort of like an associate over there at AntiWar.com, and I kind of need my own project. And frankly I've been having a lot of daydreams for a lot of years about all different kinds of activism that I could do and just never really had the vehicle to do it, and finally it occurred to me over the years of thinking about maybe other wagons to hitch to and these kinds of things, I finally figured out I can just do this myself, make my own institute. And obviously I need help from somebody to help me run the business end of it and that kind of thing.

And then I can do things my own way, and I can basically – like what you've heard me complain about Rand Paul or about really even for that matter the liberals and the conservatives generally speaking, that they're somewhat good on some things, but we have to lead them to get their priorities straight so that we can really change this country and change the society, so it can be a more libertarian society. So that's what I really want to do, is first of all I want to get along with and work with all libertarian groups that I possibly can on whatever issues I can – not necessarily political activity, because I know a lot of libertarians are not into that, but they can be societal activists

on the same questions, whether or not they literally want to petition the Congress or whatever like that.

But then also I want to really work with conservative groups and liberal groups as much as we can, so that we can claim that we have groups of groups of groups, and we literally have millions of people, and we are all singing with one voice, no to escalation in Syria, or no to keeping pot a Schedule I outlawed, illicit substance, or whatever the major issue is, the major issues – the police state, the war state, bailouts for billionaires. I like to imagine, Tom, that we could try to bridge the gap between the next incarnations of the Tea Party on one side and Occupy on the other, that, forget culture war stuff for a minute. Let's just work together to pass this one bill to make it where any legislator proposes a bailout ever again then they get blasted off into the sun or whatever. And then we can go back to hating each other, but let's bring these groups together on an issue basis to really get our priorities straight. I don't really imagine I can make America libertarian. We're always going to be the smallest faction. But I do believe, and I think – you know, there are some examples of this – that we can really help to lead the left and the right to get their priorities in the correct order and then to work together with us.

And already, the first thing we're doing even before the site went live, already had to deal with David Swanson to sign on to support his new effort to do exactly this, to get groups of groups of groups to join up, to sign up, to tell Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, but I guess more likely Hillary, no to escalation in Syria next year. And we need to get ahead of the game on this. And so this is the kind of thing that I want to do. This is the kind of thing that AntiWar.com really can't do, is the kind of activism that I want to do with this. So we'll see what happens.

WOODS: Our mutual friend Michael Bolding over at the Tenth Amendment Center –

HORTON: Oh yeah.

WOODS: – does something very similar. At first his strategy with the Nullify Now events – and remember, you and I both spoke at the one in LA years ago – was to try to be a maximalist group where you try to bring everybody onboard for nullification as a general principle. And he found that you could get some people who want that, but generally it's an issue basis. Some people want to nullify some things; some people want to nullify other things. So he transformed his strategy more into an issue thing, where on this issue I can bring together these groups; on that issue I can bring together those groups. So it sounds to me a little bit like what you're talking about, what you want to do. Well, tell people what the website is.

HORTON: The website is LibertarianInstitute.org. And by the way, let me just say that our web lady is so great, the Taxpayers United web lady. Her name is Jamie – I don't know if I should say her last name or not. She's not really a public person. But she has done such a great job on this website. I've never had a webmaster who does exactly what they say they're going to do when they say they're going to do it, and it works the first time. It's just, my mind is blown. She's done such a great job. And we've also invited about 30-something great libertarians from all across the movement to come and blog on our group blog there. A few have taken me up on the offer already and

started blogging some stuff there, but I really want the blog to be a running thing all day long, a running commentary from all of us.

So anyway, I'm pretty excited about it. I hope people check it out. I hope they'll like it. And hey, why not help support our brand new effort? That's one thing I should have mentioned. None of us are billionaires or related to billionaires, or even any millionaires, I don't think, so this is going to be a many-small-donation-from-the-bottom-up kind of thing, like Ron Paul campaign here. Nobody died and left us an estate in their will or anything like that, so we are starting from the bottom up here.

WOODS: Although estates in people's wills are gladly accepted, I'm sure.

HORTON: That's right, yeah. I didn't mean to discourage anyone (laughing). I don't want you to die either, but I'm just saying if you have to die, then yes, please leave all your money to the institute.

WOODS: All right, okay, so I'm going to link to it at TomWoods.com/768, of course, in your bio. So let's turn to Syria. That'll be our main focus of conversation today. Syria's of course in the news for a lot of reasons, but partly it's in the news because Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are talking about Syria because we're getting to the end of the presidential election cycle, and I thought that's a good opportunity to review what's going on and then get a sense of where these two are going wrong with it. I don't really want to dwell on that part. I'm sure you don't either. That's not really the point. I'd like you to try your best – now, I need you to – sometimes I need to tell Bob Murphy this, because Bob is on another level intellectually. Like, he's way up here – see, I'm gesturing with my hand. He's way up here, and the rest of us are just on planet Earth. And I think with your knowledge of foreign policy you're way up there, and the rest of us are on planet Earth.

So treat me like I'm seven and explain to me from scratch who the contending parties are in Syria, because it seems so complicated even to understand it, when it looks like the US government is backing this one but simultaneously backing that one. You can't even make sense of it. Can you try to make sense of it for a seven-year-old?

HORTON: Sure. I mean, okay, so – and we've done this before. I think everybody can basically keep up. If you need to, everybody, open up a map of the Middle East so that you can look at it. But basically what you need to know is that when George Bush invaded Iraq in '03, he started a regional sectarian war, and he then stupidly stayed for five or eight years and fought that sectarian war on the side of the Iranian-backed Shiite Iraqi Arabs. And they're predominant in all the land between Baghdad and Kuwait. They are 60% of the population of the country. They used to be held down by a 20% Sunni ruling minority under Saddam Hussein. When George Bush invaded, he changed that. Not only did he change that, he helped the Shiites kick all the Sunnis out of Baghdad and turned the capital of Iraq into an 85-90% Shiite city. This is a huge move on the chessboard in favor of the Iranians and the Shiites.

So the reaction to that was the Sunni Iraqis were pushed into insurgency, and the worst of it led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was actually not an al-Qaeda guy until a year into the war when he swore loyalty to bin Laden. And it was his guys and the Sunni-based insurgency that he fought with that killed approximately 4,000 out of the 4,500 Americans who died in that war. The other 500 were killed by Shiite militias. After we helped them win, they wanted us to make sure that we knew that we weren't welcome to stay. And so that was that.

But anyway, now remember, 9/11 and the whole al-Qaeda war against us was because we were too close of allies with their governments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The 9/11 hijackers didn't come from Iran, Iraq, and Syria; they came from Saudi and Egypt where we own their country; our empire owns their countries. That was why they attacked us. But that didn't change. Our government's still allies with the Saudis and still allies with the Sunni Gulf Cooperation Council on the Arabian Peninsula and all of that.

So by 2006 it finally got through the head of the people in the Bush administration that they had just really screwed up and fought a war for the Iranians, their rivals, and benefitted them. So then came what Seymour Hersh called the "redirection." You can read that in The New Yorker. The "redirection": oops, let's turn back to the Sunnis. And that's what we've been doing ever since then. And there are Wikileaks that go back to 2006 saying that, man, we need to work on creating sectarian strife in Syria as best we can to destabilize the country and move towards regime change there. It goes back all the way there. And in Hersh's article he talks about America was backing – under the Bush administration – was backing the Muslim Brotherhood and other Sunni groups in Syria, even way back then.

Okay, now fast-forward a little bit to Obama years, and the Arab Spring breaks out in 2011, and that was really the result of the destabilization from the Iraq War, the discrediting of America's sock puppet dictators over there even worse than before, and for that matter, the destruction of their currencies, because they have to match America's inflationary policy in order to keep their trade balances more or less right, and this was the era of the Greenspan-Bernanke bubble, and America was printing money, and so they had to print money too. Well, if you're living on \$1 a day and all of a sudden now it's worth 50 cents, you can see how that creates a crisis, and that was really the start of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya – we'll have to skip Libya for a minute, but America obviously intervened there, exploited that war, basically hijacked the Arab Spring in Libya and in Syria as well.

And the consensus among our allies – that's Israel, Saudi, Qatar, and Turkey – is that they hate Bashar al-Assad, because he runs – well, first of all because he's an ally of Iran. Full stop, that's it. And an ally, therefore, also of Hezbollah and the Shiite militia sub-government in southern Lebanon. Okay, this is the Shiite crescent. And so basically because George Bush gave Iran two-thirds of Iraq, oops, well, a consolation prize then will be to take Syria away from them. And Obama said this out loud, no problem, in The Atlantic magazine in 2012 to Jeffrey Goldberg, that that's right; if we do a regime change in Syria that'll help bring Iran down a peg. And so that's the policy that they embarked on.

It quickly became clear, though, that Assad wasn't really going anywhere, that some Sunnis were against him, but not all by any means, and his government was supported by everyone else: the Alawites, the Shiites, the Druze, the Maronite, Chaldean, and Assyrian Christians, and every other faction in the country, because they're scared of getting their heads cut off by a bunch of crazy, suicide-bombing al-Qaeda guys, which is who America and Saudi and Qatar have been backing in the country since 2011. And you know, we can demonstrate this with reporting from The Observer, Eric Margolis; our friend Phil Giraldi reported on Obama's CIA authorization finding in December of 2011.

And so what's happened ever since then is a policy basically, as the Israelis put it, of keeping the war going as a never-ending thing, not really pushing for regime change anymore, but keep them fighting. They put this on the front page of The New York Times: as long as both sides continue to hemorrhage to death, that is in the interest of the Israelis. And so that is why I think – along with the Saudis and the Turks, but especially because of the Israel lobby's point of view, the Israeli government's point of view on the subject – is why America is so hell-bent on this policy.

And it amounts to high treason. And you know, I'm a Lysander Spooner guy, too, Tom, but these people actually have sworn loyalty, an oath to the United States. They do owe allegiance to this constitution, and they've betrayed it. I mean, the al-Qaeda guys are the butchers of New York City, and the al-Nusra Front in Syria right now is sworn loyal – their leader, Julani, is sworn loyal to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden's number two, the guy who convinced Osama to target the United States first and foremost in the first place. But we're on his side.

And what they say is, oh no, we only back the moderate rebels, but in fact, we all know and we've known for years the moderate rebels are basically the name of the weapons and money procurement operation of al-Qaeda over there. They go over there and shake hands with the CIA and say, yeah, we like Americans, we like Christians, whatever you want to hear. Give us some guns and give us some money. And then they turn right around, and they give it to the al-Nusra Front.

And so now in 2013 al-Nusra and ISIS split. ISIS was basically the Iraqi-dominated faction of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and Nusra was the Syrian-dominated faction of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and they had a falling out. And ISIS went ahead and quit al-Qaeda. They still claim Osama's legacy, but not Zawahiri. And they created their caliphate. And the caliphate went in 2014, spread all the way to rule all of Iraqi Sunnistan. So Ramadi, Fallujah, Mosul, all of western – Anbar province – and northwestern Sunni Iraq all fell into the hands of the Islamic State.

So that was good for punishing the Iranians for a little while there, but now that got out of hand and threatened American and allied interests in Iraqi Kurdistan and places like that, so then Obama came up with the Yazidi stuck on the mountain excuse in August 2014 and started the air war against ISIS. So we're bombing ISIS in Iraq. We're on the same side as the Iranians, the Shiite militias, and the Kurds in Iraq fighting against the al-Qaeda in Iraq guys, the Islamic State in Iraq. But meanwhile, in Syria we're fighting against the Shiites, and including even the Badr Brigade. Our militia guys who worked for the Americans for the last 15 years in Iraq fight against us, fight

against CIA-backed al-Qaeda terrorists in Syria on the side fighting with Hezbollah, Russia, and Assad against these terrorists.

And then another little wrinkle in here of course is that we back the Syrian Kurds, who are the YPG. And we back them against the Islamic State in Syria, and yet they are allied, they're basically the cousins of the PKK Kurdish group over the border in Turkey, who are the avowed enemies of Erdogan, our NATO ally and the president of Turkey, who has now invaded Syria in order to fight the Syrian Kurds that we're backing. And he's using the al-Nusra/al-Qaeda terrorist types against them. So you literally have, Tom, a situation where you have CIA-backed al-Qaeda terrorists are fighting DOD-backed Kurdish basically communist militia guys. And then on a third front, then you have the Badr Brigade. Our allies, our Shiite Iraqi militia allies from Iraq are in Syria fighting against both of those factions at the same time.

And now Hillary especially – we can talk about Trump because he's really bad on this too. But Hillary is the worst, because she wants not only war in the east against the Islamic State; she wants war against Assad. And she keeps trying to dress it up and say, well, we want a safe zone – and Trump says the same thing: a "safe zone." That means invasion of a sovereign nation and carving out a piece of it to say, oh, well, refugees can come here to be safe. What that really means is war with the nation state of Syria, and at this point, with Russia.

And this is the last thing I'll say here, is that a year ago in late 2015, when the CIA-backed Army of Conquest, which is the al-Nusra Front allied with Ahrar al-Sham, which is just another al-Qaeda group, and the other so-called mythical moderates, they were making real gains in the Idlib province, and they were threatening to cut off the highway – I believe it's the one that connects Aleppo and Damascus. And that was when Vladimir Putin said that's enough, called Obama's bluff, basically, and started bombing the CIA-backed al-Qaeda terrorists, the al-Nusra Front – and along with the Islamic State, but he was especially focusing on them, because they were a much closer and immediate threat to the Assad government. So that was when the Russians finally came in to intervene outright, was to say, no, you're not having your regime change here.

And then I'll just say one more thing, actually, which is that – well, let me put it this way. Everybody agrees, even people who are still pro-Iraq War II, say that it was a big mistake to de-Baathify the government and abolish the army. That's basically what they're trying to do right now in Syria in the middle of a war with a bunch of al-Qaeda guys. So if abolishing the Iraqi army and de-Baathifying the government led to the rise of al-Qaeda in Iraq, can you imagine how stupid it would have been to do that same stupid war if Saddam had already been in the middle of trying to put down an al-Qaeda insurrection? How crazy is that?

So if the Baath government falls – and it is a Baath government, and there are Sunnis who back it, but it's the Shiite alliance too and the Christians and all them. If that government falls and if the Syrian army falls, then we're only at the beginning of section two of this war. We're only just turning the page. Now the real massacres start. Now the real genocide begins, as it's a war of all against all based on ethnic groups and tribal militias, with the state army of Syria abolished at that point, or you know, crumbled at that point. And that's when – and this goes right to the answer.

Why would a bunch of all the different kinds of Christians and Druze and Alawites and Shia and everyone else support the Assad government, which is after all a fascist dictatorship police state? And the answer is because it's a secular government, and because it's the last thing standing between them and getting their head cut off by a bunch of American-backed al-Qaeda terrorists. That's why.

WOODS: Wow.

HORTON: So there you go. It's a Sunni-Shia civil war, and we're fighting on both sides of it because our government is stupid and evil.

WOODS: All right, let me ask you this: in connection with all this, we hear a lot of commentators of sound mind say that the approach, particularly the Hillary approach, is liable to embroil us in an outright war with Russia. To what extent is that scaremongering, and to what extent is that just a common sense statement of the obvious?

HORTON: Yeah, I'm going with the latter there, dude, by you know, 70/30 or 80/20. And I hate sounding like an alarmist too, because you know, alarmists are never right, and then they look like fools later. But here's the thing of this, is that the Russians have already said, no, you're not overthrowing Assad. They've already put in anti-aircraft missiles, and they've already said, hey, if there's any unidentified planes flying over Syria on attack missions, we'll shoot them down. And that's a reference to our stealth attack aircraft. To have a no-fly zone means, as we know Hillary knows from her secret Goldman Sachs speech that's been leaked, she knows that a no-fly zone over Syria means war. It means we have to, in her words, kill a lot of Syrians in order to take out all their anti-aircraft, etc. And we're talking about airspace where we are right now sharing that airspace with Russian jets.

And I just think about, is anybody suffering the same cognitive dissonance as I am here? What are the Russians doing? They're bombing al-Qaeda, and they're bombing the Islamic State. And that's why we hate them and are risking to have war with them. "Who will save al-Qaeda from the Russians?" the American government and every liberal media idiot cry on Twitter all day long, every think-tanker in America cries. We should all hate the Russians. Why again? Because they're attacking al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. All right. Well, so if we do that and if we have American planes in a situation where they have to either kill Russians on the ground manning anti-aircraft systems or we have dogfights in the air where American and/or Russian planes are getting shot down, we are already just an inch away.

And the thing is this, Tom, is you could imagine that maybe we would, over a mistake or a stupid island or something, maybe we could have an air dogfight with some Chinese jets, but then maybe things would cool down and it wouldn't necessarily escalate all the way to war. I don't know. But with Russia I think matters are much worse, because even though the Americans are basically just playing games and making money — well, destroying money, but making some for themselves — the Russians I think are in a position where they are taking America's threats incredibly serious now. You know, on the American side it's all just a bunch of public relations, all a bunch of scaremongering and pointing the finger at Vladimir Putin and pretending

he's a villain and a demon and all of these things. But exactly to what end? Meh, politics, arms sales, you know, some things.

But the Russians' point of view is more like this: we have them surrounded. We have expanded our military alliance right up to their border. That entire Eastern European buffer zone that they created after World War II is completely gone now, and this is a country that's been invaded from the west, I don't know, 50 times or 100 or something, by everybody under the sun. And America now is literally bringing — has brought German troops on their old invasion route through Ukraine and the right up into the Baltic states to run parades, NATO parades within the line of sight of the Russian border. Big tank parades and all these military exercises going on. And they're expanding the anti-missile systems, the anti-missile missiles in Romania and in Poland.

And that's meant to give the Americans the ability to do a first strike nuclear attack, and that's different than just first use, like they've been arguing about would you use nukes first in a war. First strike means the ability to completely destroy Russian retaliatory response, that on the first hit we would take out so much of what they've got that whatever they have left we would be able to shoot it down when they try to launch it, that ultimately we could launch a unilateral, Pearl Harbor, sneak attack, nuclear war against Russia and win it outright, and with their ability to nuke us back eliminated or virtually entirely eliminated.

Now, that's crazy, because guess what: they have submarines, which is the ultimate retaliatory secondary response, so they can still destroy your hometown and mine. They can do whatever they want. Only some genius, egghead idiot at the University of Chicago could come up with an idea for how to win a nuclear war. The whole thing is crazy. But they are pursuing this policy. And they've been, just in this century, they've overthrown five or six different Russian allied states, including Ukraine twice in ten years, in 2004 and in 2014. And the last time they did it it led to a war that killed 10,000 people in eastern Ukraine.

So again, all of this is very far away to Americans, and that ought to be the number one argument why it's really not your interest, right? As Pat Buchanan says, Ukraine is on the far side of what we used to call Eastern Europe. It's not even Eastern Europe. It's east of Eastern Europe. This is why on a Risk board it's called the Ukraine. It's never been a state before; it's a region. It's always been dominated by a Polish king or a Russian czar or the Soviet communists or somebody else. And now all of a sudden our government is really risking war with Russia in order to take Ukraine away from them.

And that's even how they put it. The editor of Foreign Affairs explained this on the Colbert show, that this is like we're trying to steal their girlfriend away, or he said Ukraine is Robin to Russia's Batman, but we want him to come with us. We're trying to break them off. This would be the same thing as if America had lost the Cold War, and the Russians were expanding the Warsaw Pact to include Canada and Mexico and the Caribbean states and Latin American states. We'd have gone to war a long time ago.

We have our Monroe Doctrine; they have theirs, but we are violating theirs right up to the line. Right up — again, paraphrasing Pat Buchanan, we used to draw the line

during the Cold War, Tom, at the Elbe River, halfway across Germany. The line is now at the Latvian border, the eastern border of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. If the tanks roll across, we are sworn to defend them. The NATO alliance has sworn to go to war with Russia to keep them out of countries where – you know, I know the city Tallinn. I couldn't tell you anymore cities in the Baltics off the top of my head, other than one is Tallinn. I don't know about your audience, but I think it's not fair to sign us up to die in nuclear wars for cities we've never heard of.

WOODS: I've been wanting to ask you, I mean, the Wikileaks dumps are so, I don't know, copious that it's hard to know exactly everything that's in there, and even if there were some bombshells I'm not even sure the American media would dig them out. But have we learned anything related to any of the issues you've just talked about, major hotspots in US foreign policy, as a result of Wikileaks? Have we had our fears confirmed? Have we learned anything new? Or have we learned nothing?

HORTON: Well, I'll go back to the thing that I mentioned previously when I brought it up, which is Hillary's Goldman Sachs speech, where she talks about the situation in Syria honestly. And it's a real mindblower, because in public, you know, oh, if you want to deal with Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, then you're a Manchurian candidate and a puppet. She in the debate literally called him a puppet of Vladimir Putin and the Russian government and all of this, when in fact, you read her secret transcripts to Goldman Sachs and she basically outlines what I just outlined to you, is that there's no good guys to ally with in Syria right now and the place is crawling with a bunch of al-Qaeda terrorists, and if we do the safe zone and the no-fly zone that she wants to do, then that will mean war with Syria. And she doesn't take the next step, but that could then mean war with Russia as well.

But you talk about her public position and her private position. Her private position is she knows better than all the things that she's for. So what does that mean for next February? Is she going to stick with her public position or her private one? I like her private one better on this issue. But you know, I really don't know. It just goes to show too that – I think overall the – well, I mean, there are so many different little things. But overall I think the lesson of, like, say, the Podesta emails and the DNC hacks and all this is just how calculating and just what a put-on this all is: the coordination with the media, and even just – not that this itself is necessarily scandalous, but it's interesting to me to see to what degree – and you could have guessed every bit of this, Tom. I'm not saying that. But to what degree they really focus group and talk about and plan out and game out every word out of her mouth. I mean, they even have busted where she's done call in interviews to cable TV news shows, and she's straight reading a transcript out of her email of her answer to they guy and this kind of thing. And they just talk about, you know, to the comma exactly what she should say about this issue, the other, the other.

One more that's right off the top of my head now that, again, more confirmation bias, but in a real big way, and this is in The New Republic of all places. You can find it on the blog at LibertarianInstitute.org/blog. And that is from an email from a senior executive at Citigroup, and it's a month before Obama beat McCain, although it was pretty clear he was going to beat McCain at that point. But this is from right around early October actually of 2008, and the senior executive from Citigroup picks Obama's cabinet. He picks Robert Gates should stay as Secretary of Defense, Erick Holder

should be the Attorney General, and Janet Napolitano should be the Director of Homeland Security, and on and on down the list. Here are your choices for Treasury, etc., etc. It's just like in the Skull and Bones conspiracy theory, only just right there for you, plain as day.

WOODS: Scott, before we wrap up for today, we might as well say something about Donald Trump, because both of them have been talking about this issue. How much daylight is there between the Trump and Clinton positions on Syria?

HORTON: Actually, a bit. I wish it was a bit more, but he really has fairly consistently said that he wants war against the Islamic State in eastern Syria – western Iraq and eastern Syria – to destroy ISIS, but he's not interested in regime change against Assad and picking a fight with the Russians. On the other hand, he does say, yeah, I want to create a safe zone, a big, beautiful safe zone. So does he understand that that means "invade," and that that does ultimately mean war with Assad? I don't know. And in fact, a couple of times he has said – I'm trying to remember exact words, but he has sort of left open the possibility that maybe we would attack Assad after we were done with the Islamic State first, although I think that really is less likely.

But you know, the problem with him is he's so ignorant about all of this stuff that he can't come up with any kind of real coherent sort of a strategy. So on one hand he says, what the heck, we might as well ally with Russia and Iran and Assad and Hezbollah against the Islamic State, but then wait a minute, he hates Iran and he hates having a deal with Iran, and that's a whole other separate talking point of his, is how horrible the Iran deal that he knows absolutely nothing about is and all of this kind of stuff. So in the debate, for example, he wasn't sure what his position was, and he ended up saying, well, because of your half a regime change there, you've created this space for Russia to move into Syria and expand their influence there, which is actually true. But it raises the question of whether he thinks that's a problem or not, because he keeps saying that actually that's okay. But I think that's the biggest worry there, is that he's actually so incoherent on the thing that he would really just be putty in the hands of his advisors when it comes to what to do there.

I do think overall his instincts as far as Russia are better, and I really honestly, I don't think that Donald Trump is a better person or a better presidential candidate than Hillary Clinton on virtually anything other than this. And it's not even really that he's better than her; it's just that she's worse. She is just – and it's because of the legacy of her husband getting us into this mess with NATO expansion, her supporting NATO expansion when Bush was the president and she was a senator, her failing in her reset with Russia when she was the Secretary of State, her protégé Nuland running the coup d'état in 2014, and her calling Putin Hitler. And she has basically painted herself into a corner here and has as part of her legacy so much anti-Russia stuff, there's basically nothing that she can do other than keep being absolutely horrible on everything Russia.

And so that's not an endorsement of Trump or anything, but I do believe that America's relationship with Russia – I'm not even sure it's a belief. I think that maybe this is a scientific fact that assuming the value of human life, America's relationship with Russia is the single most important issue in the world, period. We've got thousands and thousands of H-bombs each, and we just can't have this kind of strife.

We just can't. So that is – on the one issue where Hillary is qualitatively worse than Trump, it's the single most important issue in the world: America's relationship with Russia.

On the other hand, when they buzzed a fighter jet over an American battleship in the Baltic Sea, where we had no business whatsoever, Trump said, oh, we should shoot them down. How dare they buzz our ship? We should blow them out of the sky. So he's the same ignorant dunderhead basically on Russia as he is on anything, that he could change his mind at the drop of a hat. George W. Bush said a lot of nice things about not wanting to be a warmonger back in the year 2000 too. It didn't mean much, did it?

WOODS: Yeah, and the thing is for me, the big problem is precisely what you've identified, that he would be a person who would be heavily influenced by advisors, and unfortunately – now, he has been willing to take an independent position on a number of issues, advisors be darned, but when it comes to foreign policy he's so deferential toward the generals and toward the establishment that it gives me reason for concern, especially because the worst appointments he's made to his campaign team in terms of advisors I think have been the foreign policy people. Because here and there you find a decent economist, you find an economist who's actually good on money or whatever, but with foreign policy it's just been one disaster after another, which is why I'm afraid of what – people would get their hopes up, and then, well, look, he's surrounded by people who in any other context you wouldn't be able to stand.

HORTON: Yeah, and in fact, he's had some advisors like Jim Woolsey and some people who've come and gone – Woolsey, I don't know if you know, is one of the craziest of the neocons. Total fruit loop. But he also is, and there's an article in The Washington Post about this, about Stephen Hadley, the guy who funneled the Niger uranium forgeries into the string to get us to attack Iraq, who was Dick Cheney's guy on Condoleezza Rice's staff and was Bush's second National Security Advisor in his second term there. Hadley is one of the only neocons who hasn't been criticizing Trump publicly, and that's because he's been working quietly to see if he can get a job as Secretary of Defense. And Trump's people told The Washington Post they like Hadley, and they're looking at Hadley for the Secretary of Defense position.

So I mean, what's he going to do? If he was going to hire Doug Bandow to be the National Security Advisor and Andrew Bacevich to be the Secretary of Defense or something like that, we'd already heard. Hey guess what, everybody! Donald Trump learned how to read, and he figured out that there are some really skeptical realists that he could hire over there who right for The National Interest or something like that. But he can't read. He doesn't even know who Doug Bandow is. He doesn't even know that there's anyone in the world who sort of sees the alliance system or whatever the same way as is only is actually really bright and intelligent and could help him. He doesn't even know. So who's he going to staff his government with, other than a bunch of Stephen Hadleys if he's never even heard of Cato or he's never even heard of The National Interest magazine or these kinds of things?

So it's a real – you know, people want to believe that one is better than the other, one is worse than the other, that one is going to save us from the other. But I just – I

think sometimes it's okay to just accept the fact that we're all screwed and there is no hope here. Not in presidential terms, anyway.

WOODS: All right, well, on that note we're going to wrap it up, and I'm going to let people know that —

HORTON: That's a good one, right?

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. In the presidential arena, anyway, was a good save at the end there.

HORTON: Yeah, there you go.

WOODS: I'm going to link to your stuff to your personal site, ScottHorton.org, as well as LibertarianInstitute.org over at TomWoods.com/768. I hope people will check those out, particularly your new site and institute, LibertarianInstitute.org. Thanks for the foreign policy briefing today, Scott, and I hope we can talk again before too long.

HORTON: Thank you very much, Tom. Good to be on.