



Marco Rubio Picked as Secretary of State: What Does It Mean?

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): So there's a lot to talk about in terms of the last several days. There's been this flurry of announcements. I think some of them are clearly timed strategically in order to control the reaction. Today, for example, Donald Trump announced what was speculated for several days and was not well-received by a lot of his more populist and anti-war base, which is that Marco Rubio is likely to be Secretary of State. The delay made people think, and I heard from people close to Mar a Lago that there was actually an attempt to prevent that at the last minute from happening. But he did announce Marco Rubio today. But knowing that that would be disappointing to a lot of his supporters, he also announced two other choices that have generated a great deal of excitement and support within the more MAGA wing of the Republican Party, which is Tulsi Gabbard, who was named to be his Director of National Intelligence, and then Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz to serve as Trump's attorney general. Now to say that those last two choices have created a lot of backlash and anger and rage, not just among Democrats but Republicans as well, is to put that mildly. But that's actually the point. And that's what makes them such interesting choices, as the whole point of the election was that the D.C. swamp needed to be drained. The Washington establishment needed to be radically overhauled. And obviously, anybody who comes to do that is likely to be a threat to established powers in both parties. The choices that he made that are aligned with establishment factions, people like Rubio and Elise Stefanik, who was his ambassador to the UN, or people like Mike Huckabee, his ambassador to Israel, or John Ratcliffe, the new CIA director, these are people who likely are going to sail through the Senate because these are the kinds of people that the Senate wants to see and that Republican senators in particular, who tend to be more establishment oriented – they just elected as the new Republican leader replacing Mitch McConnell, John Thune, who is basically a Mitch McConnell clone, even though most Trump supporters preferred Senator Rick Scott – so the Republican in the Senate in particular are very protective of establishment prerogatives, and they dislike many of these choices, the ones that I think are the more interesting ones.

Here to begin with the least interesting one and the most alarming one, I think, is Trump's statement today. And there you see it on the screen. Quote: "It is my great honour to announce that Senator Marco Rubio of Florida is hereby nominated to be the United States Secretary of State. Marco Rubio is a highly respected leader and a very powerful voice for freedom. He will be a strong advocate for our nation, a true friend to our allies, and a fearless warrior who will never back down to our adversaries". Now, it's interesting because Marco Rubio has always been perceived as kind of a Lindsey Graham, John McCain type when it comes to foreign policy. He typically defends every war. He wants to go to war all over the place in Syria, Libya, Ukraine, the Middle East, to protect Israel. He's just constantly calling for more war. He wants to bomb Iran, wants seemingly to go to war with China. And so you can say, well, look, if Trump's choosing people like Marco Rubio, this must mean that his whole anti-establishment persona and brand is a fraud. After all, why would you choose Marco Rubio if you want to challenge establishment foreign policy dogma, given that Marco Rubio is as pure and loyal of a servant of that establishment dogma? And that's a reasonable question. I just think it's a very simple minded question, as if within each of these individual picks you can find the definitive truth about what the Trump administration, which hasn't even begun, is going to be. Do I wish that Marco Rubio had not been chosen for Secretary of State? Yes, I absolutely wish that. Would I have preferred any number of other alternatives, including the one that was reported to be his primary competition, Rick Grenell? Yes, I would have. Even though I have issues with Grenell as well, he would have been wildly preferable to someone like Marco Rubio. For me, Marco Rubio is about as bad as it gets. But the President is going to be Donald Trump. And if you want to say that Marco Rubio is somehow a pure representation of what the Trump administration is going to be in the second term, what does the pick of J.D. Vance say for Vice President? Who's now Trump's Vice President. What does the pick of Tulsi Gabbard as DNI say? What does the pick of Matt Gaetz say? Other picks are coming as well. You can't just look at one pick in isolation and say, oh, this person is going to run foreign policy for the United States. Trump's whole first term was characterised by going to war with many of his aides, by purposely selecting ones sometimes that were more warmongering or threatening that he viewed as a weapon that he could use, people like John Bolton. His first administration was filled with all kinds of militarists and warmongers and neocons. And yet the fact is, the undeniable historical fact is, that Donald Trump was the first American president in decades not to involve the United States in a new war. Much like President Biden and Harris did and Vice President Harris did, involving heavily the US in the war in Ukraine, multiple wars in the Middle East, involving Israel and Gaza, Israel and Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, which the United States just this week again bombed. So this attempt to try and suggest that any time Trump picks anybody other than a pacifist means that his whole antiwar agenda is somehow fraudulent, I think is extremely simplistic. And it also relies on this equally simplistic binary that either Trump is going to be a hardcore anti-interventionist peacenik who never will start wars or launch bombs or shoot missiles anywhere, or Trump is going to be the living, breathing embodiment of a pacifist, and there's just nothing in between. He's certainly not going to be a pacifist. The question is where on the scale is Trump going to fall? You can certainly look, I think, more toward his first term than you can toward each individual pick in order to determine that. You can certainly look at the picks as a whole as we're about to do and try and draw some meaning

from that. And that's what we're going to try and do now. So let's begin, first of all, with Rubio and obviously some of the most scathing things that have been said about Marco Rubio were said by Donald Trump, particularly in the 2016 campaign. As you might remember, the primary preferred candidate of the GOP establishment was Jeb Bush. And when his campaign flopped, when Trump quickly dispatched of him, the establishment moved to Marco Rubio. That was their second choice. And here are some of the things that Trump said about Marco Rubio. This was when Trump was running in 2015 and 2016 against him. Quote: "Sheldon Adelson is looking to give big dollars to Marco Rubio because he feels he can mould him into his perfect little puppet. I agree", said Trump. And then he also said in September of 2015, quote, "Rubio is totally owned by the lobbyists and special interests. A lightweight senator with the worst voting record in the Senate. Lazy!" And what's interesting about that is that Sheldon Adelson was a huge funder of Marco Rubio at the beginning because he really did believe that Marco Rubio would be the most loyal to Israel, which is Sheldon Adelson's only cause. And yet, as we reported on two weeks ago, Sheldon Adelson became a massive supporter of Donald Trump, and Trump himself said that in exchange for those tens of millions of dollars or hundreds of millions of dollars that the Adelsons were giving to the Trump campaign and the Republican Party, he said, Trump said, that Sheldon and Miriam Adelson were the people who were in the White House more than anybody else, except for those who work there. And Trump talked about how he gave them everything they wanted for Israel and even more, including recognising the sovereignty, Israeli sovereignty, over the Golan Heights, which is something that Trump said was always considered very extreme in this context. And it was. And he said, I gave that to the Adelsons. And he said, every time you give the Adelsons something, they come back right away demanding more for Israel. And I was like, give me two weeks to breathe and then I can do something more for Israel. And as it turned out, Miriam Adelson was Trump's biggest, or one of his top two or three biggest donors in the 2024 election, giving him \$100 million or so. So it is interesting that Trump was accusing Marco Rubio of turning into a puppet for the Israel lobby through Sheldon Adelson's money, and now that's a claim that a lot of people are suspicious about when it comes to Trump. Here is Rubio in 2020 when Mike Pompeo was the Secretary of State, the position that Marco Rubio, if he's confirmed, is about to hold, asking Rubio about things like Venezuela and whether or not the United States is doing enough to engineer regime change in Venezuela and standing up to other dictators around the world to try and remove them as well.

Marco Rubio: As you're well aware, there have been press reports, speculations, commentators and the like that have made much about recent allegations. And in one case, an interview the president gave in which they took from it that the president would be willing to engage in negotiations with Maduro and the Maduro regime in Venezuela, as you understand our policy, being in the position that you're in, could you envision as long as this administration is in office, we would ever negotiate with the Maduro regime for them to remain in power?

Mike Pompeo: Absolutely not. Our policy is not to negotiate with them for anything other than his departure from ruling that country.

GG: [00:10:26] All right. So Marco Rubio is somebody who very much believes in these kinds of interventions: We want to isolate all these governments around the world that have nothing to do with us, that aren't threatening America in any way, including Venezuela, Cuba and dictators all throughout Central and South America. He's fine with the dictators that we support that do our bidding, like in Saudi Arabia, Egypt. That's just classic neoconservatism. It's classic militarism. It's the DC blob for the last 60 years. It's we are going to control and pick and choose which governments are here and which factions are going to be ruling this country. And we're going to pick the ones and do coups for the ones we don't want, go to wars with the ones who aren't sufficiently pliable. He was a supporter of the Iraq war, the war in Syria to remove Assad, the war in Libya to remove Gaddafi, and has been a very vehement and vocal supporter of funding and arming Ukraine until the very end, until we finally defeat Putin and the Russians. And there are multiple picks that Trump has made who have very similar views to Marco Rubio. They're basically the views of people like Liz Cheney. But also, remember, Trump began this whole process by announcing that he wasn't going to choose Mike Pompeo or Nikki Haley to serve in his administration. And a lot of people applauded that. But as it turns out, there are people, many people of these choices who have very similar foreign policy ideologies to Liz Cheney, Nikki Haley and Mike Pompeo. I would be lying if I tried to deny that or if I tried to mitigate that in any way. The question, though, is, I don't think it's going to be Marco Rubio, Little Marco running foreign policy. Trump is going to be the president. And what has been happening over the past several years is even a lot of these people who hated Trump previously and said they did because of his foreign policy, that it was too isolationist, too anti-interventionist, have begun seeing that the Republican Party, is a Trump led party. And if they want to wield influence, they need to mould themselves to that ideology. Donald Trump is going to be the president, not Marco Rubio, not Mike Huckabee, not any of these other people who we've been discussing. And so, as I said, there are people in the administration already who have a lot of different views, such as Tulsi Gabbard, such as J.D. Vance, and nobody knows who's going to wield power. A lot of times it's just who Trump listens to last or who he instinctively wants to empower or punish or freeze out. Anyone telling you that they can divine definitive signals about what the Trump administration will be based on his cabinet choices either had no idea what happened in the first Trump administration or simply being extremely binary in a very simple way.

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