

What happened to Marco Rubio? | Opinion



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio gives a media briefing during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting at the Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur Friday, July 11, 2025. (Mandel Ngan/Pool Photo via AP)

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There was a time when Marco Rubio was one of the most vocal champions of American diplomacy. As a U.S. senator and a prominent member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Rubio was a tireless advocate for the Department of State. He traveled frequently to our embassies around the world, collaborating closely with our diplomatic corps. He deeply understood the power of diplomacy in protecting America's interests and values abroad. He regularly sponsored legislation to strengthen the department, pushed for the nomination and confirmation of qualified

ambassadors, and consistently voiced support for the dedicated public servants who carry out our foreign policy.

That Marco Rubio has vanished.

Since taking the helm as Secretary of State under President Trump, Rubio has undergone a stunning and deeply troubling transformation. The same institution he once championed is now in his crosshairs. In a matter of months, he has gutted the State Department's workforce, [ordering the dismissal](#) of over 1,300 career professionals on July 11 alone, and has promised that many more firings will take place in coming months. In an inordinately cowardly and cruel act, Rubio stayed away from the department that day, ignoring the men and women whose careers and life plans were decimated by his flippant decision-making.

These people are not, as President Trump says, members of any "deep state" bureaucratic machine. They are smart, dedicated professionals with many decades of service, irreplaceable institutional knowledge and invaluable regional and technical expertise. They are patriots who have dedicated their lives to advancing America's interests and defending its values around the globe.

What makes this reversal not just baffling but dangerous is its context. We live in a time of rising authoritarianism, global instability and increasing challenges to democratic norms. Historically, the United States has responded by standing firm, with military might accompanied by moral leadership, by promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law around the world. These values have been the lifeblood of our diplomacy. Yet under Rubio's leadership, the very institution that is responsible for these critical missions is being gutted.

Gone are the experts who helped build coalitions to defend freedom. Gone are the advocates who fought for women's rights, LGBTQ+ equality, press freedom and the protection of civil society abroad. And with them, gone too is the credibility of America's claim to be a beacon of liberty the world over.

Equally disturbing is Rubio's dismantling of efforts to build a diplomatic corps that reflects America's diversity. A strong, resilient foreign service requires perspectives from every corner of our society. Yet under Rubio's tenure, programs to recruit and retain diverse talent have been abandoned, sending a chilling message that our global face should not reflect our national fabric.

America is less secure today because of these choices. Allies are questioning our reliability. Adversaries are exploiting our absence on the global stage. And inside the Department of State, morale has plummeted, with professionals once proud to serve now demoralized, distrusted or displaced.

If Rubio once believed in the importance of diplomacy, why has he turned against it? Is it political expediency? Personal ambition? Or a misguided belief that diplomacy is

weakness? Whatever the reason, the result is the same: a weakened America, retreating from the world, abandoning the values we have long claimed to champion.

We need a Secretary of State who will restore, not tear down; who will lead, not lash out. Marco Rubio once knew the true power and purpose of the State Department. It's time he remembers — or steps aside for someone who does.

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