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The
Israeli
Factor

By

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John K. Cooley is former correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor and ABC News. He has authored seven books on the Middle East. His latest is "An Alliance Against Babylon," available from our Book Catalog on page 14.

**In Memoriam
Jack B. Sunderland
A.M.E.U. President 1967-2005**

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The U.S. and Israel in Iraq: 1948–2005

By John K. Cooley

President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, and some of their real or nominal allies in Bush's war of choice in Iraq have had the active or tacit cooperation of many of us in the media. Obscured have been huge issues such as Iraqi civilian casualties; full disclosure of abuse or torture of prisoners in places like Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo; origin of the falsehoods about WMDs in Iraq; poor planning for the occupation.

For this writer, after covering Arab and Muslim regions for nearly half a century, there is another issue. Our mainstream media, almost without exception, tip-toe around the role played by Israel in influencing the Bushites toward war in March 2003.

Working in North Africa and the Middle East since the anti-colonial wars of the 1950s and 1960s, I am constantly struck by the centrality of the Palestine-Israel conflict in peoples' minds. It's obvious in talking with everyone from Berber high-school dropout shepherds in distant Morocco to highly-educated academics in places like Egypt and the Sudan.

The Palestine-Israel conflict is inextricably entwined both with Iraq and the belligerent sentiment in Jerusalem and Washington vis-à-vis Iran and its presumed nuclear-weapons ambitions. Our policy-makers have been fighting a wishful rear-guard action in trying to put them in separate "boxes" and keep them there.

The central theme of this article is to show how Iraq and Israel became mortal enemies, and how the United States, after generations of very limited interest in the region, became Israel's ally in its conflict with Iraq.

The Jews in Iraq

There is an Old Testament epic dear to Christian evangelists, many of them enthusiastic Israeli supporters, that is also part of recorded secular history: the mass deportations of the Jews from the ancient kingdom of Judah by the Babylonian and Chaldean armies in 597 BC, 587 BC, and 581 BC respectively. The deportations brought about the seventy-year-long “Babylonian Captivity” of the flower of ancient Jewry.

For hundreds of thousands of Jews who chose not to return to Palestine after their Babylonian captivity ended, Arab and Persian rule brought some golden decades. Jewish chroniclers record that early Arab rulers, the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, mindful of the Prophet Muhammad’s injunctions against interfering with the lives of Jews and Christians, “Peoples of the Book,” encouraged economic and cultural revival among Mesopotamian minority communities. The Jews established a system of autonomous self-government under an executive called the exilarch. He was supposed to be a descendant of Israel’s King David (1000-961 BC). His office was hereditary.

In 1492 AD, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain did the Middle East the favor of expelling hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews. Ottoman Sultan Bayezit II ordered his governors to receive them with the utmost generosity and assistance. “They say Ferdinand is a wise monarch,” he told advisers. “How could he be, he who impoverishes his country to enrich mine?” Soon the European Jewish immigrants were enriching cities like Istanbul, Baghdad and Mosul with their arts, crafts and skills. They received the same respect as the various Christian sects. Descendants of the Spanish *Sephardim* today exist in a quiet and prosperous community in Istanbul, speaking and publishing in Ladino, an archaic form of Spanish.

Nevertheless, through the centuries Jewish emigration gradually increased. By 1850, according to figures compiled by the American Jewish Committee, only about 3,000 Jews remained in Baghdad. In 1853, they joined with the majority of Sunni Arabs then living in Baghdad and Mosul to fight against one of the recurrent Kurdish rebellions in northern Mesopotamia.

Today, in Israel, seven miles east of Tel Aviv, is the Or Yehuda Museum of Babylonian Jewry. Here one can see displays of the well-developed educational and communal structures of Iraqi Jewry during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Photos show lavish weddings with stylishly-dressed families, prosperous businessmen

at the entrances of their homes, and children in neat school uniforms standing at attention on the grounds of one of the 32 Jewish schools in Baghdad. A three-dimensional model depicts Baghdad’s main Jewish neighborhood in the early 1900s, with push-button lighting for schools, hospitals, and community centers.

The museum also depicts how the Zionist movement slowly infiltrated and changed Jewish life in Iraq, before and after the British conquest in World War I. Artifacts, including letters, newspaper clippings, political pamphlets and photos, tell the story. It had actually begun during the late nineteenth century, under the tolerant and watchful eyes of the last Ottoman rulers, as their power waned.

The wealth and influence of all the trading and merchant classes—Muslim, Christian and Jewish—revived and grew. So did animosity between the self-appointed and comfortably established, self-declared heirs of Babylonian Jewry and the mainly young and hyper-activist Zionists, who came from the West. The Zionists dreamt of variations of Theodore Herzl’s *Judenstat*, a Jewish national state with no determined boundaries.

Israel’s Need for Oil

In 1909, an early Zionist group called The General Jewish Colonization Association tried to persuade the Young Turk rulers to bring masses of Jewish settlers into Turkish-ruled Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Cyprus, Syria and Eastern Turkey (Anatolia). Personal funds of the settlers and subsidies from banks and special societies were to support emigration. The British Ambassador in Istanbul reported to London that the Zionist group wanted to found “an autonomous Jewish state in Mesopotamia.” Nothing came of this, except added tensions among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the region.

There soon began an epic struggle for control of Middle East oil, especially the huge deposits lying under the earth in Iraqi Kurdistan, southern Iraq and neighboring Iran. After British colonial rule began in 1919, Turkey had to yield its oil concessions in Iraq to a British-controlled consortium.

Following the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson and his peace team promoted two notable flops: independent states for the Kurds and for those Armenians who had survived the Ottoman massacres of 1915. Both the Armenian and Kurdish republics collapsed after a few months of fighting with the Russians and Ataturk’s deter-

mined armies. Where Wilson's diplomacy relates directly to today's epic conflict for the soul and the energy resources of contemporary Iraq was Wilson's insistence on an "open door" commercial policy in British-mandated Iraq. The Americans operated in accord with Winston Churchill's insistence that oil, first for the Royal Navy and then for British industry, would be essential to guarantee Western economic and military supremacy in the coming decades.

The U.S. State Department in the 1920s jostled constantly with the British Foreign Office. The latter tried to insist that Texas and Oklahoma had so much oil that America didn't need any from Iraq or anywhere else in the Mideast. The former Turkish Petroleum Company metamorphosed into the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1928. IPC's new owners, getting 23.75 percent of shares each, were Anglo-Persian (later British Petroleum, BP), Royal Dutch/Shell, a U.S. consortium later narrowing to Standard Oil of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum (later Mobil, which eventually became the Exxon-Mobil of our day) and the Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (CFP). With variations, the original IPC owner companies remained essentially in control of Iraq's oil until Saddam Hussein, then in title vice-president to President Ahmed Hassan al-Baqr but in reality already Iraq's dictator in all but name, nationalized IPC in 1972.

By the mid-1920s, the British mandate authorities were administering an oil-free Palestine. They eventually remedied this by completing, in 1936, a Kirkuk-Mosul-Haifa oil pipeline. Britain would close the pipeline in 1948. And in 2003, oil-poor Israel would seek—futilely—to have it reconstructed as one of the goodies it coveted from President Bush's invasion of Iraq.

The U.S. State Department tacitly accepted a so-called "Red Line" agreement of 1925 among the major oil companies. This remained in force through the 1930s and 1940s. After the Roosevelt-Ibn Saud accord in 1945, the U.S. began to rely on the Saudi kingdom, Kuwait and other Gulf emirates as main foreign energy sources. The 1925 accord excluded Britain from the Arabian Peninsula, but jealously guarded England's predominance on its own side of the "Red Line" in Iran and, to a lesser degree, in Iraq.

Major oil discoveries near Kirkuk in 1927 helped swell IPC's production to provide a major part of Iraq's national income by the mid 1930s, after Britain's formal colonial mandate expired in 1932 and a nominally independent—but heavily British-influenced—Iraq entered the League of Nations as a sovereign state. Ever since, key

scientists, economists, major oil company executives and their governments have kept a covetous eye on Iraq. As the twenty-first century began, Iraq was deemed to be custodian of the world's second-largest oil reserves. Costs of extracting them are still among the world's lowest.

Iraq and the Jewish State

First steps up the escalator of enmity between the Hashemite Iraqi monarchy and the *Yeshuv* or Jewish community in Palestine, which became the new State of Israel in 1948, were taken by Britain, the mandatory power in Palestine from 1920 to 1948 and in Iraq from 1920 to 1932. The chief player on the British side was Winston Churchill. On the Iraqi side it was the canny politician and ex-Ottoman army officer, Nuri al-Said; and on the Israeli side, Israel's visionary founder, David Ben-Gurion.

As a member of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George's cabinet, Churchill played a role in the Middle East roughly comparable to a hybrid of Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell in the younger George Bush's first term in 2001-2004. To keep France, firmly installed in Syria and Lebanon, out of Iraq and Palestine, Churchill offered the throne of the artificial new mandate-state of Transjordan (later Jordan) to King Abdallah I. He was the grandfather of the late King Hussein and the great-grandfather of today's King Abdallah II.

Churchill and his advisers believed that Britain could reconcile the basically contradictory 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. The former, between Britain and France, repudiated promises of national independence that had been given the Arabs in return for their support of the Allied war effort; the latter, by Britain, favored a National Home in Palestine for the Jewish People in exchange for Zionist promises to pressure Jews in Austria, Germany, Hungary, and the United States to support the same war effort. Churchill's solution was to give the Jews their National Home in Palestine, then create a separate Arab kingdom, Transjordan, east of the Jordan river, under the rule of the Hashemite family.

Nuri al-Said and David Ben-Gurion were architects of the uprooting and extraction to Israel of most of Iraq's approximately 300,000 Jews. Israel entrusted this to members of its fledgling Mossad, its external civilian intelligence service. The Israelis named the operation after two Biblical prophets: Ezra and Nehemiah. This writer first heard details during an early reporting trip to Iraq in January 1969. Myself and a small busload of other correspondents were repeatedly arrested by police and *muhabarat* worthies as we followed the trial of 14 Iraqis, nine of

them Jews, including boys of 15 and 16, who were hanged for alleged espionage before big crowds in Baghdad.

Accounts of the Iraqi Jews' extraction, published by once undercover Zionist agent Slomo Hillel and by historians like Benny Morris, all agree about early details of the "encouraged" exodus of the Iraqi Jews, which official Israeli accounts term a "rescue." Shortly after the pogrom accompanying the brief pro-German coup in Baghdad of Rashid Ali and a junta of Iraqi army colonels in 1941, the Haganah Jewish militia in British-ruled Palestine began smuggling agents into Iraq to form "self-defense" cells for Iraqi Jews. They organized escape routes and clandestine arms-supply lines for them through Transjordan, Turkey and Iran, and from 1947 on, by air from Palestine. They also created clandestine radio networks and secret training programs. With "Mossad B," the clandestine Haganah cells organized the systematic transfer to Israel, between 1948 and 1951, of nearly 300,000 Iraqi Jews. Ben-Gurion vainly hoped they would bring with them their capital as well as their professional skills. But most were despoiled of cash and assets, except the clothes they wore and some hand baggage, before Nuri al-Said's Iraqi government would allow them to leave.

In his book "Operation Babylon," Shlomo Hillel describes how under his cover name, "Charles Armstrong," he operated clandestine charter flights of "Near East Transport Inc." to Palestine, circumventing often lax British surveillance. After Israel's founding in 1948, when Iraq declared a state of war with Israel and the Iraqi monarchy sent a small force to join Arab armies seeking to crush the new Israeli state, the extraction operations became more difficult. So did the situation of the remaining Jewish community in Iraq, which clandestine emigration had already reduced by about one-fourth to one-third in size.

Naeim Giladi, an Iraqi-born Jew, told his life story to *The Link* in 1998. His forebears were the Haroon family, descendants of the builders of the Prophet Ezekiel's tomb near the ruins of ancient Babylon. Giladi worked for Mossad B in the Iraqi Jewish underground. As an 18-year-old he was caught by Iraqi secret police while helping fellow Jews to emigrate to Israel. His captors incarcerated him in the Abu Ghraib prison, of ill-fame during today's U.S. occupation. Sentenced to be hanged, Giladi carefully planned a successful escape to Israel. There he experienced the frustrations of thousands of other immigrants

"On April 8, 1950, after the grenade was thrown into the crowd of Jews assembled at the Al-Dar-Al-Bida coffee shop during the Passover holiday, injuring four, outraged Iraqi Jews accused the Zionist underground ... the only party that had the interest to perpetrate this deed in order to scare the Jews to flee to Israel."

From "Ben Gurion's Scandals" by Naeim Giladi, page 254

from Arab and Muslim societies.

Giladi witnessed the dumping in overcrowded Gaza of Palestinian prisoners who wouldn't collaborate with the Israeli authorities. Soon he appeared in the front ranks of civil rights activists. Adopting the Afro-American label of "Black Panthers," they agitated against the Ariel Sharon-led Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Giladi then emigrated to the U.S. He renounced Israeli nationality and acquired American citizenship.

Giladi sold his house in Israel and used proceeds to publish his book, "Ben-Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah and the Mossad Eliminated the Jews." It describes violence and terrorism against Jews in Iraq in 1950 and 1951. Giladi asserts the bombings of prospective Jewish emigrants and Jewish property, including synagogues, were perpetrated by Mossad agents in order to expedite Iraqi Jewry's move to Israel. His contentions are supported by other contemporary accounts of his Iraqi-born compatriots. They are refuted, however, in "To Jerusalem and Back," a book by Mordecai Ben-Porat, another Iraqi-born Jew instrumental in planning and managing the mass exodus. Ben-Gurion, concerned about the varying reports, ordered an official Israeli investigation which cleared (or "whitewashed," according to the critics) Israeli agents, later condemned to death and imprisonment by Iraqi courts.

In any case, these events fed the panic of the beleaguered Jewish community and sped up the "legal" emigration agreed by Nuri al-Said. They also increased fears of both Iraqi Jews and Arabs of each other. Today, the last of the aging Iraqi Jews—about 32 in Baghdad when the Americans arrived in April 2003—have been mostly flown from their old homeland to their new one, Israel.

Another basis of Israeli-Iraqi enmity that would eventually tighten the once loose U.S.-Israeli alliance was the perception of Israeli military and intelligence that Iraq was a major strategic threat to the Jewish state. I interviewed Ben-Gurion, then long in retirement, in March 1968. He assured me that Israel remembers that it was Iraqi troops in 1948 that had helped to prevent an early Israeli victory in Jerusalem, and that this experience had given birth to the Israeli axiom that any new movement of Iraqi troops into Jordan or Syria would be seen as a *casus belli*. This became a pillar of Israeli policy. It was eventually accepted in Washington.

Iraq's role progressively grew in the war that the leaders of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the "Palestine Liberation Army," and Iraq all launched—with very poor coordination—as soon as the Union Jack went down and Israel's blue-and-white banner went up over the land on May 15, 1948. Of the 21,000 combined Arab force committed during the first phase of the war, May 15 to June 11, 1948 (against 65,000 men of the Haganah and various Jewish militias, better equipped and usually better trained than the Arabs), Iraq at first sent only one under-strength brigade of two battalions.

One battalion, with exactly one armored car, crossed Jordan and the Jordan river with little Jewish resistance. It joined other Arab League forces to occupy temporarily the old walled city in East Jerusalem, Nablus and the British-built police fort, nicknamed the "Tiger's Eye" at Latroun, capturing a couple of kibbutzim and a power station on the way. When U.N. negotiators directed by Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte (assassinated by Israeli gunmen on September 17, 1948) arranged the war's first truce on June 11, combined Arab forces including the Iraqi battalion had occupied a large zone. It reached from Jerusalem's Old City westward along the main Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road to Latroun, and northwest to Ramleh and Lydda (Lod). It extended northward along the railroad line to Qalqiliya and Tulkarm, swinging east to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias) at Samakh.

The second Iraqi battalion was at first repulsed with heavy losses by Jewish troops in the West Bank's hills overlooking the Jordan Valley. Then it engaged Israel's Golani and Carmeli brigades, inflicting losses on them around Jenin. The Israelis retreated to Megiddo, the site of Armageddon, where the bible foretells of a final clash between the forces of Good and Evil. However, the Israelis increased pressure on Jerusalem and on Latroun, defended by the British-officered Arab Legion of Jordan. (Latroun remained in Arab hands until the 1967 war.)

When fighting resumed, new Israeli airpower was now applied, with little Arab opposition. Israel got planes supplied by Czechoslovakia, on Moscow's urgent recommendation. (Stalin's one-year honeymoon with Israel was still in force. After beating the United States by a few minutes in recognizing the new state, the Soviet dictator surmised that Israel would cause Mideast upheavals and undermine the Western position.)

Baghdad steadily sent Iraqi reinforcements. By October 1, 1948, amid a victorious Israeli offensive against the Egyptians in the Negev, two Iraqi brigades totaling nearly 15,000 men held Nablus and its suburbs. An Arab summit conference vainly called on Iraq, Lebanon and Syria to help relieve Israeli pressure on the Arab Legion around Latroun, and on Egyptian and Sudanese forces in the Negev.

After victorious Israeli offensives on almost all fronts in December 1948 and January 1949, the British government stepped in, threatening British intervention under Britain's 1936 defense treaty with its former protectorate, Egypt. Ben-Gurion, shocked at U.S. President Harry Truman's failure to block British interference, ordered an immediate ceasefire and withdrawals on January 8, 1949. Israel's War of Independence, as Israeli historians call it, ended with the capture of 30 percent more territory than the U.N. had allotted to the proposed Jewish state in Palestine in the U.N. General Assembly partition resolution of 1947.

When in mid-February 1949, Dr. Ralph Bunche, the U.N.'s brilliant Afro-American statesman, began his successful armistice negotiations on Rhodes between Israel on the one hand and Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon on the other, Iraq refused to join them, and until this day has maintained its technical state of war with Israel. Iraq has remained aloof from all Arab-Israel peace deals since. The wishful thinking of George W. Bush's neo-conservative advisers ignored this when they spoke, from 2003 onward, of a "new democratic Iraq" which would eventually embrace Israel.

Iraq's rejection of peace dealings with Israel was reinforced, if anything, by its performance in the 1967 war, again a humiliating defeat, and in the 1973 war, when the tardy but effective arrival of two Iraqi tank divisions on the Syrian front helped to halt a possible Israeli occupation of Damascus. Effects on Iraq of other Arab-Israeli conflicts, including Saddam Hussein's missile attacks on Israel during the Gulf War for Kuwait in 1991 and the failure of Saddam's military to help the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) in its hour of need in Jordan in

“Black September” of 1970, help to understand how the Israel-Iraq-U.S. relationships have played out since those events.

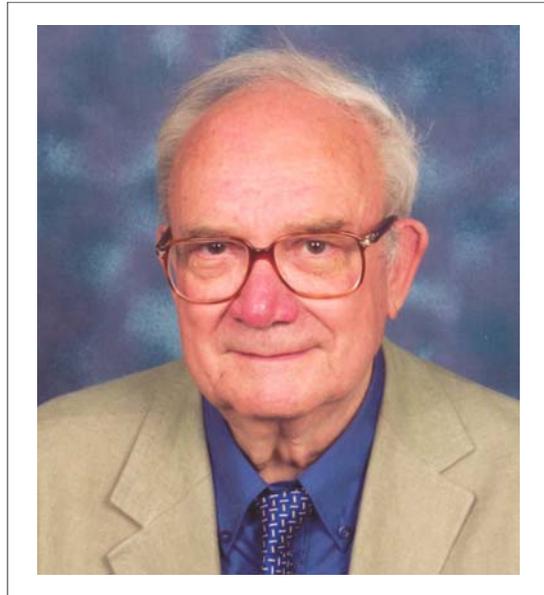
Even before the 1967 war, Israel had scored an important victory over Iraq and, by proxy for the U.S., over the Soviet Union. Since the early 1960s, U.S. and Israeli military and intelligence establishments had coveted the secrets of the MIG-21, the most advanced jet fighter the Soviet Union had supplied to Arab states.

The successful operation was engineered in large part by Yaacov Nimrodi, Israeli envoy to Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, and a senior intelligence specialist who made a personal fortune from wheeling and dealing between Israeli and Iranian merchants of arms and other commodities. Munir Radfa (also called Rofa), a Catholic Iraqi airforce pilot stationed near Kirkuk, managed to steal a MIG-21 and fly himself safely to Israel and a new existence on August 16, 1966. Within months, both Israel and the United States (the MIG was loaned to the Pentagon) were thoroughly familiar with its avionics, armaments and every other characteristic. This knowledge enhanced both U.S. intelligence about the Russian plane’s performance and the Israel air force’s overwhelming air superiority over the Arabs in the June 1967 war.

Iraq’s role in that war was modest. The Aref government in Baghdad cheered for Arab solidarity in the tense run-up to the war. When a pre-war Unified Arab Command was set up in Amman under Egyptian command, including Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi officers, Baghdad sent spare parts and other military aid to Jordan (but not to its Baathist-ruled rival, Syria), and signed a defense pact with Cairo.

A couple of Iraqi Tupolev bombers reached Israeli air space at the height of Israel’s own devastating dawn air offensive on June 5 against the Egyptian and Syrian air forces. The Iraqi pilots probably aimed at Haifa’s port and oil refinery, but caused little damage. Israel’s fighter-bombers quickly knocked out their H-3 air base, in Iraq’s Western Al-Anbar province. An Iraqi force of about brigade strength crossed Jordan, while King Hussein’s army

fought gallant but futile rear-guard actions in Jerusalem and surroundings. The Iraqi contingent, like other Arab forces, lacked Arab air cover. It took about 80 percent casualties from Israeli air attacks. Both the Israeli Defense Force and the Iraqi armored units deployed British-made Centurion tanks at the time. Some Palestinians of Nablus mistook advancing Israeli armor for Iraqi Centurions. Remembering the 1948 episode, they turned out to cheer them in, before bitter disillusionment and a permanent Israeli occupation set in.



John K. Cooley

Iraq’s poor war performance stirred political turmoil at home. It was one factor leading to Saddam Hussein’s final seizure of power with his then senior but weaker partner, Ahmed Hassan al-Baqr, in the successful Baathist coup of 1968, after the period following the Baath’s earlier, C.I.A.-assisted one, in 1963. Abroad, Iraq broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. and Britain, accusing both of active intervention in the war. Relations were not restored until 1984, during a reciprocal charm offensive by Saddam and President Ronald Reagan’s administration. Missions of Donald Rumsfeld and other big-business representatives, seeking a big chunk of the lucrative markets resulting from Iraq’s oil bonanza, and the 1980-88 war with Iran were crucial in the restoration process. Before examining how United States support for Saddam and Israel’s efforts to destroy him at first diverged in the 1980s, then converged in the 1990s, we must first briefly examine the convoluted Israeli-U.S.-Iranian-Kurdish relationships.

Israel and Iraqi Kurdistan

We lack space here to review the long struggle of the Kurds for their autonomy or independence from their host countries: Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and the ex-USSR. Suffice it to say that Iraq’s Kurds, 15 to 20 percent of Iraq’s estimated population of about 24 million in 2004, have been the group benefiting the most from the brief U.S. and allied invasion of Iraq during the Kuwait war of spring 1991, and the long-drawn-out invasion and occupation of all of Iraq from 2003.

My first visit to the late Kurdish leader Mullah

Mustafa Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan, crossing mountain trails from Iran, was in 1973 (arranged by Ahmed Chalabi, then a young pro-Shah professor at the American University of Beirut). Barzani hinted that Kurds would welcome direct oil deals and even American military bases in Iraq. In 2003 Brusik Nuri Chawais, the German-educated deputy of Mullah Mustafa's son and leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Massaoud Barzani, endorsed the idea of U.S. bases, music to the ears of both the Bush administration and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Israeli government. As far back as 1973, General Ezer Weizman, Israeli pioneer, combat pilot and air force commander who later became president, told colleagues of his wish that "Israel had bases on the Euphrates."

In 2004, The New Yorker journalist Seymour Hersh reported C.I.A. knowledge of Israeli paramilitary cells embedded in Kurdistan for reconnaissance and possible action against targets in Iran and Syria. In fact, Israel has periodically kept a clandestine military and intelligence presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 1953, the Shah's iron rule was restored by a U.S. and British-engineered coup, which displaced the brief quasi-democratic rule by nationalistic Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadeq, who had tried to nationalize Iranian oil and weaken the grip of the controlling Anglo-American oil consortium. Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlevi began using Kurds in Iran and Iraq to undermine central authority in Baghdad and so reduce Iraqi strategic power.

Ben-Gurion concurred with the strategy. Mossad needed to recover from several severe reverses. In Egypt, clumsy bombings of U.S. installations by Israeli agents, meant to look like the work of Nasser's military-backed regime, resulted in prison and hangings of the confessed bombers. In Iraq, breakup of the clandestine emigration net of "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah" led to 28 espionage sentences against Iraqi Jews, and commuted death sentences against two Israeli Mossad agents.

Ben-Gurion resolved to cement alliances, both official and overt, and unofficial and covert, with non-Arab Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia and other African nations, Muslim or otherwise—and the Kurds. Israel's Yaacov Nimrodi worked in Tehran to keep the Shah's regime involved. Large-scale fighting between the Iraqi military machine, which began to use up its old British arms and receive Soviet ones, erupted soon after Abdel Karim Kassem's 1958 seizure of power from the monarchy. Baghdad resumed an old British-era policy of "Arabizing" the oil-rich Kirkuk area, replacing indigenous Kurds with Arab colonists brought from the south, including nomadic Arab tribes settled on rich and newly-irrigated farmlands.

Leaders of Israel's then ruling Labor Party, including Defense Minister Shimon Peres, began secret meetings with Iraqi Kurds in 1964. In June 1966, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Foreign Minister Abba Ebban secretly visited Tehran, probably to coordinate a later covert Israeli politico-military mission to Mustafa Barzani's mountain headquarters. Israeli arms and military training were promised; cash subsidies began later. A 1966 mission brought Barzani a full military field hospital, with Israeli doctors and nurses. Later, Barzani visited Israel and met politicians including Menachem Begin. Mossad and the Shah's secret service, SAVAK, helped create a Kurdish intelligence service, called Parastin. Israeli cash and arms, in modest but for the Kurds very welcome amounts, helped them prepare for more guerilla wars against Baghdad's army and its Kurdish supporters, contemptuously called by the rebel Kurds "Josh," meaning "little donkey," a play on the Arab *jeish*, meaning army.

Secret visits to Barzani by U.S. military officers in 1969 and decisions by President Nixon's National Security adviser Henry Kissinger resulted in a clandestine U.S. aid program, supposed to be worth \$14 million, following the Israeli one. Barzani and aides had to promise not to work for an independent Kurdistan, anathema to their Turkish, Iranian and Syrian hosts as well as to Iraq, and to obey all American orders.

Fast forward to 1975: after months of cooperation between the Shah's Iran, Israel, and the U.S. to aid the Kurds, the Shah of Iran decided instead to patch up his frontier and other problems with Saddam Hussein. Following Iraq's important role in ending Israel's counter-attack against Syria during the 1973 war, and in enforcing brief but draconian oil sanctions against the West, the Kissinger-Nixon team in Washington stepped up their involvement in diplomacy and covert action in Iraq. Barzani begged the U.S., Israel and Iran for more aid. (I was asked by Barzani personally to convey this message to the Shah in Tehran, which I did.) However, on March 6, the Shah and Saddam met at the Algiers OPEC oil conference. As one senior Kurd told me, together "they dumped the Kurds into the shit." Saddam acceded to the Shah's border demands and immediately closed his borders with Iran, as the Shah withdrew his forces and military aid. The U.S. and Israel, somewhat reluctantly, followed: the Shah was clearly calling the shots at that time.

Israel Plans to Bring Down Saddam

The late King Hussein of Jordan and other commentators agree that the C.I.A.'s support was crucial in the Baathist power seizures.

First came the February 1963 coup. The C.I.A., notably its redoubtable senior officer and much-decorated World War II hero, the late James Critchfield, steered it from Cairo, with support from the C.I.A. station in Baghdad. Saddam Hussein often visited the U.S. Embassy in Cairo during exile there after his unsuccessful attempt in October 1959 to assassinate President Adel Karim Kassem. President Nasser shared American and British dislike of Kassem, whom Nasser viewed as a rival for Mideast leadership. Main allies of fervent Arab nationalist Kassem were Iraq's dynamic and hyper-active Communists, who supported Kassem's populist program of building public housing and using oil revenues to help Iraq's poor, as well as buying arms from the Soviets and anyone else who would sell them. The C.I.A., like the Baath and Nasser, was anxious to destroy the Iraqi Communist Party and its power, judged to be a spearhead of Soviet Cold War penetration. So, when the time came for the Baathist conspiracy, which had penetrated key army units, to move against Kassem, the C.I.A., from a secret radio transmitter in Kuwait, broadcast long lists of hundreds of key Communists held in its files for use by the Baathists, who cornered, rounded up, tortured and killed them. This neutralized any defense they could make of Kassem. The Baath's power bid was successful. "We rode to power on a C.I.A. train," said Baath secretary-general Ali Saleh al-Sa'adi, in charge of the mass execution of Kassem's nationalist and Communist supporters, in which the ruthless Saddam enthusiastically participated.

The 1963 coup, Saddam's first taste of power, ushered in the interregnum of the Arefs; and another Baathist coup in 1968—this time with less provable C.I.A. participation—led to the sidelining of Saddam's nominal but weak Baathist General and President Ahmed Hassan al-Baqr. In 1979, Saddam finally rose to the presidency and assumed total dictatorial power. This was seen with some satisfaction in Paris, London and Washington, all of whom were ready to support their businessmen's race for Iraq's oil-fuelled economic boom. But it was viewed with consternation in Jerusalem, where Israel saw Saddam's strategic threat to itself growing by the month.

While Europeans and Americans scrambled for the lucrative new markets in Iraq, buttering up Saddam in the process, Israel geared up its increasingly formidable military and intelligence power to bring Saddam down and to destroy, once and for all, the Iraqi threat.

Iraq's offers to aid Yassir Arafat's P.L.O. forces, embattled and finally pushed out of their Jordanian bases by King Hussein amid threats of all-out war to protect Hussein by Israel and the U.S. in the "Black September"

P.L.O.-Jordan war of 1970, came to nothing. Iraqi forces stationed in Jordan left the P.L.O. in the lurch. They withdrew when an ultra-nationalist faction of the ruling Syrian Baath sent a Syrian armored brigade without air support into Jordan, where Jordan's tanks and aircraft smashed the Syrians. The Iraqi withdrawal, unpopular with the pro-Palestinian Iraqi populace, stirred unrest. It gave Saddam a chance to liquidate suspected opponents.

The Black September events also impelled Saddam to act in the Yom Kippur-Ramadan Arab-Israel war in 1973, when Presidents Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Hafez Assad of Syria tried to re-conquer their territories lost to Israel in 1967, drawing U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's peace shuttle missions decisively into the game. Two Iraqi tank divisions helped to halt Israel's counter-offensive in Syria towards Damascus.

The 1980s saw Saddam challenge the rise and militant expansionism of the Ayatollah Khomeini's militant Shi'ite revolution in Iran. In September 1980, Saddam's air force and six armored divisions began an assault, which ebbed and flowed until both sides, exhausted, made peace in 1988. About a million people perished on both sides. The economies of both were ruined. Saddam's forces launched its chemical weapons against the Kurds and, during one of my own reporting visits to Basra, against the "human waves" of suicidal Iranian *basseej* teen-age fighters who were threatening the city and the marshlands and oilfields of southern Iraq.

The Reagan administration decided to favor Saddam, considered a lesser evil than Khomeini, offering Iraq satellite intelligence photos, air and naval intelligence about Iranian forces, dual-use military supplies including ingredients for chemical weapons and loans arranged through an Atlanta bank. Israeli traders, spooks and middlemen played important roles in the Reagan administration Iran-gate scandals, when Admiral John Poindexter and Colonel Oliver North ran, with Israeli help, mostly Ramboesque and unsuccessful operations to trade arms for American hostages held in Lebanon by Iranian-supported guerillas.

During this period, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin launched Israel's covert war against what it deemed Saddam's plans to acquire nuclear weapons, a concept then taken far more seriously in Jerusalem than in Washington. After about two years of planning and some hesitation and disagreements among Israeli leaders, on June 7, 1981, eight U.S.-made Israeli Air Force F-16 fighter-bombers, covered by F-15 interceptors, bombed Iraq's French-supplied Osirak nuclear reactor into rubble. The new Reagan administration, deeply involved in its proxy

war to support the Afghan resistance against the 1979 Soviet invasion, endorsed the U.N.'s gently rapping of Israel on the knuckles. It seemed barely aware that the Osirak knockout blow against Saddam's nuclear program was preceded from 1979 by a series of sabotage acts and murders against Arab scientists and European industrial enterprises, involved in the program attributed to Mossad by French police and Israeli journalists.

During this time the strategic enmity and the strategic balance between Israel and Iraq were gradually clarified. From the time of the Gulf war to expel Saddam Hussein from his rash and costly invasion of Kuwait in 1990-1991, the George Bush senior and Clinton administrations gradually drew the U.S. away from policy emphasis on commercial benefits it had enjoyed from its relationship with Saddam during the Reagan era, and into leadership, with Israel as a partner, of the anti-Saddam camp.

As I discovered during interviews in Israel in 2004 for "An Alliance Against Babylon," such Israeli leaders as Shimon Peres had, during the 1980s, considered the idea of declaring at least a truce with Saddam, who had been made to understand by the Osirak attack that Israel clearly held the strategic initiative in the Middle East. Saddam, for his part, realized that if there was hope of warding off eventual U.S. military action against him, he had to take a more reasonable line in the Arab-Israel conflict.

Saddam had declared, on January 7, 1983, to visiting U.S. Congressman Stephen Solarz that "Israelis" as people, not their state, were entitled "to conditions of security." However, during his buildup to his invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Saddam had threatened publicly to "burn half of Israel" with chemical weapons. While the U.S. and its allies did their best to separate the Iraq issues from the central Palestine-Israel one, Saddam did all he could to connect them. By firing 39 Scud missiles over the heads of Jordanians into Israel during the U.S.-led Operation Desert Storm in early 1991, Saddam tried to prove the connectivity. He apparently also hoped, vainly, to draw Arab states—who were mostly actively or passively opposing him, in the U.S.-led coalition—into a general war against the Jewish state.

The Scud attacks killed four Israelis, wounded others and caused both property damage in coastal towns and provoked a short-lived and baseless scare that the Scuds carried chemical or biological warheads. They also cemented further the U.S.-Israeli military alliance: President George H.W. Bush and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney rushed U.S. Patriot anti-missile missiles and their U.S. crews to Israel, where they proved rather ineffectual

against the Iraqi attacks. Crucially, the combined diplomacy of President Bush, Cheney and Secretary of State James Baker and their deputies succeeded in deterring Israel from its own planned full-scale assault on Iraq, which would have probably turned the Arab camp away from the U.S. and against Israel.

Assassination of Saddam crossed the minds of some U.S. planners in the 1991 war, as it did again in 2003 until American troops, with help from Kurdish allies, finally captured Saddam alive in a hole in his native Tikrit region's soil, in December of that year. An executive order prohibiting U.S. involvement in assassination plots against foreign heads of state, like Fidel Castro or the Congo's Patrice Lumumba in the 1960s, apparently caused Defense Secretary Cheney to dismiss U.S. Air Force chief of staff General Michael J. Dugan, who explicitly suggested that Saddam be killed. However, right after the primary objective of the Kuwait war, to drive the Iraqi army out, had been achieved, Israel's army chief of staff and later Prime Minister (and peace negotiator) Ehud Barak, revived the idea. Several of Israel's top journalists were able to break the story after censorship on it was lifted in Israel. Despite doubts of then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, it was planned to airlift commandos of Israel's elite *Sayaret Metkal* unit to the Tikrit area and kill Saddam with long-range rockets while he attended a relative's funeral there. But at the Negev desert training base of Tze'elim on November 5, 1992, a rehearsal went wrong and a maverick rocket killed five Israeli soldiers. The operation was cancelled and, to my knowledge, never repeated.

Pre-War Lobbying

In August 1995 Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel al-Majid, defected to Jordan. He began telling tales of WMDs concealed in Iraq. King Hussein personally disclosed to me for ABC News that a shipment of Russian gyroscopes intended for guidance systems of Iraqi missiles had been seized at Amman airport. Using information supplied by Hussein Kamel before he and his brother-in-law were lured back to Baghdad by Saddam and murdered, U.N. inspectors found at an Iraqi chicken farm boxes stuffed with documents, indicating amid much else the existence of bioweapons programs in Iraq

When President Bill Clinton got wind of a plot by Iraqi spooks to murder the senior President Bush during a visit to Kuwait, he ordered the Pentagon to fire 23 cruise missiles at Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad. About seven of the missiles missed their target, killing several civilians, among whom was Leila al-Attar, one of

Iraq's best woman artists.

In October 1994, senior officials met in the White House to reaffirm a secret directive by Clinton to the C.I.A. in 1991 to oust Saddam. Since then, exiled Shi'ite banker-politician Ahmed Chalabi, supported by large C.I.A. subsidies, had been gathering an umbrella organization, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), to do just that. While training in Hungary an armed militia of exiles for occupation duty in a future "liberated" Iraq, Chalabi launched a propaganda campaign. It was partly meant to counter growing world opposition to the draconian U.N. economic sanctions that were causing severe suffering among ordinary Iraqis. Former Israeli intelligence officers as much as admitted to me that Chalabi's elaborate reports of WMDs in Iraq were fabricated for the benefit of believers in Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon, as well as for U.S., Israeli and, apparently, British intelligence. Rivaling the INC was the Iraqi National Accord (INA), led by another Iraqi exile, Iyad Allawi. He had a long record of working with Britain's MI-6. He became Iraq's first "sovereign" interim prime minister from June 2004 until the U.S.-supervised elections of January 2005.

Then current C.I.A. Director, James Woolsey, a fan of both Chalabi and Allawi, subscribed to the theory hatched in neo-conservative Washington think-tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, that Saddam Hussein was behind acts of international terrorism, notably the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York.

U.S. policy turned decisively toward regime change in Baghdad when, in 1997, Clinton appointed Madeline Albright as U.S. Secretary of State. Albright publicly proclaimed that Western help would come after Saddam's departure.

A vast body of reporting has described the backgrounds and actions of the "neo-conservative" advisers who entered the White House and Pentagon with the younger Bush's election to the presidency: Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary to Donald Rumsfeld in the

"Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power – an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right..."

From "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," prepared for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 by the Israeli think-tank The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies. Collaborators included the American neoconservatives David Wurmser, Douglas Feith, and Richard Perle.

Pentagon; Richard Perle, member and former chairman of the backstage but powerful Defense Policy Board; James Woolsey; Kenneth Adelman; Douglas Feith, deputy secretary and Number Three at the Pentagon; and J. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, chief of staff to Vice-President Dick Cheney. By mid-2005, most of these gentlemen, their policies discredited, were either moving to more obscure jobs or retiring – the exception being Wolfowitz, whom Bush maneuvered into the directorship of the World Bank.

Wolfowitz, Perle and Woolsey were disciples of the late Albert Wohlstetter, a hawkish University of Chicago professor who during the Cold War recommended that the U.S. should mount a first nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. Wohlstetter introduced Perle to Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, a devoted supporter of Israel. He also introduced Perle to Ahmed Chalabi. Perle's power and influence stemmed in part from his close relations with defense contractors working with Israel.

The single document probably most influential in directing George W. Bush's alliance with Israel against Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a study prepared by Perle, Feith and Douglas Wurmser, who in 2004 took a White House job connected with pressuring Syria to evacuate Lebanon, drop support to Hizbollah and block insurgent troops, funds and weapons from entering Iraq over Syria's borders. The study was called "A Clean Break: A New Strat-

egy for Securing the Realm." It was originally prepared not for the Pentagon, but for Israel's new right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon's perpetual critic and rival on the far-right fringe of Israel's Likud Party. It trashed the Oslo peace accords of 1993 that Clinton had sponsored between Rabin, Shimon Peres and Arafat. It asserted Israel's right to invade the Palestinian Authority's areas whenever it believed necessary. It further advocated not only Saddam Hussein's forcible removal, but also overthrow of governments in Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iran. It urged an open policy of preemptive strikes. For Iraq, the report urged post-Saddam restoration of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq and mentioned that "Israel has an interest in supporting the Hashemites in their efforts to redefine Iraq."

Books by Bush's former National Security Adviser Richard Clarke and Treasury Paul O'Neil, to say nothing of Bob Woodward's meticulously recorded interview with Bush and others, amply record the president's determination to blame Iraq for the 9/11 attacks and, with the support of a Republican-dominated Congress, to steer America into his war of choice against Iraq. What many Americans, other than those outside the defense industries, government and the Washington lobby groups like the potent AIPAC (The America-Israel Public Affairs Committee), do not realize is the degree of actual U.S.-Israeli military cooperation in the run-up to the war, and the war itself. Weapons including co-produced drone aircraft, were shared. Israeli special warfare instructors helped to train U.S. Special Forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and elsewhere. U.S. observers accompanied Israeli strikes on Jenin and other West bank towns during the second Palestinian *intifada* in the spring of 2001, to learn "house-busting" and other techniques later applied in Iraq. Above all, Israel continued and probably increased the perennial input of intelligence it gathers or tries to gather on Iraq and most of the rest of the Muslim world.

During my interviews in Israel I consulted such analysts as Shai Feldman, heading the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS) at Tel Aviv University. Before the war he had prophetically written that "Israel's security interests are served by the evolving U.S.-led confrontation with Iraq almost regardless of how it ends," a statement he might be less ready to support after the disasters of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Israeli military officers predicted great benefits for Israel from the war, such as Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad's prediction that toppling Saddam in a war "would create dramatic change in the Middle East because Saddam is a leading symbol to tyrants like Arafat and others." How-

ever, after the fall of Baghdad and of Saddam in April 2003, Maj. Gen. Ya'akov Amidror prophetically warned that "Absent the [American] stabilization of Iraq, the consequences of the war could be disruptive for the entire area."

From October 2003 until spring of 2004, the Israeli Knesset's defense and intelligence committee, under its chairman, Yuval Steinitz, held closed-door hearings about Israeli intelligence failures in Iraq and elsewhere. It released a bland, unclassified report, blaming Mossad and military intelligence for many errors, such as ignoring the secret Bush administration-Qaddafi regime negotiations for nuclear disarmament of Libya. Its long, classified report to Sharon and top leaders was never released, but one participant admitted to me that it showed up damning information about U.S.-Israel exchanges of false information. By fall of 2005, the disruption and threats of wider conflict involving Iran, Syria and possibly Jordan predicted in Israel were all too apparent.

The course of the war and the bungled "coalition" occupation need no detailed repetition here—catastrophic dissolution of the Iraqi regular army along with the purely Baathist structures; the lack of planning or ability to execute restoration of vital services like electricity and water; the vast corruption among foreign civilian contractors; and the difficulty of training new Iraqi police and military forces to take over security after any U.S. withdrawal.

It is clear now that it was Saddam Hussein's U.S.-assisted rise to power that, in the end, solidified an U.S.-Israeli partnership that earlier had been more tentative. The details of this evolution are presented in my recent book. At this point, I can only reiterate what a distinguished and highly cerebral Israeli intelligence officer and author, the late General Yehosfat Harkaby, told me once in 1969: "Our problem [in the Mideast] is not what happened in 1948, 1967 or what catastrophes may occur in the future. Our problem is existential: how are we to live in peace, now and tomorrow, with the Palestinians and with our other neighbors?"

How, indeed, with hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops abroad, committed not only to supporting Israel but to spreading democracy to societies like Iraq and Afghanistan that have rarely or never known democracy? These are missions regarded by the most seasoned observers of the Muslim world as impossible. The outcome may depend mainly on the ability of most Americans to inform themselves about badly-understood parts of the outside world, and to exert influence toward more enlightened policies. ■

IN MEMORIAM

Jack Sunderland served as president of A.M.E.U. from 1967, the year it was founded, to his death this past July. A successful businessman and devoted family man, he is survived by his wife, Rosemarie; his children: Anne, Richard, Stephen, and Thomas, and six grandchildren.

Rep. Paul Findley, in his book "They Dare to Speak Out," tells of the time when Jack gave an interview in which he suggested that peace would come to the Middle East only when the building of illegal settlements stopped, and only when Palestinians had a sovereign state of their own. The next thing Jack knew someone was knocking on his neighbors' doors inquiring about his children and the times they went to school. Undaunted, he hired a detective who, working with the FBI, discovered that the person making the inquiries — who had also gained computer access to his finances and credit record — was employed by a prominent, pro-Israeli organization.

Didn't that intimidate you? I asked him.

Americans are fair-minded people, I recall him saying. But first they need to hear both sides of the conflict. I'm more concerned about that.

And that's what guided him for 38 years as our president, during which time he never missed a board meeting — until our last one this past June. Even then, when I visited him at his home, the first thing he asked about was the board meeting.

Jack was on other boards. One was the Near East Foundation where he served for 37 years. In the 1990s he headed NEF's Strategic Planning Committee, charting much of the humanitarian work it is doing today in 16 African and Middle East countries.

Another humanitarian organization is the

American Near East Refugee Aid organization, founded in 1968 to provide assistance to the thousands of Palestinians who, after the 1967 war, found themselves in refugee camps all over the Middle East. Today, political analysts point out that, if Palestinians are to have a viable state, their economic and social infrastructure needs to be dramatically developed. Fifty years of military occupation, including the past five years of closures, curfews, and checkpoints, have left half of all Palestinians living below the poverty line of \$2 per day, and fully 30% of Gazan children suffering severe malnutrition. If this situation is to be reversed — and peace depends on

it — one of the principle agencies involved will be ANERA. The work it does — its 2004 operating budget was \$30 million — can be found on its website www.anera.org. What the website does not mention is that the planning for ANERA, back in 1967, took place in New York City, in Jack Sunderland's office. And it was Dr. John Davis, the first commissioner general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and the first executive director of our organization, who became the first president of ANERA.



Jack B. Sunderland
1928—2005

In the eulogy I delivered at Jack's memorial service at St. Bridget's Catholic Church in Cornwall Bridge, Ct., I concluded with the story of a young man who was traveling one Sunday in Pennsylvania, and came upon people entering a Quaker church. Deciding to go in, he took a seat in the back pew next to an elderly gentleman. There he waited, five, ten, fifteen minutes. Finally he leaned over to the gentleman and asked: "When does the service begin?" The man turned to him and replied: "When we leave the church."

Jack Sunderland knew when the service begins.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

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