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Donald Trump's U-Turn on Palestine, Firmly Committed to the Israel Lobby

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Has American political reality finally set in for GOP presumptive nominee Donald Trump?

With only days before the Republican Party's National Convention at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, Ohio, presidential candidate Donald J. Trump finally abandoned any pretense 'neutrality' on the Israel-Palestine issue, and is now firmly "committed" to supporting Israeli settlement expansion on territories it has seized illegally, and also not recognizing a Palestinian State.

After all the promising rhetoric and previous displays of good will on this crucial foreign policy issue, exactly how did he finally arrive back at the status quo?

What started off as interesting, became promising, before eventually settling into Washington's*default* position. On numerous past occasions during the GOP debate cycle and along the campaign trail, Trump had stated his feelings (which appeared to have an air of passion at the time) and intentions to secure a peace deal for the open-ended Israel-Palestine conflict.

The Israeli Lobby started to get very interested in the beginning of December 2015, when during an interview with the AP, Trump seemed to blame Israel for not securing a lasting peace agreement.

> I have a real question as to whether or not both sides want to make it," Trump said, before explaining that his concerns predominantly reside with "one side in particular [Israel].

He also hinted that he wasn't interested in any Jewish Republican money, to a chorus of boos he crowed, *'I can't be bought'.* The same for any outside money too. Later, it slipped out again during a nationally televised GOP debate, with Trump making sounds about "negotiating a peace deal."

Now here was a true *maverick,* hunting the forbidden cow. Amid all of Trump's wild gaffes and ad hominem attacks, this was an epiphany. At this moment Trump really stood out, and caught the attention – and support – of a whole new legion of disaffected, disenfranchised moderates paddling on the fringe of the Trump wave.

That was it. Soon after the phone rang. It was Sheldon.

The Donald had been summoned to a one-on-one in Las Vegas with the capo de capo himself, the George Soros of American right-wing politics, the kingmaker, Lord of the Slots and Supreme Master of Macau, billionaire property, casino tycoon and CEO of Las Vegas Sands Corporation, 82 yr old Sheldon Adelson.

It was after this time that Trump appeared muted on the issue of Israel-Palestine.



CAPO de CAPO? Donald Trump and Sheldon Adelson

Adelson, a committed Zionist who has backed numerous successful political careers, including that of Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu, commented on his meeting with the Republican candidate, "He [Trump] had talked about potentially dividing about Jerusalem and Israel, so I talked about Israel because with our newspaper, my wife being Israeli, we are the few who know more about Israel than people who don't."

From that point on, began the process of Trump's 'rehabilitation' on the Israel-Palestine.

On March 10, 2016, there stood Trump, still as the *presumptive underdog*, at CNN's GOP Debate in Miami – alongside a wall of Republicans candidates who were all firmly in the pockets of the Israel Lobby including Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, his remarks on the illusive peace process could have been considered seminal back then:

> I would like to at least have the other side think I'm somewhat neutral as to them, so that we can maybe get a deal done.

Campaign rival Cruz hit back, questioning Trump's support for Israel saying, "I don't think we need a commander in chief who is neutral between the Palestinian terrorists and one of our strongest allies in the world, the nation of Israel."

Everyone, including the media, seemed so shocked by Trump's unorthodox comments that they went near catatonic on this issue afterwords. It was as if Trump had pole-vaulted over the perennial swamp that is the GOP foreign policy platform. The Lobby didn't waste any time however. In the eyes of the Israeli Lobby, taking a 'neutral' stance or daring to recognize Palestine or Palestinians, is synonymous with attacking Israel and Jews. This is a

simple law of political physics in America at the moment and will remain so as long as the lobbyists continue shoveling millions of dollars per month into the pockets of both prospective candidates and elected officials nationwide.

Predictably, he was attacked viciously by his opponents, especially Cruz. It seemed as if Trump has broken ranks in a way that was unfathomable for any Republican politician seeking office in the United States of America.

Of course, the Israeli press didn't take kindly to Trump's vision of peace and harmony, and from this point onward, pressure began to mount on Trump to conform to the American political orthodoxy on this issue.

Soon, Trump was summoned on March 21st, to AIPAC, the *American-Israel Public Affairs Committee*, where he delivered a resounding speech which seemed good enough for the lobby that night, but the job wasn't finished just yet.

Later on in May, Trump continued to evolve, now employing doublespeak on the issue, saying he would still like to negotiate "a deal" but that Israel should keep building illegal settlements in the West Bank of Palestine, and that Israel needs to 'keep going' and 'keep moving forward.'

> I'd love to negotiate peace. I think that, to me, is the all-time negotiation…I would love to see if peace could be negotiated. A lot of people say that's not a deal that's possible. But I mean lasting peace, not a peace that lasts for two weeks and they start launching missiles again. So we'll see what happens.
>
> I think Israel should have – they really have to keep going. They have to keep moving forward [with constructing illegal settlements].

Finally, the penny ultimately dropped. With the GOP's Big Tent event rapidly approaching, Trump's platform on Israel has been fully baked. *Sputnik News* reports:

> "David M. Friedman, a real-estate attorney serving as Trump's main advisor on Israel, said the Republican presidential candidate and reality television star would not support the recognition of the Palestinian state without "the approval of the Israelis." Friedman also remarked that Trump was unconcerned with the inhabitants of the West Bank, because "nobody really knows how many Palestinians live there."
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> "Trump made Friedman a part of his campaign staff in April, at a meeting with Orthodox Jews, naming him and Jason Greenblatt, another real-estate lawyer and Trump's chief attorney, as his advisors on Israel. Friedman said at the time, "Mr. Trump's confidence is very flattering. My views on Israel are well known, and I would advise him in a manner consistent with those views. America's geopolitical interests are best served by a strong and secure Israel, with Jerusalem as its undivided capital." Friedman has made no secret of his feelings about a two-state solution with Palestine, writing that, "It was never a solution, just an illusion that served both the US and the Arabs."

Another devastating blow to the native Palestinians, currently under military occupation by an invading force – backed by the US, to the tune of $3 billion per year in direct military aid (free money for weapons and equipment).

Against his former declarations to the contrary, Trump is also now accepting outside money, from multiple sources. Funny how the political poles shift. How quickly a raging populist becomes a cynical realist. Even for a self-made billionaire, money still buys friends and influence.

With that out of the way, it's finally safe for the lobby to get behind Donald in a general election, should they wish to.

There it is. The genealogy of Donald Trump's evolving stance on Israel.

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