



## Media Melts Down Over Tulsi Gabbard's Nomination

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** Here, just as the last appointment that I want to cover from Donald Trump, this is also of today: "I am pleased to announce that former Congresswoman Lieutenant Colonel Tulsi Gabbard will serve as Director of National Intelligence. For over two decades, Tulsi has fought for all our country and the freedoms of all Americans. As a former candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, she has broad support in both parties. She is now a proud Republican". Now, Tulsi is often misunderstood because she's often railed against the evils of regime change war. She doesn't want to go to places like Iraq or Syria or Libya and change the government and replace it with a new one. She doesn't think that's the role of the United States. The same reason she doesn't think we should be doing that in Ukraine, but instead facilitating a peace. But that doesn't mean she's anti-war. She very much believes that the United States should be extremely aggressive in fighting against what she considers to be Muslim extremists organisations. But in terms of this position, her role would be to kind of root out the subversive elements in the intelligence community and prevent it from interfering in our domestic politics. And there I think she could actually do a very good job. Now, the choice of Tulsi Gabbard was also something that produced enormous outrage on the part of the Washington establishment, not quite as much as Matt Gaetz, but almost as much. And it's all based on this hysterical McCarthyite lie that they use against anyone who they disagree with in foreign policy that she's a Russian agent. Here is David Frum's reaction today, quote: "Why not cut out the middle woman and just name Putin as Director of National Intelligence?" And that was all begun when Hillary Clinton, in this statement in 2019, tried to insinuate that Tulsi Gabbard's real plan when running for president was that she was being groomed by the Russians to pull out of the race when she was running as a Democrat, run as a third party candidate, to split the Democratic vote between Biden and Gabbard and help Donald Trump win as the Kremlin wanted. Obviously, Hillary Clinton was lying. None of what she said actually ended up happening. Tulsi Gabbard did drop out of the race, but she didn't run as a third party. She dropped out and endorsed Joe Biden. She was still in the Democratic Party. She had just been three years earlier the vice chair of the DNC. Something that she resigned because she supported Bernie Sanders in protest of their cheating to make sure Hillary Clinton won. But here's what Hillary Clinton said about Tulsi Gabbard. This is the sort of thing that is now being used to try and stop her nomination.

**NBC News:** The bizarre Hillary Clinton attack, Betsy, on Tulsi Gabbard. First I want you folks to hear it.

**Hillary Clinton:** I think they've got their eye on somebody who's currently in the Democratic primary and are grooming her to be the third party candidate. She's the favourite of the Russians ... [A]nd that's assuming Jill Stone will give it up, which she might not, because she's also a Russian asset.

**NBC News:** Also a Russian asset... Tulsi Gabbard responded, Betsy: "You, the queen of warmongers, embodiment of corruption, personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long... It's now clear that this primary is between you and me. Don't cowardly hide behind your proxies during the race".

**GG:** Now, think about this for just a second. People like David Frum, who in 2002 were writing the lies that George Bush was going to read to convince the country to invade Iraq. He was, at the time, a speechwriter for George Bush. Knowing that he, David Frum, would never get near the war he was so desperate for whatever motives, he wanted the United States to start by removing the government of Iraq and replacing it with a more pro-US, pro-Israel government. He knew he was never get anywhere near that war. Hillary Clinton voted for that war, advocated for that war in Iraq as well. Obviously, the Clinton family has never gotten anywhere near the wars they support. Tulsi Gabbard volunteered for the military. She went and fought in that Iraq war that Hillary Clinton and David Frum were cheerleading from a safe distance. She remained in the military to this very day in the reserves. She's a Lieutenant Colonel. Imagine going to war in a war that people like Hillary Clinton and David Frum send you to, knowing that they have no intention to go and get near the violence, and then when you come back those people impugn your loyalty and your patriotism by accusing you of being a Russian agent or a Russian asset. Just imagine the audacity that it takes. And yet that is becoming one of the main goals, to stop Tulsi Gabbard. I think Tulsi Gabbard and Matt Gaetz and possibly Pete Hegseth are going to be among the people of the current nominees, encountering the most difficulty in getting confirmation even from the Republican Senate. And that doesn't assume other nominees are likely to come, including RFK Jr, who is likely to lead some health agency, maybe the FDA or be Secretary of Health and Human Services, something like that, that would also encounter a lot of opposition. Any one of these picks that is disruptive to or threatening of establishment power and establishment dogma in any way, those are going to be the picks that generate the most upset. And that's true of Republican senators as well, many of whom are more like David Frum and Bill Kristol and Liz Cheney than they are like the Trump wing of the Republican Party that they mouthed loyalty to, but are really there to prevent and limit it from doing anything other than cutting corporate taxes and appointing conservative judges to the Supreme Court. That's about all they really care about. Now, I just want to conclude with this important question, which is: As I said, Donald Trump in 2016 ran on a promise to overhaul America's foreign policy, ranted and raved against the evils of the Iraq war. He talked constantly about the deep state, the US security state, how subversive and corrupted they are. And that's only gotten more radicalised over the next many years. He has often talked about the stupidity of wars. Why are we in Syria trying

to change their government? Why are we in Ukraine spending our money there? And that really has changed the face of the Republican Party. And a lot of people who have been conservative for a long time in the Republican Party who believe in this more militaristic and neocon worldview, have started to slightly transform it, abandon it, even repudiate it. Whether that's because they are careerist, knowing that they have to sound like Trump in order to get the kind of appointments they just got, or whether it's because they really are starting to see the world a little bit differently, it's impossible to know. But that definitely is what a lot of these people who we just covered, who are being, I think, rightly characterised as being more warmonger, more establishment foreign policy adherence than certainly Donald Trump was, whether that they have really started to take a different turn and will continue to take a different term given that it's Donald Trump and not Marco Rubio or Elise Stefanik, who will be president.

The New York Times surprisingly published a very nuanced article about exactly this question. And here's what the title was. Quote: *Once They Were Neocons. Now Trump's Foreign Policy Picks Are All, quote, 'America First'.* Here's how The New York Times explored this question. Quote: "The Republican Party used to have a label for the kind of foreign policy hawk that President-elect Donald J. Trump named on Tuesday as his national security adviser and is considering as a secretary of state:", meaning Marco Rubio, "neocons". "But while they were once neocons, over the past few years, Representative Michael Waltz and Senator Marco Rubio, both of Florida, have gradually shifted their positions. Sounding less like former Vice President Dick Cheney or John Bolton, who served as Mr. Trump's third national security adviser, they no longer talk about foreign interventions or the prospects of regime change. Instead, they speak the language of the 'America First' movement, and fit more comfortably within Mr. Trump's often erratic worldview, in which deal-making reigns over ideology". They're saying that that is a bad thing; his erratic world view in which he prefers to make deals rather than go to war through ideology, which I think is one of the best things about Trump and I hope that it finds expression. The Times goes on, quote, "The result is that Mr. Trump may end up with a foreign policy team composed of deep loyalists, but with roots and familiar Republican approaches. The shift that the two men have made", meaning his choice for national security adviser Mike Waltz and the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio", the shift that those two men have made reflects the broader marginalisation of neocons throughout the Republican Party after the disaster in Iraq and the rise of America First. Mr. Trump's loyalists, and much of the party, have now made a full conversion to that worldview, few more enthusiastically than Pete Hegseth, the Fox News host who was chosen as defence secretary on Tuesday". This is The New York Times quoting Pete Hegseth as the example of the person who used to have a neocon world view and who has now shifted and abandoned that in the era of Donald Trump. This is them quoting Pete Hegseth on this question, quote: "I think a lot of us who were very hawkish and believe in American military might and strength were very resistant to how candidate Trump characterised the wars", meaning the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. And he was criticising him. He said, I'm very hawkish and I was very resistant to Trump's criticism of the war. But then he went on: "But if we are honest with ourselves, there is no doubt that we need to radically reorient how we do it. How much money we have invested, how many lives we have invested, and how it

actually has made us safer? Is it still worth it?" "For Mr. Rubio and Mr. Waltz to drift from their previous positions to their current ones has been slow, evident in shadings of what they said at conservative conferences or in interviews on Fox News, and how they altered their votes at key moments in the past few years. Ukraine has been a litmus test. When Russia first invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Mr. Rubio, the number two on the Senate Intelligence Committee applauded the rush to send arms, aid and intelligence to the Ukrainians. So did Mr. Waltz, a former Green Beret who enthusiastically supported giving Zelensky everything he needed to drive Russian troops out. But by this spring, for each of their own reasons, Mr. Rubio and Mr. Waltz voted against the last major aid package to support Ukraine. And to justify their new position, Mr. Rubio declared that the United States could not afford to fight for Ukraine's freedom while illegal immigrants were coming over the southern border. For his part, Mr. Waltz wrote in an opinion essay for Fox News that President Biden, quote, 'has neither explained the American objective in Ukraine nor his strategy to achieve it'. Will American military spending continue until Ukraine is pushed Russia back to its prewar boundaries? Its pre-2014 boundaries? Or until the Putin regime collapses? Nearly ten years ago, when Mr. Rubio was running for the Republican nomination for president against Mr. Trump, the Florida senator spoke at the Council on Foreign Relations – the heart of the traditional foreign policy establishment. He quoted John F. Kennedy and made the case that the younger Mr. Bush had made: that American power must, quote, 'be motivated by a desire to expand freedom, rather than simply expand its own territory'. Quote, 'While America did not intend to become the world's indispensable power', said Senator Rubio, 'that is exactly what our economic and political freedoms have made us'. He castigated President Obama and the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, for being too timid in facing up to dictators from Syria to China. Quote, 'The free nations of the world will still look to America to champion our shared ideals'." That's pure neocon dogma. And then The Times said this, quote, "But today, Mr. Rubio makes a different, more pragmatic and more Trumpian case: that the way to keep America out of wars, is to build up its strength, invest in key technologies and domestic supply chains for critical materials, and use tariffs to block threatening imports. Outside experts say Mr. Trump learned something from the chaos of the first term and has adjusted accordingly. Quote, 'Over the past eight years, he has collected enough accolades to staff his foreign policy and national security team with like-minded officials'. Daniel W. Drezner, a professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, wrote this week in Foreign Affairs. Quote, 'Trump is far less likely to meet resistance from his own political appointees. Other checks on Trump's policies will also be weaker', he said, and the result will be, quote, 'that the United States will speak with one voice on foreign policy and that voice will be Donald Trump's'."

Now, I don't want to be nearly as rosy-eyed as The New York Times, for whatever reason was in that article about the abandonment of neoconservative and warmongering ideology on the part of a lot of these choices that Trump has selected, such as Marco Rubio and Waltz and others, but I do think that it is absolutely true that the Republican Party has been remade in Donald Trump's image. And the first term of his presidency contained some of Donald Trump taking strong control and insisting that things be done with the way he wants, but others being places where a lot of his appointees who had a much different ideology than he did,

who wanted to sabotage his ideology, ran circles around him. So that's why I say I don't know the answer to the question of what this actually signals. Will Trump, at 78 years old, now eight years older than he was when he first took office in 2016, be energetic enough, vibrant enough, motivated enough, interested enough, to take the reins and say: No, this is how foreign policy will be run. And if he isn't, will he deputise someone like J.D. Vance or Tulsi Gabbard, or in empower Matt Gaetz, or other appointees that may be coming that definitely have a much different worldview, or will Marco Rubio and Mike Huckabee and John Ratcliffe of the CIA and his national security advisor, Mike Waltz, simply be able to pretend all along that they were appeasing Trump, but in reality, they have the same war mongering mentality: Let's go have war with China, let's go to war for Israel, let's banish and defeat Putin, and they'll be able to just get their way. No one knows the answers to those questions. But that's why I say, well, I don't purport to have certainty about what these appointees suggest or signify or what the second Trump administration will be. And while I certainly dislike several of them, to put that mildly, I think to say, oh, this means that Trump's whole anti-intervention approach is a fraud, that's just partisan idiocy. It's just very binary thinking. And I think that a lot of these choices, as The New York Times article suggests, are a lot more complex and nuanced, both in terms of what these people's beliefs are and how those beliefs, even if as bad as they always were, will find expression, if at all, in this second Trump administration. I think this is going to take a lot of vigilance to prevent the second Trump administration from falling into old traditional Republican foreign policy dogma that has been so destructive. But it's still the same Donald Trump, the same instincts that he's always had. And there are other people in the administration, beginning with his vice president, who very much have those same instincts, very much in contact with Marco Rubio's of the world, and that will be how this all shakes out, how this all emerges. And a lot of people who voted for Trump or supported Trump or even who didn't will have a lot of say, a lot of role in determining what this foreign policy ends up being.

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