

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode, or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io, and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, remember you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:47 What's up everybody? My guest today is **Joshua Landis**. Joshua is the director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma. He is an expert in the Middle East. He is a Syria expert in particular. He has lived for over 14 years in the Middle East. He was brought up in Beirut. He returned to the region in the 1980s to teach in Beirut, and study at universities in Damascus, Cairo and Istanbul. He writes Syria Comment, a daily newsletter on Syrian politics, which attracts, I am told some 3000 readers a day. And he is a highly regarded academic and commentator in this space. He's been on all sorts of programs from Charlie Rose, to Jim Lehrer, to BBC Radio, to NPR, so we're very fortunate to have him.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:41 Our conversation today, doesn't just focus on Syria and the conflict between Turkey and Syria, and the Kurds, and Russia, and Iran, and all these different players. But it actually broadens into a larger conversation about the disintegration of the rules-based global order, which is something that I've been thinking a lot about. It's something that I wrote a lot about in the rundown to this week's episode as a topic that I wanted to discuss, and Joshua was very receptive to that. And so, we cover that. We cover not just, what does this mean in the Middle East? But, what is a reflection of? If we're going to actually see a withdraw of American influence around the world, how does that shift alliances?

Demetri Kofinas: 00:02:27 And what does that mean, also, let's say specifically with Turkey's entry into Syria? And what does that mean for the security of Europe, which has relied on the security guarantees of the US and the US nuclear umbrella? And if Turkey decides to become belligerent, I mean, it's something that seems unimaginable now. But it's not inconceivable to imagine Turkey beginning to encroach upon European territory starting with Greece, which it has already displayed some level of aggression towards in recent years. And we discussed that. We discussed the possibility of Greece strengthening its relationship to Russia, possibly forming an alliance with Russia. And all these things are conceivable in a world where the United States withdraws.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:13 I think Joshua's perspective differs from let's say, Jake's, who is a reporter, in the sense that Joshua has always felt, it seems to me that this withdrawal was inevitable. And if you read his writings going back years, it seems that his concern, or his advocacy was around making it a strategic withdrawal, to bring some order so that it didn't become chaotic. And I think what we're seeing now is a chaotic withdrawal. And so, this is what we discussed in the conversation as well as many other things.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:47 The overtime to this week's episode, or the overtime feed is an afterthought segment. It's about 20 minutes or so. After the show was over, I decided to sit down and give my thoughts about the last two episodes. My conversations with both Joshua and Jake, why I think these are important, what I've learned from the process of preparing for them.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:12 The rundown for super nerds to this week's episode is exceptionally large, because it began as a rundown for Jake and then morphed into the rundown for Joshua. And so, I think it's something like, 15 or 16 pages of material. And it's, I think, very useful for those of you that are subscribed to it. If you're not, as you know, I always recommend trying it out. Because there is no forward commitment, you can cancel at any time.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:39 Those of you who are not yet subscribed to our audio file, or autodidact or Super Nerd Tears, there is a link in the description to this episode that you can click on, which will take you to the Patreon page. You can learn all about those subscriptions and how you can support the program. Without any further ado, here is my conversation with **Joshua Landis**.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:06 Dr. **Joshua Landis**, welcome to Hidden Forces.

Joshua Landis: 00:05:09 It's a pleasure being with you.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:11 Thank you for making the time to be on the program. When I first booked you, I wrote down a lot of what I wanted to discuss. Primarily, it was a conversation around kind of establishing a foundational understanding and a context for what's happening right now in Syria, and the border between Turkey and Syria and all the different players involved. That is still my primary interest. We did an episode or a recording a few days ago with Jake Hanrahan, who is an international journalist reporter. And he filled us in on some of that also, although I wanted him more to talk about more of the timely stuff.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:48 But before we get into that, if you had to write a headline to describe what's happened in the last week, what would it be?

Joshua Landis: 00:05:59 I was thinking about that myself. It would really be that, interestingly enough, the United States today finds itself aligned with Bashar Al Assad. Now, that seems sort of tongue in cheek. But here we are in the United States today, fighting alongside the Kurds who are aligned with Damascus. And in a sense, the Russians in order to stop the Turkish invasion. And allied with the Turks are the Free Syrian Army forces that we were funding only a few years ago, and that we were hoping would overturn Assad and take Damascus.

Joshua Landis: 00:06:40 And today, we are putting sanctions on Turkey. And we're telling Turkey to stop this, and those forces to stop their incursion into Syria, which is allowing serious troops to rush into places like Manbij. We just handed Manbij over to the Russian troops. We had a controlled hand over to the Russians who are, of course serious, great sponsor. In a sense, we've come 360 degrees on this, I guess, in the sense that Obama eight years ago said, "Assad must go." Hillary Clinton said the same thing. They supported the Syrian rebels who became too Islamist, too extremist by 2014. And, in a sense, spooked America. America withdrew their support. And ultimately, this was a decision to allow Assad to survive.

Joshua Landis: 00:07:39 When Russia came in, sensing that American weakness, America said nothing. Obama said, "We're not going to go to war against Russia for Syria." Then, we switched to the Kurds. When ISIS grew so big and took over much of the rebel-owned territory in Syria and became, in a sense the most powerful rebel force in Syria, America switched against the rebels and took up with the Kurds who have traditionally been allied with Assad. Today, the Kurds broke with Assad, broke with the rebels, because they hoped that America would help establish an independent Kurdish state in northeastern Syria. Today, those hopes that were raised by the United States have been dashed.

Joshua Landis: 00:08:27 President Trump, in his very rash decision decided to yank American troops, letting the Kurds down with a great thump. Kurds all saying they've been stabbed in the back. And immediately, the Kurds in a few days, initiated an alliance that had been hammered out over a year ago with Assad and said, "We're going to take second best." That's to go back to Damascus, put Syrian troops up the border and try to stabilize Syria in much the same position it had been eight years ago. And so, in that sense, I think the headline has to be that the United States, in many ways, is siding with Assad against the

Turks and against the Arab Islamist Rebels who are trying to take land in Syria.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:17 So the headline would be, after eight years of fighting Assad, we've decided to join him. Is that what you're saying?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:09:23 Yeah. I mean, we're not joining him because we dislike him tremendously. But in a sense, strategically, we've aligned in supporting his reconquest of all this territory up to the Turkish border.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:34 Is that a way of saying that it's all for not? That what we did for the last seven or eight years...
- Joshua Landis:** 00:09:38 Yes, absolutely.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:38 ... Has been primarily a waste, a wasted effort?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:09:41 And it's not only been wasted. It's caused tremendous destruction in Syria, because America poured in well over \$10 billion into Syria and into military, into opposition forces. That's not to mention our allies, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, all of whom we in a sense wound up to take on Assad. If you recall, Hillary Clinton in the opening days of the Syrian uprising, went around to Turkey, to Qatar and others asking them to take the lead in this effort to drive out Assad. And so, America has a lot of soul searching to do, it seems to me.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:10:23 I want to also ask you if we've actually made it worse, because of our reputation. The damage that America's reputation has taken as a result of how brashly we left the Kurds to basically fend for themselves and cut a quick deal with Assad. Also, I want to ask you, what impact this has had in terms of our fight against ISIS, because we decided to take a particular strategy and, or defeat ISIS? Now as I understand it, the Kurds have had to basically let lots of fighters escape, and families of ISIS fighters escape the prisons that they were held in?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:11:00 But I want to take a quote from an article that you wrote, and I think it was in 2012, and it kind of speaks to this. You write, "With America's economy in the dumps, its military badly bruised, its reputation among Muslims in tatters and its people fatigued by foreign wars, this is no time to intervene in Syria. Washington has no staying power if things go wrong. He wants regime change on the cheap, to bomb and withdraw. And if things go wrong, will we leave the Syrians in the lurch or get sucked into another complicated quagmire? The administration

can ill afford to leave a failed state behind in Syria or to have it unfurl into civil war."

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:11:41 That quote, that what I just read there seems remarkably prescient? Is that where we are today?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:11:48 It is. America has made things worse in Syria, there's no doubt about it. And as you've opened up not only has it made things worse, but we have really scored an own goal here. Because we have ditched the Kurds, ruined our reputation with allies, but now we're putting economic sanctions on Turkey. So, we've got the worst of all worlds. We don't have any friends left in the region as we withdraw. You would think that if we were dumping the Kurds out in front of the Turks, we would at least gain something from Turkey, get them to give up Russian missiles, the S400s, get them to move away from Russia in some way. But we haven't gained any of those possible benefits.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:12:33 Our reputation is in tatters. And today, President Putin of Russia is swanning around the Middle East. He's in Saudi Arabia today with a royal welcome, because everybody distrusts America. Everybody is looking to Putin as a statesman who can mediate their flashpoints with Iran, with Israel, with Turkey. He's the man of the hour, and in a sense where United States is wearing the dunce cap today.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:06 I want to ask you about him also, because it seems that there are three players that are the front of this civil war in Syria has expanded. It's expanded now with Turkey's invasion. Also, as you said, it's empowered Russia as a player in this domain. You don't hear much about Iran in the news, but I think this is also another great victory for Iran. And it seems also that not only does this administration not have a policy or coherent policy, but it almost feels like its policy is to smash things.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:40 Because the withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal makes no sense in the context of this decision to just brashly pull troops out of Rojava. I mean, help me make sense of this. Was this always inevitable, because the US body politic was never going to support an endless occupation of any sort? Even a small force contingency, they wanted out. Was this always inevitable?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:14:06 Yes. I think, and it was inevitable. We, unfortunately have a bad habit, and we have for a number of decades now of inflating their expectations of local peoples in the Middle East. We've done that in Afghanistan, promising that we would get rid of the Taliban and set up some kind of decent government there. We did this when we rolled into Iraq in 2003, and President Bush

promised to reform the greater Middle East. He made a big, wide ranging speech in London, in which he promised that he would bring democracy to Iraq, and it would cause a domino theory. And the dictatorship and tyranny throughout the Middle East would begin to collapse.

- Joshua Landis:** 00:14:49 Then we did it again, of course, with the Kurds in Syria, promising we would be there for the long haul. That we wouldn't let them down, and that they would become a strategic... A fortress for the United States in the region, and thus, that we would help them to some form of independence.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:15:08 In all of these cases, we've been unable to deliver. We promised way too much, and we've let people down. And that's the fault of the entire foreign policy establishment, which somehow has taken its rhetoric and its idealism much too seriously. And its ability to alter distant lands and societies in a way that they're not capable of doing.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:36 Are you troubled by the fact that there has been no self-reflection whatsoever during the course of the last seven days, and even up until then? I mean, it seems to me that every time something goes wrong in the Middle East or something goes wrong with American foreign policy, everyone just sticks to their position. The hawks just want more intervention. There doesn't seem to be any accountability for all the past mistakes. Sure, Trump has acted, seemingly irrationally without any kind of strategy. But Trump didn't get us here, right? So...
- Joshua Landis:** 00:16:08 No he didn't?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:16:08 ... Are you troubled by that lack of self-reflection by the foreign policy establishment?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:16:12 Absolutely, and I fight it every day going on talk shows with...
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:16:16 What is the reason for it? What is the reason for this kind of like, bunker mentality?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:16:21 Part of the reason is that we don't pay for it. I went on PBS news just the other night and I said something like, Trump's desire to end these endless wars is very popular. And I used the example of Oklahoma, where people want better schools and better roads, and they don't want to suspend \$5 trillion in the Middle East. And I got tons of emails and phone calls from people saying, Oklahoma is a taker state. They don't pay as much taxes as they get.

Joshua Landis: 00:16:51 And they've got a point, Oklahoma is a very poor state. But the point, I think that I would make is that all of America is a taker society, because we have not paid for these wars. That \$5 trillion that we've spent on Afghanistan, on Iraq, on Syria and other places, Libya has been borrowed. Nobody is paying for it, and that is one of the main reasons that the foreign policy establishment can get away with these sorts of adventures. Because America has this incredible credit rating, and it's borrowed over \$20 trillion, which our children are going to have to repay. So, we're getting to do these fantastic experiments on the cheap, at least it's on the cheap today. That's one reason.

Joshua Landis: 00:17:40 The other reason, of course, is that our politics has become increasingly more corrupt. Special interest groups have bought chunks of foreign policy. And you see that most profligately with this administration, but it's not just this administration. This administration is just a little bit worse.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:58 Can you give me some examples of that?

Joshua Landis: 00:17:59 Yes, I can give you examples of that. I mean, you look at our Saudi policy, you look at our Israel policy. Somebody like Bolton for the National Security Council, who didn't jive with Trump's foreign policy. Trump said he's going to end these Middle Eastern wars. Bolton was the exact opposite, he wanted us to get us in deeper on the Iran thing particularly.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:18:21 As a neoconservative.

Joshua Landis: 00:18:22 As a neoconservative, and he wanted a bomb Iran and have regime change. Just what President Trump said he wouldn't do in his campaign. And it turns out that the way he came to attention of Trump is not just that he spoke with a tough language on Fox News. But he called from Sydney Sheldon's office in Las Vegas, a big gambling billionaire, very pro-Israel who liked Bolton because he was pro-Israel and anti-Iran. And I don't know whether Trump made some kind of transactional deal in which he said, okay, I'm going to let this guy be National Security Advisor for a number of months, because Sheldon Adelson is giving over 100 million dollars to the republican party for campaigns. But it wouldn't shock me if that kind of transactional policy is going on it.

Joshua Landis: 00:19:20 But you see these interest groups pay to play from one end of Washington to the other, and people become very cynical. And I think that's why Trump is president today, because the American people feel that Washington is a swamp, has become terribly corrupt. And now, they elected the wrong person to

clean up the swamp. But, I guess that it goes to the naive tale of the American people. But they do feel that something is desperately wrong in Washington.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:19:50 Well, I have a question about that. Because one of the things that Jake brought up in our previous episode, and I've read something this effect as well is that Trump has certain business interests in Turkey. And so, he's more naturally aligned with that country than he is with the Kurds. And it just got me to thinking, generally speaking about how much corruption exists across the political spectrum. And if we're just hearing about Trump's possible ties or possible corruption, because he's so despicable and so disliked within the establishment. But if this is just kind of par for the course, is this how business is done? Is that kind of more of what you're saying?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:20:32 It is, more and more is done this way. And more and more is done, and we've seen this. Look at what's happening in Ukraine scandal right now, with an ambassador being thrown out because she wouldn't put the President's interests over the national interests. The Two Towers, the Trump Towers that Trump has in Istanbul. The many apartments he's sold to Saudis when his incredible statement of, "Of course, we're going to do business with the Saudis. They buy my apartments, bing, bing, bing, bing." And he makes this incredible, "They're good customers. And I think to a certain degree, that's very important."
- Joshua Landis:** 00:21:04 It's important to Americans at large, but it's very important to this president who has these deep economic relationships in different places. And it underlines, I think this blurring of interests between the person and the state.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:21:20 Do you think that the American voter who voted for Donald Trump who supports him, supports him because, at least they know that he's transparent about the extent to which he has corrupted work versus let's say, the kind of prototypical Democrat or Republican who is seen as hypocritical? Is that kind of one of the things, do you think that is driving the support?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:21:45 Yes, I do. I mean, I think that his iconoclasm, and he works it. Is popular because, unfortunately, people believed because he was rich, somehow, he would be immune to all these other moneyed interests, and that he would somehow turn America around and dry up the swamp in Washington.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:22:05 Of course, that's so far from the truth, and he's just another instrument in this. But we see it. we see it up and down with

the Clinton fund. We saw it with Biden's son taking these fantastical jobs at high pays for doing, either nothing, or gaining some influence through his father. We don't know. Maybe he's just doing nothing and these are stupid countries, and he's milking them. But the point is, is that the optics of it are that everybody is playing this game in Washington. And it's very hard to see how to undo it.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:22:39 I want to put it back to what we're talking about, specifically in Syria. Before we do, I want to ask one more thing about Trump or point something. Because I saw that both of us retweeted something that he tweeted, and I never retweet him, and I hardly talk about him. But I found it impossible this week. And I'm just learning about what's happened in this conflict, whatever you want to call it. It's just kind of scary, because it feels like he's self-destructive and potentially crazy on some level. He tweeted out, "Anyone who wants to assist Syria and protecting the courage is good with me, whether it is Russia, China or Napoleon Bonaparte."

Demetri Kofinas: 00:23:20 Now, I don't get that, you know what I'm saying? Like in the middle of this slaughter, he tweets out, obviously a complete trollish tweet. Obviously, Napoleon is dead. He's not going to help.

Joshua Landis: 00:23:31 I think underneath that tweet was, people are slamming him because Assad and the Kurds are now partners. They've made a deal. And the Kurds are helping and Assad returned to the borders, which of course, is very damaging to Israel's interests and to Saudi Arabia's interests. And a lot of our allies who've been pushing the United States to overturn Assad are furious. That ultimately America in their senses turning up, allowing us and retake all this land. I think what he is saying is, I don't care if the Russians and Assad help the Kurds.

Joshua Landis: 00:24:10 And this returns to his rhetoric of the campaign trail three years ago, when he attacked Hillary Clinton, and I think did some real damage with Hillary by criticizing her for regime change and saying you tried to overturn Gaddafi, and what did you do? You turned Libya into this playground for Islamist militias. Then he realized this resonated with Americans. Then he turned on George bush, and he said, "George Bush started the regime change thing by invading Iraq, and he turned Iraq into the Harvard of jihadism." That's what he called it, the Harvard of jihadism. And all the Al Qaeda sort of came to Iraq. And he began, he got on a real role there and he ended up by in a sense, supporting a Russian foreign policy in the Middle East, which is to support strong men.

Joshua Landis: 00:25:03 Americans foreign policy has been based on the notion that the Middle East is ripe for democracy, and if you--

Demetri Kofinas: 00:25:10 Which has also been somewhat ridiculous, right?

Joshua Landis: 00:25:13 Yes, that's turned out to be false. And Americans argued that if you kick over these dictators, the healthy society, and people will put their shoulders together and build good government and democracy in the Middle East. Russia said, "No, that's not going to happen. Islam is still going to take over. There's going to be civil war, and pandemonium is going to come out. This is the worst of all worlds. What you need is a strong man. In a sense, Putin is just in a sense, projecting a Russian reality. He believes that Russia needs a strong man Putin. America believes that the whole world needs democracy, and it's a God given right. And these are two different visions of the future of society.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:25:58 Well, the vision you're describing is, the American foreign policy in the Middle East before the end of the Cold War. Correct? It was to support a strong man.

Joshua Landis: 00:26:06 Well, it's a democracy promotion. Well, yes, America has supported strong men in the past. You're absolutely right during the Cold War. And since the end of the Cold War, and particularly with the rise of neoconservatism, where both liberal hawks and conservatives came to this notion that America can really speed up history. That's the way they think of it, as sort of this ineluctable march of history. And all these presidents, both Obama and bush began to talk about people as if they're on the wrong side of history. In other words, dictators on the wrong side of history.

Joshua Landis: 00:26:37 History is coming to deliver democracy. It's a teleological progression towards this ideal Jerusalem of democracy, and America can speed it up by knocking down the doors of dictatorship. And this false understanding of not only history, but the way democracy evolves has led America into these terrible miscalculations that have cost us trillions of dollars, which has led to terrible civil wars, which have unleashed what I've called the great sorting out in the Middle East.

Joshua Landis: 00:27:13 Because these fragile states, like Syria's, or Iraqs or Libyas, or many of the others in the Middle East, are holding together societies where people have not come to an agreement on how to live together, on what sort of constitution they want, what kind of laws and rules. And the basic rules of the game, the rules of the road that help a society like our Constitution, which helps

us all agree on how to adjudicate our problems. And Syria has not done that, and these dictators are holding the society together. You kick them off, and these and terrible civil wars between Alawites, Sunnis, Kurds, breakout, and each group tries to carve out its own state or to take over and become a dominant group. And so [inaudible 00:28:03] is free for all.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:28:05 It feels, from what... I mean, I agree with what you're describing or rather, what you're describing resonates with my understanding. It seems to me that ever since the end of the Cold War, we've seen in the world a fracturing of states that were carved up after World War One, fracturing along sectarian lines. We've seen it in the Balkans, we've seen it in the Middle East. And it seems that, that has accelerated since the Iraq war, and Iraq was really the first place we went and we broke a country. And that has since spread, but it's remained contained within the greater Middle East.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:28:42 With Turkey's invasion now into Syria, and apparently, they're not stopping. They're going deeper. They're going into the government-controlled areas. I don't know if you can comment on that if it's true, I've seen it reported. That now opens the risk, depending on what happens to Turkey, that this issue begins to spill over into Europe. So, I want to talk a little bit about Turkey really, because I feel like Turkey is a player in all of this.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:29:09 I mean, Russia has been playing the role of outside agitator for some time now. Iran, the US has been committed since Trump came into office to antagonizing Iran. Iran and Israel have had issues for a long time, the US has had issues with Iran going back to '79. Our relationship with Saudi Arabia is changing. All sorts of alliances are changing. But to me, it seems that Turkey is the biggest new variable in all of this. Am I touching on anything that's correct here? What would you... How would you respond to that?

Joshua Landis: 00:29:42 Well, I think you're absolutely right. The Turkish army is powerful, it's not been used very much. Erdogan, of course, has these grand ambitions, and we're not sure. Of course, Erdogan is couching. His incursion into Syria as a national security issue that he's going to stop these Kurds who are aligned with the PKK and the insurgency inside Turkey. And I think most people believe that he has a much larger agenda. That he wants to change Turkey's borders permanently, and that he sees his country in smoking ruins next door to him. Same with Iraq, very weak.

Joshua Landis: 00:30:24 This is an opportunity to expand. He talks about, this as a time of the brave and the courageous. This is, history is in flux. And one has to sort of stand, get a stride, this current. And one senses this sort of manifest destiny. Going back to the Ottoman Empire, these are our lands, Mosul, Kirkuk, and so forth were stolen from us at World War One, and we're going to recuperate them. And this is an opportunity for a great army and a great people who have a much greater role to play on the stage of history.

Joshua Landis: 00:30:59 And that's the worry. And that's I think why not only Russia is warning Turkey not to do this. But the United States has done it, and Iran has said, don't do it. Everybody seems to be very anxious that these Turkish troops could continue to roll. And that once they're in, they're not going to get out.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:31:20 A few questions. First of all, what are the internal dynamics in Ankara that may incentivize Erdogan to continue to do this? In other words, is this going to give him a political advantage domestically if he expands Turkey's borders? Also, how does Russia respond to something like this? I mean, Russia always wants to pick the strongest states to align with. How do all the other players fit into this, because it doesn't seem that Turkey can proceed to take over Syria without an ally like Russia or the United States, can they?

Joshua Landis: 00:31:57 Well, United States has opted out, but lawmakers are trying to get sanctions for Turkey. So that could rein Turkey in. And obviously the business class is so important to Erdogan and to the Turkish body politic, that if they feel that their interests are really threatened, they may pull in the reins a bit. But Russia has done this. It's unclear where that border could go. And I think Erdogan will want to push as far as he can, and then stop and see if he can get leverage for negotiating the best outcome possible for Turkey.

Joshua Landis: 00:32:31 He wants to move, and he says that he wants to put two million Syrian refugees into this new territory he's conquering, and that he's going to return them. So, he's casting this as a humanitarian effort to return refugees to their homes. Of course, these aren't the homes of most of these refugees. It's going to change the demography of northern Syria away from the Kurds towards Arabs. There are a lot of self-interested reasons for him to do this. But he has a number of reasons driving him. And this Islamic wave that he's riding, I think has tremendous sympathy inside Turkey, as well as the nationalist wave.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:13 Where do you think this ends? And how do countries like Israel, how do countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran? How do these nations respond to Turkish aggression?

Joshua Landis: 00:33:23 Well, Iran is trying to lay down the law and saying that Turkey should return to the Adana agreement, which was hammered out between Turkey and Syria in 1998 when Turkey threatened to invade Syria. Hafez Al-Assad, the father Bashar Al Assad, the Syrian president to cough up Ocalan, the head of the PKK, this Kurdish militant organization who had been given refuge in Damascus. And Hafez Al-Assad was forced to send them out of the country. And they agreed on a border strategy, which is that Turkey could pursue PKK insurgents in hot pursuit six to eight kilometers across the border. They'd have to inform the Syrian police and military, they would have to withdraw quickly. But they did have this ability for hot pursuit, which would secure their national interests, but not allow them to change the border.

Joshua Landis: 00:34:15 And that's what Iran is insisting on. It has sent some troops into the region, Russia has sent troops into the region, United States is threatening sanctions. So, it's very possible that much potential damage from this Turkish incursion could be limited if the world really mobilizes and insist to Erdogan, that it's going to pay up much too higher price if he continues this.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:34:40 Is there any risk over the next several years that what has so far been a Middle Eastern conflict spills over into Europe, where the Turks begin to move slightly West, perhaps in the Aegean where they've already been exploring for oil resources in the territorial waters of Cyprus, for example.

Joshua Landis: 00:35:05 Well, there's also all the islands off the coast and right off the coast of Turkey, which are owned by Greece.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:12 Yeah.

Joshua Landis: 00:35:12 And Greece has military outposts on some of them, and Turkey has been trying to. The ones that don't have anybody on, Turkey has been putting military elements on it. It's been challenging Greece, lots of friction along those lines. Then, of course, there's the new discovery of all these gas deposits underneath the Mediterranean Sea around Cyprus. And Turkey owns a big hunk of Cyprus, and Greece owns big hunk of Cyprus. And so, they're both demanding territorial waters, and rights of way and so forth. And this is reanimated, that old animosity between Turks and Greeks, and it could lead to some fisticuffs because Erdogan has this inflated sense of his national destiny.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:54 I wonder also, because of the incompetence now of the transatlantic alliance, the problem that Europe is having with the EU, and the disintegration that we're seeing of the European Union, is there a risk that the Greek government could find that it's in its geopolitical interest to align with Russia at some point in the not too distant future because of a threat of continued threats by the Turks? I mean, we're talking about an environment here where the US has withdrawn. I mean, if this environment--

Joshua Landis: 00:36:25 Well Greece is already doing that. Greece is already tons of these Russian mafia guys are investing their money in Cyprus and in banks in Cyprus. So, Greece has been helping to launder tons of Russian money.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:36:38 Well, that's Cyprus. We're talking about Cyprus specifically.

Joshua Landis: 00:36:40 That is Cyprus, but the Greeks have been making alliances with Israel in order to try to develop a pipe way for the gas and oil that would go through Greece. But they're also trying to cotton up to Russia for the same reason that Saudi Arabia is now welcoming Putin, the first Russian president in, well over a decade to go to Saudi Arabia. All the Middle East, you can see the metal filings around the various magnus as the balance of power changes as the United States withdraws.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:09 Well, that's what we're seeing. We're seeing a... Right. Yes.

Joshua Landis: 00:37:11 As the United States withdraws from the region, countries are looking to Russia at who can. Because were Turkey to invade Greek islands, or push the oil thing and get into a fight with Greece. Greece doesn't have the military power to take on Turkey. And it would need to have a good relationship with Russia, and hope that Russia's good offices can restrain Turkish expansionism just as this is happening in Syria today.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:38 It's so ironic because, of course, Greece was a major outpost of the CIA after World War Two. And Greece has natural points of alliance with Russia, not least of which is their common religion of Greek Orthodoxy.

Joshua Landis: 00:37:51 --Orthodox.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:52 Exactly. So, it's not there--

Joshua Landis: 00:37:53 There was a traditionally a big Communist Party in Greece after the war, the Civil War and Russia is...

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:58 But there's still a huge leftist element in Greece, absolutely.

Joshua Landis: 00:38:00 Yes, there is. The world is going back to a 19th century real politic where there are not two major powers around which everybody has to align as it was in the Cold War. But there are many different major powers. With the rise of India, China, Russia, America's shrinking footprint, and new countries really like Turkey growing up. We're seeing an environment much like the 19th century where the concept of Europe was able to keep some kind of order until it exploded. Then you had lots of vying for influence and treaties, alliances. And you're seeing the same scramble for alliances trying to balance stronger neighbors. And it's a much more complicated world, there's no doubt about it with spheres of influence.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:38:50 So that's, I think you're... You've, we've arrived now at the point that I think I wanted to get to or where I felt this conversation was going to go when I asked you about what the headline would be. Because I feel like this event, what's happening over the last week is, it's the first major watershed in the breakdown of the rules-based order.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:39:15 I feel like it's the first clear example of what happens when the global headroom on the security provider, which has been the United States for all these decades, retreats or withdraws. And all of a sudden, all of these countries, all of these states that either assumed that the United States was there to prevent them from acting on their behalf in a particular way, or was there to guarantee their security as is in the case, that's what's so kind of scary for me about Europe. Because the entire European project has been built on the premise of the American Security umbrella.

Joshua Landis: 00:39:53 You're right. And a friend of mine just wrote, are we seeing the end of the American Middle East? And I think that's two grand a headline, but there's a lot of truth in it. America is withdrawing now. I said, I don't think we are. I think we're seeing a Middle East in which there are a number of great powers competing. Not only world powers, but regional big powers like Iran, like Turkey, like Saudi Arabia, all throwing their weight around, they now have powerful armies. And they're realizing they can use them, and they are using them. And it's leading to a much more dangerous environment.

Joshua Landis: 00:40:33 That I think is largely true, the United States is withdrawing. But George Bush took us into the Middle East, militarily, economically in a way that we had never been there before with all of these troops on the ground. In the last month, we

have bombed eight countries. American military is just so big today, and it's overstretched. And I think we're going to see this retreat for years to come. It partly is not an absolute retreat. It's because there are other powers growing up. We're ...

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:11 But it's not strategic, that's the problem that we're seeing. I mean, the last week shows a non-strategic retreat.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:41:16 It does.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:17 I think you would agree that retreat, a strategic retreat is needed. In fact, you made the argument in some of the articles that I read, that this was effectively an inevitability. That in the case of the Kurds, there was no way that the United States is going to be able to maintain support for the Kurds indefinitely, because it was such an unpopular position, that it would drive a wedge between them and all the countries in the region. But what we're seeing here is, it's almost as if Donald Trump is going out of his way to destroy American foreign policy.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:41:45 Well, his pitching is, he's draining the swamp and he's trying to blame all the people around him, who of course, he's put into positions of power for being part of the swamp. And he's relishing, in a sense lashing out at them. And firing them here and hither and yon like Bolton and others who said we disagree, and he's no good. And I'm not going to agree with him. In a sense, he stages these little temper tantrums. And I think it plays well to his base. But you're absolutely right, it's thrown American foreign policy into chaos.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:18 He's the agent of chaos. He is the agent of chaos.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:42:21 He is an agent of chaos. But there's never a good time to withdraw from Syria, and it's the same for Afghanistan. We are in untenable position in Afghanistan. We are not going to destroy the Taliban, and we're not going to stay there forever. And when we pull the plug on that, it's going to look something like Vietnam, because the Taliban is going to sweep in and take over. And all of the nice secular people that we have been employing, training, schooling, they're going to flee the country. And they're going to be damaged badly, and it's going to be chaotic.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:42:56 Whether it's a democratic president who's very careful, or a Trump who throws a temper tantrum and just yanks a plug, there's going to be a large element of chaos. Because we've

gotten ourselves into very stupid positions around the world that we cannot afford. and which don't make any sense.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:14 It's interesting, because in some ways, we've seen something similar with China. Because many people will agree that the United States needed to change the way that they engage with China, but China was so effective at lobbying American businesses and politicians, that the United States has not adjusted its policy all of these years. And so here comes Trump and he adjusts it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:37 He doesn't adjust it as well as people would like. But I guess it sounds like what you're saying is, it's hard to imagine that because of the nature of the interests, that this would be done in a way that wouldn't be messy, regardless. That it's something that we may want, but realistically speaking, it's not going to be easy. It's going to be messy whenever we're going to do it, and this is kind of how it's going to look like what's happening now.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:44:00 Some elements are. But I mean, like Iran, President Obama, I think very smartly got us out of a potential war with Iran. By scuttling the Iran deal, we're now, I think, ineluctable march towards some kind of conflict with Iran. Because we're crushing Iran's economy, and they're not going to sit by and allow it to be closed.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:24 But that's the crazy right now. But that's, see, that's the crazy thing. And this goes back to the point. On the one hand, he's withdrawing us from a region where we have 1000 troops. I forget how many people we had on the ground in Syria. I think, five collective fatalities in the entire time that we've been there, and he would put us potentially in a war with Iran. I mean, he pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:44:44 Right, it makes no sense.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:45 It makes no sense from a geopolitical standpoint.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:44:48 And to take on China, we need to stabilize the Middle East. We need to get out of this conflict, looming conflict with Iran. We need to shore up NATO and our alliances with Europe. And in a sense, develop as many alliances, even with the Russia. In order to corner China, we needed to stay in the economic agreement in Asia. Because all those Asian countries who are fearful of the rise of China wanted to have an economic agreement with the United States.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:18 The TPP you're saying right.

Joshua Landis: 00:45:18 Yes, so they could counterbalance China. We didn't do that. We needed to use every instrument at our disposal, and our long history of very strong alliances and friendships with all these countries, in order to, in a sense, provide a roadmap for China that led into the direction of really becoming a capitalist country, and abandoning the statism that has made America question its own capitalism and fearful.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:47 Is that also a naive belief? In other words...

Joshua Landis: 00:45:50 Well, you might be right. I don't know.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:52 Yeah.

Joshua Landis: 00:45:53 But it's worth a college try. I mean, that's the...

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:56 Well, haven't we been trying though? Isn't that what we've been trying to do with China? The presumption has been that as they get wealthier, that they'll become more open. But in fact, it seems the opposite has happened.

Joshua Landis: 00:46:06 Yes, it does. We don't know the answer. We're facing a real competition between two different systems, economic philosophies and systems. And this system in China is not like Marxism, which was based on a faulty notion of human nature. That humans wanted to share, and that they would be productive, even as the state owned everything. But China has come up with a model that it seems to be working beyond anybody's wildest dreams with 10% growth a year for 30 something years. I mean, it's really extraordinary.

Joshua Landis: 00:46:41 Now it's possible that, that could all come crashing down, and that we're just seeing a very extended lucky streak.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:46:48 Well, it also depends on where that growth went, and how much of that is malinvestment. Right?

Joshua Landis: 00:46:52 It does.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:46:53 How much of that over capacity of course,

Joshua Landis: 00:46:55 You're right, because they could become corrupt like everybody else over time, because this state directed capitalism seems to be working now. But we know that you let it go long enough and you begin to invest in stupid things. And there's tons of

interest self-interested people who... Anyway, the point being that we are in this incredible competition, we need to be smart. And what we're doing today is not smart.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:21 Just to recap here a moment, it seems that there have been a number of things that have come out of the last week or so. One is that, this has revived ISIS. And I want to ask you about ISIS, because we haven't discussed it yet.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:47:33 Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:33 You said that basically, the big story is that it's cemented Assad's grip on Syria. And it's also handed Russia another geopolitical victory, right?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:47:42 Yes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:43 And we didn't talk about the Kurds. This has been, obviously a huge betrayal to the Kurds. As you said, our position with the Kurds was always untenable, but it certainly could have been handled better, and it certainly could have been handled in a way where we didn't further damage our reputation in the Middle East. And on top of that, US credibility at large has been damaged from all of this. It seems to me that these are kind of the major takeaways from what has occurred.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:48:14 Right. If we had been running our policy in a thoughtful way, President Trump who wanted to get us out of Syria after the destruction of the Caliphate, the Kurds went. When he made that statement in December of this year, about eight, nine months ago, 10 months ago now, everybody shuttered and some people resigned. It was an irresponsible statement, but he walked it back, and he basically gave his foreign policy lead another 10 months.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:48:44 The Kurds on hearing that 10 months ago went to Damascus and hammered out an agreement with Damascus, an agreement that they never acted on, because they had a much better agreement from the United States. But James Jeffrey, the special envoy to Syria and others told the Kurds not to make a deal with Damascus, because they were going to stay there for the long haul. They were, of course, all completely wrong.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:49:11 Then when Trump basically just ripped America out in the last few days of Syria, the Kurds had the deal. They managed to revive it within two days. I mean, everybody was stunned at how quickly this deal fell into place. But that's because they'd

hammered it out long time ago. And America should have been facilitating the Syrian return to these lands, knowing that it's not going to stay, it's not going to be there to defend a Kurdish state in northeastern Syria.

- Joshua Landis:** 00:49:42 It should have laid the groundwork for stability in Syria and stopping a Turkish invasion, which was going to be so damaging to the Kurds, and to the whole political order in the Middle East. And it could have done that, and it refused to do it because it didn't really know what its foreign policy was. Because two sides of American foreign policy were fighting each other, and we've got this chaos that's come out the other end. But we could have done this in a much more reasonable way, and we didn't do it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:50:14 One of the things that you said, this word chaos, that brings us back to ISIS.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:50:18 Yes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:50:18 These types of extremist organizations operate well in environments of chaos, and that's what we are seeing increasingly in the Middle East. What does this mean for ISIS? And what does this mean for the security of European nation states and the United States, which have seen attacks from ISIS? I don't know if we had any in the US, I guess we had some ISIS inspired attacks.
- Joshua Landis:** 00:50:42 Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:50:42 But certainly, there have been some in Europe. This is no small threat. We managed to roll them back through our relationship with the Kurds. Now, presumably, they're in a better position. How much better? And what does this really mean in the next several years? Are we going to start seeing attacks again, do you think from ISIS as a result of this?
- Joshua Landis:** 00:51:02 ISIS has not gone away. I mean, look, this is obviously a great opportunity for ISIS. And I'm sure there are a lot of ISIS people out there who are rubbing their hands together and hoping that the whole situation falls apart, and Turkey and Syria get into a real fight. But if this can be contained, the Syrian government has a very long and deep interest in destroying ISIS. So does Russia, so does Iran, and even Turkey. So it's very possible that ISIS is not going to grow up again, in the middle of Syria. It obviously has positions in Yemen and in North Africa, in Central Africa. So, it's not over for ISIS by any means.

Joshua Landis: 00:51:45 The Islamic extremism is still a potent force in many places in the world, but it doesn't have to be the replay of Iraq in Syria. I think, the long-term solution to ISIS in Syria is a strong central state, a good police force and stability. That needs to be built around a government in Damascus. Now, of course, America does not want to see a strong Assad. Traditionally, it has not because that means Iranian influence, that means hurting Israel, hurting Saudi Arabia. But ultimately, that's the only long-term solution for ISIS in the Middle East.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:52:27 Dr. Landis in closing, I'd love for you to give us maybe a best case and worst case, and maybe even middle of the road case scenarios for what you think comes out of this current crisis, and this larger crisis of American leadership and foreign policy within the Trump administration. Because of course, we do have one more year, and we don't know what's going to happen, and I don't think the democrats have this in the bag whatsoever.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:52:55 In fact, I'm quite concerned by the fact that there hasn't seemed to emerge a compelling democratic candidate who can appeal to both sides of the aisle. And I wouldn't put it past the electorate to put Trump back into office, because of much of the rightly deserved hate and disgust with the hypocrisy and the mistakes, the unacknowledged mistakes of the ruling class that have unfastened so much of the ire of the body politic. So how do we forecast American foreign policy amid all this uncertainty?

Joshua Landis: 00:53:33 The US is withdrawing slowly from the Middle East from this high point of the bush, sort of projection of power, which was very unnatural. America had never had that kind of power projected, and couldn't afford to project that kind of power. So where we're withdrawing for two reasons. One is, because we'd overextended, and two is because America is no longer the sole superpower in the world, which we were for about 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We had this little 20, 25-year period in which to play on the globe. And now China's come up, Russia is back. There are many other smaller regional powers that are pushing in at this as well.

Joshua Landis: 00:54:15 So, America is going to find it much more difficult to project power. Our major interest in the Middle East today... Well, we have two. One is Israel, and the other is the Persian Gulf and oil. And if there was one lesson that came out of World War Two is that, you wanted to have your hand on the spigot. We defeated Germany, because we didn't allow Hitler to get to oil. He ran out of oil, and his pants or units, his Air Force came to a screeching

halt. Germany was trying to get to oil in what Churchill calls the hinge of fate, the Battle of Stalingrad in Russia, and El Alamein in North Africa. He was stopped.

Joshua Landis: 00:54:59 Now as a result of that, the US began to think about a World War Three, and they wanted to have control of world oil. That meant the Persian Gulf, where over 50% of world's strategic oil reserves or known oil reserves lie. And so the US has doubled down on Saudi Arabia, and this is part of the reason why we have not been able to abandon Saudi Arabia. Because we don't want to cede control over that Persian Gulf Oil to China, or to Russia, who would move in very rapidly should America withdraw. And that has to do with our identity as a superpower. If we concede that, we're no longer going to be... That's one of the major tent pegs of superpower dumb, if you want to put it that way.

Joshua Landis: 00:55:51 So, America is at a very, at a crossroads here. And we see this amongst the Democratic Party, who've been trying to hammer a Trump for his alliance with Saudi Arabia. But in some ways, they're undermining a central tent peg of American foreign policy since World War Two, which is, control over the Persian Gulf and this alliance with Saudi Arabia. We don't know what is going to replace that. And it's something that Americans aren't talking honestly about, and haven't really thought about.

Joshua Landis: 00:56:23 This is our relationship with Israel is another complex, traditional tent peg in our middle east foreign policy. And the democrats today are at six and seven's over our relationship with Israel. You listen to Bernie Sanders, or the sort of very left wing of the Democratic Party, Ilhan Omar and so forth, who are condemning Israel for its settlement policy, and it's rather nasty policy towards the Palestinians. And yet, Israel has been a central part of the Democratic Party. The vast majority of American Jews vote for the democrats and support the Democratic Party, and the Jewish community in America is so important to politics, to intelligent discourse.

Joshua Landis: 00:57:08 So we're in a time of real flux, where we have to rethink our global strategy. We have to retrench, there's no doubt about it. But we have to retrench, as you were saying earlier in a very smart way. Because if we unravel things in a chaotic way, the way we've been to a recently, we're going to be left with enemies on the right and the left. We're going to lose a lot of power quickly, and we don't have to do that. We are the major player in the world, and this is still American Century if you want it that way. I mean, 60s, 5, 70% of world trade is done in the dollar. We have tremendous power to shape things.

Joshua Landis: 00:57:46 So, America has an important role to play. We have to limit our ambitions, we have to have a much more realistic sense of what we can accomplish in the world, and we have to maintain our alliances and reshape our alliances. Those are going to be very important things for the next president.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:58:03 I think, it's not unreasonable to assume that if someone like, let's say, Joe Biden comes into office, he will retreat to the traditional strategies, he'll try to deploy some of what you're describing. If Donald Trump gets reelected, what are we looking at for the next four years, in your view? Or do you think that the establishment, the deep state, whatever you want to call it is so committed to ejecting him from office? They see him as such a threat that they're going to impeach him one way or the other? And then, what are we dealing with?

Joshua Landis: 00:58:35 I don't know the answer to that. I think that President Trump has tapped into some deep veins of American anxiety. Not only economic in terms of the economic gap, but also identity politics. I think that many Americans felt uncomfortable with Hillary Clinton's real retreat to identity politics where it was.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:58:56 Yes. Yeah, sure.

Joshua Landis: 00:58:57 Women interests, whether it was black Americans, Hispanic Americans. At the National Convention, she paraded one special interest group after the next. And I think, many white American men got very anxious. And a lot of American women got anxious, because they have sons who are white American men's, but also because of many Americans don't want to think of their country as a parceled between these different identity groups.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:59:24 It was very divisive. So the Democratic Party adopted a very divisive framework for thinking about politics, and that's what identity politics is.

Joshua Landis: 00:59:32 It is, and that's what played into Trump's hands. The democrats today, whether it's Bernie or Warren are trying to move away from that. That's what makes Bernie Sanders so compelling, because he sticks to his economic arguments with incredible, like a laser beam. And he is pitting that two percent of the top against the rest of America, and he's saying, look, we have to fix this. And Warren is moving in that direction, but she doesn't...

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:02 She has moved away from some of that identity politics language, I've noticed that. She's been moved away from some of it.

Joshua Landis: 01:00:07 She's tried to, but she comes back to it. And Trump has been trying to nail her, but first with the...

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:12 Pocahontas.

Joshua Landis: 01:00:13 ... Pocahontas thing. But so he has every interest to make her Mrs. identity politics, and he's going to try to find a way to chisel that into her. And we'll see.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:00:24 Well, interestingly enough, he has exploited the competencies of the democrats and the vacuum that they have created, in the same way that Vladimir Putin has exploited the competences of the American foreign policy establishment and the hypocrisy of American foreign policy, because that's the other thing. It's very difficult for us to make moral statements about the behavior of Russia or Iran, or turkey or China, when the United States has been caught red handed, many times doing things that are totally immoral in foreign policy. Whether we're talking about Abu Ghraib, whether we're talking about the...

Joshua Landis: 01:01:08 Killing a million Vietnamese in order to...

Demetri Kofinas: 01:01:10 Yes, sure.

Joshua Landis: 01:01:11 No, and there's no doubt that America is capable of being very self-serving.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:01:15 It's hard to know who the good guy is when it comes to American foreign policy sometimes, because the rhetoric is very lofty. But the record isn't really so pristine.

Joshua Landis: 01:01:24 It isn't, and American power has been abused a lot in the last 20 years. We had that sort of glowing record of the victory in World War Two, and a good cause is in the great generation, all that. Today, Americans have a much deeper sense of self-doubt, I guess, both economically in terms of the way their own society works, and the way that they can use their authority in the world.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:01:47 Dr. Landis before we end it, maybe you can give us a silver lining here. What if you gave us an optimistic outcome out of all of this, what can we take away to feel good about the future?

Joshua Landis: 01:01:57 Well, I think America holds wonderful lessons for the world. We still are an incredibly successful society. You look at our education system, the whole world and particularly in the Middle East. If you name any school, the American school, everybody wants to send their kids to it. People believe in what America has put together, a multi ethnic, a multicultural society that is ruled by a civic nationalism rather than an ethnic nationalism, that can produce fantastic institutions, and learning and progress.

Joshua Landis: 01:02:34 That model is still the envy of the world. And not a China, not a Russia have found something that can really replace it. It has become tarnished, and America's in a sense casting about for a more restrained vision of its place in the world. But I think there is a lot... There's so much that's good in the American model that needs to really be highlighted, and that should act as a real future for the world because we're seeing the rates of migration. The old national idea of a Switzerland or a sub Sweden, excuse me. That's all Swedes are Germany, that's all Germans....

Joshua Landis: 01:03:19 Immigration is going to change the face of nationalism in the blink of an eye, and it's doing it. And it's causing great backlash of this nationalist backlash, but it's happening. And America has a good answer for that, which is a way to integrate people with their civic nationalism, and how that can make you stronger. And I think that's a model that we need to hold up to the world as a counter measure to some of the darker, more atavistic nationalism that we see.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:03:51 Well, Dr. Landis, I really appreciate you making the time to speak with me today. Thank you so much.

Joshua Landis: 01:03:57 Well, it's a pleasure. Very good questions, very challenging.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:04:01 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media Design Studio in New York City. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundown full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page at patreon.com/hiddenforces.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:04:40 Today's episode was produced by me, and edited by the Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our

website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @hiddenforcespod, or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.