

Oil and Israel

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Debate on the motivation for the Iraq War is shepherded into two camps: securing oil *or* securing Israel. In reality, the war is being fought to secure oil *through* Israel. US foreign policy is geared to make Israel its primary *transport* route for Middle Eastern and Central Asian oil. This also accomplishes two Israeli aims: ending dependence on US aid and toppling uncooperative neighbors.

Richard Perle's memo to Benjamin Netanyahu, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing The Realm,"^[1] is rightfully cited as evidence of Israel's influence in the US's decision to attack Iraqi. However, overthrowing Saddam is not the main point of this memo. The "clean break" refers to ending Israel's dependence on US aid, which weakens Israel, and is the main source of control the US has over its ally.

This change in policy comes at a good time for the US. Friendly oil sources are dwindling. Massive spending on the Iraq invasion, as well as AIPAC spying scandals,^[2] have drawn negative attention to the amount of US-Israeli aid. America's contributions to Israel may not be politically justifiable forever -- the States needs an out.

The "Clean-Breakers" in Israel have a big job to do. They must wean Israel from sixty years of aid and cheap loans from the US, during a shaky time for the Israeli economy. Before Perle *et alia* can free themselves from American interference, they need to find an alternative source of revenue. That type of revenue isn't going to come from featherless chickens^[3] or even arms sales to China.^[4] Israeli leaders have fallen back on the commodity that helped create Israel in the first place.

Oil and the History of Israel

Oil played a large role in the lives of Israel's fathers. In the 1880s, Alfonse Rothschild invested heavily in the Baku oil fields of modern Azerbaijan. As a partner in the highly-lucrative Royal Dutch Shell trust, Rothschild dominated oil *transport* from Baku fields to Europe. Estimates say between 42% ^[5] and 36% ^[6] of oil exports were Rothschild-controlled, more than twice the amount of the next-largest competitor, the Nobel Brothers. These oil exports were the lifeblood of the British Empire.

In 1917 Alfonse's British brother Lord Walter Rothschild played a crucial role in securing the Balfour Declaration from the cash-strapped Brits, and created the state of Israel.

Israel's fathers had hopes that their new state would be blessed with viable oil deposits. Over the past 60 years, at least 470 oil wells have been drilled in the tiny country^[7] -- which have resulted in very little production. This was a big disappointment to everyone involved, considering Israel's location.

However, one doesn't need to have oil to make money from oil. Israel sits between the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the last great oil producing regions on earth. The Jewish state connects the biggest producers and the biggest consumers.

Israel was first considered as a major distributor in the 1950s, with the building of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline (Tapline). Originally, Haifa was chosen to be the western-end terminal. However, Israeli extremists' conflict with the British Mandate resulted in the Tapline being rerouted to Sidon, Lebanon -- via the Golan Heights.^[8]

According to the US Energy Information Administration, the only reason that the US doesn't use Israel to transport oil is the danger of disruption from Palestinian unrest.^[9] Perle also recognizes that destabilizing factor in "A Clean Break" and suggests breaking the Palestinians through "hot pursuit," dismantling Palestinian representation in Jerusalem, and securing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

The US government has been wholehearted in its support for these tactics. Bush began moving the US embassy to Jerusalem in December 2006,^[10] and extended the "International Emergency Economic Powers Act" another year.^[11]

This act prohibits anyone under US jurisdiction from contributing to organizations Bush deems "terrorist" -- including the democratically-elected Hamas government in Palestine.

The Neocons hope that soon oil pipelines will flow through Israel, unmolested.

What the pipe will look like

"The vast expanses of the former Soviet Union harbor oil and gas riches which will be crucial in fueling the global economy in the next century. The huge oil reserves, estimated at over 25 billion barrels, under the Caspian Sea and in the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are similar to those in Kuwait and larger than those in Alaska's Northern Slope and the North Sea combined. Control over these energy resources and export routes out of the Eurasian hinterland is quickly becoming one of the central issues in post-Cold War politics." "The New 'Great Game': Oil Politics in the Caucasus and Central Asia," by Ariel Cohen, The Heritage Foundation 25th January 1996.

This Century's Oil Basket



- Producing region
- Prospective region
- Oil pipeline
- Gas pipeline
- Proposed/planned oil pipeline
- Proposed/planned gas pipeline

Source: Energy Information Agency, <http://www.eia.doe.gov>

Currently, the United State's best access to Caspian oil is through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC pipeline), which runs through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Its opening gave Turkey's geopolitical standing a huge boost (especially in the Middle East), as well as significant income. Israel has had rocky relations with Turkey -- relations that the Jewish State has tried to warm to secure plans for a pipeline from Ceyhan to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon.^[12] The BTC pipeline also forces the United States to take Turkey's opinions seriously.

All indications point to more "hydrocarbon power" for Turkey in the future: Russia has expressed interest in piping gas through Turkey.^[13]

Turkish "hydrocarbon power" makes Israel and the US nervous. Turkey is an unsteady ally for Israel and America, as shown by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's hosting of a Hamas delegation in February 2006. American and Israeli support for Kurds on the Turkish boarder adds to the strain. On top of that, US military planners are worried about "defending" the BTC pipeline -- something that will only get harder if Turkey's power increases and the country gravitates outside of US control.^[14]

It makes sense for the US to want an oil tap it knows is reliable. Israel fits that description nicely: it has ports on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, has established military contacts with the USA and would provide a shorter pipe route for Iraqi and Middle Eastern oil than Turkey.

BTC- the Israeli version

Israel and the US intend to seize pipe routes that are being planned across Southwestern Asia.

Planned Pipe Routes -- Approximate Paths



Yellow line: Proposed Pipelines (Sanders Addition)

Green line: Old Pipelines (Sanders Addition)

Blue lines represent existing oil pipes.

Dotted lines represent alternate routes.

Source: Sanders Research Associates

In the past year, Syria, Iraq and Iran have proposed rehabilitating old pipelines and creating new pipelines to transport oil between each other. According to their plans, one pipe would start in Iran, stretch across Iraq and end on the Mediterranean Sea in Syria. The Iraqis and Syrians are talking separately of a pipe from Kirkuk to Syria. The two lines could be connected or expanded eastward along Iran's borders to take oil from the Caspian Sea or Central Asian producers. This plan was first made public in October 2000, but was stymied by US involvement in Iraq.[15]

Originally, the US was dead-set against the Kirkuk-Syria pipe.[16] Now that America controls Iraq, the US wants to build that pipeline.[17] The Americans are *very quiet* about the new plans for the Syria-Iranian pipe -- presumably Syria and Iran are confident the Iraqi government will comply.[18] America is waiting to make its move until after these pipes are completed.

In "A Clean Break," Perle states that Syria, Hezbollah (Lebanon) and Iran are a "challenge" to Israel. By looking at the proposed pipelines, we begin to understand the nature of that challenge. Syria, Lebanon and Iran chose routes that terminate too far north for Israel to benefit.

Syria, Iran and Lebanon are the pieces of the oil puzzle that America has not yet taken. Israel's disastrous incursion into Lebanon, as well as Bush's warmongering against Syria and Iran suggest the US will try to complete the puzzle. Once the US controls these three countries, it can begin shipping crude out of Israel's ports in Eilat and Ashkelon (the terminals of the Trans-Israel Pipeline, Tipline). Using the Tipline will give the oil alternate departure points, should one of the Mediterranean or Red Sea routes become unstable. Aside from US interests, the Eilat port allows Israel to service Far Eastern markets as well.

What other choices does America have?

The reason that this political and military maneuvering is necessary, is because the US *does not* want to deal with Russia for oil. Despite brief hopes for cooperation after the September 11th attacks, the US government has made it clear that it doesn't see Putin as a partner, and the US media has consistently painted Russia as a racist, undemocratic state.

In reality, the US government doesn't want to pay Russia for oil because Russia is a threat to its dominance. American foreign policy has aimed to undermine Russia's economy and sovereignty: through corrupt privatization programs and encouraging sham-revolutions along Russia's borders. Putin has also shown some reluctance to cooperate with international financial elites -- perhaps his chief sin.

Whether it is in the American people's interest or not, the US government will avoid dealing with Russia for oil.

Out of the frying pan, into the fire

Will securing pipelines through Israel help secure oil for America's needs? Only if the US could do this without spreading even more anger throughout Southwest Asia. Turkey would be foolish to continue cooperating with the US after it invades Syria and Iran -- Turkey's pipe is next on the list.

Securing oil through Israel means that the US becomes dependent on Israel -- our only "friend" in a hostile world. Israel would control the tap to the American economy -- a tap that America paid to build. Not only would Tel Aviv be our crucial supplier, they would have other markets in Asia should Uncle Sam go bust. A great plan for securing the realm, a terrible plan for America.

[1] "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," Richard Perle *et alia* , 1996. The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies.

[2] AIPAC is the "American Israeli Public Affairs Committee," the most powerful lobby in Washington DC.

[3] "Bald chicken 'needs no plucking,'" BBC News, 21 May, 2002.

[4] "US acts over Israeli arms sales to China ," Conal Urquhart, Monday June 13, 2005 *The Guardian* .

- [5] ["History of the Development of Azerbaijani Oil"](#) , Heydar Aliyev Foundation.
- [6] ["Baku Baron Days: Foreign Investment in Azerbaijan's Oil"](#) , Mir Yusif Mir-Babayev, 2004, Azerbaijan International.
- [7] ["Israel Exploration History"](#) , Zion Oil and Gas Company, 2004.
- [8] ["History of the Tapline"](#), Al Mashriq hosted by the Østfold College, Halden, Norway.
- [9] [Eastern Mediterranean Oil: Israel](#) , accessed January 2007. Energy Information Administration (US Government).
- [10] Federal Register / [Vol. 72, No. 9](#) / Tuesday, January 16, 2007 / Presidential Documents.
- [11] ["Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process"](#) January 18, 2007, The White House.
- [12] ["The Militarisation of the Eastern Mediterranean: Israel's Stake in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline"](#) Michel Chossudovsky, GlobalResearch.ca.
- [13] ["The new Great Game"](#) Richard Norton-Taylor, March 5, 2001 *The Guardian*.
- [14] ["The Empire strikes back...and the target is Turkey"](#) , John Laughland, All News is Lies, Sept/07/2003.
- [15] ["Syria-Iran pipeline to be reopened in November - MEES report"](#) , Tuesday October 31, 2000 *The Iranian Times*.
- [16] ["Iraq: US objections will not stop Iraq- Syria oil pipeline"](#) , 7/29/1998 Arabic News.com .
- [17] ["Rehabilitation Oil Pipeline via Syria"](#) , 17/10/2006 *Al-Sabah* .
- [18] ["Syria, Iran to establish oil pipeline across Iraq"](#) , 2006-03-07 Xinhuanet.

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