

The Vicious Sewing Circle Of Washington DC

By [Maureen Dowd](#)

I was already feeling queasy about the Trump administration when I saw that the Agriculture Department was withdrawing a Biden-era proposal meant to reduce salmonella in poultry.

So besides making us jittery — and “yippy” — the Trump gang is trying to make us actually sick.

It has been another wild, whiplash-y week in Washington.

Amid an economic catastrophe President Trump personally caused, a startling new Times/Siena [poll](#) found him underwater, even on immigration, as voters recoiled at the very thing the president loves: his overreaching.

How do most Americans see his first 100 days in office? “Chaotic” and “scary” — not the paternal reassurance he might have hoped to engender with his cartoonishly macho style, his manosphere heroics and his swaggering U.F.C. and wrestling posse.

“He is replacing the meddlesome Nanny State with an aggressive, paternalistic Daddy State, based on the deference and devotion of his underlings,” Gerald Seib [wrote](#) in The Wall Street Journal.

All the talk about more traditional gender roles hearkens back to a time when women were seen as biologically unfit to hold higher office. For centuries, women were thought to be too high-strung and unstable to have a hand in running world affairs.

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What if women got into the highest echelons of government, determining life and death, war and peace, and began gossiping, catfighting, backbiting and clawing each other’s eyes out? And everyone knew, of course, that women were more deceptive.

So it is grimly entertaining to see this most “masculine” of administrations reflecting stereotypes about female behavior that long kept women out of power.

Trump’s macho crew, it turns out, is a vicious little sewing circle.

Elon Musk and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent got into a white-hot shouting match in a West Wing hall, within earshot of President Trump and his guest, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy. The fight started about their different opinions on who should lead the Internal Revenue Service but then spilled over into the efficiency of DOGE, Musk’s efficiency team.

“Bessent criticized Musk for overpromising and under-delivering budget cuts with DOGE,” Axios’s Marc Caputo [reported](#). “Musk clapped back by calling Bessent a ‘Soros agent’ and accusing him of having run ‘a failed hedge fund.’”

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Musk also had a nasty spat with Peter Navarro, Trump's top trade adviser, earlier this month over Teslas and tariffs. Musk posted on X that "Navarro is dumber than a sack of bricks."

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, dismissed that hair-pulling incident, saying, "Boys will be boys."

There was once a fear that women would be too emotional at the top, but look at Elon. He maniacally jumps around the stage, and he is known to mist up in the middle of interviews about his work and his love life.

And if you don't want an unstable creature at the top, particularly at that bastion of masculinity, the Pentagon, why would you hire Pete Hegseth?

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The lightweight former Fox weekend anchor, who promised to forgo his louche ways, made [dunderheaded blunders](#) with Signal that could have jeopardized our troops, and invited a nest of vipers into the Defense Department. (He even ordered up a spiffy makeup studio next to the Pentagon briefing room, as CBS [reported](#).)

Hegseth followed his boss's reality-show lead and produced the Real Housewives of the Pentagon, casting fellow military veterans as top advisers, even if none of these men had the requisite experience to run a sprawling, global organization, and they had no interest in learning. Instead, they lit up the Pentagon with bawdy meetings, vicious rivalries and power feuds. The [bad-mouthing](#) led to three firings and, on Thursday, the abrupt departure of Hegseth's chief of staff.

Having his wife, Jennifer, a former Fox producer, by his side at the Pentagon, where she is [known](#) as the "human leash," has not kept Pete on the straight and narrow.

Hapless Hegseth fought back at the White House Easter egg roll by accusing reporters of publishing "hoaxes" and using "disgruntled former employees" to smear him.

But the man in charge of a department with a budget of approximately \$850 billion seems flighty and shaky, unable to find loyal consiglieres and unable to stick to the Pentagon's classified message system, which is among the best in the world for a reason. It protects our troops.

When Gen. Jim Mattis was Trump's defense secretary in the first term, he conveyed the idea that he was the adult who would make sure the highchair king in the Oval did not do anything crazy with our military. But who is the adult now?

Trump, who often casts by looks, may have liked Hegseth's slick style and pretty face. But even the Emperor of Chaos must realize this Princess of Chaos has to go.