



Netanyahu's U.S. Speech Reaction: Can Members of Congress be "America First" and Loyal to Israel?

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Michael Tracey (MT): So Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel was in Washington, DC today. And, man, he caused a bit of a rancour, didn't he? He addressed a joint session of Congress. He was invited to do so by the House speaker, Mike Johnson, one of his solemn duties, of course, I guess, that being Johnson, is to ensure that the Prime minister of Israel has a platform in the United States, which I suppose he had been sorely lacking until today. But that void has been filled. And Netanyahu made his views known to an American audience, which I guess, again, had been sorely lacking them until just this afternoon. Now we have a couple of clips that I want to go to, and we'll discuss various aspects of the address and the elation and jubilation and all the, you know, endless applause lines that were rattled off. I think in order to determine how many ovations were given, you'd have to perform a very complex and advanced statistical analysis, because I couldn't really finish counting them myself. And one thing that's notable, and we're going to discuss a bit hopefully, I don't know why I say hopefully because I'm the one running the show, so I guess it's all up to me, isn't it? One thing that was notable is the total uniformity among particularly the Republicans in their fervent, unswerving support not just for Israel, but for the current government of Israel led by Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest serving prime minister of Israel. Now, of course, the Democrats in the House of Representatives in the Congress writ large, are almost as uniformly supportive of Israel in practical terms, meaning on a substantive policy level, they almost entirely vote for similar, you know, weapons provisions, financial support, that sort of thing. But the Republicans definitely wear it on their sleeves a little bit more as like a partisan point of pride that they're the ones standing in ardent affirmation of their support for Netanyahu in particular, whereas the Democrats, you could tell, sort of want to distance themselves from Netanyahu as a persona and, yeah, they're going to always stand stalwart with the Jewish state, but they want to demonise Netanyahu as, you know, tainting the glories of Israel and that sort of thing. And also on the Republican side, there is the issue of the evangelical religious fervour around Israel, meaning among evangelical Christians who have sometimes outright apocalyptic views as to the heavenly status of Israel and how Jesus will

literally return from the heavens to preside over earth and rule over us all at the Second Coming. And thus the United States must, unfortunately, support Israel to hasten that Second Coming. I mean, it almost sounds a little bit like a joke when you describe it, but I promise I'm trying to be as impartial as possible in describing what that conventional view is. So let's go through a couple of these clips, shall we? Here is the first one that I want to share with all you beautiful people. Here is Netanyahu explaining what a fantastic ally of Israel, the current alleged president Joe Biden has been.

Benjamin Netanyahu (BN): I thank President Biden for his heartfelt support for Israel after the savage attack on October 7th. He rightly called Hamas sheer evil. He dispatched two aircraft carriers to the Middle East to deter a wider war. And he came to Israel to stand with us during our darkest hour, a visit that will never be forgotten. President Biden and I have known each other for over 40 years. I want to thank him for half a century of friendship to Israel and for being, as he says, a proud Zionist, actually he says, a proud Irish American Zionist.

MT: Okay, so why do I play that particular clip? Well, I don't know how Bibi could be very much more effusive in his praise of Joe Biden, and he's right, in that Joe Biden has provided to Israel more military support for an ongoing Israeli war effort than any president in US history. Now, there are different ways you could potentially quantify that, but I would postulate that it's pretty indisputable that Joe Biden has been a greater friend to Israel than any president in US history since the founding of Israel, if you quantify that by the amount of armaments that that US president has provided Israel so it can conduct its war effort; not to mention the diplomatic support, the military support, the economic support, the spiritual support, if you will. Netanyahu even mentions there that Joe Biden still goes around very proudly and unabashedly proclaiming himself to be a proud Zionist. He uses that term, despite being Irish Catholic. So that's an interesting phenomenon that may be perhaps slightly unique to US politics. And I raise that because one of the main critiques of Joe Biden has been from Republicans, including Donald Trump, for the past nine or so months, it's been that Joe Biden is insufficiently aggressive in his support of Israel. It's that he's been damningly derelict in arming and aiding and abetting Israel. It's that Biden has actually pandered to the pro Hamas wing, allegedly, of the Democratic Party. That's been the conventional attack line on Biden, and it clearly does not line up with the praise that's been heaped on Biden by Netanyahu. It doesn't line up with the objective data in terms of the quantity of armaments supplied and so forth, a number of UN security Council resolutions that have been vetoed by the US at Israel's behest. That's all been under the Biden-Harris administration. Now we'll get to Kamala a little bit later, but I want to now draw your attention to a clip that you might not have noticed, actually, from that fateful presidential debate in late June between Trump and Biden, when Biden was still the full throated presumptive Democratic nominee. Obviously, everybody was fixated at the time on Joe Biden's cognitive deterioration. It was hard, really, to keep one's focus on anything else. But I'm a very shrewd person, I suppose. So another exchange caught my eye that I think has some relevance to the topic at hand. So let's view that, please.

Donald Trump: You got to ask him, as far as Israel and Hamas – Israel's the one that wants to go on. He said, the only one who wants to keep going is Hamas. Actually, Israel is the one. And you should let him go and let him finish the job. He doesn't want to do it. He's become like a Palestinian, but they don't like him because he's a very bad Palestinian. He's a weak one.

MT: Okay, so there is Donald Trump accusing derisively as a term of derision, Joe Biden of being a, quote, "Palestinian", I guess, to signify that Joe Biden is in hock to pro-Palestinian sinning elements in the Democratic Party, that he has some sympathy for perhaps Hamas or some other form of Islamic extremist. This all the while Joe Biden, as we have established, hopefully, has sent more armaments to Israel in furtherance of an ongoing war effort than any president ever. Now, how do you square that? I mean, you can't really. But evidently Donald Trump figures that one of his strategies in 2024 would be to say variations of: If you don't vote Republican this year, you ain't Jewish. Donald Trump hasn't literally said that quote, it would be amusing if he did. But do you recall back in 2020 when Joe Biden said: If you vote for Trump, you ain't Black? That's basically what the Republicans and Trump are going with for the 2024 election to put fear in the hearts of American Jewish voters that if they vote for a Democrat, then I don't know, they'll have to do a mass exodus from the United States and go where exactly? I'm not sure. It seems like the United States probably stands alone in human history as a safe haven for Jews, but the Republicans are really invested in making Jews feel that they are extremely unsafe and in grave peril, if another Democrat gets in and I don't know, does what exactly? Continues to fund and arm Israel virtually without reservation? So, let's go to another clip from our friend Bibi, who made sure to establish his bipartisan credentials by additionally heaping praise on the Republican nominee. That being one Donald J. Trump, you may have heard of him. Let's hear that please.

BN: We could call, I have a name for this new alliance, I think we should call it the Abraham Alliance.

MT: I wonder. And just for some context there. Bibi is proposing that a new alliance be established between Israel and the Gulf potentates that Israel has increasingly aligned with at the facilitation of the US to basically freeze out the Palestinians from any real settlement to their situation. So that's what he's suggesting there. And he would name it after the so-called Abraham Accords that were generated under the Trump administration and spearheaded by a Jared Kushner, who Trump assigned to the Israel Palestine portfolio. I guess due to all of Kushner's amazing experience in the realm of Middle East negotiations. So let's proceed.

BN: To thank President Trump for his leadership in brokering the historic Abraham Accords.

MT: Okay, so listen to that ovation. That's the Republicans in the House who pretty significantly outnumbered the Democrats today, because at least a subset of the Democrats claimed that they were boycotting the speech, or at least they were not attending right? So Bernie Sanders wasn't there. Elizabeth Warren wasn't there. Others who you may be familiar with were not there in some brave act of defiance, I guess, because they figured that sitting and listening to a foreign leader give a speech was some statement of something or other. I

don't fully understand the logic there. I'm not a huge fan of Bibi myself, but I certainly wouldn't be opposed necessarily just sitting and hearing his remarks. And that doesn't necessarily indicate that I agree or disagree with them, right? I'm telling you my views now by verbalising stuff out of my mouth, my presence at a speech doesn't really signify anything one way or another. But politicians, I guess, have a different calculus where they're always going around deliberating on what the symbolic impact of where they parked their posterior indicates. But let's continue. And you hear that the Republicans, who outnumber the Democrats here, are extremely vociferous in their ovation. I don't know if I've ever heard Republicans in the House give a more frenzied ovation for virtually anything. But on the topic of Israel and Trump's support for Israel, they are hooting and hollering up a storm, that's for sure. So let's continue.

BN: Like Americans, Israelis were relieved that President Trump emerged safe and sound from that dastardly attack on him. Dastardly attack on American democracy. There is no room for political violence in democracies. I also want to thank President Trump for all the things he did for Israel, from recognising Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights to confronting Iran's aggression, to recognising Jerusalem as our capital and moving the American embassy there.

MT: Okay, so there you have it. The hooting and hollering reaches a high fever pitch, you might say. And so this gets to one of the, perhaps, conceptual conundrums at the heart of the current Trump campaign or MAGA movement, America First movement, etc., which is how do you reconcile the Israeli prime minister bombastically proclaiming Trump to be the greatest president ever with regard to Israel, on Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, etc., etc., etc. Trump was just the best ever with regard to Israel, and how do you square that with this notion of America first? Which is a very fluid concept. Everybody has a different definition, who you talk to about it within the Republican Party, as I did when I covered the Republican convention last week in Milwaukee for this show. And so that's something to perhaps ponder. One thing that I wanted to pull up was, Rashida Tlaib. Here she is. Rashida Tlaib she did attend, interestingly, the Netanyahu address today. Now, Rashida Tlaib is a huge operation in Congress. She has Palestinian lineage herself. And she's been adamantly critical, fiercely critical of Israel, of even the Biden administration's policy on Israel. But unlike some of her democratic or "Progressive" with a capital P colleagues, she did not boycott the Netanyahu speech today. Instead, what she did, as you can see by glancing at your screen, is that she attended the speech. She sat and she listened, and she held up some sort of sign there that says: Guilty of Genocide. Now, whether the Israeli war effort in Gaza can be rightly called a genocide is not even something I want to delve into right now. I think the term genocide is frankly overused. I'm going to get killed by some of the audience but I just think it, like, has lost a lot of its conceptual value and just gets used way too often just to make people all emotionally exercised, frankly. Maybe I'll do a segment on that at a later day. That's not to excuse anything about the Israeli war, but I think that that terminology has been chronically overused and kind of obscures more than it reveals. But the point is, Rashida Tlaib, she was there accusing Netanyahu being guilty of genocide. Now, if Netanyahu is in fact, quote, "guilty of genocide", who's his chief abetter? Who's his chief enabler? Right? Who made

possible the genocide that Rashida Tlaib and others are claiming has been perpetrated by Israel? It's the United States, right? It's Joe Biden, it's Kamala Harris. Now to Rashida Tlaib's credit, and we would love to have her on the show, I think we reached out to her staff today and unfortunately didn't get a response. But, you know, the invitation is still there and open. But to her credit, she has not yet endorsed Kamala Harris. Now, AOC, on the other hand, you might be familiar with her, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, haha, she did come out and endorse Kamala Harris the instant that she could. She had also been a big booster of Joe Biden. She's not one of these squad members or progressive members, who is trying to leverage their endorsement to extract some kind of concession from the Democratic standard bearer or the Democratic ticket. No. She's in the fold completely and is not trying to extract anything, so far as we know. So she's riding with Kamala or, you know, coconutting with Kamala or whatever the latest meme is, instantaneously. But Rashida Tlaib is a little different. She is not endorsing Kamala yet. And, you know, that is to her credit, at least she's one of the rare Democrats, who it actually occurs to to attempt to exert leverage on the party. Republicans usually are a bit more open to doing that, including even if it leads to the embarrassment of top party officials, whereas Democrats tend to be usually a lot more deferential. Although I guess the ouster of Biden recently kind of challenges that view. So maybe it's a little bit more complicated now, but nevertheless, the Democrats have, at least traditionally in recent years, been a bit more hesitant to do anything that might interrupt their rigid conformity within their party leadership. But here's Rasheeda Tlaib, who has not yet endorsed Kamala. And that could be consequential because Rashida Tlaib represents a district in Michigan, which is a critical state and therefore has a through line to some of the constituencies or demographics that Kamala Harris, if she becomes not just the presumed nominee or the presumptive nominee, but the actual nominee, she would have to galvanise those voters behind her in order to have a chance of winning Michigan. And here's Rashida Tlaib kind of standing in the way of that, at least temporarily, by, you would think, I mean the only logical thing that makes sense here, is that Rashida Tlaib is accusing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris of being facilitators of a, quote, "genocide". Because the US, as we all I think should be well aware of by now, is the chief arm supplier and operational coordinator and diplomatic enabler of the Israeli war effort that's ongoing and could expand into the north of Israel with Lebanon and Hezbollah at any moment really. Maybe that could be one reason why Netanyahu made his jaunt today to the US to continue gathering support. So that's something else, I think, to be mindful of. Now, I do want to go to one other thing here. Netanyahu what he was lauding Trump was singing Trump's praises for something called the Abraham Accords, right? And Abraham Accords are what Trump goes around touting as having, you know, brought an oasis of peace and tranquillity to the Middle East. Now, what was the main purpose of the Abraham Accords? And in fact, a lot of this is replicated in Project 2025, in terms of what they want to suggest for a second Trump administration or a forthcoming Republican administration. They endorse the policy framework of the project of the Abraham Accords continuing. And I have it here on my card that I'm going to pull up because it's really interesting. And I'll find it in a moment. But what they basically say in Project 2025 is they want to continue the framework that was established by the Abraham Accords, which is to effectively bypass the Palestinians as having any real say in their fate as a cohesive society and basically just have the US buy off Gulf autocracies with arms deals and with other

giveaways like the United Arab Emirates, like Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco – those were the original signatories of the so-called Abraham Accords – in exchange for recognising Israel. And so what Project 2025 recommends is that they want to continue that framework, but also include Saudi Arabia. And in fact, the Biden administration, I guess one of his big feats that he's trying to accomplish, meaning old Slow Joe, before he's ushered out into actual official retirement, although maybe he's in semi-retirement now, it's hard to tell, is to include Saudi Arabia and the Abraham Accords' framework by making Saudi Arabia an official treaty ally. And I just want to point to this, and maybe Max can comment on this, but this is the Abraham Accords, the original framework for what they prophecy, some kind of future Palestinian state would look like vis-a-vis the West Bank. And as you can tell, you know, this is the brilliant brainchild of Jared Kushner. It looks like some deformed piece of Swiss cheese. This is what they were saying was going to be the tenable Palestinian state. Now, of course, nobody in Palestinian civil society view that to be remotely tenable. And so the Abraham Accords, as much as it's heralded as having brought forth this outbreak of stability and peace and tranquillity in the Levant, meaning Israeli Palestine conflict. You could argue that it actually set the stage for the outbursts violence that occurred on October 7th and then the subsequent pulverisation campaign that Israel has waged within Israel.

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