



Episode 353 - The Netanyahu Speech and Neocons

Guest: Daniel McAdams

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WOODS: It seemed pretty important to talk about this Benjamin Netanyahu speech before Congress today since that is on everybody's minds, and it is of great importance for a great many reasons. Before we get into the content of the speech, tell us something about the circumstances in which this speech took place, the political backdrop. He was not invited to speak to the Congress by the U.S. president. What exactly happened?

MCADAMS: Well, apparently it was John Boehner, the speaker of the House, who invited Netanyahu to address the House of Representatives. Incidentally, he is the only leader besides the great Winston Churchill—ha, ha—who has addressed Congress three times. So that's quite interesting. But yes, apparently Boehner, in collusion with the Israeli ambassador here in the U.S., decided to get Netanyahu over to speak, and as you point out, it was without the participation or even knowledge I think initially of the president of the United States. So it's very, very significant in that respect.

WOODS: And highly unusual, to the point where even a great many traditional friends of Israel thought: this is just a bridge too far.

MCADAMS: I think absolutely, and people were embarrassed by it. People were uncomfortable about the way this was done. I can't remember anything like this, Tom, in all my time of studying history. You're the historian here, but I don't know that something like this has ever happened, where the House of Representatives has invited a foreign leader to come over and undermine the policy of the president. There are constitutional means by which the Congress can express its disapproval of the president's foreign policy. As you know, you can withhold funds. You can provide strong guidance points. There are many things that you can do, but inviting a foreign leader to undermine your stated foreign policy is really something I would guess is unprecedented.

WOODS: I remember in the old days, Joe Sobran was accused of being cuckoo about and obsessed with Israel, as indeed a lot of people who favor non-intervention are.

MCADAMS: Yeah.

WOODS: But it wasn't that he just had this arbitrary desire to go after one particular country. It's just that this is the only country where shenanigans like this seem to take place in the U.S. This is the only country that gets in terms of foreign aid and gets a lot of times what it wants in terms of foreign policy decisions by the U.S. government. I don't see the Sudanese or the South Africans or the Lichtensteinians getting things like this. They try to make this out to be, well, you must just hate Jewish people, so before we go on, I want to hit this dead on, because this is just so stupid. This is the typical right-wing version of racism, because right-wingers are sick of being called racists. So now here's their club. We'll call you an anti-Semite, which is equally preposterous, as with most claims of racism—99 out of 100 of which are just politically motivated smears. It's meant to shut down conversation. I wonder if you saw this article in the *American Conservative* just a few days ago by Jon Basil Utley. Did you see that?

MCADAMS: I did. As a matter of fact, I was just looking at it again before we started talking.

WOODS: Yeah, I actually want to share a couple of passages from this, and I will link to it on the show notes page. Today's episode is 353, so it will be tomwoods.com/353. Let me just read you this, because this really undermines the view that if you have a particular opinion about the foreign policy that Israel advocates for the U.S., you must hate Jewish people. It's going to be a little bit trickier to make that bizarre claim stick. He says, "The Israeli lobby represents less than half of American Jews. The real lobby today is an amalgam of mainly older Jews, evangelical Armageddon believers, and the military-industrial complex, which prospers from unending wars and chaos in the Middle East. A recent Pew poll shows 31% of Jews do not feel attached to the state of Israel, while another 39% feel only somewhat attached. A massive 83% think that construction of settlements on Palestinian lands on the West Bank do not help Israeli security. 62% believe that the Israeli government is not negotiating in good faith with the Palestinians." Then he goes on to talk about J Street, which is the pro-peace Jewish organization in Washington, D.C. And then he goes on to say, even among evangelicals, Daniel, he says, because of the aging of the demographic, "only 30% of evangelicals sympathize with Israel while 49% sympathize with Israelis and Palestinians equally." So it's not that they won't try to smear people and destroy their careers, because I have found that that is not something they would bat an eye at. But it is going to be very tricky to make that stick in the future.

MCADAMS: Absolutely, and you know, as you started out saying, it's very interesting. You're right. There probably is not another country that has the ability to so strongly influence U.S. foreign policy, but as you point out, a criticism then is it's taken as being anti-Semitic. But just looking at what we do at the Institute, if you remember, it was France that was really hot and heavy about intervening in Libya, and we published, and I have written, and we have spoken numerous things about how horrible the French government was for doing this—how horrible France was. And there is really no, oh, you're Francophobic.

WOODS: You must hate French people!

MCADAMS: I regularly because I have kind of a beef with Saudi Arabia because I think that puts us into a lot of unnecessary conflict, especially in places like Syria. I have written tons of things against them. As a matter of fact, I was on a program with Dr. Paul the other day, our *Liberty Report*, and we were both talking about the horrible practices of Saudi Arabia, and its toxic relationship with the U.S. No one screams that we're Saudi-phobic, and we must therefore be silenced from society. So it is interesting, and I think the people who are afraid of debate are the ones who would like to retreat into the use of these kinds of language to stifle the debate; to not talk about these figures that you point out that are very, very important; that the lobby is losing people left and right, and the tone is changing.

WOODS: I want to talk, again, before we get into the speech itself, about a couple of positions that Netanyahu took in the past. In fact, before I do that, let me tell you about—I had a guy named Michael MacDonald on the show, who has a book on the Iraq war, the decision to go to war. And even though he is not a conservative, when we talked about the neocons, he said there is no political thinker more alien to the neocons than Edmund Burke. And I thought, wow, that is so quotable. Because, of course, could you imagine what Edmund Burke would think about the plan to democratize the Middle East. It would be utterly preposterous to him. Whereas, for the neocons, you're a racist if you don't want to democratize the Middle East. Well, anyway, Netanyahu was all in favor of that. If we democratize the Middle East, we'll have this wonderful wave of pro-Western sentiment. What actually has been the result?

MCADAMS: I was just looking up that quote again, and it was such a great quote. It was from the beginning of 2003, as the U.S. was in the final stages of what passed for a debate on whether to attack Iraq, and Netanyahu said, "If you take out Saddam's regime, I guarantee you it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region."

WOODS: Yeah, the same reverberations he's now here terrified telling us about.

MCADAMS: Yes, the reverberations were al-Qaeda, and ISIS, and the U.S. going back in to Iraq and now bombing Syria. If anything, as the neocons always are—completely misreading foreign policy, completely wrong, and when shown to be wrong, just simply ignore any of the facts. It's because we didn't do enough or we didn't do it right. He sounds just like McCain.

WOODS: Of course, and of course, he complains that Baghdad now is in the hands of bad people. Well, you think that might have had a teensy-weensy bit to do with the fact that you get rid of the Sunni regime, and you put in a pro-Shia regime, and that might be more friendly with Iran? It's like we can't think more than 10 minutes ahead with each policy—ten minutes ahead and two or three slogans is all we need. So in other words, there is reason to be skeptical of somebody who basically repeated the most ridiculous, preposterous, obviously exploded theses about the likelihood of Western-style, Enlightenment thinking spreading throughout the Middle East. I am going to listen to a person like this with a grain of salt.

All right, let's go through what you consider to be the highlights of the speech, or I don't know how you want to put it, but it is interesting. Let's just start off with the history of Iran that's

given, that all of a sudden in 1979 religious fanatics took over, and that's the beginning of the modern history. It begins in 1979. There is no 1953 in this history of Iran.

MCADAMS: Absolutely. This evil Iran emerged from nowhere. There was no precedent. There was no intervention. Intervention was never the cause. It's a re-writing of history. But you know what struck me most about the speech when I was reading it, it really felt like déjà vu in 2002 all over again, when the neocons were arguing for a war with Iraq, and it was kind of interesting. Of all places, even the *Washington Post*—I was reading after I was thinking to myself. Even the *Washington Post* pointed out that when Netanyahu was arguing that Iran and ISIS are two heads of the same beast, is what the writer said. He said it began to sound awfully familiar like George Bush arguing that al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein must be working together, and sadly enough, Tom, there is still a majority of Americans who believe that Saddam Hussein had a hand in 9/11. So this kind of propagandistic lie is very effective. What most Americans don't probably realize right now is that Iran is actively fighting ISIS in Iraq as we speak. So they are actually fighting ISIS. I wrote a little piece yesterday about McCain because McCain tweeted how upset he was that Iran was fighting ISIS, and I said, yeah, he'd much rather have American blood being spilled there than having people in the region take care of a problem that they've identified.

WOODS: I was telling you before we went on that it looks like over the years I added to my Facebook account a lot of people as friends rather indiscriminately, and that's coming back to bite me because I look at my feed, and it's full of crazy people. And the problem is that I make the mistake of commenting on their threads, which means that according to Facebook's algorithm, I want to see more from these people. So my feed gets worse and worse and crazier and crazier. I just hope they drop me, some of these people, at some point because I am too lazy to drop them. But just this morning I had somebody saying that someday soon ISIS and Iran will join together for the sake of Islam, and I thought, how could you be more ignorant of the most significant split in the history of Islam to think that that's just a small thing that they can overcome because of their mutual desire to destroy the West? That is not really how it has worked.

MCADAMS: But I am sure that person probably saw it on either FOX News or MSNBC, which are two sides of same coin, and this is the propaganda that's spewed out to Americans who rely on the mainstream media spewed out constantly. And it's funny, our leaders talk about how wonderfully diverse our press and our media is, but it's just simply not the case. I know that you spend a lot of time looking at alternative sources, and I certainly do, and it's just like we're living in two different worlds. You always know when you start a conversation with someone who relies exclusively on the mainstream media because it really feels like you're talking to someone from another planet.

WOODS: Exactly, I want to make sure to link to that Weiss annotated version of the speech so that people can get some of the specific replies to some of the specific claims about this official said this, and this one said that. Sometimes they didn't actually say these things, or these are

made-up quotation or whatever, and it's not, by the way, it's not to say that I would want to live in Iran or that this is a regime that I would ever support. I don't really support any regime anywhere in the world, so that more or less goes without saying, but nevertheless, there is no need to invent things or to be propagandistic or to smear people or just to promote scare-mongering, which is what a lot of this is, but what about the claim though that this is a uniquely undeterrable regime? We can't allow them to get nuclear weapons because they can't be deterred. They'll just go and kill all the Jewish people, and they can't be deterred from this. There are two arguments in here. One is that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon, which they are on the verge of getting one is something that Netanyahu has been claiming for 20 years or more. They are three weeks away or whatever, and 20 years has gone by, and they are still three weeks away. It reminds you of that movie *The Money Pit*. The house is going to be ready in two weeks, and four months later it goes on, but that's not impossible that they could build one. But they are not deterrable. They are unlike all the other enemies we have faced in the past. How do you respond to that? Because there is a superficial plausibility to that.

MCADAMS: Well, he has to make that claim, but this is the kind of argumentation that the neocons always do. They will tell you, as Rumsfeld would say, unknown unknowns, you know, they will tell you the most outrageous thing, and certainly it is possible that they are insane. We haven't seen any demonstration of that. As a matter of fact, they seem to be relatively rational actors in the region when you consider the behavior of other countries in the region, but you're right. As you point out, I think it was in 1992 that Netanyahu first said that Iran is five years away from a nuclear weapon. And we all remember in 2012 when he went down to the U.N., and he held up that goofy bomb and said that their weapon is 70% complete. You probably saw this, Tom, but recently we discovered that leaked cables from October 2012 reveal that even the Mossad believe that Netanyahu was full of beans when he made that claim. There is no evidence for this. His own intelligence services were saying it. So what that means, clearly, is he's lying. And he also lied when he said Iran is gobbling up countries, and that's like you said about being undeterrable. It's a terrifying thing. It's gobbling up countries. We've got to stop it now before it gobbles up Mexico. But there's just no evidence. Iran hasn't invaded a country since the 1700s.

WOODS: And yet toward the end, after he has painted this horrifying picture, toward the end he refers to it as a "very vulnerable regime." Well, which is it? This unstoppable colossus that's gobbling up nations or a very vulnerable regime? The fact that it is a vulnerable regime is precisely a point on our side, that there are people who favor westernization of one form or another and whose cause is completely discredited when the westerners themselves are constantly beating the war drums against Iran.

MCADAMS: It's interesting, I was just watching on Twitter yesterday, which is I like to read people's comments when things are happening of importance, and I think it was a progressive Jewish person. I don't remember exactly who tweeted it, but someone tweeted a list of all the synagogues just in Tehran, and I think it was 15 or so active synagogues. Try that in Saudi

Arabia, our great ally. Try setting up a synagogue there and see what happens. Try having a Bible and talking about Christianity in Saudi Arabia and see what happens. Like you, Tom, I am not enthusiastic to moving to a place like Iran because I don't share their religion and that sort of thing, but nevertheless, the propaganda that's being said about Iran is just incredible. It's just unbelievable.

WOODS: I was listening to a discussion by Bruce Fein, formerly of the Reagan Administration and who has been fairly high profile in the years since, and he says that he just sees no evidence for this claim about Iran. He says, take the Iran-Iraq War. He said, they did not go on fighting forever so that they could have their x-number of virgins and all that stuff, and they didn't. They had a negotiated settlement, and that was it. Even though Saddam was using chemical weapons against them, they did not respond in kind because it was their view that it would not be morally acceptable to do so. And then the U.S. actually shot down an Iranian civilian airliner in 1988 as the war was winding down, and the Iranians did not say, well, now it's all-out war. They just said, look, we need some kind of compensation, and that was the end of it. So they don't act the way they are supposed to be acting if they can't be deterred, and they are just completely insane.

MCADAMS: They are insane. Exactly. That's true. What was interesting is I noticed that a lot of even the neocons who were tweeting yesterday about the speech: They seemed to have a level of discomfort as well. People like Danielle Pletka and others were saying, whatever you think about Netanyahu, love him or hate him, he makes some very good points. So it's clear that they are also somewhat uncomfortable with this whole charade, and I think it's certainly the implications are strong for the election coming up in Israel, and I think Netanyahu is trying to boost his electoral chances back in Israel, and I think he wanted to come here and show how close he was with the U.S. Congress, and that's understandable. I try to give the guy the benefit of the doubt because it's understandable that he would like to have the U.S. help fight his battles for him. Who wouldn't want to have someone assume some risk for you? But at the same time, he makes the point toward the end, which I think is a very interesting point, and I hope he is right, he says, the days when Jewish people remain passive in the face of genocidal enemies is over. We're no longer scattered among the nations. For the first time in 100 generations, we the Jewish people can defend ourselves. That sounds great. That's fantastic, and I am glad they can. Then I hope we can stop sending however many billions of dollar a year that we send over there and stop being dragged into their regional conflicts. That would be perfect. That would be the logical conclusion to what he claimed.

WOODS: Daniel, take a minute here at the end of our discussion to say something about this new Ron Paul *Liberty Report* that you're doing with Dr. Paul.

MCADAMS: Well, it's sort of the epitome of soft launches, I guess, because we're just sort of working around trying to figure out what might be the best format, and we are releasing some of our early things, and that's why, you know, we certainly value the input from all of our friends. We are trying to make something interesting. Dr. Paul, obviously, ravenously devours

the news. He knows about everything from finance to foreign policy, and he has very important opinions and perspectives on this, and so now that I am down here in Lake Jackson, Texas close to Dr. Paul, we're just kind of sitting down in Dr. Paul's studio and trying to go over a few of the issues, and hopefully we're going to develop it into a show with more or less regular television programs. So it's exciting. These will be freely available on YouTube, so there's no subscription. There's none of the other things that happened in the past. So this is a whole new thing. It's a very, very soft launch, but we're in the process of building a website and making it a more permanent thing for Dr. Paul.

WOODS: Well, it's great so far. What's the name of the YouTube channel that it's hosted on?

MCADAMS: Right now in our very, very soft launch—this is not even our beta—it's being hosted by the Ron Paul Institute's YouTube page. There eventually be a *Ron Paul Liberty Report* YouTube page, but that is not up and running yet. So we're tiptoeing into the waters.

WOODS: Okay, well, after we finish talking I will ask you where and to what I should link on the show notes page for the *Liberty Report*, but thanks for a brief conversation with us today about yesterday's speech. We'll put articles that were mentioned today on the show notes page tomwoods.com/353, and of course, a link to the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, which is RonPaulInstitute.org. Daniel, thanks a lot.

MCADAMS: Thank you so much, Tom.