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Trump and Netanyahu: Prodigal Sons of Capitalism

By Yoav Litvin
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A love affair has been brewing in the corridors of power in Washington and Jerusalem, soon to be consummated. Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu and Donald J. Trump share a brand of right-wing ethnocentric populism that deregulates and privatizes anything and everything. It bolsters an oligarchy, which preys on public social safety nets and leads to a collapse of the working class.

Netanyahu and Trump rely on broadcasting their narrative via a submissive corporate media in order to achieve their vision of an isolationist, homogenous utopia (Jewish and white, respectively). Though Netanyahu has many more years of experience on the global political stage, Trump’s demagoguery and social media prowess have managed to stoke the wild imaginations of insatiable imperialists, warmongering capitalists, conspiratorial racists, unabashed misogynists and messianic Zionists in both Israel and the United States, even before setting foot in the White House.

First to be victimized, of course, are the Palestinians. Though claiming last February that he will be neutral with reference to negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, Trump flip-flopped as early as May, stating that illegal settlement of the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the West Bank should “keep moving forward”. In line with this bias, Trump has indicated that he may entrust Middle East peace negotiations to his son-in-law Jared Kushner, whose family has contributed money to illegal settlements and to the Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (FIDF), an Israeli army support group.

As further evidence of Trump's strong Israeli favoritism and as if taken from the arsonist's playbook for the Middle East, Trump declared that transitioning the American embassy to Jerusalem is a "big priority" for his administration. American presidents to date have wisely refrained from making this move due to the highly sensitive, contentious and potentially volatile status of Jerusalem as a holy city for Christians, Muslims and Jews and its great importance for both Israeli and Palestinian societies. Trump's declaration obliterates any American claim of impartiality as an arbiter of the conflict.

But with all due respect to the Palestinians, one cannot be considered a true American warmonger and friend of Netanyahu's Israel without provoking the Iranians. Resurrected by Trump from the graveyard of false flags and bogus, debunked scare tactics, Bibi's "Iranian nuclear threat" has made a comeback. Last March when Trump was just one of several Republicans on his mandatory pilgrimage to the Haaj of wannabe leaders of the free world – the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) – he said: "my number-one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran". Though at that early stage of the electoral circus Trump was still viewed as an entertaining side show who complemented Netanyahu's demagoguery in a bid for support from American Jews, it is now clear that he is backing his dangerous rhetoric with equally dangerous cabinet appointments who have stated that Iran is back on top of the American (and therefore Israeli) target list.

Netanyahu and Trump complement each other so well because they are the quintessential prodigal sons of capitalism. They share a deep-seated corruption, extravagance and wastefulness, which reflect a proud contempt for the poor and disadvantaged in society. Surrounded by all the spoils of the uber-wealthy, Netanyahu and Trump champion a dubious and self-aggrandizing version of history. One scandal after another, the media expose their perverse orgies of vested interests, macho chest-thumping and a reactionary tribalism with an utter disregard for our planet and all its inhabitants.

Though this grotesque, incestuous love fest presents an obvious and grave danger to humanity, it also provides a unique opportunity. During the campaign trail, Trump carelessly made absurd promises he cannot possibly keep. As such, with time, it is likely that his voters will recognize him for the con artist he is, and reject his brand of populism. One can only hope that in his hubris, Netanyahu will fail to hedge his bets and go all in on Trump, at which point we can all sit back and rejoice at the sight of both Netanyahu and Trump helplessly barreling away into the abyss.