The Israel Lobby and Its Influence on the Democrats

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): I'm here to report on some extremely exciting news that tells the kind of radical change that Americans went to the ballot box to demand just a couple of weeks ago when they handed the Democratic Party a massive victory. By any metric, the Democrats regained control over both the House and the Senate by massive margins, margins, at least as big if not bigger than even their most optimistic boosters predicted they might be able to obtain. They won seats all across the country in every region; won seats in a massive Trump plus ten districts or plus 12 districts in red states. They turned all of Texas blue. Ted Cruz is the only Republican left. They turned South Carolina blue. They Turn Mississippi blue in the Senate. No question that it was a gigantic success for the Democratic Party. And part of the reason, obviously, was that people are very dissatisfied with the status quo, that's why out of power parties tend to do well in the midterms. And the Democrats have taken this victory and have decided that with their majority in the House, they're going to elevate and empower to what technically is the third in line to the presidency, but really I think you could say it's a position that's the second most powerful elected position in Washington, only after the president, which is the Speaker of the House, Congressman Hakeem Jeffries of New York, who is about to enter his eighth term as a member of Congress, has been there since 2012. And I really don't think it's an exaggeration to say that Hakeem Jeffries, who the Democratic caucus overwhelmingly elected today to be their nominee for House Speaker – in fact, barely any no votes, I think the total was eleven of their entire caucus, eight of whom at least, maybe more, but at least eight of the eleven who voted no are actually not even members of Congress yet. They are people who were just newly elected, haven't even taken their oath of office yet, haven't been commandeered or corrupted by the DC system because they're not even inside of it yet. So they still maintain some degree of autonomy and independence and integrity that hasn't been completely extinguished from being part of the House Democratic caucus and the wider American Congress and DC system.

The person that they just voted to make speaker, and actually, he had no opposition, that's how certain his victory was, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that number one, he is the

most ardent, fervent, unyielding loyalist to the foreign country called Israel and to their American lobby called AIPAC. He has been a very vocal and unequivocal supporter of what many Democrats claim to believe was a genocide, what Israel did in Gaza. I believe it's genocide. And for that reason, I would never in a million years vote for the empowerment of somebody who was one of the main political officials responsible for funding it, for arming it, for defending it, for protecting it, for justifying it, and who continues to this day to justify it. But that was no problem for people like AOC and many other members of the House Democratic caucus who voted for Hakeem Jeffries despite claiming or pretending to believe that he's actually a genocide supporter. I don't believe that if you actually believed that someone was a supporter of genocide, you would vote to empower them because the only alternative is that you don't really consider genocide a disqualifying crime. And I guess I'm giving them enough credit to them morally to believe the more likely explanation, which is that they had to say they think it's a genocide because that's the only way you could survival of global politics or media, but their actions prove they don't really believe it. But he's not just the most ardent supporter of AIPAC in the US Congress, there may be ones as ardent as him. I'm sure there are. In fact, the current speaker, Mike Johnson, probably is. So you just have absolutely no change on this issue that people have spent so much time and energy talking about, even though it was a supposedly completely different result from the election. He also probably is the most corporatist member of the House, the one who most readily and eagerly serves the interest of corporate lobbyists and the corporatists agenda. He's basically the living and breathing embodiment of everything the Democratic Party, their media spokespeople, their activists, their politicians claim to despise. And yet that's the person they just went and voted to hand over immense control of our Congress. The Speaker of the House is a position that has always been very powerful in the House, but in recent decades, under people like Paul Ryan and Nancy Pelosi, the power in the House has been aggressively centralised, and House leadership members, ranking file members, have almost no power. The Speaker controls the entire House. And the Democrats, with their victory, just made Hakeem Jeffries the House Speaker. And I think it's really worth taking a look at some of the ramifications, some of the implications, some of the aspects to this that are really quite amazing. So let's just begin with the vote.

Here you see from CNN's congressional correspondent, Manu Raju, who reported: "Big vote for Hakeem Jeffries, has the Blue Dogs crowing and arguing that the far left will have little power in the House Democratic caucus." And there you see the vote, 251 to 11; 251 House Democrats voted for Hakeem Jeffries. Now, because it was a secret ballot, we don't know the identity of all the no votes, but seven of them came forward and identified themselves as no votes and explained themselves. And here's the joint statement. This is from seven Democratic members-elect, so they're not even part of the Congress yet. They're newly elected for the first term. They have not yet been sworn in. They are Darializa Chevalier of New York, Adam Hamawy of Pennsylvania, Frederick Haynes, Melat Kiros of Colorado, Donavan McKinney, Chris Rabb of Pennsylvania and Claire Valdez of New York. They issued the following statement, quote: "Whether on Medicare for All, stopping ICE terror, gutting money out of politics or ending the genocide in Gaza, our constituents sent us to Congress with a mandate on these issues. We have worked to secure commitments from

Leader Jeffries in good faith conversation while we have seen some meaningful progress, there's still work to be done to ensure that the direction our party takes this coming Congress reflects what our constituents are demanding of leadership. These conversations are ongoing. As such our vote in the caucus today was no."

That means that people like, basically the entire original squad, AOC, Ilhan Omar, who confirmed her yes vote, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, the chair of the House Progressive caucus, Pramila Jayapal, presumably all of these members voted for Hakeem Jeffries. One of the other no votes who wasn't on this statement is Congressman-elect Don Leonard, who is from Ohio. He won a Trump district. He came forward and said that when he got the House to DC, House leadership and the Democratic Party threatened him and said: "If you even think about not voting for Hakeem Jeffries, if you even try and negotiate for concessions in exchange for your yes vote, we're going to destroy you. We're going to make your life miserable. You won't be on any committees that have any relevance to your home district. We'll finance a primary challenger against you. You'll be a one-term member of Congress." And he went public with it and then voted no on Hakeem Jeffries' votes. That's eight of them that we know about. So there's only three left. And I'm sure at some point those other three are going to come forward and identify themselves. Possibly Pramila Jayapal, voted no, but I really doubt it. And there's a lot to say here, starting with the fact that huge numbers of rank-and-file Democrats, liberals, people on the left, spent enormous amounts of time and energy and money campaigning for Democrats over the past two years, especially over the past several months. They were ecstatic when the Democrats took over both the House and the Senate. They were sitting there like till four in the morning biting their nails, like, ooh, this close race in this district in Indiana, hope the Democrat wins, even though we've never heard of him, like really excited for the Democratic victory. And these people have spent two years or three years claiming that the Israeli destruction of Gaza is the worst crime against humanity of the century, that it's a genocide. And now they're left to celebrate the fact that they're going to be led in the House by one of the most vocal supporters of that genocide. In fact, not only a supporter of it, not only someone who rhetorically defended it, someone who voted to arm and fund it and to this day continues to believe that that was the right thing to do. And it is amazing how little dignity that they have when it comes to the Democratic Party – I mean, the Democratic party can just spit right in their face, as they basically did when they just voted overwhelmingly, barely any no votes of the people who were already in Congress as Democrats for someone like Hakeem Jeffries, and then you have these members of the House Democratic caucus who are mocking them to their face, who are cackling about what losers the left wing of the Democratic Party is: They try to defeat or oppose Hakeem Jeffries and not only did they fail, they barely got any votes which shows how pointless and irrelevant they are.

I was showing this tweet before, this is from Henry Cuellar who had been voted out of Congress, was in a very GOP Texas district, but he won his race by ten points as part of the Democratic wave, and here he is, Congressman Cuellar, mocking the left and liberals for having lent all their support to the Democratic Party only to get slapped in the face by having Hakeem Jeffries shoved down their throat, not by a close vote, by an overwhelming margin,

how this obviously reveals how irrelevant they are, how powerless they are, how pointless their support for the Democratic Party is.

Henry Cuellar (HC): 251 yeses for Hakeem and then eleven no's, that tells you that's a small number of votes that are marginalised. This small little group cannot tell the caucus what we need to be at.

Interviewer: If Jeffries listens to them, is that a risk for your majority?

HC: Well, listening is one thing. Yeah, I can listen to them, but that doesn't mean we're going to follow this small, small marginalised group of people.

GG: All right, so that's basically them saying, like, not only did we vote for the candidate that the left insisted that was the one they didn't want because he represents everything they claim to oppose, but now that he's elected, they should just accept they're not getting anything they want. And Congressman Ro Khanna, who supported Hakeem Jeffries like AOC, went on The Young Turks and admitted that while they tried to negotiate with Hakeem Jeffries for various concessions on the issues they claim to most care about, he didn't make a single concession. He knew he was going to win. He's not going to make concessions to these losers who are basically saying, oh, please, Hakeem, we're going to vote for you anyway. You're our guy. You are our leader. But even though we have nothing to offer, no leverage, would you mind making some voluntary concessions? He was like, no, I'm not making any concessions to you idiots. Hakeem Jeffries has gone around for a long time saying, I have contempt for the left wing of the Democratic party, for the DSA wing, I'm going to make it my mission to destroy them. I don't care about AOC. He has open contempt for this wing of a party that is so loyal to the party, even though they get constantly slapped in the face. They watch the Democratic Party steal the nomination for Hillary Clinton away from Bernie Sanders by cheating. And then watched even people like Donna Brazile and Liz Warren admit that the DNC rigged the election in favour of Hillary Clinton and they still stay Democrats. I think what these establishment Democrats are doing now is saying: You imbeciles thought that you were making progress or you were like an insurgent force in our party, you're complete losers! You're zero! We just put you into the highest position we could, AIPAC's most loyal servant and you're not going to do anything about it. You can't do anything about it. You're just going to go vote for us again in 2028. Maybe you'll get one more DSA seat and next time it'll be 250 to 12 in favour of Hakeem Jeffries, but you'll be making progress. Just keep voting Democrat and I'm sure it'll be better very shortly. Don't worry about it, but for now you're total losers and marginalised irrelevancies.

GG: Now let me just show you an amazing video clip because obviously Mike Johnson, the current House Speaker, is as much of an Israel loyalist as the new one is, Hakeem Jeffries, and not just on that question but on war in general, foreign policy, lots of other things, both massive supporters of financing the war in Ukraine for all of eternity. Hakeem Jeffries says he's opposed to the war in Iran; that's because he had to say that. If you think the Democrats are going to do anything to stop the war in Iran before Trump wants to, sorry to say, that you're extremely gullible. There's no chance that's going to happen. They want the war on

Iran to continue because it's politically advantageous to the Democrats as was just demonstrated in this election. But just to give you a sense of the continuity that is guaranteed, no matter what the outcome of elections are, you can care so much about sending billions to Israel, about believing that they committed genocide, about going to war for Israel and Iran, you can be so passionate about it, you can go and vote thinking that you're going to vote for the politicians whose views align with yours on that topic so that you can democratically change those policies, here I give you this video, which is a video of Chuck Schumer. We're going to get to him in a minute, speaking of AIPAC's most ardent loyalists, he hasn't yet been voted for as Senate Majority Leader. We'll see if that happens, but if he does, you're going to have two of the most ardently AIPAC loyalists leading the Democrats and the House and the Senate. But here is Chuck Schumer, Hakeem Jeffries, and Mike Johnson, the current House Speaker, outgoing, literally holding hands in defence of Israel.

Chuck Schumer: We stand with Israel!

GG: So there you see Schumer with his glasses on his nose, just his fashion trademark, very chic, and he's standing there next to Hakeem Jeffries. And then to the left of your screen is the then House Speaker, Mike Johnson. Don't know who that is in the shadow, I'm sure it's some sort of good Republican, very pro-Israel Republican. But here you see the face of the by-part of Washington. So you can go and vote and you can vote to make the House Speaker the guy on the left or you can go to make the House Speaker the second to the left and they're from different parties so they're radically at odds with one another and there they are holding hands, literally holding hands with their hands held high appearing together chanting in defence of this foreign country. It's hard to know what you might see. I want you to show you another video of Hakeem Jefferies in case you haven't gotten a good enough sense of who he is and what he is, especially on this topic. Here he is giving a speech. This is a speech called I'll Stand With Israel. There you see New York signs: I Love Israel. He's speaking to a pro-Israel group, this is 2014, just in his second term. He's been at this for a long time. Listen to him.

Hakeem Jeffreis (HJ): And then you had to deal with the first intifada and Israel prevailed. And Israel had to deal with the second intifada and Israel prevailed. And then missiles were flying in December of 2008 and Israel prevailed. And then missiles were flying in November of 2012, and Israel prevailed. And so I'm confident that when it's all said and done, we're going to stand together. Israel today, Israel tomorrow, Israel forever. God bless you.

GG: Now, as some astute historian or observer of history pointed out, that phraseology that Hakeem Jeffries invoked in defence of Israel: Israel today, Israel tomorrow, Israel forever, was George Wallace's battle cry in defence of segregation, segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever. And I guess Hakeem Jeffries repurposed George Wallace's pro-segregation message on behalf of Israel because it's actually verbatim exactly what Hakeem Jeffries said. Here's Hakeem Jeffries much more recently, speaking to AIPAC, obviously, about the importance of Israel and its supporters to him personally, to his district, to his politics.

HJ: But someone said to me, they said, Hakeem, you're going to Israel a fifth time? I said, listen.

GG: Even friends of Hakeem Jeffries couldn't believe it, they're like, look, we understand you're going to go to Israel. Israel is so important. I mean, of course you're gonna go make a pilgrimage to Israel, that's a given, but like, this is your fifth time in, I don't know, just a small amount of time. Like the fifth time, isn't that kind of excessive? This is like probably somebody who is pro-Israel because I doubt Hakeem Jeffries speaks to anybody who isn't. They're like I don't know, five times to Israel? Isn't that a bit much? Like you're an American official you're kind of supposed to at least have a pretence of pretending.. You're going to go for your fifth time? And here he is smiling, extremely animated. Like he's never more animated than he is when he talks about AIPAC in Israel. You saw that speech where he's like Israel today, Israel tomorrow, Israel forever, like that speech that Haley Stevens gave. Usually Hakeem Jeffries is very even keeled, not really animated about much. Same with Haley Stevens. Haley Stevens was, she looked like an evangelical preacher, preaching the gospel at like a particularly energetic Sunday church when she gave that speech about how Israel comes to me in my dreams. She was so excited. And obviously that was the issue that caused her to destroy her political career, because the one thing you cannot do as a Democratic politician, even with that race is endorse the Republican candidate. You can refuse to endorse Abdul El-Sayed, that would be totally acceptable, even encouraged, but you cannot go and endorse Mike Rogers. And yet she did that because she's just so impelled by Israel. It's like she lost control of herself; kind of like how Hakeem Jeffries did in that speech. So here he is before AIPAC explaining in a very like suave, cool way, what he said to his friend, who was like, I don't know, like five times? Really? And here is what he said.

HJ: I said, listen, I'm from New York City and back home, back home in New York City, we consider Jerusalem to be the sixth borough. And so I'm just trying to catch up with my constituents.

GG: I mean, that's pretty honest. He considers Israel to be the sixth borough of New York. And the reason he goes so often to Israel, he says, is because that's where his constituents are. His constituents are in Israel, which is totally true. That's where his donors are, his funders are, his bosses are, and his constituents are. And so he doesn't make them get on a plane and travel to him. He goes to his constituents, which is in Israel. That's why he's there so often, in Israel, probably in Israel more than he is even in Queens. It really is amazing to watch; I could show you clips of Hakeem Jeffries professing his undying love and loyalty for Israel pretty much all day. And it has not changed in the slightest. It's not like he has become even a little bit less supportive of Israel in the wake of political changes within his own party in the country more broadly, he hasn't at all. To his credit, I guess he's not one of these people who pretend. He's like, no, I'm not any less pro-Israel than I ever have been before.

GG: In case you're cynical about the fact that Hakeem Jeffries elevation to the speakership represents real change, here's one of the people most excited, who has long been one of Hakeem Jeffries biggest boosters, the reason he rose in the House Democratic caucus and her name is Nancy Pelosi, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi. I love how they created, the Democrats

did, a like brand new lifelong title just to honour her greatness. She was the House Speaker, and then she's not. That title doesn't pass with her after you leave the job. But for Democrats, it is, so she's the Speaker Emerita. And here she is so happy and giddy that Hakeem Jeffries is going to succeed her as Speaker: "Congratulations, Speaker Designate Hakeem Jeffries." And there are the two of them holding hands, in case you have any doubts about whether this represents the kind of radical change the Americans just went to the ballot to ask for.

GG: Now it is true that Hakeem Jeffries' election was an inevitability, a foregone conclusion for several months now. And it became a done deal, signed, sealed and delivered as a result of AOC's public proclamation of her support for Hakeem Jeffries. She did that back in June when she went on Meet the Press. And there you see the tweet: "Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said she will support House minority leader Hakeem Jeffries to remain Democratic leader, sagging his commitment to securing funding for New York city's public housing." So obviously it was probably unlikely that Hakeem Jeffries was ever going to be defeated. Democrats are very loyal to the idea that seniority prevails, that you don't ever rebel against authority or institutional prerogative or leadership, but had there been any chance of derailing Hakeem Jeffries' path to the speakership it would have come from the left, and particularly from AOC who is the undisputable leader of the whatever you want to call the left, if there is such a thing, but whatever you wanna call the left in the House representatives in the Democratic Party, without her there's zero chance. Once she said Hakeem Jeffries is my candidate for speaker four months before the election, his speakership was guaranteed provided Democrats won. And this is how Democratic Party politics function.

GG: So let's remember that for all the criticisms I have of the Republican party and their politics, and especially the Trump term, and I talk about them far more than anything that I talk about anything else these days, they didn't have this kind of institutional fealty that's evident here. Remember that their establishment in 2016 was not behind Donald Trump. It was behind Jeb Bush and then Marco Rubio and then Ted Cruz, and Trump just mowed them down one after the next by keeping contempt and scorn on the Republican establishment, on the donors who sustain it, on their orthodoxies and ideology regardless of what he ended up doing in power, that was the way that he won, and Republicans voted for the candidate that the establishment of their party hated. Where's Hillary Clinton beat Bernie Sanders? And then Joe Biden beat Bernie Sanders in 2020. And then they installed Kamala Harris with no even pretence of a vote. And now they're putting Hakeem Jeffries and probably Chuck Schumer in charge of both houses of Congress that they just watched their grassroots loyalists work so hard to win for them. And that's the president that they're getting. But also when Kevin McCarthy was House Speaker, the rank and file of the House Republican caucus uprooted him. They removed him, they threatened for a long time, they constantly extracted concessions and then once they finally got to the point where they were no longer willing to tolerate him led by Matt Gaetz and others, they unseated him. And yet here the Democrats just constantly always marching in line, never disturbing any sort of institutional succession, even when they accuse someone in their party of funding and arming and defending and supporting genocide, the worst single crime against humanity you could possibly commit, even then, they still line up and dutifully empower that person.

GG: It is so pathetic to watch, but at the end of the day, the loyalist of the Democratic party on what they call the left, on the liberal left, people who were opposed to Hakeem Jeffries, who said that they think what Israel do was a genocide, who think that the Democratic Party is a corporatist party, they deserve all this scorn and patronising treatment because there is nothing more pathetic than voluntarily and willingly giving up all your power. Your only power against a politician is the threat not to vote for them. That's all there you have. You don't have anything else. If you are in the group of people that may or may not vote for a politician or that party, they will have to come to you and accommodate your interest and desires because if they don't, they know you won't vote for them. But if you proclaim publicly ahead of time over and over for decades, for years and decades, as a lot of these people do, these kind of left liberal dissident insurgents, in AOC Bernie world, in politics and media, if you pretty much say, look, I think the Republican Party is such unreconstructed evil that I will never in my entire life vote for a Republican, in fact, I will never refrain from voting for the Democratic Party, but I will always vote for the Democratic Party, every two years, I will dutifully go to the polls and vote for Democratic Party, no matter what they believe in, no matter, what they do, no matter what they say, because they're always going to be better, obviously, they're going to look at you with contempt and scorn. They're going to think you're the irrelevant losers that they're telling you that you are. And if you are that dumb and primitive and willing to just degrade yourself publicly that way by saying, I have no autonomy, I have not willingness to withhold my vote, to negotiate, I'm gonna support you unconditionally, you deserve to be abused and mistreated in this way and to never have your agenda paid attention to. And the reason they're openly mocking you is because they know even if they do, you're gonna continue to vote for them and donate your money to them and use your dumb little shows to urge other people to do so. And to turn yourself into a pretzel to justify why what AOC did is some brilliant strategic play that shows that she's actually like an adult mature politician and not like just some purist like you. And they know they're going to just go to work for them even if they spit in their face and that's exactly what's happening and the result is they got Hakeem Jeffries and they're, I don't know, we'll see, they're probably going to get Chuck Schumer. If they get Chris Van Hollen, I guess it'll be a non-trivial concession, we'll see if that happens. But the Hakeem Jeffries vote is so amazing, not just because it happened, but because it happens so easily. Nobody was even willing to run against him. He had no opposition. And he only got eleven no votes, because at least eight of them were people who weren't yet in Congress, aren't yet trained, probably were given the green light, but the whole point of the system is to take these people who get to Washington and believe that they're there with some kind of integrity, with some sort of commitment to fulfil the expressed views and objectives of their voters to fulfil the promises they made during the campaign to extinguish all of that integrity and autonomy and independence as just naivete and just the kind of childish politics that you can do before you understand how things really work and you become an adult, a serious politician like AOC, like a team player.

GG: So there you have it, congratulations to the Democrats on your extraordinarily resounding victory in the midterm elections. And your present is that you are now led by Hakeem Jeffries in the House and very possibly by Chuck Schumer in the Senate, remarkable, remarkable blow against the establishment, against the status quo. Again, it's

bipartisan dogma, an incredible uprising of citizen power to demand change in Washington. And the person who's going to lead it is Hakeem Jeffries in his eighth term from Tel Aviv and AIPAC. So congratulations to all.

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