

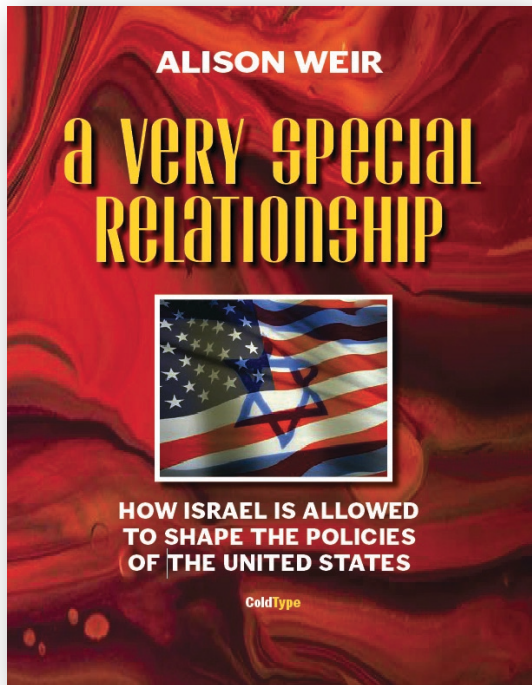
**ALISON WEIR**

# **a VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP**



**HOW ISRAEL IS ALLOWED  
TO SHAPE THE POLICIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**ColdType**



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# a VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

HOW ISRAEL IS ALLOWED TO SHAPE THE POLICIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES | **ESSAYS BY ALISON WEIR**

AUGUST 23, 2011

## Israeli video games in Gaza: 'Minimal collateral damage'

I can imagine his mother dressing him that morning, making sure he would be warm enough. I wonder if she's the one who took the picture. Someone has written on the photo "kisses."

It's not a formal picture. He's outside on a sunny day. It looks like he was probably moving when the picture was snapped; his arms seem to be swinging a little. As with most almost two-year-olds, I suspect it was

“

The missile was fired remotely by an Israeli sitting in front of a video screen and operating one of the many drones that periodically fly over Gaza and shoot Palestinians like fish in a fishbowl

hard to get him to stay still long enough for a photo.

It's a happy picture, the kind that makes you smile; perhaps it reminds you of funny, energetic little children you know or remember.

Until you see the next picture. It was taken on his second birthday. His name was Islam Quraiq'

Death from a drone strike is not pretty. The small body is charred, ripped apart; internal organs are pouring out.

He had been riding with his father and uncle on a motorcycle in Gaza when the missile hit them. His 29-year-old father, a member of the Palestinian resistance, and 32-year-old uncle, a physician, were also killed. Five bystanders, including a woman, were injured.

The missile was fired remotely by an Israeli sitting in front of a video screen and

operating one of the many drones that periodically fly over Gaza and shoot Palestinians like fish in a fishbowl. The operators are usually female, the preferred group for this kind of desk job.

The drones, which look like small, pilotless jets, are equipped with precision-guided missiles. Those operating them receive real-time video feeds from sensors located on the drone: a color nose camera, a TV lens, an infrared camera for low light and night, and a synthetic radar for looking through smoke, clouds or haze. The cameras produce full motion video as well as still frame radar images.

Numerous articles extol the virtues of Israeli drones. An August 17th article by David Rodman reports: “The Israel Air Force (IAF) has a rich history of employing unmanned aerial vehicles in battle with excellent results.” Rodman crows that with the possible exception of the United States, “Israel is the country most closely identified with [drone] operations in the post-World War II period.”

Islam was the second two-year-old to be killed by Israeli forces in two days.

The first was killed by an Israeli “precision” rocket the day before. The boy’s name was Malek Sha’at. His father was also killed. The only picture available online is of a small shrouded body.

An article by reporter Aaron Klein proclaims that Israeli weapons are “capable of taking out stationary and moving targets with minimal collateral damage.”

Perhaps Klein is right. Two years of life is decidedly minimal. Intolerably so.

### Putting it all into context

During this period (August 18-20, 2011) Israeli forces killed 14 Palestinians including at least one other child, a 13-year-old, and injured at least 50, nine of them children. Gazan resistance forces killed one Israeli and injured about 20. Gazan hospitals, hard hit by the years-long Israeli siege, report that they have run out of 150 medi-



**While many reports describe the Israeli actions as retaliatory, Israeli attacks on Gaza occur regularly and were already ongoing before the Eilat attack**

cines and 160 types of medical equipment.

The Israeli assaults were allegedly triggered by attacks on Thursday, August 18th, by unknown gunmen on the Egyptian border with Israel that killed eight Israelis. Israeli forces killed the attackers in Eilat, also shooting dead, according to the BBC, five Egyptian policemen. The Israeli Defense Minister told Egypt afterwards that “Israel regrets the deaths.”

There is no evidence connecting Gazan resistance groups to the attack, and they have denied responsibility for it. Hamas itself had maintained a unilateral de facto ceasefire since 2009 (some independent resistance groups, however, refused to take part in this truce and continued to launch rockets in response to Israeli actions). Groups in Egypt have periodically taken actions opposing Israel. Egyptian authorities say they have identified three of the attackers, who appear to have been based in the Sinai, there are reports that Israeli intelligence warned of the attack ahead of time, and there is mounting information suggesting that the attackers may have been Egyptian, not Gazan.

While many reports describe the Israeli actions as retaliatory, Israeli attacks on Gaza occur regularly and were already ongoing before the Eilat attack. Two days earlier, on Tuesday, an Israeli air strike killed a 29-year-old Palestinian man in the morning, and Israeli ground soldiers killed a disabled teenager later in the day. The youth was shot more than 10 times, mostly in the head. On Wednesday night there were more Israeli air attacks throughout Gaza. (The LA Times called this a period of “relative calm.”) Some analysts suggest that the recent Israeli escalation against Gaza may have been prompted, at least in part, by a Netanyahu desire to deflect energy from the massive social protests that have been enveloping Israel recently.

The death toll among Gazans and Israelis has been notably disproportionate. In Israel’s Dec-Jan 2008-09 “Cast Lead” assault, Israeli forces killed approximately

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1,387 Gazans, while resistance forces killed nine Israelis. In the preceding year Israeli forces killed 713 Gazans; Gazan resistance fighters killed eight Israelis. Since “Cast Lead” through the end of July of this year, Israeli forces killed approximately 200 Gazans; Palestinian resistance groups killed approximately five Israelis.

Most of Gaza’s residents are refugee families who were forcibly pushed out by Israel in its 1947-49 founding war, in which non-Jews, who originally made up over 70 percent of the inhabitants, were expelled.

In violation of international law, they have been prohibited from returning to their homes and have lived under crippling Israeli occupation for decades. Palestinian land is continually confiscated by Israel for Jewish-only use. A popular uprising against Israeli occupation began in the fall of 2000.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said yesterday: “Those who operate against us will be decapitated.” That night at least 100 Israeli military vehicles stormed into the West Bank city of Hebron, closing the city off for hours and rounding up more than 50 Palestinians, including several academics and members of charitable associations.

On Saturday, August 20th, Israeli Aerospace Industries proudly unveiled its latest drone, known as the “GHOST,” which the company announced, “is at the forefront of technology thanks to years of experience and knowledge acquired in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles.”

Israel partisan and author David Rodman reports that Israeli drones “played a substantial part” in Israel’s 1982 Lebanon war (in which Israeli forces killed at least 17,825 Lebanese, compared to 344 Israelis killed by the Lebanese resistance) and that their use in what he acknowledges in profound understatement were “asymmetric conflicts” – in the 2006 Second Lebanon war (Israeli forces killed at least 1,125 Lebanese, almost all civilians, a third of them children; Lebanese resistance forces killed 164 Israelis, about three-quarters of them soldiers and the 2008–2009 Cast Lead op-



**Israeli Aerospace Industries proudly unveiled its latest drone, known as the “GHOST,” which the company announced, “is at the forefront of technology thanks to years of experience and knowledge acquired in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles.”**

eration – “sparked renewed global interest in Israeli drone operations.”

Rodman states: “In terms of the technological sophistication of its UAV force, Israel is unquestionably well ahead of the pack. Only the United States is in the same league.”



SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

## Subsidizing Israel’s Ascendancy Over the US

Israel’s *Jerusalem Post* newspaper recently published an article calling Israel “The New Golden Country” for young people from around the world. It reports that Israel boasts “an ever-increasing GDP, a strong currency, and a lower unemployment rate than the US.”

The article fails to mention the well over \$3 billion a year that American taxpayers have given Israel for years, nor the fact that some of this money has been used to develop industries that compete with US companies, costing thousands of American jobs and adding to the American unemployment rate.

The story also omits the fact that Israel has periodically stolen US technology, hurting the US economy still more, and fails to note that support for Israel has cost Americans in the range of \$3-\$6 trillion and that these costs continue to escalate.

The article reports that many young Jewish American singles “are realizing that their future is in Israel. Since 2002, over 7,000 students and young professionals have made Aliyah [“ascended” to Israeli citizenship] from North America and the UK... bringing with them their skills...”

Many of these new Israeli citizens, the article reports, then “telecommute to their home countries, commute to Europe or consult globally,” adding to Israel’s economy.

The Israeli story states: “Many students and young professionals are drawn by the incentive of free tuition for a bachelor’s or master’s degree,” comparing this to the United States, where obtaining a degree can put many into significant debt.

According to the article, “Israel sits, quite literally, at the nexus of the world.” The newspaper reports: “This tiny nation is not only in the geographical heart of the globe and at the center of international attention. Israel is also at the very core of innovation, a leader in global commerce and technology.”

Again, the story fails to report the US subsidy of such “innovation.”

In the past ten years alone, Americans have given Israel the equivalent of approximately \$200,000 per Israeli family of five. In addition, there have been weapons subsidies, loan forgiveness programs, special trade preferences, and other generous gifts from American taxpayers to Israel. In fact, despite being one of the world’s smallest nations, Israel receives more US tax money than any other country.

On top of this, a multitude of organizations contributing money and assistance to Israel have been given tax-deductible status in the US, removing still more money from the American economy. For example, donations to the “Birthright Israel” program that takes Jewish American students on fun-filled holidays to Israel, convincing many to then “ascend” to Israeli citizenship, are deducted from taxes owed to the US

When Americans become Israeli citizens



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they retain their US citizenship, allowing them to continue to vote in US elections. Such dual citizenship used to be illegal in the US, where it was felt that a citizen could have only one primary national loyalty (for example, in a war or other situations where interests diverged between two nations an individual would have to choose which to support). It was only after Israel became a nation and many Jewish Americans wished citizenship in both countries that a 200-year American tradition was changed.

The *Jerusalem Post* article also neglected to mention Israel’s attack on a US Navy ship that killed and injured approximately 200 Americans and caused the ship to be scrapped. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Israel termed this a “mistake” and gave the US \$6 million “compensation” for a ship valued at \$40 million, another blow to the US economy.

While US news media, which are highly Israel-centric in their coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict and portray Israelis as victims, the *Jerusalem Post* reports that “a recent Gallup survey on global wellbeing ranked Israelis seventh in the world in terms of happiness and satisfaction with their lives” (well ahead of the US).

In considerable contrast, the Palestinian Territories, where the population has been living under Israeli occupation for almost 45 years, is listed as the 12th lowest population in this wellbeing survey.

Miami Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the extremely pro-Israel head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (it is unknown whether she has dual citizenship) and who has just introduced yet another bill on Israel’s behalf, has proposed that the US end assistance programs to the Palestinian population, despite considerable poverty among Palestinian families, while continuing the American dole to Israel, even though Israel is listed among the world’s wealthiest nations.

The *Jerusalem Post* crows, “The back pages of daily newspapers are overflowing

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with last minute vacation deals within Israel and abroad, and it is completely normal to find that your friend or coworker has just found a great deal to fly off to Europe for a long weekend.”

Meanwhile, the US continues to suffer a growing economic crisis, numerous Americans have lost jobs and homes, schools are being closed, businesses have gone bankrupt, and many military families are subsisting on food stamps.

An increasing number of Americans are calling for an end to US taxpayer subsidies to Israel. Some go even further, suggesting that it is time to reverse the money flow and demand that Israel begin sending back some of the billions of dollars it has received from American taxpayers over the past 60-plus years.

According to the CIA World Factbook, Israel's current account balance is 29th in the world; the US comes in at 196th.



SEPTEMBER 14, 2011

## US Ambassador: Support for Israel drives all US policies

**W**hile many Americans may believe that US policies are designed to address American needs, America's new Ambassador to Israel explains that this is far from the case.



**Palestinian rocket attacks have killed approximately 20 Israelis. There is no report that Shapiro has visited the victims of Israeli shelling attacks on Gaza, where over 1,400 have been killed**

In a recent speech before the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), Ambassador Daniel Shapiro clarified what drives US policies:

“The test of every policy the Administration develops in the Middle East is whether it is consistent with the goal of ensuring Israel's future as a secure, Jewish, democratic state. That is a commitment that runs as a common thread through our entire government.”

Shapiro went on to say: “This test explains our extraordinary security cooperation, our stand against the delegitimization of Israel, our efforts on Iran, our response to the Arab Spring, and our efforts on Israeli-Palestinian peace.”

It also explains a factor in the downward slide in American prosperity and standing in the world.

Shapiro elaborated: ‘Israel will receive over \$3 billion in US funding for training and equipment in the coming fiscal year. This assistance allows Israel to purchase the sophisticated defense equipment it needs to protect itself, by itself, including the world's most advanced fighter aircraft, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Our assistance has also helped boost Israel's domestic defense industry.’

On top of this, Shapiro pointed out, “Congress, at the request of President Obama, provided \$205 million to accelerate production and deployment of the Iron Dome short-range missile system, a project to which I devoted particular attention during my tenure at the White House.”

Shapiro failed to note that this system competes with American defense firms, causing still further job loss for Americans, who have a higher unemployment rate than Israel.

Shapiro said that one of his first visits as Ambassador to Israel was to see an Iron Dome battery deployed near Ashkelon, where he “had very moving visits with the victims of rocket attacks in Ashdod.” Palestinian rocket attacks have killed approximately 20 Israelis. There is no report that

Shapiro has visited the victims of Israeli shelling attacks on Gaza, where over 1,400 have been killed.

### **Opposing international initiatives, undermining US needs**

Shapiro continued: “The test of our policy – that it advances Israel’s status as a secure, Jewish, democratic state – also explains our commitment to vigorously battle against those who would attempt to isolate or delegitimize Israel in the international community.”

As a result, Shapiro said, the US withdrew from the South African conference on racism in Durban and vetoed UN efforts on Israel (which otherwise would have passed).

Currently, he said, the administration is “doing everything we can” to oppose the Palestinian bid for UN membership to come later this month. “We are taking our opposition to capitals around the world.”

This campaign is reminiscent of previous pro-Israel campaigns, including the original pressure brought by Israel partisans in 1947 on the UN General Assembly to pass a recommendation to give over half of Palestine to a Jewish state.

Prince Turki al-Faisal, a member of the Saudi Royal Family who headed up its intelligence service for many years, has just published *Veto a State, Lose an Ally*, in which he warns that if the US vetoes Palestinian UN membership, “Saudi Arabia would no longer be able to cooperate with America in the same way it historically has.”

He writes that it would “provoke uproar among Muslims worldwide,” further undermining American relations with the Muslim world (over 1.2 billion people), “threaten regional stability,” and increase “the chances of another war in the region.”

In 1973 Saudi Arabia, which has been an extremely important US ally, issued a warning based on a similarly reasonable request (that Israel obey international law – see discussion below). When Henry Kissinger



**Twenty years ago similar pressure on Iraq created a humanitarian catastrophe in which, according to the World Health Organization, over 5,000 children under the age of five died each month from “embargo-related causes”**

ignored it, the US was thrown into a major recession and thousands of Americans lost their jobs and homes.

Author and international attorney John Whitbeck writes that “the adverse consequences for the United States of blocking Palestine’s membership are dazzlingly obvious. An American veto would constitute a shotgun blast in both of its own feet, further isolating the United States from the rest of mankind and outraging the already agitated and unstable Arab and Muslim worlds (notably including Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey).

Since 120 nations have already recognized Palestine, such a veto would outrage countries all over the globe.

Shapiro went on to say:

“The test of our policy – to advance Israel’s status as a secure, Jewish democratic state – explains our persistent efforts and the President’s determination to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

“Since 2009, the United States has led the world in imposing the toughest sanctions ever against Iran, through U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, through the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions and Divestment Act, and through additional sanctions imposed by European and other partners beyond those mandated by the U.N. Security Council... We are working to increase pressure on Iran through additional means, and have taken no option off the table.

Twenty years ago similar pressure on Iraq created a humanitarian catastrophe in which, according to the World Health Organization, over 5,000 children under the age of five died each month from “embargo-related causes.”

### **Arab Spring actions predicated on Israeli interests**

Shapiro explained that concerns for Israel also drive the Administration’s actions regarding the Arab Spring:

“The test of our policy explains President Obama’s original outreach to the Mus-



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lim world, and his response to the Arab Spring.

“Israel’s interests were not served by the deep anger felt toward the United States in many Muslim communities, and the President made clear that those who would accept his outstretched hand must do so knowing that the United States will remain a fierce defender of Israel’s legitimacy and call on others to build their own connections with Israel.

“As the unprecedented events of the Arab Spring have unfolded, we have recognized the opportunity presented by the possible emergence of more open, transparent, peaceful, and democratic governments, who will make better neighbors, while remaining vigilant about the risks these changes could present. We know the stakes for Israel are high, and in a situation where neither of us can control outcomes, we are working closely together to chart a common strategy.”

Shapiro said that US support for a “two-state solution” is also based on Israeli desires, explaining that he and the Administration are “convinced that a two-state solution is the only way to guarantee Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state.” Therefore, he said, the administration’s “vigorous pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peace” also meets the pro-Israel test.

### Need to bolster pro-Israel ties among Jewish Americans

Shapiro spoke of the close allegiance that most Jewish Americans feel for Israel, but expressed concern that “much research has shown that growing numbers of younger American Jews feel disconnected, or at best ambivalent, toward Israel. Valuable programs like Birthright have exposed many to this connection, but many more have not been reached.”

He said that “a stronger commitment to Zionist education for American Jewish youth could do much to strengthen bonds that we want to be even stronger in the



**Ambassador Shapiro failed to mention that Israel’s current account balance is 29th in the world; the US comes in at 196th**

next generation, but may not be if left untended.”

Shapiro said that “one of the most fruitful opportunities for deepening ties” between Americans and Israelis is in the economic sphere:

“There are approximately one dozen American-Israel Chambers of Commerce throughout the United States, based in New York, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. These organizations are run and organized by Americans who care deeply about the US- Israel relationship and strive to facilitate US-Israel business connections.”

Shapiro pointed out:

“In 2010 alone the US imported \$21 billion of Israeli goods and services; that’s 10 percent of Israel’s GDP. American companies and their representatives here directly employ about 60,000 Israelis; that’s fully 2 percent of Israel’s entire workforce. This figure does not include the many thousands more that are supported by American companies here as subcontractors or in downstream businesses.

“American companies have opened two-thirds of all foreign R&D facilities in Israel and brought in nearly 60 percent of all foreign direct investment. In 2011, American companies have acquired ten Israeli startups to the tune of \$1.5 billion dollars, not just for their products, but to establish leading international R&D centers tapping into the greatest asset of Israel’s people, their brainpower. American-sourced venture capitalism provides more than half of all money for nascent technology companies to get off the ground.

“Just as other Diaspora communities are often in the lead in promoting economic ties with their countries of origin, many of these projects began because of Jewish-American ‘champions’ of corporate interaction with Israel.”

Ambassador Shapiro failed to mention that Israel’s current account balance is 29th in the world; the US comes in at 196th.

## 1973 War and Shapiro's personal ties to Israel

In his speech, Ambassador Shapiro recounted his personal history “for the insights it can give us about the connection of the American Jewish community to the US-Israel relationship.” He stated:

“I am a proud member of our Jewish community in Washington, DC, active in a Conservative synagogue and the Jewish day school that my children attend and where my wife, Julie, worked for many years. And my profound respect for the State of Israel and its remarkable achievements stems from a lifetime of exposure to the extraordinary people who brought Theodore Herzl's Zionist dream to life.”

Shapiro explained that his close attachment to Israel began in 1973 when he was four years old and his family spent a fall semester in Israel. They were there during the war in which Egypt and Syria tried to retrieve land that had been taken by Israel seven years before.

While Ambassador Shapiro didn't go into this, there is a close US connection to the 1973 war, called by Israel and US media the “Yom Kippur War.”

Before and during this war, Saudi Arabia called on the US to pressure Israel to return the lands that it had taken and held since 1967, in violation of international law. Instead, Henry Kissinger arranged a massive airlift of US weaponry to Israel, saving Israel from losing the war. This support led to the oil embargo against the US that caused a deep depression and cost thousands of Americans their jobs.

As historian Donald Neff later wrote, this boycott, induced by Kissinger's weapons to Israel, left “economies around the world shattered and many individuals living poorer lives.” Neff wrote that while “Kissinger admitted, ‘I made a mistake,’ skeptics might wonder whether it was a mistake, or wanton disregard of US interests during a passionate effort to help Israel.”



**Henry Kissinger arranged a massive airlift of US weaponry to Israel, saving Israel from losing the war. This support led to the oil embargo against the US that caused a deep depression and cost thousands of Americans their jobs**

Shapiro explained that the 1973 war had a major impact on his family:

“By the end of the war, and even more so, by the end of our stay, our family's relationship with Israel had been utterly transformed, from a solid but light connection to the deepest of bonds. Throughout the remainder of my childhood, family dinner conversations turned easily to events in Israel, from the thrill of the peace with Egypt to the anguish of the Lebanon War [initiated by Israel; fatalities were approximately 25:1 Lebanese to Israelis]. The ample bookshelves in my parents' home grew laden with studies in Zionism, Jewish history, and Israeli literature.

“A product of the Reform Movement, I nurtured my own connection to Israel primarily through summer camp experiences at the Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, an unlikely setting for some of the most innovative Jewish and Zionist education to be found anywhere.

“These experiences led me to spend half a year after high school in Israel on a Reform Movement program, living with an Israeli family in Jerusalem, studying at Hebrew Union College, traveling widely throughout the country, and volunteering on Kibbutz Yahel in the Arava.

“I returned for my sophomore year of college at Hebrew University, supplementing my studies with work as a waiter at the wedding hall in the Beit Knesset HaGadol and long walks in Rehavia, where my girlfriend – who is now my wife of 19 years – took an apartment.

“In the years since, I have made Israel, its history and people, its quest for peace and security in the Middle East, and its relationship with the United States, the centerpiece of my academic studies at Brandeis and Harvard, my work on Capitol Hill, and my service in the Clinton and Obama Administrations.”

Shapiro emphasized that in many ways his story is not unique, stating that “it is impossible to deny the special connection

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that most in the American Jewish community feel for Israel.... wherever they fall on the political spectrum, and whatever their views on American policy, Israeli policy or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the vast majority of American Jews care deeply about Israel...”

Shapiro said that he is deeply honored that President Obama has entrusted him with the “task and responsibility of

strengthening and deepening” US ties to Israel.

Shapiro concluded: “... as a committed Jewish American, with deep roots in the American Jewish community and warm bonds of affection with Israel, I will have an opportunity to draw on those associations to help make the US-Israel relationship, strong as it is, even stronger in the years ahead.”

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