

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CCTV13

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

CHINA'S STRATEGIC PROJECTION 2026: STABILITY & MILESTONES AMIDST GLOBAL VOLATILITY

DOMESTIC STABILITY: "HARMONY AT HOME" & ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

CULTURAL WEAPONIZATION & RURAL REVITALIZATION



AI-ENHANCED TEMPLE FAIR
(DIGITAL COUPLET WRITE-AT-ION)

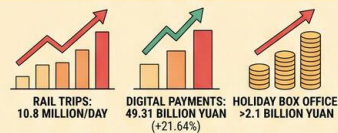


Village BA

Silver Economy

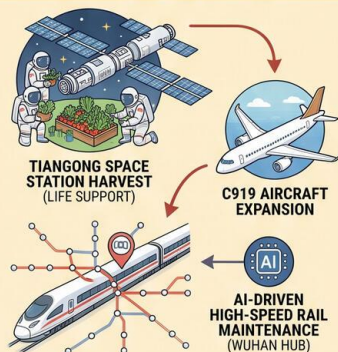
Integrating AI and tradition to forge "Modern Chinese Civilization." Massive state effort redirecting resources to the countryside.

RECORD SPRING FESTIVAL CONSUMPTION



Aggressive promotion of "Ice and Snow Economy" and holiday spending to offset economic cooling concerns.

TECHNOLOGICAL MILESTONES & LOGISTICS OF RESILIENCE



Space, aviation, and infrastructure advancements demonstrate state capacity to manage complex systems.

GLOBAL VOLATILITY: "CHAOS ABROAD" & GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS

EXTERNAL CRISES & "SYSTEMIC FAILURE" NARRATIVE



US CAPITOL SHOOTING (INSTITUTIONAL DECAY) FRANCE FLOODING (INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE) SLOVAKIA ENERGY CRISIS (SUPPLY SHOCK)

Highlighting foreign instability to reinforce China's governance model and "Security-First" approach.

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS & "MULTIPOLAR FRONT" FORMATION



GENEVA TRIPARTITE TALKS
(CHINA, RUSSIA, IRAN vs. US)



JAPAN'S LEADERSHIP TRANSITION (SANAЕ TAKAICHI, MILITARIZATION)

BANGLADESH'S ELECTION (STABILITY FOR BRI)

Positioning China and Russia as "stabilizers" against US-led bloc politics in the Middle East and Europe.

STRATEGIC SUB-NATIONALISM & FUTURE OUTLOOK



XI'S IOWA LETTER (DIPLOMATIC BACKCHANNEL)

IRAN DEAL DEADLOCK, JAPAN-CHINA TENSION, ECONOMIC CORRECTION, BLACK SWAN EVENTS

Engaging local populations to bypass unstable national governments. The narrative promotes the "Ascension of the Global East." Future risks include regional conflict and domestic economic strain.

THE "HARMONY AT HOME, CHAOS ABROAD" NARRATIVE

CONCLUSION: China leverages cultural projection and tech milestones to project itself as a cohesive, modern civilizational alternative, framing the West as fractured and dysfunctional, while managing domestic narratives against unmanaged global volatility.

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CHINA LEVERAGES LUNAR NEW
YEAR CULTURAL PROJECTION AND
SPACE MILESTONES TO PROJECT
STABILITY AMIDST HIGH-STAKES
GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS AND
GLOBAL VOLATILITY.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The broadcasting cycle for February 18, 2026, is dominated by the strategic synchronization of domestic cultural celebration with high-level international mediation. As China celebrates the "Year of the Firehorse," state media is heavily emphasizing national cohesion through the Spring Festival, utilizing record-breaking consumption and travel data to signal economic resilience. This domestic "peace and prosperity" narrative is sharply contrasted with reports of external chaos, including a shooting incident near the U.S. Capitol, devastating floods in France, and a deepening energy crisis in Slovakia. By highlighting domestic harmony against foreign instability, the state reinforces its governance model during a period of intense public focus.

Strategically, the administration is utilizing "sub-national diplomacy" as a stabilizer for

the U.S.-China relationship. President Xi Jinping's correspondence with residents in Iowa serves as a diplomatic backchannel, attempting to maintain civilian ties while official relations remain strained by geopolitical competition. Simultaneously, China is positioning itself as a central stakeholder in the "second round" of high-stakes negotiations in Geneva regarding the Iran nuclear framework. The coverage suggests a coordinated effort with Russia to manage Middle Eastern and Ukrainian "hotspots," framing the China-Russia partnership as the primary counterweight to U.S.-led bloc politics. This posture is further bolstered by technological milestones, including the harvest of the "space vegetable garden" on the Tiangong space station and the expanding commercial footprint of the C919 aircraft.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Record-Breaking Spring Festival Logistics and Consumption:** The "Chunyun" travel rush reached a fever pitch on the second day of the Lunar New Year, with [10.8 million rail passenger trips](#) recorded in a single day. Total digital payment transactions on the eve of the festival reached [49.31 billion yuan](#), marking a 21.64% increase year-over-year, while the holiday box office exceeded [2.1 billion yuan](#) by mid-day.

- **High-Stakes Geneva Tripartite Talks:** Negotiators from Russia, the U.S., and Iran concluded a two-day "closed-door" session in Geneva. While the [U.S. continues to press for limits](#) on Iran's ballistic missile range, Iran remains firm on its "red lines" regarding peaceful nuclear energy. China is framing the talks as a transition from "technical issues" to "political solutions," with a [third round of talks](#) pending.
- **Tiangong Space Station Harvest:** The Shenzhou 21 crew successfully completed a "harvest season" in the station's vegetable garden, utilizing [customized LED spectrums](#) to increase water efficiency and growth rates. This development is presented as a crucial step toward long-term life support for future lunar and deep-space missions.
- **Japanese Leadership Transition and Militarization:** State media reported on the election of [Sanae Takaichi as Japan's Prime Minister](#). The broadcast adopts a highly critical and skeptical tone, linking her administration to a "dangerous" shift toward [abandoning the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles"](#) and accelerating military expansion.
- **Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics:** Chinese athletes secured significant victories, including [Su Yiming's gold medal](#) in the men's snowboard big air and Xu Mengtao's continued dominance in freestyle skiing. The games are being used as a platform for nationalistic pride and "ice and snow economy" promotion.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Macroeconomics & Trade: State media is aggressively promoting the "ice and snow economy" and holiday consumption to offset concerns about broader economic cooling.

Tourism revenue in regions like [Anji exceeded 500 million yuan](#), while "New Year's goods" festivals in Jilin and Sichuan are being used to stimulate rural and urban retail markets [simultaneously](#).

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics: The formation of a "multipolar front" is evident in the coverage of the Geneva talks. China and Russia are presented as [coordinated actors](#) attempting to prevent a U.S.-led "military mobilization" in the Middle East, while framing U.S. domestic issues as a symptom of "institutional decay."

Diplomacy & Statecraft: Sub-national engagement is highlighted via [Xi Jinping's letter to Iowa](#), emphasizing that "people-to-people ties" are the bedrock of the most important bilateral relationship. This is juxtaposed with the [Slovenian President's message](#) expressing confidence in China's 15th Five-Year Plan.

Critical Infrastructure Security: Extensive coverage is devoted to the maintenance of the high-speed rail network. The Wuhan Bullet Train Depot, described as the [largest in Central China](#), utilizes AI-driven algorithms to monitor [19,000 detection points](#) per trainset to ensure safety during the high-load travel season.

Tech Sovereignty & AI: Cultural heritage is being "digitized" to assert technological leadership. The Grand View Garden temple fair in Beijing now features [3D naked-eye displays](#) and "human-machine interactions" to narrate the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, merging traditional Soft Power with hard-tech capabilities.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Cultural Heritage:

State media is no longer just reporting on the Spring Festival; it is engineering it as a proof-of-concept for "Modern Chinese Civilization." By integrating AI, robots writing couplets, and digital "Red Mansions" displays, the broadcast [frames China as a nation](#) that has successfully bypassed Western secularization by modernizing its tradition rather than replacing it. This is a direct ideological counter to the "Western universal values" narrative.

Strategic Sub-nationalism in U.S.

Relations: There is a clear pattern of bypassing the U.S. federal government to engage directly with [local American populations](#). By highlighting Xi's personal history with Iowa, China signals that it views the current U.S. political structure as [unstable and prone to internal violence](#) (referencing the Capitol shooting), and therefore seeks to "park" the relationship with the American people until a more "principled" leadership emerges in Washington.

The Logistics of Resilience: The obsession with "precision" in the high-speed rail maintenance and C919 flight logs serves a dual purpose. It reassures the domestic public of their safety during the holiday rush, but more importantly, it [demonstrates the state's capacity](#) to manage massive, complex systems under extreme pressure. This is a subtle signal to foreign observers that China's mobilization capabilities remain at a peak state.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Domestic stability is currently at its annual peak, managed through the "high-density" emotional atmosphere of the Spring Festival. However, between the lines, the broadcast reveals ongoing efforts to address the [rural-urban divide](#). Reports on "Village BA" (basketball) and "Village Galas" in Guizhou and Zhejiang indicate a massive state effort to redirect cultural and economic capital to the [countryside](#). This "Rural Revitalization" is not just an economic policy but a stability measure to prevent the hollowing out of the hinterland, which could lead to social unrest.

The health of the "Silver Economy" is also a notable theme. Extensive reporting on [elderly populations](#) participating in temple fairs and traditional markets suggests the state is actively trying to ensure that the aging demographic remains integrated and economically active, rather than becoming a source of institutional drag. There is no mention of elite infighting; the hierarchy is presented as monolithic, centered entirely on the implementation of the [Xi Jinping "General Secretary" directives](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

China is projecting a "Global Mediator" posture, particularly in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. By co-hosting or facilitating discussions on Iran and Ukraine, China is presenting itself as the only major power capable of [balancing the interests](#) of the Global South against Western "bloc confrontation." The broadcasting of Russian military successes in Ukrainian "hotspots" [integrated with](#) diplomatic calls for peace

serves to frame the U.S. as a "disruptor" while China and Russia act as "stabilizers."

The portrayal of the West is increasingly focused on systemic failure. The [U.S. Capitol shooting](#) is framed as a failure of social order, while the [flooding in France](#) is presented as a failure of infrastructure and climate response. This serves to justify China's "Tech Sovereignty" and internal "Security-First" approach to the domestic audience.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is characterized by a "Dual-Track" strategy: massive domestic holiday consumption to drive short-term GDP and a focus on high-end manufacturing (C919, space tech) for long-term growth. Market sentiment is being managed through the publication of "bullish" travel and spending data.

- **Digital Payments:** [49.31 billion yuan](#) processed on New Year's Eve (peak 144,700 transactions/sec).
- **Entertainment:** Holiday box office [exceeded 2.1 billion yuan](#), with "Success for All" leading the charts.
- **Logistics:** Rail passenger volume up to [10.8 million trips](#); civil aviation transporting [2.48 million passengers](#).
- **Commodities:** Brent crude oil prices noted at [\\$2.93/barrel increase](#) (reflecting energy volatility during negotiations).
- **Retail:** Hainan offshore duty-free sales reached [680 million yuan](#) in the first three days of the holiday.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Significant political shifts in neighboring states are being framed as potential security

risks for China, requiring a re-evaluation of regional posture.

- **Sanae Takaichi (Japan):** Her election as Prime Minister is viewed as a [victory for the "Right Wing."](#) with state media warning that her administration's agenda to re-arm Japan and potentially [pursue nuclear capabilities](#) will destabilize the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh):** Her re-election and the [formation of a new cabinet](#) are presented as a win for regional stability and "Belt and Road" continuity.
- **Trump Administration (U.S.):** Though not a new change, the transcripts repeatedly reference the ["Trump government's" policies](#) regarding Iran and trade as the primary sources of global "uncertainty" and "chaotic" diplomacy.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial priority is "Harmony at Home, Chaos Abroad." The lead stories are consistently **Spring Festival celebrations** and **Xi Jinping's diplomatic correspondence**, occupying the first 20-30 minutes of major broadcasts. This is intended to create a sense of national pride and safety. Buried stories include **minor domestic incidents** or **inflationary pressures**, which are entirely absent. Conspicuous Omissions include any critical analysis of the **Russian military position in Ukraine**—instead, it is framed through the lens of Russian defense ministry statements. There is also zero coverage of **youth unemployment**, replaced by narratives of "rural entrepreneurship" and "university students returning to the farm."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The world is increasingly framed as a fracturing arena where China provides the only cohesive "civilizational" alternative to Western dysfunction.

COUNTRIES

- **Russia:** Portrayed as a **strategic and principled ally**. Cooperation in Geneva and joint naval exercises [near the Gulf of Oman](#) are framed as "stabilizing" forces against U.S. aggression.
- **United States:** Characterized as **unstable and hypocritical**. The "Trump administration" is blamed for breaking international agreements, while [internal violence \(Capitol shooting\)](#) is used to undermine its "democratic" prestige.
- **Japan:** Framed as an **irresponsible regional actor** moving toward militarism under the new Takaichi government, which is portrayed as [betraying its post-war pacifist commitments](#).

LEADERS

- **Xi Jinping:** Portrayed as the **benevolent "General Secretary"** who manages global crises via mail (Iowa) while personally overseeing [rural poverty alleviation](#).
- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as a **decisive leader** who is open to "principled" negotiations but ready for [military mobilization](#) if pushed.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The meta-narrative is the "Ascension of the Global East." State media is actively seeding the idea that the Western-led "International Order" has already collapsed and been

replaced by a [multipolar governance model](#) led by the UN Charter (interpreted through a Chinese lens). Disinformation is used via "mirroring": by focusing on [U.S. border policy failures](#), the network obscures its own migration and demographic challenges. The "psychological operation" of the day is the ["My Country, My People"](#) musical segment, which uses 1980s-era patriotic Hong Kong singer Zhang Mingmin to link the 1997 handover to the 2026 "national rejuvenation" goal, targeting the diaspora and youth with a "manufactured" nostalgia.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Iran Deal Deadlock:** Negotiations in Geneva are likely to stall into a "war of attrition." Iran's refusal to [curtail its missile program](#) and U.S. domestic political pressure suggest a third round will only yield "process" wins without substantive change.
- **Japan-China Tension Escalation:** With Prime Minister Takaichi's rise, expect a sharp increase in [maritime friction](#) and a possible Chinese "response" via increased naval presence in the East China Sea as Japan moves toward its "nuclear discussion" agenda.
- **Post-Holiday Economic Correction:** While the "holiday data" is strong, the underlying structural issues (debt, property) will resurface in early March, likely prompting a new ["stimulus" narrative](#) during the National People's Congress (Lianghui) cycle.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Immediate diplomatic fallout from the [U.S. Capitol](#)

[shooting](#) as China utilizes the event to "shame" U.S. gun policy during UN human rights sessions. Re-entry of millions of workers into Tier-1 cities will test the stability of the urban transport and health sectors.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Completion of the [C919's first international routes](#) will be a major milestone, challenging Boeing and Airbus market shares in Southeast Asia. Formalization of a "China-Russia-Iran" maritime security framework following joint exercises.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Transition of the [Tiangong space station to a fully commercialized and international scientific hub, aiming to displace the aging ISS as the primary station in LEO.](#)

RISK ASSESSMENT

[The primary strategic risks involve the collision of managed domestic narratives with unmanaged global volatility.](#)

- **U.S. Institutional Instability:** [Domestic political violence in the U.S. could lead to an unpredictable "rally-around-the-flag" foreign policy.](#) **Triggers:** [Further assassination attempts or mass casualty events at high-profile sites.](#) **Likelihood:** [Moderate.](#) **Impact:** [Catastrophic global market volatility.](#) **Mitigations:** [Intensifying sub-national and civilian diplomatic channels](#)

[like the Iowa outreach.](#)

- **Middle East Regional Conflict:** [Failure of the Geneva talks leading to a direct Israel-Iran confrontation.](#) **Triggers:** [Iran surpassing its](#)

["uranium enrichment" threshold.](#) **Likelihood:** [High.](#) **Impact:** [Energy price spike \(Brent crude exceeding \\$120\).](#) **Mitigations:** [Deepening the China-Russia strategic coordination.](#)

- **Japanese Nuclear Drift:** PM Takaichi's revision of the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles." **Triggers:** [Formal cabinet discussion on nuclear sharing.](#) **Likelihood:** [Low in short-term, but rising.](#) **Impact:** [Collapse of the regional NPT framework.](#) **Mitigations:** [Economic sanctions and increased military drills in the Yellow Sea.](#)
- **Supply Chain Shock (Energy):** The [Slovakian refinery shutdowns spreading to broader Central European infrastructure.](#) **Triggers:** [Persistent cold snaps in late February.](#) **Likelihood:** [Moderate.](#) **Impact:** [Disruption of European manufacturing.](#) **Mitigations:** [Acceleration of China-Europe "green energy" technology exports.](#)
- **Logistics Failure:** [A major accident on the high-speed rail network during peak holiday travel.](#) **Triggers:** [Cyberattack on the Wuhan monitoring hub.](#) **Likelihood:** [Low.](#) **Impact:** [Severe blow to the "social stability" narrative.](#) **Mitigations:** [Redundant AI](#)

monitoring systems and [human-AI "hand-off" protocols](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Russian Frontline Attrition:** While Russian Ministry of Defense statements are cited, the broadcast fails to mention any **counter-offensive gains by Ukraine** or internal Russian logistical failures, creating a distorted view of the military balance.
- **The Cost of Rural Revitalization:** The broadcast highlights successful villages but ignores the **massive fiscal drain** on local governments to maintain these "showcase" galas and basketball tournaments.
- **Domestic Inflation:** While consumption *volume* is up, there is no mention of the **price increases** in essential holiday goods, which may be dampening real household wealth.
- **Cybersecurity Threats:** Extensive reporting on the "digitization" of culture and infrastructure (rail, space) omits any mention of the **vulnerability of these systems** to foreign-state-sponsored hacking.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Potemkin Economy" Hypothesis: The record-breaking Spring Festival spending is not a sign of recovery but a "last-hurrah" of **discretionary spending** using dwindling savings. If consumption drops sharply in March, the state's "stability" narrative could face a legitimacy crisis among the middle class.

The "Russia Trapped" Hypothesis: Russia's willingness to negotiate in Geneva

[is actually a sign of desperation caused by internal economic strain rather than strategic strength. If the U.S. detects this, they may walk away from the table, triggering a "Black Swan" of Russian tactical nuclear use as a final leverage play.](#)

[Black Swan Event: A major solar flare or technical glitch causes the](#)

[Tiangong space station](#) to suffer a catastrophic life-support failure on the same day as a rail disaster, shattering the "technological perfection" pillar of CCP governance during the most sensitive holiday of the decade.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the **Sanae Takaichi diplomatic file**; her administration presents the most significant shift in Japanese foreign policy since the 1950s.
- Continue the **sub-national charm offensive** in the U.S. Midwest to weaken the domestic U.S. consensus for trade decoupling.
- Leverage the **C919 reliability records** from the Chunyun season to push for certification in the European (EASA) market.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Opportunity:** Target "Ice and Snow" infrastructure projects; the government is committed to making this a year-round industry.

- **Risk:** Be wary of energy-intensive manufacturing in Central Europe due to **Slovakian refining vulnerabilities**.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure strict adherence to the new **AI-Cultural heritage guidelines** as the state begins auditing "digital couplets" and automated media for ideological alignment.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on defense autonomy and environmental management during the pre-NPC period.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
 - **Canada's National Defense Industrial Strategy:** A new proposal to [invest billions](#) into local supply chains to reduce reliance on the U.S. defense umbrella.
 - **Japan's Defense Expansion Bill:** Proposed legislation to [triple R&D for indigenous missile technology](#).
 - **The 15th Five-Year Plan (Slovenian Review):** Discussions on the final parameters of the plan [prior to its formal presentation](#).
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
 - **Geneva Tripartite Briefing:** Russian and Iranian negotiators [expressing "moderate optimism"](#) despite U.S. "maximalist" demands.
 - **Ministry of Transport Chunyun Update:** Press conference detailing the [success of AI-driven congestion management](#).

KEY STORIES

- **President Xi's Correspondence with Iowa:** A high-profile diplomatic gesture recalling personal ties from the 1980s to stabilize [U.S.-China relations](#).
- **Geneva Iran Nuclear Talks Round 2:** High-stakes tripartite negotiations focusing on [U.S. ballistic missile range](#) demands and Iranian energy rights.
- **Milan 2026 Winter Olympics Success:** Gold medals for Su Yiming and the Chinese team [boost national pride](#).
- **Tiangong Vegetable Garden Harvest:** Shenzhou 21 crew harvests [lettuce and tomatoes](#) in orbit, proving life-support tech.
- **C919 High-Frequency Operations:** The indigenous aircraft logs [record flight hours](#) on major domestic routes like Beijing-Shanghai.
- **US Capitol Shooting Incident:** An 18-year-old suspect [apprehended with a shotgun](#) near the Capitol, used as proof of U.S. instability.
- **Sanae Takaichi Elected as Japan's PM:** State media warns of [right-wing militarization and nuclear threats under her leadership](#).
- **Spring Festival Digital Economy Surge:** Records in [mobile payments](#) and holiday box office receipts.
- **Wuhan Bullet Train Maintenance Hub:** Central China's largest depot [uses AI to service 258 trainsets](#).
- **Nicaragua-China Economic Partnership:** Report on the [Nicaraguan Luban Workshop](#) and trade growth.
- **Guizhou Mulan Academy Revitalization:** Village-level cultural revitalization [supported by state direct-investment](#).

- **Slovakian Energy Crisis:** Refinery shutdown [triggers national emergency](#) and fuel supply anxiety.
- **France Flooding Disaster:** Extreme rainfall [causes mass power outages](#) and infrastructure damage.
- **Bangladesh Cabinet Formation:** PM Sheikh Hasina [secures regional stability for BRI projects](#).
- **Digital "Red Chamber" Temple Fair:** Naked-eye 3D tech [modernizes traditional cultural festivals](#) in Beijing.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching

themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

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