



Gaetz of Heaven, Gaetz of Hell: Is Trump Playing 3-D Chess With His Oddest Nomination?

Perhaps President-elect Donald Trump's most shocking Cabinet nomination thus far is ex-Congressman Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) for attorney general. Both loved and hated by many, Trump's naming of him Wednesday ignited a firestorm of speculation on the president-elect's motives. Is there method to what some would call his madness?

Theorizing about this Friday, commentator Bill Hansmann put forth several possibilities. And one of them, if the real explanation, would mean Trump is playing 3-D chess. Let's examine the theories.



AP Images
Matt Gaetz

Loyalty

Hansmann correctly [points out](#) that Trump treasures loyalty perhaps above all other qualities. His critics malign him for this, claiming he wants mindless yes-men. But this priority is understandable. After all, Trump was undermined by the Deep State during his first term like no other president.

At this point, too, Trump has had eight years since his initial election to learn, firsthand, who the loyalists are. He can see who stood by him not only during his first term, but during his dark years out of power, when many thought he'd never again win the White House.

Gaetz fits the bill. Moreover, "His dedication to reining in Merrick Garland's DoJ lawfare and other extracurricular hijinks places him high on any list of loyalists," writes Hansmann.

Gamesmanship?

Hansmann next wonders if the Gaetz pick is an "in your face" move. Is it directed at the Democrats and RINOs who consider the congressman the Gaetz of Hell?

While Hansmann says Trump certainly isn't above this kind of gamesmanship, and he isn't, this theory may be unlikely. Just consider, for example, Trump's reaction to Democratic New York Governor Kathy Hochul's recently touted congestion pricing scheme for NYC. He began diplomatically, [saying](#) "I have great respect" for Hochul, but.... (This is even though, as a New Yorker, I can say that there's nothing to respect about her.) This perhaps signals that Trump has exited campaign mode and has entered governance mode. He clearly grasps that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. (And the Establishment insects he can fumigate away must be cajoled).

The 3-D Chess?

As diplomatic as Trump may end up being, though, many in Washington are saying the confirmation gates will nonetheless be closed to Gaetz. Trump and his allies certainly have considered this eventuality, however, and what's up their sleeve may be quite interesting. As Hansmann writes:

Since [Marco Rubio's nomination](#) as Secretary of State is almost certain to be approved,



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 16, 2024

Florida governor Ron DeSantis will select an individual to fill Rubio's seat. This selection will not occur until the nomination process is complete. Rubio is unlikely to resign from the Senate until he is approved as Secretary of State, unlike Gaetz's immediate resignation from the House of Representatives, prompting a rapid replacement to prevent damaging the fragile House majority. At that time, and at Donald Trump's request, DeSantis could name Gaetz as senator. The Democrats, celebrating the defeat of Gaetz's nomination, would suddenly find themselves looking at Senator Matt Gaetz — a look they would find both unpleasant and unamusing. Trump may well be playing 3-D chess with the nomination process while the opposition is staring at a checkerboard. If this scenario proves to be the case, it will be long remembered for its impudence and audacity.

This outcome would also probably be better for Gaetz and the country. As attorney general, Gaetz would likely serve four years or less. As a senator, he'd finish out Rubio's term, which ends in 2029. He'd then have strong reelection chances, being a smart, attractive, articulate candidate enjoying the benefits of cured incumbency.

The Art of the Deal?

Yet there's another factor. What if Trump *knows* Gaetz won't be confirmed but realizes that afterward, his next nominee will appear moderate in comparison? Trump is known for this strategy, I believe: First you ask for more than you actually want. In this way, you're moving the "middle" the two sides will eventually meet in more toward your ideal outcome. Realize here that after rejecting Trump's first nominee, the Democrats would be under greater pressure to confirm his next one. Doing otherwise could make them appear as obstructionists.

And Trump's next nominee could be someone such as attorney and commentator Jeanine Pirro. (She has been suggested as a possibility.) As a former prosecutor and judge, Pirro is well qualified for the role. She also has great name recognition and gravitas and would pursue justice and not lawfare. The kicker is that she's still what Trump desires — she's loyal and a pit bull.

The Rest of the Story

And what if Gaetz does get confirmed? Then, Hansmann writes,

DeSantis will pick a senator other than the new attorney general. If the President-elect is given to a bit of nepotism, he certainly could do worse than his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump. She distinguished herself as co-chair of the Republican National Committee and has hinted strongly that politics is in her future. Other possible Rubio replacements would include DeSantis' chief of staff, James [Uthmeier], a not unprecedented move that would allow DeSantis, out of office by 2026, to step in to be elected to that seat. Also, 13th District congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna — a move likely to be popular among the state's and nation's Hispanic population, and the solid 16th District Congressman Vern [Buchanan] would be considered.

The problem with nepotism is that even with the best intentions, it's never a good look. And whomever DeSantis picks, there are several prerequisites. The individual must, for starters, be an ideologically sound person of character who puts America (and Truth, ideally) first. Second, the new senator should be intelligent, articulate, *and* attractive — as Marco Rubio is. After all, if you can't get reelected and



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hold the seat, the effort is for naught.

Whatever the outcome, though, there's something we can be sure of: The process will not be boring.



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