

My existing thoughts about Tulsi before reading the post

She's generally on the left and mildly on the side of social democracy but her main issue is ending illegal American foreign intervention. Quite a few things in her foreign policy are questionable. She is interesting in how ready she is to oppose the establishment. However, I find her valuable specifically for hard opposition to interventions and regime change, in shifting the discourse similar to how Bernie did in 2016 for many other issues.

This is kind of weird but I don't know what to conclude from it:

<https://www.tulsi2020.com/updates/2019-10-24-mahalo-nui-loa>

Her campaign site and general site hit many of the major left issues (healthcare, climate change, criminal justice, war on drugs, social issues, economy, etc.) and has some interesting votes listed. Way too much to include all my thoughts on these, and I haven't gone through every page anyway.

<https://www.tulsigabbard.org/> <https://www.tulsi2020.com/>

Looking through OnTheIssues everything looks good to me except:

- Voted NO on workforce training by state block grants & industry partners. (Mar 2013)
- Rated 85% by the NAPO, indicating a tough-on-crime stance. (Dec 2014)
- \$25B more loans from Export-Import Bank. (Feb 2015)

https://www.ontheissues.org/House/Tulsi_Gabbard.htm

Positive:

- Resigned as DNC chair in order to endorse Bernie [1]
- DNC rigged election against Bernie [2]
- Eliminate super delegates and have open primaries [2]
- Drop charges on Assange and pardon Snowden [3]
- Paper ballots and funding [4]
- Opposes intervention in Venezuela [5]
- One of 3 congress members to oppose PAYGO [6]
- Cosponsored reinstating Glass-Steagall [7] [8]
- Protested Dakota Access Pipeline [9]
- Though she spoke against the Iran Nuclear Deal, her voting record supports it [10] [11]
- Introduced H.R.1069 No More Presidential Wars Act [12]
- Calls out Iraq, intelligence agencies, and military industrial complex [13]
- Opposes supporting Saudi Arabia in Yemen [14]
- Introduced Stop Arming Terrorists Act [15]

Negative:

- Watered down to Public Option instead of Medicare for All [156]
- Voted to condemn BDS of Israel [17]
- Possible ties to Hindu nationalists and Modi, though might be overstated [18] [19]
- War against terrorists: hawk, regime change: dove [20]
- Called Iran the leading state-sponsor of terrorism, waffled on Iran Nuclear Deal [21] [22]
- Voted for SAFE Act [23] [24] [25] [26]
- Possibly pro-torture at one point, though she voted for H.R.1735, and now opposes it [27] [28]
- Support of drone strikes [20] [29]
- Questionable comments on el-Sisi, though I'm not entirely convinced [30]
- Opposed H.C.R. 121 condemning Assad (though her rationale bares consideration) [31] [32]
- This tweet is extremely cringe ... not sure how to interpret it [33]

- [A] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsi_Gabbard
- [B] https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Tulsi_Gabbard
- [C] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXKtEEiaj9k>
- [D] <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2017/6/8/1670163/-Why-is-Daily-Kos-Lying-About-Tulsi-s-Record-on-Progressive-Issues-Read-on-for-the-Real-Facts>
- [E] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/05/tulsi-gabbard-president-sanders-democratic-party>
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- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsi_Gabbard.
- [2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0a5t5XeMfU>
- [3] <https://www.newsweek.com/tulsi-gabbard-julian-assange-edward-snowden-pardon-dropped-charges-joe-rogan-1425802>
- [4] <https://medium.com/@progressivepinay/why-congress-must-pass-tulsi-gabbards-securing-america-s-elections-act-8247898c9855>
- [5] https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-american-left-must-find-its-voice-on-venezuela/2019/02/07/0481f918-2b20-11e9-984d-9b8fba003e81_story.html
- [6] <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/04/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-pay-go/>
- [7] <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/790/cosponsors>
- [8] <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2176/cosponsors>
- [9] <https://observer.com/2016/11/tulsi-gabbard-to-join-veterans-at-standing-rock-to-protest-dakota-access-pipeline/>
- [10] <https://twitter.com/mtracey/status/1084229470087774209>
- [11] <https://www.sandersinstitute.com/blog/rep-tulsi-gabbard-condemns-president-trumps-withdrawal-from-iran-nuclear-deal>
- [12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_More_Presidential_Wars_Act
- [13] <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/podcast-tulsi-gabbard-kamala-harris-syria-iraq-870003/>
- [14] <https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/video-rep-tulsi-gabbard-urges-congress-oppose-authorization-war-against-iran>
- [15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stop_Arming_Terrorists_Act
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- [16] <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/09/25/tulsi-gabbard-2020-democrat-candidate>
- [17] <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2019/roll497.xml>
- [18] <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/05/tulsi-gabbard-2020-hindu-nationalist-modi/>
- [19] <https://youtu.be/OXEXyJaHVRA?t=248>
- [20] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/05/tulsi-gabbard-president-sanders-democratic-party>
- [21] <https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/rep-tulsi-gabbard-renews-calls-critical-funding-missile-defense-fy2015-budget>
- [22] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/01/yes-tulsi-gabbard-iran-deal-war-hawk>
- [23] <https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/open-letter-rep-tulsi-gabbard-regarding-safe-act>
- [24] <https://time.com/4119155/syrian-refugees-congress-safe-act/>
- [25] <https://www.hias.org/blog/what-you-need-know-about-american-safe-act>
- [26] <https://medium.com/@pplswar/tulsi-gabbard-voted-to-make-it-virtually-impossible-for-syrian-refugees-to-come-to-the-u-s-11463d0a7a5a>
- [27] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNqbE3jApb8>
- [28] <https://www.tulsigabbard.org/tulsi-gabbard-on-regime-change-war>
- [29] <https://theintercept.com/2018/01/20/tulsi-gabbard-syria-isis-al-qaeda/>
- [30] <https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/photos-rep-tulsi-gabbard-meets-egypt-president-el-sisi-and-other-leaders-cairo>
- [31] <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2016/roll113.xml>
- [32] <https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/rep-tulsi-gabbard-statement-vote-against-hconres121>
- [33] <https://twitter.com/TulsiGabbard/status/649615636088365058>

TL;DR overall my opinion of her didn't change that much, though in the course of this I did learn a number of new things. Some of these points are mildly concerning, but I'm not going to take completely seriously without more evidence. I still find her valuable as a strong voice against regime change.

https://old.reddit.com/r/politics/comments/dmwp7d/gabbard_abruptly_drops_house_reelection_bid/f55lxvn/

(1) Tulsi Gabbard comes from a family of conservative activists, most famous for their opposition to gay marriage in Hawaii: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/05/tulsi-gabbard-president-sanders-democratic-party>

I guess this is important in order to understand she had a very hostile environment to overcome on her journey towards the left? I don't find this to be a criticism by itself, but I suppose it's intended to be taken as additional context with the rest of the points in the post.

(2) Tulsi Gabbard has said her personal views on LGBT equality haven't changed as recently as 2015: <https://www.ozy.com/rising-stars/tulsi-gabbard-a-young-star-headed-for-the-cabinet/62604>

Unfortunate and reminiscent of Hillary. Again, as mentioned above, this seems largely due to her parents, and seemingly she has flipped on this.

Her (apparently second) apology for it (the full text is in the description so you can read instead of watching): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLb3KVBerig>

Some quotes from it:

- Opening sentence: "In my past I said and believed things that were wrong"
- "He was an activist who was fighting against gay rights and marriage equality in Hawaii – and at that time, I forcefully defended him and his cause."
- "When we deny LGBTQ people the basic rights that exist for every American, we are denying their humanity"
- "my past positions on these issues were at odds with my values, my aloha, and that they were causing people harm."

She isn't ducking responsibility like Hillary kept doing; the apology seems sincere to me.

Her ratings from the Human Rights Campaign have been 92%, 100%, 88%, and 100%.
<https://votesmart.org/candidate/evaluations/129306/tulsi-gabbard/76>

If someone has legitimately changed and overcome an oppressive upbringing to finally arrive at the correct position, we can't hold it against them. Of course, Bernie has been consistent on this forever,

(3) Tulsi Gabbard is rated "F" by Progressive Punch for voting with Republicans, despite the strong progressive lean of her district: <https://imgur.com/wDhVnKq>

Using that site, if we look at "Crucial Votes % Lifetime" Tulsi is 75.94% putting her at 146th place. If we look at "Overall % Lifetime" Tulsi is 92.69% putting her at 150th place.

<https://progressivepunch.org/scores.htm?topic=&house=house&sort=crucial-lifetime&order=down&party=>

That seems to imply she's further left than ¾ of the House, which isn't necessarily a high bar, but I don't think paints her as right-leaning. Further, I tend to be very wary of metrics of this sort. Some direct comparisons:

- Raul Grijalva: 94%
- Ro Khanna: 94%
- Barbara Lee: 92%
- Tom Graves: 28%
- Justin Amash: 30%
- Mick Mulvaney: 0%

<https://projects.propublica.org/represent/members/G000571-tulsi-gabbard/compare-votes/>

This site puts her pretty centrist:

https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/tulsi_gabbard/412532

Skimming her ballotpedia didn't show anything that stood out honestly; a couple of votes make her look slightly progressive. Her record is meh, her current presidential platform is reasonably progressive, I would hazard to say she's my third pick after Bernie, Warren, if we trust her current platform and compared to the other democratic candidates.

(4) Tulsi Gabbard was nearly a part of Trump's cabinet at Steve Bannon's suggestion:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/democratic-rep-tulsi-gabbard-consideration-trump-cabinet/story?id=43696303> <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/307106-bannon-set-up-trump-gabbard-meeting>

Skimming those articles it looks like Bannon likes her because:

- She's a veteran
- She's a democrat willing to vocally criticize Obama
- "Gabbard meshes with Trump's foreign policy views in that she vehemently opposes U.S.-led regime change."
- "she voted for a GOP bill last year to conduct stricter background checks on refugees"

The first 3 are neutral or positive to me, the last one negative. Quote from her:

"However, I believe we can disagree, even strongly, but still come together on issues that matter to the American people and affect their daily lives. We cannot allow continued divisiveness to destroy our country ... I shared with him my grave concerns that escalating the war in Syria by implementing a so-called no fly/safe zone would be disastrous for the Syrian people, our country and the world," she said. "It would lead to more death and suffering, exacerbate the refugee crisis, strengthen ISIS and al-Qaeda and bring us into a direct conflict with Russia, which could result in a nuclear war. We discussed my bill to end our country's illegal war to overthrow the Syrian government and the need to focus our precious resources on rebuilding our own country and on defeating al-Qaeda, ISIS and other terrorist groups who pose a threat to the American people."

(5) Tulsi Gabbard has also been praised multiple times by Steve Bannon, Trump's former strategist and prolific white nationalist propagandist: <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/36352314/bannon-name-drops-hawaii-congresswoman-in-national-interview/>

I don't understand how this can be viewed in good faith and makes me question the integrity of the poster. The full quote from Bannon is:

"Bernie Sanders understands, Sherrod Brown understands, Tim Ryan understands, Seth Molton understands, Tulsi Gabbard understands that that's what can win in this country."

Tulsi's response when asked about the interview:

"Trump's so-called populism has been a fraud."

Are we supposed to be mad that Bannon says Bernie and Tulsi understand economic populism? Framing this point as "Bannon praised Tulsi" to smear Tulsi is ridiculous to me.

(6) Tulsi Gabbard declined to join 169 Democrats in condemning Trump for appointing Steve Bannon to his cabinet administration: <https://mauitime.com/news/politics/why-didnt-rep-tulsi-gabbard-join-169-of-her-colleagues-in-denouncing-trump-appointee-stephen-bannon/>

Could be a political calculation in case she thought they actually would put her in the administration, and whether that's a good thing or bad thing I guess depends on your overall impression of Tulsi. I don't have context to know what actually goes into signing such letters, or if there are legitimate reasons someone might have missed it. Overall feels bad but is rather specific.

(7) Tulsi Gabbard isn't anti-war. She's a self-described hawk against terrorists. Her narrow objections center around efforts to spread democracy: "In short, when it comes to the war against terrorists, I'm a hawk," Gabbard said. "When it comes to counterproductive wars of regime change, I'm a dove.": <https://www.votetulsi.com/node/27796>

Agree with the hawk on terrorists criticism. Disagree with the framing of the second part. Saying the purpose of our regime-change wars is to spread democracy is at best ignorant, but in reality I would call it gross propaganda or simply lying.

(8) Tulsi Gabbard copies the rhetoric of Republicans: Gabbard voted against condemning Bashar al-Assad, president of Syria, and was praised by conservative media for publicly challenging President Barack Obama over his refusal to use the term "Islamic extremism" when discussing terrorism: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/28/tulsi-gabbard-slams-obamas-refusal-to-say-islamic/>

She has an interesting reason for that vote that I can't dismiss out of hand and that jives with her platform [32] but overall I think it was the wrong choice. Her rationale generally being: condemning Assad is just a tool to control public discourse and set the stage for regime change.

The debate around "radical Islam" is weird to me. Of course we oppose "radical Islam" which is to say Jihadism, Wahabism, etc. Saying "radical Islam" should by definition mean something different than just "Islam." We're not against "Islam" we're against "radical Islam". But I guess it's easy for bad actors to co-opt and conflate that usage to imply all Islam is radical terrorists. So in principle I think she's fine here, but the optics aren't good.

Although this bullet point doesn't mention it, I agree with the article for criticizing her dismissal of factors outside of religion influencing terrorism. If nothing else, American acts play a huge role, and I'm sure economics and other factors do as well. That being said, we do need to acknowledge that radical Islam exists, and it's an extremely dangerous ideology given its ability to enable suicide bombings and etc.

(9) Tulsi Gabbard also copies the policy of Republicans, voting with them to block Syrian refugees: <https://medium.com/@pplswar/tulsi-gabbard-voted-to-make-it-virtually-impossible-for-syrian-refugees-to-come-to-the-u-s-11463d0a7a5a>

Despite her espoused reasons, I agree with this criticism. [23] [24] [25] [26]

(10) Tulsi Gabbard has multiple connections to Hindu nationalists: <https://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/curious-islamophobic-politics-dem-congressmember-tulsi-gabbard>

I'm not convinced this is as bad as everyone says it is. There is a real history of Hindu persecution to take into account here. I'll say these ties are worrying, but I won't count them against her until there's more direct evidence of it affecting her policy. Being willing to meet with world leaders isn't a bad thing. [18] [19]

Also Obama had a close relationship with Modi. He was cleared of some charges, though questioning the system that cleared him I think is reasonable:

<https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/12/26/court-clears-narendra-modi-in-riots-case/>

Also came across this, though I'm not entirely sold:

"I do not believe the timing of this hearing is a coincidence. The national elections in India begin on Monday and continue until May 12. I am concerned that the goal of this hearing is to influence the outcome of India's national elections, which is not an appropriate role for the US Congress. Such interference with India's elections would undermine our shared goals. The United States of America should always stand for religious freedom for all people in all countries and should always work to that end. In this regard, we need to be especially careful not to directly or indirectly contribute to sectarian strife in India or other countries. I am concerned that this hearing is an attempt to foment fear and loathing purely for political purposes, and that it's being done to influence India's national elections. This is wrong and it will contribute to further sectarian division in India and will undermine the national interests of the United States."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kWm2ai9yJE>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/US-gears-up-for-life-after-UPA-eclipse-rethink-on-Modi-visa-issue-possible/articleshow/27146592.cms>

(11) Tulsi Gabbard frequently repeats Russian talking points and works to legitimize Assad: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/26/tulsi-gabbard-bashar-al-assad-syria-democrats>

Again, meeting with world leaders isn't a bad thing. Whether her exact policies will lead to peace is debatable, but you have to be willing to start the conversation, which is more than can be said for many politicians. I have to agree with this:

"Whatever you think of President Assad, the fact is that he is the president of Syria," Gabbard said. "In order for any possibility of a viable peace agreement to occur, there has to be a conversation with him."

I wasn't aware this was a thing: "the Logan Act, a federal statute barring unauthorized individuals from conferring with a foreign government involved in a dispute with the US".

According to Tulsi (though I couldn't find independent confirmation):

- Tulsi informed the House Ethics Committee of her trip a month prior to going to Syria
- For security reasons, journalists and government officials who were aware of her trip kept it confidential until she was safely out of the country

<https://www.tulsigabbard.org/tulsi-gabbard-on-syria>

- The 7-day trip was approved by the House Ethics Committee, as required by House rules, and was not taxpayer funded.

<https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/congresswoman-tulsi-gabbard-returns-syria-renewed-calls-end-regime-change-war>

Illegal and ill-advised, maybe, but I don't find it overly concerning.

The article also says: "During her interview with CNN, Gabbard claimed the US was funding terrorist groups by assisting Syrian rebels and further pushed a talking point propagated by the Assad regime and the Russian government that there are no moderate rebels in Syria."

Which is incorrect or at the very least suspect:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/16/dont-rely-syria-moderate-fighting-force-anti-isis>
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/03/01/468604939/five-years-on-syrias-moderate-rebels-are-exhausted-and-sidelined>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-s-moderates-have-disappeared-and-there-are-no-good-guys-a6679406.html>

(12) Tulsi Gabbard was one of only 3 representatives to not condemn Assad for gassing Syrian civilians and the only Democrat: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/121/text> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/20/house-democrats-refugee-bill-social-media-backlash>

Isn't this a repeat of the first part of point #8? See answer there.

(13) Tulsi Gabbard has introduced legislation pushed by GOP-megadonor, Sheldon Adelson: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics-adelson-idUSBREA2P0BJ20140326>

I don't feel that strongly about this. According to Tulsi this hurts the poor and enables criminal activity. There's some letter from Attorneys General endorsing this bill, as well as the FBI. I wasn't able to find evidence of her receiving money from Adelson after a couple minutes of googling.

Did they have a meeting? As far as I can tell Tulsi and Adelson support this bill merely by coincidence.

<https://gabbard.house.gov/news/press-releases/chaffetz-gabbard-work-restore-americas-wire-act>
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/214631788/State-Attorneys-General-Letter-on-the-Wire-Act>

(14) Tulsi was later awarded a "Champions of Freedom" medal at Adelson's annual gala in 2016: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/tulsi-gabbard-the-bernie-endorsing-congresswoman-who-trump-fans-can-love>

Alright, but did they fund her? She doesn't take PAC money. What argument is actually being made here?

(15) Senator Mazie Hirono from Hawaii did not endorse Tulsi's 2020 bid due to concerns of Tulsi's lack of a progressive record. Senator Hirono said she would be "looking for someone who has a long record of supporting progressive goals" when asked if she will support Gabbard in the Democratic primary.

She has a record of votes on major progressive issues, see the "Positive" section at the beginning.

I'll also include some points from Daily Kos here:

- Tulsi is an advocate for Wall Street reform, including breaking up big banks and reinstating the Glass-Steagall Act
- She is pushing for campaign finance reform, including a constitutional amendment that would reverse 2010 Citizens United decision. She is relying exclusively on individual contributions for her campaigns (no PAC money.) She supports legalizing marijuana, Medicare for All, \$15 minimum wage.
- She is against Donald Trump's ban on refugees and his Muslim ban.
- She urged President Obama to halt DAPL, visited Standing Rock to stand with the water protectors against DAPL
- She supports labeling of GMOs and opposes harmful trade deals like TPP.
- She supports sensible gun control, including banning assault-type weapons and high-capacity magazines, thorough background checks and ending gun show loopholes, and criminal justice reform.
- Tulsi supports equality and LGBT rights, women's rights, immigration rights, and early/STEM education.
- She has been working for years to stop US from escalating the Syrian war, to end regime-change wars that are causing horrible refugee crises and unnecessary deaths
- Tulsi is a life-long environmentalist, a strong proponent of clean energy, divestment from oil, and protecting our water.
- Tulsi is rated a "libertarian-leaning progressive", votes with Democrats over 90% of the time, has a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood, Environment America, Alliance for Retired Americans and Humane Society and is endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood, Bernie Sanders, Progressive Democrats of America, Sierra Club and Emily's List, etc.

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2017/6/8/1670163/-Why-is-Daily-Kos-Lying-About-Tulsi-s-Record-on-Progressive-Issues-Read-on-for-the-Real-Facts>

(16) Tulsi Gabbard was born into a cult called the Science of Identity. It was created in the 1970's and is led by a white man named Chris Butler, but he calls himself Jagad Guru Siddhaswarupananda Paramahansa. Tulsi's own aunt has come forward and called it the "alt-right of the Hare Krishna movement". To this day she is an active member and some of her campaign staff come directly from that cult. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/06/tulsi-gabbard-2020-presidential-campaign.html>

Wow that's a long article. I gave up a few pages in. I'm trying to take these accusations seriously but it just feels like a conspiracy theory to me. Maybe I'll try getting through that article again at some point?

Also came across this that I also didn't find very helpful:

<https://medium.com/@lalitamann/an-insiders-perspective-on-tulsi-gabbard-and-her-guru-e2650f0d0>
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/tulsi-gabbard-krishna-cult-rumors_n_6879588