



Is the Trump/Netanyahu Split Real?

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): All right, let's move to the next topic, which is these reports that there has been a breach in the relationship between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. Now, I think we have to be very careful about believing this. In part, because there's never really been a real breach between an American president and an Israeli prime minister since you have to go back pretty much to the very early 1990s under George H.W. Bush, where his secretary of state, James Baker, and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, were extremely angry with Israel about expanding settlements in the West Bank, because the US position always was, that it's in the US national interest, to achieve a two-state solution between the Palestinians and the Israeli, where they have two states side by side, living in peace, because the US always understood that tying itself at the hip to Israel, while this conflict flared, was creating a lot of anti-American sentiment, making it much more difficult for the US to operate in the Middle East. So, in response to these expanding settlements in the West Bank, the Bush 41 sought to tell the Israelis, if you don't stop these settlements immediately, we're going to cancel our loan guarantees. There was this insane bipartisan backlash calling Jim Baker and Brent Scowcroft, you know what they called them, anti-Semites. And when Bill Clinton ran against George H.W. Bush, Bush 41, in the 1992 election, Bill Clinton strongly suggested or even explicitly said that President Bush and his administration were anti-Semitic because of their refusal to support Israel; just showing you this bipartisan dogma that has existed for a long time. Reagan actually defied the Israelis, including when he withdrew Marine barracks from Lebanon after there was an attack by Hezbollah that killed close to 250 American soldiers. And the Israelis said, now you have to go to war to get vengeance, and Reagan said, no, actually, I don't even know why we're in Lebanon. Why do we have bases in Lebanon? And he pulled them back. There's been other times as well, but since then, there was a lot of tension between Obama and Netanyahu, and other than like this symbolic UN vote at the end of Obama's term, it never really transformed into policy. It was Obama, in fact, that signed a \$40 billion agreement, \$38 billion agreement to pay the Israelis \$4 billion a year for the next ten years. Some of that goes to buying American weaponry, but not all of it. And so you really have to be very careful about any

claim that the US president and the Israeli Prime Minister are having a real split because there's not been a split for a long time between the two countries, they've almost merged. And then on top of that, almost everybody who surrounds Donald Trump – and we've talked about this before, he has a lot of diversity of opinion and pluralistic ideology in his administration. He has hardcore hawks and neocons on the one hand. Then he has anti-interventionists and isolationists and more like paleoconservatives and the Pat Buchanan/Ron Paul strain of conservatives. So he doesn't need homogeneity. He doesn't like homogeneity, except on the issue of Israel. You don't have any people really questioning US support for Israel who are in the administration at the top levels. Every single person that he picked, that was basically a price of admission through the door and in part that's because he was so heavily funded by pro-Israel interests, starting with Mary Middleton, the Israeli-American billionaire who inherited her husband Sheldon Adelson's massive wealth and uses it, as she openly admits, to make sure that the Republican party stays vehemently and unyieldingly pro-Israel.

So it's not just any American president, but particularly Trump, I want to see evidence before I believe this, but as I said, this is not just some conspiracy theory invented out of nowhere. I want to show you the reasons why there may be grounds to believe that this is real, starting with the fact that Netanyahu and Trump have famously had tension in their relationship going back to the first Trump presidency. But here from the New York Times in April last month. There was a report, and this report's everywhere in the media, not just the New York Times, quote: *Trump Waved Off Israeli Strike After Divisions Emerged in His Administration*. You may remember that Netanyahu went to the White House not once, but twice, since Trump in the three months since he was inaugurated. And the second time when he went, we were told that the reason he was going was because Trump had just imposed tariffs on Israel, which he did, but the real reason, it was very clear and it turned out, including in what they said, the real reason was because Netanyahu wanted to meet Trump about Israel's desire to bomb Iran, which they could only do if the United States gets heavily involved. They need American support in order to do it. So you have to get Trump's permission, and all reports from the White House, which were never denied, was that Netanyahu, who was very much trying to convince Trump to give the green light to an Israeli attack on Iran. And Trump said, no, I don't want to attack Iran. I want to see if we can get an agreement with them. I prefer an agreement. And this is something Trump repeated today, in fact, in the White House.

Donald Trump: We're trying to work on Iran to get that solved without having to get into any bombing, as we say, big bombing. I don't want to do that. I want them to work a deal. I want them to be very successful.

GG: And this has been a very consistent position Trump has taken. Now, who knows if he means it, who knows if it will sustain the pressure that will obviously be brought in, that's already being brought on him, as we're about to show you. And it's not that easy to get an agreement with the Iranians, because the agreement that you need the Iranian to agree to has to be substantially better, or at least somewhat better than the deal that Obama got with the Iranians, because Trump has been saying for eight years now that that was a terrible deal, a deal that was too weak. So if you can't get the Iranian's beyond that to make more

concessions than they made to Obama, it's gonna be very difficult to get a deal. He can't get a deal that's identical to what Obama got or people say, well, why did you withdraw in the first place?

I believe that Trump does want to get an agreement. I don't think he wants a new Mideast war, major Mideasts war. He's talked for years about the horrors and waste of Middle East wars. But there's a lot of powerful people in Washington and elsewhere who want that war, including the people in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem and their network of funders and influencers and activists, not just Jewish ones but evangelical ones, very neocon ones, pro-military ones. There's a lot of factions of Washington that consider this relationship with Israel to be of the highest priority, and for Trump to simply defied that in the way that's being suggested, I want to see a lot more evidence from that.

Here is Israel's largest newspaper, Hayom, that reported today: *Trump sidelines Netanyahu in Middle East policy as relations deteriorate*. So it's not just coming from the American press or the Middle East or Arab press, it's coming from establishment Israeli media outlets. Quote, "Earlier this week we reported that Netanyahu was frustrated with Trump. Now it appears the American president has also lost patience with his Israeli counterpart. Two senior figures in Trump's circle stated in recent closed-door conversations, whose content reached Israel Hayom, that Trump has decided to stop waiting for Israel and instead wants to move forward with Middle East initiatives without Netanyahu. The sources explain that the president wishes to make decisions he believes will advance American interests, particularly regarding Saudi Arabia and Gulf states. Israel was supposed to participate in some of those steps, referring primarily to normalisation with Saudi Arabia". That has been the kind of golden goose that Israel has been chasing. They hope to establish normalised relations with the Sunni states and especially the very wealthy Gulf state countries that are close to the United States and to the West, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, and especially Saudi Arabia because then they would feel like they had a union against Iran. The problem is, the Saudis have always said that we can't normalise relations with Israel until they resolve the problem of the Palestinians being denied a state. And there was probably not that much authenticity or conviction behind that Saudi position for a long time, but once October 7th happened, and the Israelis just openly began blowing up all of Gaza and obviously people in the Middle East especially are seeing that every day from Al Jazeera, from other outlets, they see it even more than we do – in fact, a lot more than what we do – it basically became just no longer feasible for even these tyrannical governments like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates and Qatar to normalise relations with Israel while they're destroying Gaza without the Palestinians getting any consideration. And I think there's some extent to which people believe, and I think it's certainly viable, that part of Hamas's intent in attacking on October 7th was a fear that the Saudis were going to just go ahead and don't really care about the Palestinians and were going just keep that on the back burner. They were moving toward normalisation. And they launched October 7th to reprioritize, to put on the front burner the issue of the Palestinians to make it impossible for those other countries to normalise relations with Israel.

The Israeli paper goes on, quote, "However, according to Trump's perspective, Netanyahu is delaying making the necessary decisions. Given the situation, the president refuses to wait until Israel takes its expected actions and is proceeding without Israeli participation. Furthermore, Trump is furious about what he views as an attempt by Netanyahu and his team to pressure National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, who has since been dismissed from his position toward military action in Iran. Netanyahu claimed in response to the publication of this matter in the Washington Post that he spoke with Waltz only once. However Trump remained unconvinced". So there's a lot going on here. I just want to focus on a couple parts of it. When Mike Waltz was fired as Trump's national security advisor after barely 100 days, people were very surprised. I was certainly surprised because Trump was unwilling; he did not want to feed Democrats or the media a head on a pike. And that's why he defended Mike Waltz even after Signalgate, which of course should have resulted in his firing. You cannot let a journalist accidentally into a planning room for a bombing campaign that you're about to launch imminently and then basically lie about what happened and afterwards. It just gave Mike Waltz this stench of loser-ness. Which is the thing that Trump hates most. But what really infuriated Trump was, and there were lots of reports about this, was that Mike Waltz was, knowing that Trump wanted to avoid war in Iran, knowing that Trump was trying hard to get an agreement with Iran so that he doesn't have to go to war with Iran, was plotting with Netanyahu behind Trump's back on basically how to proceed with this Israeli attack, which would force the United States to be involved, and I absolutely believe that Trump was enraged when he learned of that, and not just at Mike Waltz, but at Netanyahu as well.

And then there's this other issue with normalisation and better relations that the US might pursue with these Gulf state dictatorships. The Biden administration could have reached agreements with the Saudis, with the Emiratis, with the Qataris for much closer ties. But Biden was unwilling to do that unless Israel was satisfied, unless Israel believed that its interests were also being solved. So yet again, Biden sacrificed American interests that could have been advanced with agreements and greater proximity to these very wealthy countries because he didn't want to upset the Israelis and Israel's supporters in the United States. And Trump seems to be saying, and maybe this is for some venal reason as well, Trump is very, very interested in the money that comes from the Persian Gulf. And Jared Kushner went and signed a \$2 billion deal with the Saudis for his investment fund. They've been profiting in all sorts of ways with the Emiratis and with the Saudi's. And so Trump proceeded to be not only in America's interest, but I think in his interest, to get these deals that would bring closer proximity with these Gulf states in particular. And Trump, when it comes to his interests, or more broadly the US interest, just if he wants to do something he's not going to care as much as Biden did about whether it angers Netanyahu.

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