

### Versione Italiana

Benjamin Bibi Netanyahu, now a political zombie in his country, is moving with ostentatious determination as commander-in-chief of a dirty war, well supported by the American circles in the Republican Party and in Jewish organizations adjacent to it with which he has long had solid personal relationships. Recent statements from many leading exponents of the US Grand Old Party are chilling; they are paeans to the destruction of Gaza, to the point of wiping out the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, the big star at the recent annual conference of the Republican Jewish Coalition was Donald Trump, who was praised when he said that, had he been president, “you wouldn’t have had Ukraine, you wouldn’t have had Israel attacked,” pledging, if re-elected, “to defend our friend and ally the state of Israel like no one has ever done before.” In the front row to applaud him, cloyingly honored by Trump, was Miriam Adelson, the hostess in her hotel The Venetian, a copy of the city of the Doges, where the conference was held. Among the richest people in the world, Sheldon Adelson’s widow, an Israeli, is a mega-donor to the Republican Party and was also a major donor to Trump and to Bibi in their election campaigns.

In his conduct of the war, Netanyahu is moving with a political change in the leadership of America in mind, with the prospect of a Republican returning to the White House, and he is working to favor it as much as he can, while also counting on the growing uncertainties in the Democratic camp itself over re-nominating Biden. Who, in fact, he treats like a “lame duck” president. Biden, for his part, as an experienced politician, tried to get ahead of the situation at the outbreak of the crisis, flying to Israel as if he wanted to “commission” Netanyahu and avoid the scenario of all-out war, which then happened anyway. The Israeli leader is perfectly at ease in this scenario, and gradually forced his American ally to settle for the fait accompli of a ground war in Gaza, even if with apparent reluctance.



Benjamin Netanyahu with Miriam Adelson. Sheldon Adelson is standing behind them.

Netanyahu is the first Israeli prime minister born in Israel (1949) after the establishment of the Jewish state. But he is also the first culturally “all American” prime minister. A significant part of his biography is intertwined with the United States. Never has an Israeli leader had such a remarkable ability to interact personally with American political, cultural and economic spheres. His relationship with America began early. After spending his childhood and early youth in Jerusalem, he went overseas in 1963. His family lived in Pennsylvania, in Cheltenham Township, a suburb of Philadelphia, where Bibi attended the local high school. He still has a strong city accent

left from his Philadelphia years.

After his military service he returned to the USA, to Boston, to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also studied at Harvard. In those years he changed his name, calling himself Benjamin Ben Nitai (in reference to Mount Nitai), a decision that would be seen as a symptom of a lack of attachment and loyalty to the Israeli identity. In an interview he clarified that he did so because his surname was difficult for Americans to pronounce.

In 1976 he began working in the private sector in Boston, where his life intersected with that of Mitt Romney, beginning a long-lasting friendship and robust partnership. Netanyahu returned to Israel for a while, then returned to the USA in 1982. He was thirty-three years old and already a high-ranking political leader. In this capacity he returned to America as number two in the embassy in Washington. Two years later he moved to New York, where he assumed leadership of the embassy to the United Nations until 1988. Then he returned home and began a political career that took him to the top office in the country.

He also got there using a pure American-style electoral campaign, when he won the elections against Shimon Peres in 1996 thanks to the strategy of Arthur Finklestein, a Republican political operative who also had Ronald Reagan among his clients.

Precisely his status as an “insider” of American politics would make him a sort of internal opponent of Obama (and therefore of his deputy, Biden) in the 2012 presidential elections, when his old friendship with Mitt Romney turned into a dramatic political plank aimed at preventing Obama’s re-election. Never before had a foreign head of state, even from the greatest ally and friend of the USA, actively taken part in an American presidential campaign by siding with one of the contenders, the challenger of the incumbent president in office. The identical “script” was played with Trump, who was opposed by liberal American Jews, but was Netanyahu’s solid ally in the plan that led to the Abraham Accords with the Saudis, which is also one of the causes of the current conflict.

The fundamental “assumption” on which the special relationship between America and Israel was historically based – first and foremost from the point of view of the American Jewish community – was that support for Israel was a strictly bipartisan issue in American politics, and not the purview of one party, let alone ever being an issue to pit one party against the other. This was how things were until Bibi appeared on the scene. Now politically the long-serving of the Israeli prime ministers, Netanyahu has succeeded in reshaping that relationship according to the interests of conservatives – and today of supremacists – in America and Israel.

-il manifesto

Cover image: White House meeting between then-President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, May 22, 2015 (photo from [White House Archive](#))

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