Risky Fiction:
Betrayal and Romance in *The Jing Affair* *

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Abstract

Contrary to our intuitive understanding of the Cold War as a discourse of division, Christina Klein (2003) argues that it is also a discourse of integration, serving to bring the allies closer to each other. The fundamental logic of the Cold War was, thus considered, a Schmittian game of telling friends from enemies, in which betrayal is an unpardonable crime and a traitor the worst kind of enemy. Yet at the same time, betrayal also acknowledges an intimacy that existed prior to the act of betrayal: an intimacy that must be denounced and, even, at times, held in disgust. During the Cold War, while Taiwan worried about being betrayed by its staunch allies and was at risk of being betrayed by its KMT leadership, and while Taiwan, if it converted to communism, would have harmed American interests on the Asia/Pacific front, betrayal was both a real political risk and a risky fiction, one which often (con)fused reality with imagination.

In this paper, I analyze an obscure 1965 Cold War novel, *The Jing Affair*, written by a US government official serving in the Far East Affairs Department under the pseudonym of D. J. Spencer. The novel imagines an attempt by a high KMT official, named Jing, to turn Taiwan over to Chinese communists: this presents an imminent threat to Taiwan's independence and American national interests. Featuring a Taiwanese-American hero who succeeds in preventing this act of betrayal, *The Jing Affair* is a political romance about Chinese treason, Taiwanese revolution, and CIA covert operations, set in the impending Taiwan Strait Crises of the 1950s. This risky fiction leads us to reflect on how an imaginary crisis can be productive, for it means imagining an alternative history that bears on political reality. The novel's Hollywood-esque meshing of political suspense and romantic subplots also reveals the sort of risky connections between fantasy and politics that could put real lives at risk.

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The story related here hasn’t yet happened, but it could happen any day. (Back flap description of *The Jing Affair*)

A year before the island nation of the Republic of China (Taiwan) was elbowed out of the United Nations into international isolation, American political scientist and friend of the Taiwanese people Douglas Mendel pondered the island’s future in the last chapter of *The Politics of Formosan Nationalism*:

One future possibility is the conquest of Formosa by mainland China, either through armed force or by peaceful merger. Another is maintenance of the status quo under Nationalist rule, with perhaps greater political freedom for the majority but no genuine Formosan independence. A third would be foreign intervention, by the UN or a group of powers, to force the Nationalists to hand over political control to the Formosans. We should also consider the prospect for a Formosan uprising against the mainland elite, whether initiated by local groups or precipitated by some external attempt to change the island’s status. (225)

In the geopolitical structure of the Cold War stalemate, Mendel’s prognosis entails a tripartite vision that sees Taiwanese people as being held hostage by the Nationalist regime, menaced by Communist China, and somehow abandoned by the international community, with one—and only one—slim hope of indigenous insurrection. For Mendel it seems unlikely that Communist China would force a military takeover, yet it was also unlikely that the United Nations or any other country would reach out a helping hand to aid any attempt at Formosan liberation, save through covert operations. Although it is possible that the Nationalist regime might change over time to open a space for greater bottom-up political participation, a genuinely independent Formosa would remain out of reach until its people were willing to risk their lives in pursuit of it. Mendel concludes:

It would be unrealistic to predict a major Formosan revolt in the absence of a mainlander rift or assurance of outside assistance. Disunity in the ranks of the Nationalist armed forces is almost a prerequisite to a native show of force, and perhaps only American help, preferably combined with some UN action to deter Communist intervention, could turn the domestic tide against the regime. (244)
Mendel’s conclusion represents a dominant American viewpoint of the time: Formosan independence would not happen organically from within, as in Vietnam, nor could it be granted by outside forces, as in the Philippines. Enmeshed in the Cold War structure in which Taiwan, ruled by Jiang Jieshi’s Nationalist Party (the KMT), was for the US a critical bunker for containing communism and a renegade state in the Communist Chinese imaginary, Formosan independence was in every way a risky fiction for all parties involved. In the political climate of the time, the very imagining of it already involves risk—the risk of a Third World War.

Known as a Taiwan sympathizer, Mendel wrote *The Politics of Formosan Nationalism* partly in response to his Taiwanese friends who were living overseas at the time—mainly in Japan and the US—in order to analyze the stakes involved in, and advocated on behalf of, the cause of Formosan independence. It was meant to be a scholarly and political book, and while warmly received by advocates of the Formosan independence movement then as now, it was criticized by pro-KMT scholars.\(^2\) Its political appeal hinged upon both the genuine hope for an independent Formosa and the fear that the Taiwanese people would be betrayed, first by the KMT regime and later by an apathetic international community: this was a complex web of sentiments charged with anxiety, lamentation, and helplessness that George Kerr aptly described in his book, *Formosa Betrayed*.\(^3\) More importantly, anxiety about betrayal was already in the air in the 1960s, expressed in a widely rumored deal between Jiang Jingguo, the heir-apparent of Jiang Jieshi, and Communist China according to which they would reunite under the pretense of a staged counter-strike.

It was this situation that was vividly described in an obscure 1965 novel called *The Jing Affair*, which staged a discussion of Mendel’s speculative last chapter. It is still unknown today who wrote *The Jing Affair* under the pseudonym of D. J. Spencer, but the novel acutely captures the psychology of the time and offers an optimism that Mendel found unpersuasive, despite a shared concern for Taiwan. Mendel argues: “The assumption in *The Jing Affair* that Formosans would revolt to thwart such a secret deal is less tenable than its author’s corollary, that the United States would intervene effectively. But if the mainland regime at the time were willing to deal with the United States, the latter might well accept the incorporation of Formosa as part of a larger arrangement . . . ” (231). In spite of his disagreement,

\(^2\) For a favorable review, see Edward I-te Chen’s review (1970). For the unfavorable one, see Yi Chu Wang’s review (1970).

\(^3\) Like Mendel’s, Kerr’s *Formosa Betrayed* is much favored by pro-independence activists and scholars. It is often quoted by them as evidence of KMT’s corrupt and brutal governance.
Mendel, like Spencer, was aware that the rumor was a plausible scenario, a perceived but as yet unverified threat, a potential betrayal that characterized the political atmosphere of the Cold War.

That the “Jing Affair”—whether taken as a fiction, a rumor, or an unaffordable risk looming large in Mendel’s book—has received little, if any, attention from historians and literary critics alike presents an interesting problem in Cold War historiography. Andrew Hammond claims that Cold War historiography has been so confined to the Western experience and to participation on the part of great powers that our understanding of the period has become skewed, so that we are oblivious to the devastating effects of armed conflict, forced migration, environmental damage, imprisonment, poverty, torture, and violent death in third world countries.

Recently revisiting the Korean War, that “Forgotten War,” Asian American scholars also challenge the dominant Cold War historiography by foregrounding the intricate and intimate ties between the emerging Korean American community and US military presence overseas. In *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*, Grace Cho attends to the psychic effects of this “forgetting” on Korean Americans who remain haunted by the shame and secrecy of the Korean War, a war which unlike other wars is largely absent from US cultural production. Yet, Cho reminds us, “it is impossible to forget, because the Forgotten War is not yet over, either in geopolitical terms or in its psychic effects” (51), as it lives on in the continued division of Korea and in the stigmatized figure of the military prostitute. In her own discussion of Korean American novels, Jodi Kim contends that the Korean War not only “represents a curious lacuna” (281) in the US national memory but also “signals a broader problem of Cold War knowledge that attempts to foreclose alternative or ‘non-aligned’ knowledges” (282). By reading diasporic and mixed-raced Korean protagonists in recent Korean American fictions as third-world, non-aligned subjects that remain alien to US national culture, Kim suggests that the Cold War operates as an epistemological project that disavows US imperialist aggression by clinging to the Manichean logic of anticommunism.

Likewise, the risky imagination of *The Jing Affair* preserves for us an overlooked, if not forgotten, moment in Cold War history, one in which US military intervention plays a crucial role in deciding the future of another country. It moreover provides us with an opportunity to reexamine the Cold War as a risky fiction and the fear of betrayal as a dominant “affect” of the time. *The Jing Affair* is a sensationalized novel fraught with Hollywood-esque suspense and romance, but it also boldly imagines an alternative future, a Formosan utopia in which are more
fully realized the US-Taiwan linkages of the Cold War era—linkages that are fraught with suspense and romance, and perhaps with a tinge of paranoia and conspiracy as well. More importantly, the novel helps us to understand how the Cold War itself was imagined as a “risky fiction” which has had a lasting impact on the politics of Taiwanese independence.

Thus, rather than read *The Jing Affair* as merely a political thriller that deserves to remain obscure, in this paper I will risk a rescuing of it from oblivion by taking it as an exemplary risky fiction, one which, by shedding light on Cold War paranoia, helps us bring to the light of day an obscure yet important chapter of Cold War history, and to elucidate the ontological aporia of Taiwan as an “impossible nation” or, as others have called it, an “abnormal state.” By revisiting this obscure text, I not only intend to bring “literature” to bear on contemporary political debates in Taiwan but to suggest a transnational approach to Cold War America, whose anticommunist ideology has, beyond its domestic consequences, a direct influence on postcolonial nation-states. Primarily I intend to demonstrate how US imperialism manifests itself in both literary imaginings and actual geopolitics, during the Cold War era and beyond.

**Risk/Fiction**

. . . the signature Cold War experience is not nuclear conflict but suspense: the threat of conflict which is never quite realized.

—Daniel Cordle, “Beyond the Apocalypse of Closure”

But the phenomenon is fabulously textual also to the extent that, for the moment, a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it.

—Jacques Derrida, “No Apocalypse, Not Now”

Risk is fiction—a vision of an imminent yet uncertain moment wherein a probable event threatens to turn imagined scenarios into a disastrous reality, usually with a strong sense of danger and loss. A risk is therefore both real and imaginary, for it is a potentiality, and once envisioned, it must be guarded against and managed, if not prevented. In the lingo of the late Bush II administration, a risk is a call for a “preemptive strike,” conjuring desire and fear in order to justify current behavior or initiate aggressive action. Despite our desire to prevent its realization, a risk is by
nature “un/imaginable”—a future event that both demands and defies our imagination. In some sense, what we know of the Cold War is fundamentally a risk/fiction, or more accurately, a fiction written with un/imaginable risks. It is, as Derrida says, “fabulously textual” (23). The factor of risk led to an ideological stalemate, dramatized military competition, and plotted numerous hot wars in proxy states—Korea, Vietnam, Angola, and Afghanistan—all building up towards the frenzy of an immediate outbreak of communism and a nuclear war that threatened to lead to an apocalypse. As Daniel Cordle points out, much like the fear of communist infiltration, “nuclear anxiety is expressed in terms of the consciousness that what we experience as normal might suddenly flip over to be replaced by an entirely different mode of reality” (71). While the alternative reality remains on the geographical and temporal “other side” (not here, not now), its imminence and immanence powerfully shape our consciousness and experience of the Cold War. In hindsight, the Cold War was arguably a “bluffing game,” representing what historian Richard Hofstadter aptly called in 1964 the “paranoid style in American politics.” Nonetheless, it effectively caused tension among the players and convinced them of one another’s hostility and evil in compensation for an intensely felt sense of vulnerability, righteousness, and menaced masculinity. However, hanging upon a profound sense of enmity and fear of ultimate destruction, the Cold War was more than just a fiction, because the risk it envisioned in turn regulated our lives and ordered the world. The usefulness of risk, significantly, lies in its capacity to regulate our everyday life, mediate our sense and sensibility, and shape our vision of the future. As Ulrich Beck aptly puts it, risk is “an (institutionalized) attempt, a cognitive map, to colonize the future” (3), and I must add, *its effects are in the present*.

It is therefore possible to conceptualize the Cold War as a generative fiction, as it has nourished a literature of and about political risks. Ian Fleming, an active intelligence officer in the British Royal Navy during World War II, is arguably the

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4 See Hofstadter (1964). Steven Belletto’s study (2009) of “game theory narrative” offers plenty evidences for how the Cold War was conceptualized as a game of poker between the US and the Soviet Union, in which third world countries were their stakes.

5 Yet, we should keep in mind that the attempt to manage the present through imagining risk is not exclusive to the Cold War era, though the Cold War is an exemplary. Erskine Childers, worrying that German militarism may threaten British security, published *Riddle of the Sands* in 1903 to draw the British Admiralty’s attention to its own lack of intelligence. The novel, which depicts two young Englishmen’s discovery of German rehearsals for an invasion of Britain while on a yacht journey to the Frisian Islands, was so well received that it prompted the British Admiralty to conduct a survey of the Frisian area, which resulted in the implementation of enhanced naval intelligence activities. See Brett Woods (2008), 28-30.
most memorable writer of the Cold War because he created the character James Bond, whose multiple Hollywood reincarnations have made him the ultimate Cold War hero. In contrast to Agent 007’s image as a secretive spy and suave womanizer, John Rambo—the macho-psycho character that Sylvester Stallone so powerfully embodied on the silver screen that people forget Rambo’s author, David Morrell—gives the Cold War hero a scarred face and traumatized soul, and enables us to shift our focus from the cold-blooded, steel-faced Red Army to the Southeast Asian jungles infested with gooks and malaria. The Bond-Rambo duo represents a spectrum of Cold War heroism in which masculinity, shouldering the destiny of the nation, occupies the center stage. They embody a nationalist desire deeply “grounded in the culture of imperialism, in the anxiety of foreign invasion, and in the refinement of surveillance on the domestic population and external enemies” (Woods 13). The hero alone upholds the hope of a successful defense, whether by sabotaging the evil forces of communism as James Bond does, ever so elegantly, with his gadgets, or by mending an injured manhood as John Rambo does in the jungle with his machine gun and knife. Significantly, in contrast to what the actual geopolitical deployment suggests, the Cold War was in every way a rhetoric of defense guided by conspiracies and paranoia: such Cold War slogans as the “domino effect,” “deterrence,” “rollback,” and “containment policy” all evolved from—and in return contributed to—a desire to maintain the political status quo in the face of foreign intervention, imagined or otherwise.

Crucially, it was a global status quo, which Christina Klein argues was maintained as much by the discourse of division as by that of integration. For Klein, Truman’s 1947 and Wilcox’s 1957 speeches represented two distinct Cold War imaginaries, one of containment and the other of integration, and whereas the former heralded a heroic model of education, featuring the US as a leader and defender of the free world, the latter proposed a model of sentimental education that encouraged Americans to win the hearts and minds of Africa and Asia, peoples and regimes that were vulnerable—but had not yet been converted—to communism (23). In the logic of defense, Asia and Africa are depicted as frontiers of democracy, freedom, and capitalism: treacherous border spaces where covert actions are needed to secure alliances and sabotage betrayal. In other words, Klein conceives the Cold War not so much as a geopolitical and military construction as a “cultural war” that was fought by means of foreign aid, middlebrow aesthetics, and people-to-people programs. This cultural Cold War generated the rhetoric of sympathy, affinity, and

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6 For the discussion of masculinity in the Cold War era, see Robert J. Corber (1997) and Suzanne Clark (2000).
friendship as a defense mechanism against the anxiety about loss and betrayal.

The fear of loss and betrayal also saturates the individual experience of the Cold War. In an attempt to theorize conspiracy theory as a symptom of postwar American culture, Timothy Melley looks at the Cold War as a period charged with heightened anxiety over the apparent loss of autonomy or self-control, what he calls “agency panic,” which creates a nervous energy that constantly questions the assumed reality and an interpretive paranoia that insists on “reading between the lines” to see through the veneer of everyday life. Hence, conspiracy, often construed as “hermetically sealed, marvelously efficient, and virtually undetectable” (10), is the manifest form of agency panic, which poses the self against society in a negative, zero-sum relation. Melley believes that agency panic indicates a crisis moment in the long-cherished notion of liberal individualism, where the latter considers the self as a rational, autonomous individual with a protected, independent interiority. The Cold War structure, fully propped up by secret deals, invisible infiltrations and covert operations, intensified this crisis by subjecting both the self and social institutions to interrogations both public and interior. Conspiracies, therefore, not only suggest alternative interpretations, but could very well have spoken the truth.

Put differently, conspiracy theories occasion the appearance of what Slavoj Žižek cryptically calls the “parallax view,” through which the Real would emerge. The “parallax Real,” Žižek elaborates, is “that which accounts for the very multiplicity of appearances of the same underlying Real—it is not the hard core which persists as the Same, but the hard bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness into the multitude of appearances” (26). To resituate Žižek’s psychoanalytic-philosophical language in our discussion, the parallax Real is what allows for the proliferation of conspiracy theories; it is a structural hinge that enables interpretive paranoia to be an excessive production and a site of contested truth. It resides—or rather appears uncannily—in the ambivalent, risky, and transient acknowledgement of alternative truths and/or plausible futures. The parallax view enacted by Cold War paranoia alternates and fuses the global imaginary of containment with that of integration. It allows us not to conceive the Cold War merely as a global order built on the appearance of oppositions—good versus evil, true versus false, democracy versus totalitarianism, and capitalism versus communism—but as crisscrossing alignments of desires, strategies, policies and politics organized by risk as a generative void. It is the un/imaginable risk—a creative virtuality—that facilitates and justifies many Cold War operations in both international and domestic settings. To quote Žižek again: “this very hard core [of a
parallax Real] is purely virtual, actually nonexistent, an X which can be
reconstructed only retroactively, from the multitude of symbolic formations which
are ‘all that there actually is’” (26). Žižek’s theorization encourages us to
reconceptualize the Cold War not only as an historical period or a global military
campaign, but also as a risky fiction that produces, and at the same time is
constituted by, parallax views—multiplex, incongruent, and even self-contradictory
at times—that suspend our sense of reality.

Hammond contends that the “Cold War” is “an erroneous term for global
conflict,” for to claim that the international conflict was “cold” is to “[partake]
in the same hegemonic Euro-Americanism that defined the conflict itself, privileging a
limited range of subjectivities and relegating all others to insignificance” (1). Indeed, Hammond’s attempt to “de-Cold War”—to borrow Kuan-hsing Chen’s
arcane but pointed term—requires seeing the Cold War as a Western-centric fiction
that renders invisible various local, hot wars while initiating and perpetuating their
existence and proliferation. It is in this precise sense that the Cold War is a risky
fiction, a fiction that is created with the premise of risk and that in effect plotted
actual events that risked the precious lives of others. It is therefore important that
we reconceptualize the Cold War via “parallax views” by attending to both its
literary (read imaginative) quality and the actual voices and lives it forcefully
denied, restricted and silenced. To reexamine through its literary representations the
Cold War as a global risk is not to claim that this war was just a fiction or a virtual
reality, but to open up spaces for other—and often hushed—experiences of the
international risk that shaped our imagination and self-understanding, and to
reconsider the significance of this global risk in a specific local context. The themes
of betrayal and romance offer us parallax views of The Jing Affair, and help us to
see the making of Cold War epistemology as a form of imperialist disavowal.

Betrayal and Romance

It would be difficult to claim that The Jing Affair represents the Taiwanese
experience of the Cold War, because little is known about the author’s intention and
his/her actual identity except that he was an American government official dealing
with Far Eastern affairs. As much as the book itself was based on a rumor, the name
of the author—D. J. Spencer—is equally a fiction, a virtual identity that
inadvertently and also fittingly embodies the Cold War as a generative fiction. But
the fiction provides us with interesting perspectives on Cold War paranoia and the

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7 See Kuan-hsing Chen (2006).
intricate, risky position of Taiwan, which was on the brink of being sold out to China. This obscure novel is one of the few Cold War fictions about Taiwan, and it gives us an unusual glimpse of how US Cold War imaginaries shaped and projected Taiwan’s national identity.\(^8\) Hence, the question that concerns us here is not whether the experiences represented in the novel are authentically Taiwanese, but rather how the fictionality of the risk it describes reflects, mediates, and conditions actual geopolitical situations. Our focus here is the risk/fiction cognate that the novel embodies.

Fundamentally, *The Jing Affair* is about romance and betrayal in the time of the Taiwan Strait Crises. The first Taiwan Strait crisis occurred in 1955 and the second in 1958. Both were short-term military conflicts concentrated on offshore islands in the Taiwan Strait—the Dachen, Matsu, and Quemoy (Jinmen) Islands—between Red China (the PRC) and Free China (the ROC). The Taiwan Strait Crises are often considered as a continuation of the Chinese civil war, in which the communists had declared victory in 1949, but they are also an important, though often overlooked, chapter of Cold War history.\(^9\) According to historian Warren Cohen, Communist China became America’s most feared and hated enemy after the Korean War, and Free China under Jiang Jieshi’s leadership was a strategic checkpoint in the anti-communist front. Keeping Taiwan “free” was critical to US interests in the Western Pacific, and thus Taiwan was also a danger zone that threatened to involve America in another regional conflict. Indeed, Jiang was counting on US support not only for his regime but also for his dream of a “counter-strike”—a military campaign aimed at the liberation of the Chinese mainland.

When conflicts occurred on the offshore islands in the 1950s, the US was decisively involved: having signed a defense treaty with the ROC in 1954, it threatened to use nuclear weapons against the PRC in 1955 and supplied the ROC with ammunition and airpower in 1958. The Crises enhanced the anti-communist alliance between the US and the Nationalist regime, but due to mutual distrust the alliance was fragile and vulnerable to betrayal. As Cohen points out, the price that Jiang had to pay for the mutual defense treaty was the forfeiture of his right to a counter-attack. The US also pledged non-commitment to the defense of the offshore islands, although they were, and still are, part of ROC territory. The defense treaty, Cohen concludes, was “designed not only to deter a Communist attack against

\(^8\) Other obscure Cold War texts about Taiwan are James Michener’s *The Voice of Asia* and Vern Sneider’s *A Pail of Oysters*. See Jonathan Benda (2007). I thank Professor I-ping Liang for bringing this article to my attention.

\(^9\) For more details on the Taiwan Strait Crises, see Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (1994).
Taiwan but also as a means of insuring Washington’s control over [Jiang]” (97-8). This fragile alliance provides the background for Spencer’s political thriller.

The novel begins with the initiation of Contingency Plan S in response to a possible sellout of Taiwan by a high Nationalist commander named Jing. The Plan initially consists of two phases: a task force consisting of Taiwanese elites whose lives were saved by the US from the murderous hands of Chen Yi—the Nationalist governor who orchestrated the infamous 2/28 Incident in 1947—and the infiltration of an enemy (Nationalist) camp. Whereas the task force is led by an American agent called Alex, the infiltration mission falls on the shoulders of a Taiwanese-American pilot, Johnny Hsiao. Born of a Japanese-Portuguese mother from Nagasaki and a Taiwanese father, Hsiao has received his primary education in a Japanese school in northern China. While he speaks fluent Chinese, being a Taiwanese, his loyalties are mixed. When his parents were accused of being Japanese collaborators and killed in the 2/28 Incident, he fled to Japan as a stateless refugee and enlisted in the US Air Force there when the Korean War broke out. Spencer creates Hsiao as a romantic hero, endowed with James Bond’s intelligence and John Rambo’s bravery and survival skills. He single-handedly captures the villain, accomplishes the impossible mission, and saves the girl, who naturally falls under his manly spell. Thus the mixed-race Hsiao is a refreshingly unorthodox hero in a genre, Cold War espionage fiction, which was honed in a Western masculine tradition and usually features a white hero. Spencer’s choice of protagonist was all the more unusual in light of the history of US portrayals of Asian men in fiction and film as being weak and effeminate; indeed Asian men were denied any heroic or romantic roles until the late twentieth century. Hsiao’s multicultural identity and traditional heroic-masculine role may thus seem revolutionary even in a novel published as late as 1965.

Hsiao, we may say, has a postcolonial Taiwanese identity with strong Japanese and American connections and a firm belief that Taiwan should be

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10 The 2/28 Incident is remembered as a traumatic historical event that shaped Taiwanese subjectivity in the postwar years. It is often explained as an ethnic conflict between native Taiwanese and mainland Chinese immigrants who came with the Nationalist government in 1949, leading to decades of “white terror” until the abolition of Martial Law in 1987. While the KMT interprets the Incident as the result of postwar ill-governance, pro-independence activists have argued that it was in effect a nationalist uprising against the tyranny of mainland Chinese oppression which marked the birth of Taiwanese national consciousness. For a standard historiography of the 2/28 Incident in English, see A-Chin Hsiau (2000).

11 One Asian American hero of detective fiction that comes readily to mind is Charlie Chan, created by Earl Derr Biggers in 1923. But Charlie Chan is not a romantic hero in the mold of Bond or Rambo. Instead, he is often portrayed as non-threatening and asexual.
independent. Furthermore, his wife Rose—a member of the task force and a beautiful mainland Chinese woman whose heart lies in Taiwan—suggests not only the possibility of a China devoted to a free and self-governed Taiwan, but of the “romance” of the US (represented also by Hsiao) and Taiwan. The Chinese woman’s marriage to a (partly) Taiwanese man could also signify the ascension of a masculine Taiwanese national subject in the image of the traditional American hero, one who has successfully set his nation free and brought the enemies to justice. Hence Hsiao’s postcolonial identity makes Taiwanese—rather than mainland Chinese—the ally of (Western-style) freedom and democracy, and this narrative of heroic rescue affirms both Hsiao’s American identity (and thus a unique US-Taiwan relationship) and the preferred self-image of the Cold War US as “a global yet non-imperial power” (Klein 54).

Crucial to this rescue narrative is the story of betrayal disguised as an anticommmunist counter-strike. For Hsiao, the ROC government is a regime of oppressive “pigs” because it usurped the right of Taiwan to autonomy and self-rule. With its corrupt and despotic regime, Nationalist Taiwan is, like Japan, a colonial power. Still, General Jing’s plan to turn Taiwan over to Communist China, once realized, would be an act of treason against the ROC; it would also harm American interests in the Western Pacific by making Taiwan a crack in the anticommmunist defense. However, the US is in no position to stop this deal, for it was the US that entrusted the island to Jiang’s Nationalist regime and signed a defense treaty to protect it. Moreover, anticommmunist ideology has foreclosed the possibility of interference, prohibiting the US from withdrawing its support. Thus, while the US could do everything in its power to halt communist aggression, it could do nothing—at least not publicly—to stop General Jing from selling out Taiwan as long as the Nationalist regime assumes an anticommmunist stance.

US intervention hence depends on the confirmation of Free China’s defection (that is, forcing Taiwan to reintegrate with China) rather than on the Taiwanese desire for freedom and independence. Put differently, Contingency Plan S is not designed to be a liberation project for Taiwan; it is rather a compromised action.

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12 Pro-independence activists have always argued that Taiwan’s status was “uncertain” at the end of WWII. They argue that pertaining to Taiwan’s sovereignty, the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952 only specifies that “Japan renounces all rights, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores,” but it does not specify to whom Formosa was returned to, since the Republic of China did not sign on the Treaty. They believe that the US originally planned to entrust Taiwan to the United Nations, but the sudden advent of the Korean War stalled the procedure and forced the US to support Jiang’s Nationalist regime instead. Taiwan, in this sense, was sold out by the US for the anticommmunist agenda. Of course, this is not the view that the Republic of China holds.
plan for containing communism by circumventing the rhetoric of anticommunism. Its true intent is not to set Taiwan free and support its independence, but to keep Taiwan as a staunch ally and an anticommunist stronghold under US control. By anchoring the novel in a rumor of betrayal, D. J. Spencer takes the view that the Nationalist regime is not a friend but an enemy—or more accurately, an enemy disguised as a friend who would turn against the US at any moment.

The villain of the story is Jing, head of the secret police and the Youth Corps in Taiwan. Jing the character is a not-so-disguised reference to Jiang Jingguo, son of Jiang Jieshi, who became president in 1978 after the death of his father. Spencer depicts Jing as a conniving villain, one who not only oppresses innocent, freedom-loving Taiwanese but also deceives and manipulates the ROC President to achieve his goal. He establishes an extensive network of spies, places his opponents under surveillance, and orchestrates national treason for a mere thirty million dollars. Jing and his associates are, in short, a fifth column of communist infiltration. The US plan to sabotage this attempted treason ironically adopts the same strategies of camouflage and infiltration. Task Force Alex consists of US agents already active in Taiwan, and Hsiao’s first task is to camouflage himself as a PRC secret envoy to infiltrate into Jing’s camp. Much to his distaste, Hsiao has to conceal his Taiwanese subjectivity by assuming the opposite identity, that of a mandarin-speaking Chinese communist. When this covert operation fails to sabotage Jing’s scheme, the US, maintaining a “non-involvement” policy, decides to air-drop pamphlets to inform Taiwanese soldiers and civilians of Jing’s secret deal, with the hope that a mutiny in the offshore islands combined with an island-wide insurrection may turn the tide. The American covert operation at this stage hinges upon a successful revolution: an overturning or transformation of military command, political allegiance, and national identity from Chinese to Taiwanese.

Since the key to rolling back communism lies in Taiwan’s possession of power, Hsiao’s second task is to find and set free the Taiwanese Messiah, Tiger Ro; Ro can guide the revolution towards establishing a new republic—the Republic of Taiwan—which with US support will withstand the communist invasion. Ironically, those who were later involved in the provisional government had been collaborators with the Nationalist regime and were in fact members of the KMT, whose patriotism seemed questionable to Hsiao. As another revolutionary leader, Harry Ko, explains to Hsiao: “those of us who have survived have done so by bowing and scraping and smiling. We’ve had to sell our souls to live. . . . We’ve lost our integrity, our self-respect” (248). Yet Ko emphasizes that the important thing is that, despite their despicable pasts, “they still have enough guts” to join this fight and
that they “want to be free” (249). Ko’s emphasis suggests a sense of self-betrayal, a feeling of guilt with which the Taiwanese elites had already been living for some time. The insurrection would enable them to restore their honor, integrity, and self-identity. Moreover, Ko reminds Hsiao of his responsibility as a US subject: at a time when the Chinese have become the whoremasters of Taiwan: “the country of which you have become a citizen, the United States, has done everything that it could to make the Chinese here look like saints” (249). He affirms to Hsiao that these little men, though scared, did not forget their true identity; and that like him they would not run away this time, but would remain ready to fight.

The rhetoric of anticommunism is here fused with anti-Chinese sentiment, fomented through years of ill-governance. This imagined revolution would rally around the traumatic memory of the 2/28 Incident and the great Yellow Tiger Flag of the old Taiwan Republic of 1895, invoking a national history of resistance and survival. While the 2/28 incident is appropriately referenced by Spencer as a Taiwanese ethno-nationalist uprising against the KMT, the short-lived Taiwan Republic was in fact established—with the anticipation that Taiwan would be reunified with China one day—to resist the Japanese takeover following the Treaty of Shimonoseki. This choice of historical symbolism is ironically overcast by misplaced trust and a sense of defeatism, and haunted by a history of abandonment and betrayal. However, as the reader will have expected, the novel ends on a positive note: our protagonist John Hsiao proves to be the ultimate hero, the revolution has given birth to a new Republic of Taiwan, and America successfully secures a vital link in its Pacific defense. Nonetheless, this happy ending, while inaugurating a new US-Taiwan friendship, blurs the line between independence and dependence. The enduring quest for national independence, adding as it does an anticolonial spin to this mundane story of anticommunism, is unexpectedly betrayed to justify American military intervention.

Despite the nationalist specter it conjures, the novel’s imagined revolution indicates the morally ambiguous role that the US plays in deciding the destiny of Taiwan. It is not that the Taiwanese abdicated their own identity and dignity under Chinese rule; rather, it was the Sinophilic US that betrayed the Taiwanese people in the first place. In the harsh voice of Colonel Tsao, Jing’s loyal vassal, Spencer criticizes those Western Sinophiles who have long influenced America’s “China policy”:

13 On the significance of the 1895 Taiwan Republic, see Junhong Chen (2003); Zhaotang Huang (2006); and Jiahong Chen (2006), 46–49.
They “loved” China, but it was a comfortable port-city China that most of them loved. They loved a China peopled with Western-educated, English-speaking Chinese, Christian Chinese; “decent” Chinese with only one spouse; people who knew how to use a Western toilet. Such Chinese the Westerners welcomed not only as friends but as protégés. Small wonder that the Sinophiles fled with their protégés from China to Taiwan; small wonder that, like Lydia Green, they shared with the Chinese their dream of “going home again to China.” (116)

Spencer’s criticism brings us back to the dialectic of romance and betrayal and to the troubling love-hate triangle that defines the US-China-Taiwan dynamic. In the Cold War defense logic, betrayal is a real fear for all parties involved, and fear is derived from an often misplaced love.

Indeed, Sinophilia blinded the US from seeing the reality in China and Taiwan, making it misrecognize enemies for friends. Similarly, US-philia—or that persistent faith in the US as “our staunch ally”—has led both Nationalist Chinese and Taiwanese nationalists into their respective illusions of counter-strike and independence, thus making it impossible for either to nurture the sort of true and equal friendship symbolized by the Hsiao-Rose marriage. If the China of Western Sinophiles is but an illusion, isn’t this independent Taiwan that Spencer imagines equally a Cold War myth, generated by America’s distaste for Jiang’s regime, its paranoia about Communist China, and its imperial faith in the legitimacy of foreign intervention? In Cold War realpolitik, is the will of the people enough to determine the fate of Taiwan as Spencer and Mendel believed? Or, is this “will” but another illusion projected by realpolitik to serve US interests, that is, by America’s desire to replace China with Taiwan as its favored protégé? While Ambassador Stevens claims in the novel that “preservation of the independence of the new nations on China’s periphery has, since 1949, become a cardinal goal of American policy in Asia” (265), George Kerr has concluded that Taiwan was already sold out by the US in 1945, and that what the novel’s Sinophiles believe was America’s secret assistance in the Taiwanese revolution was in fact “America’s shameless sellout of her staunch ally” (292), so-called Free China.

What The Jing Affair glaringly shows us is that, in US-China-Taiwan relations, concepts such as independence and humanity have never been cardinal principles. Rather, such values are part of what Carl Schmitt calls an “especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion” (54). The drama of betrayal and romance is, in effect, plotted by a friend-enemy distinction where the reference of
“friend” and “enemy” shifts with the demands of US anticommunist policy, and independence itself becomes a risky fiction.

**“But Taiwan is not Another Manchukuo”**

In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way.  
—Franklin D. Roosevelt

Towards the end of the novel, when the passion for revolution gives way to the scenes of political deliberation in Washington D.C., the US Secretary of State tells his press officer what to say at the press conference on the Taiwan situation:

[I]t’s your job to make it appear that we have been caught completely unaware by this development on Taiwan, and that we are moving slowly and reacting with our customary deliberation. . . . Don’t let anyone get the idea that we have been in any way instrumental in setting up the Provisional Government or that we are manipulating it in any way. Because we are not. The Dudds and Olands can scream all they like. But Taiwan is not another Manchukuo. (257)

The Manchukuo reference deserves our attention, for Manchukuo was a puppet state in what is now called China’s “North East,” created by Japan during the 1930s. Though Manchukuo claimed that it is an independent country, its “independence” was in every way dependent on the Japanese assistance. Therefore, the statement quoted above is glaringly self-contradictory, but it finely captures the myth of independence—an enactment of subjectivity based on the denial and rejection of outside forces. In the novel, Taiwan is certainly not another Manchukuo, for the Taiwanese have organized and carried out a successful revolution in order to achieve independence. However, Taiwan is clearly another Manchukuo in that its dependence on foreign support, while concealed and disavowed, is actually well known. (One interesting example is that the radio transmitter through which the new Taiwan Republic declares independence to the world was in fact smuggled in by American agents.) In this sense, the claim that

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14 Manchukuo was established in 1932 with its capital set in today’s Changchun, China. Puyi, the last emperor of the Qing dynasty came to serve as its first and only emperor. Manchukuo collapsed in 1945 and its territory was returned to China, as designated in the Cairo Declaration in 1943.
“Taiwan is not another Manchukuo” is obviously a lie; the disavowal only validates, and confirms, the truth of the original claim. Even if in a literal sense Taiwan is not another Manchukuo, its independence is no less questionable in the alternative future that Spencer envisions.

As John Hsiao’s multiple identity suggests, both America and Japan maintain a shadow presence in Taiwan, as the latter struggles to survive in contradistinction to China, its alter-ego that must be either disavowed or harnessed in marriage. The history of the Taiwan independence movement also uncannily resembles John Hsiao’s experience in that the ardent activists are law-abiding US citizens who have created and embraced a diasporic Taiwanese identity, usually also having an affinity with Japan. Japan and the US thus function as an imperial continuum in disavowal that buttressed Taiwan’s imagination of independence. An independent Taiwan is by definition neither Chinese, Japanese or American, but paradoxically it survives and thrives in their imperial shadows.

In actuality, Taiwan continues to call itself the Republic of China even after the change of power in 2000, when the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) became the ruling party for the first time. But Taiwan’s national identity and political status remain topics of heated debate. For both the pro-KMT faction and the independence activists, as an imagined community Taiwan is at present “in-dependent.” If it is independent, then there is no need to fight for or declare independence; if it is not independent, the actual government of Taiwan, whether led by the KMT or the DPP, has to be a fiction. As some scholars have said, Taiwan is de facto an independent nation that enjoys sovereign jurisdiction over its territory; however, it is de jure not a nation because it bears the “name of the Other” (China) and enjoys little international recognition. Within Taiwan, a will to be independent is shared by the people, but the geopolitical reality has not been favorable to pursuing de jure independence.

Employing Heideggerian terms, Xuanhong Wu contends that Taiwan independence is “an aporia between factuality and facticity” (“Taiwan Independence” 96): whereas factuality describes the existence of “facts” which are verifiable in documents that are public and official, facticity refers to the actual conditions of existence before they are confirmed as “facts.” For Wu, the actual condition of existence is that Taiwan is an independent country, but such facticity is not confirmed in official documents as “fact(s).” It is this aporia that defines Taiwan’s existence. Moreover, Taiwan’s independence exists in the state of eccentric “in-declaration.” Taking the term from Jacques Derrida, Wu contends that

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15 See Catherine Lin (2006).
“in-declaration” means both “not to declare independence” and “to declare non-independence.” Both possibilities contain a disavowal of the political status quo and seek to place independence sous rature, under erasure. This is one way to explain why the topic (topos) of Taiwan’s independence is a taboo, not a subject one should discuss publicly; nonetheless it is often discussed, debated, and even declared publicly, but always “in other words” and “by other names” (“Independence” 113). As Wu puts it, Taiwan independence is a “public secret”: it is not supposed to be acknowledged in public, but the very attempt to avoid it suggests its haunting presence (“In-Declaration” 125). In other words, Taiwan independence paradoxically hinges on its “in-dependence.” It proclaims, and in reality embodies, a “spectral nation” independent from, but persistently dependent on, the validation of the state-machine and the world inter-state system.

Concerned with how the nation in postcolonial states remains people’s vehicle for actualizing transcendental freedom, Pheng Cheah formulated the notion of “spectral nationality” to describe the vicissitudes of nationalism from German idealist and national-socialist philosophy to today’s postcolonial predicaments. Understanding the nation as the bearer of the people’s will to “survive” and “live on” (a Derridean play on the word survie), Cheah’s idea of spectrality attends to the “mutual haunting or constitutive interpenetration of nation and state” (346) and thus sheds light on the aporia of “in-dependence.” As Cheah notes, “The postcolonial nation lives-on, in and through a certain kind of death that also renews life. It can only maximize its well-being and come to freedom by attaching itself to the state” (391). For a troubled state like Taiwan, a case in which the state does not quite accommodate and represent the will of the people, the nation, as imagined by the Taiwan independence movement abroad, is always “waiting to be returned to itself. But meanwhile, it lives on uncannily (unheimlich), from outside its own home” (347). Regardless of existing geopolitical constraints that the state faces, the spectral nation—that is, our “independent” Taiwan—refuses to go away and always returns from the future. The abnormality of such an “in-dependence” powerfully returns us to the claim made by the Secretary of State in The Jing Affair: an independent Taiwan seems to always appear and survive in its negation, in its dependence on global geopolitics, in its fictionality (and perhaps even facticity?) rather than factuality.
Conclusion: The Abnormal State?

In August 2007, in response to the “Anti-Secession” law which China designed to restrain Taiwan from seeking *de jure* independence, the DPP issued a resolution on “normal states” (zhengchang guojia) and initiated a campaign to “normalize” Taiwan. The resolution identifies “abnormality” with respect to international relations, national identification, party competition, social justice, and the constitution. The DPP claims that in order to address and correct these abnormalities, it is important that, based on a shared identity and destiny, Taiwan should emphasize mother-tongue education, strengthen Taiwanese identity, push for transitional justice, and most importantly “rename” itself Taiwan and issue a new constitution. In short, Taiwan is not a normal state precisely because it is constricted by a false identity, inadequate governance, and the absence of an island-wide consensus on national identity.

Crucially, the aim stated in this document is not to declare as factuality an independent Republic of Taiwan, for such an act, contrary to the view of D. J. Spencer, would run the risk of causing an unaffordable war and losing international support. Instead, the document proposes to “normalize” the state by restoring its proper name, as if properly naming itself would effectively change the political status quo and gain for Taiwan immediate international recognition. Apparently, this was another “in-declaration” of independence, another struggle within the aporia of/between factuality and facticity. What is different here is that independence has ceased to be a future event, a utopian moment that would create a new republic, and become an exiled and unsettled ghost demanding a proper name, a name it cannot possess. In this sense, Taiwan can only be an abnormal state or rather a spectral nation, for its survival depends on the illegitimacy of the current form of government (the Republic of China) and the inaugural moment of independence that is forbidden to ever arrive.

Nothing explains this abnormality better than the recent US Court of Appeals case of *Roger C. S. Lin et al. vs. the USA*. Born in Taiwan, Lin is the Chair of the Taiwan Civil Alliance, an activist group supporting Taiwan’s independence in the US. On November 3, 2008, Lin and his co-plaintiffs filed a petition to the US District Court for the District of Columbia, asking for a juridical resolution on Taiwan’s international status. The lawsuit is based on the assertion that under the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952, the US was the “principle occupying power”

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16 The Resolution was proposed in early August and passed on 30 September 2007 at the Democratic Progressive Party’s the 12th National Convention.
of Taiwan, and the ROC government that has ruled Taiwan since 1949 is a state in exile because it exercised only delegated authority for military occupation, under the supreme authority of the United States. As a result, Taiwan should be recognized as "an insular area of the United States," and native Taiwanese should be correctly classified as "US national non-citizens" who are "entitled to the life, liberty, property, and due process of law of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the [US] Constitution."

Though this case drew some attention, especially when it was requested that the US Court issue a subpoena to former ROC president Chen Shuibian to testify in the US, it has achieved little in advancing the cause of Taiwan independence except to make explicit that Taiwan's future depends largely on US executive decisions. As the District Court of Columbia Circuit ruled on February 5, 2009, "Addressing Appellants' claims would require identification of Taiwan's sovereign. The Executive Branch has deliberately remained silent on this issue and we cannot intrude on its decision. Therefore, as the district court correctly concluded, consideration of Appellants' claims is barred by the political question doctrine."17

Taiwan's abnormality is conditioned by US decisions to alternately exercise strategic support and deliberate negligence.

Forty-five years have quickly passed and much has changed since the publication of Spencer's novel, but Taiwan's political future remains uncertain. The Cold War is generally thought to have ended no later than 1989, and persisting potential tensions in the Taiwan Strait are daily smoothed over by rapid economic and cultural exchanges, but hopes of achieving de jure independence for the island nation remain untenable. Our reading of The Jing Affair allows us to revisit, then, the ontological aporia of Taiwan independence, and as such it may afford a different perspective on actual historical conditions that became overdetermined by un/imaginable risks. The fear not just of the spread of communism but of possible nuclear war shaped the contours of Cold War geopolitics, and the imagined risks contributed to the making of political decisions. That is to say, national policy and political action cannot proceed without taking into account historical factors both

17 For information regarding Roger C. S. Lin et al. vs. USA, see Taiwan Civil Government website: <http://www.taiwanus.net/roger/US_laws.htm>, accessed on 6 February 2010. This website is also conducting an interesting poll that asks: if given a public referendum, would Taiwanese choose to subject Taiwan to the status of US territory, like Guam and Puerto Rico, or to return Taiwan to Japanese rule. The choices suggested here are most exemplary of my discussion of Taiwan "in-dependence." The "political question doctrine" is a US judicial principle by which the federal court can refuse to decide on issues that properly belong to the decision-making authority of the elected officials.
An explicit imperialist agenda lies behind this novel’s sympathetic and even utopian picture of Cold War Taiwan. While optimistically envisioning a “Free Taiwan” that is free from Chinese oppression, *The Jing Affair* does not hesitate to expose the irony and paradox of such liberation. Nor is it embarrassed to admit the American presence in it. Instead, in the political climate of the mid-1960s, Spencer’s optimism and honesty revealed the hypocrisy of US Cold War ideology and prophesized the danger of Taiwan’s in-dependence. The imaginative quality of this fiction has sharp political edges. However, the novel itself also bears the signature of the mid-1960s in terms of both content and style. It is, after all, a political thriller which, in spite of its romantic touches, is meant not just to advocate the cause of Taiwan independence but also to remind America of its tasks and responsibilities in the Western Pacific. Spencer wants to suggest possible scenarios for real-life US political and military action in the region, and not only with regard to Taiwan. It is in this sense that the concept of risky fiction is most helpful, because the novel is a risky proposition based upon an imagination of risk, a fiction that is waiting to be filled with real-life actors.

Spencer writes in his author’s note:

[This novel] is a fictional tale in that the roles of the fictional characters have not yet been filled from life. But there is little doubt that somewhere on Taiwan today there lurks a General Jing waiting his cue to come on stage. . . . Only a Johnny Hsiao would be hard to find. I only hope that someone finds him though, in time to confront Jing as he waddles out upon the boards. If not, America may well have lost Taiwan, that “vital link in our Pacific defenses.” (viii)

Echoing the familiar rhetoric of the “loss of China,” Spencer’s imperialist interpellation shows us how literature bears the imprint of reality and also urges us to reconsider the postcolonial model of national independence, which has to date failed to adequately account for Taiwan’s situation. Independence is achieved when people are determined to fight and expel foreign intruders at the cost of their lives, when they decide to overthrow the yoke of oppression and be their own masters. However, the glory of postcolonial independence, as envisioned by anti-colonial theorists from Fanon to Nehru, has blinded us from seeing the actual alignment of dependencies, which ironically provides the illusion of independence.
Spencer’s romantic portrayal of this covert operation on the part of the US is a vivid account of what Chalmers Johnson appropriately calls “stealth imperialism,” and his sympathetic rendition of a successful Taiwanese revolution presents an example of a “spectral nationality” that endeavors to harness the state.\(^\text{18}\) Cheah says that “the state is an uncontrollable specter that the national organism must welcome within itself, and direct, at once for itself and against itself, because the state can also possess the nation-people and bend it towards global capitalist interests” (391). In other words, the state-machine is at once in subjection and in excess to the nation; and the nation as the embodiment of a people’s will in its attempt to harness the state cannot ignore the actual praxis of the state-machine, which is subjected to the constraints of the global geopolitics and economy.\(^\text{19}\)

In the case of Taiwan, while the current state may not yet bear the proper name of its people, it is nevertheless the only vehicle by which the nation survives and lives on (survivre). Its spectrality stands witness to the transnational trajectory of the Taiwan independence movement in and through history, and to the lasting influence of imperialist disavowal in the present. For Taiwan, whose struggle for national independence remains overdetermined by global geopolitics, the Cold War is not quite yet a bygone past, but remains as an ideological risk that colonizes our present. *The Jing Affair* gives us risky access to the hard core of America’s Cold War literary imagination, to a place both imaginary and real where the future of Taiwan is at stake.

**Works Cited**


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\(^{19}\) One obvious example is the decline of the Taiwan independence movement in the face of a rising China. While China’s military threat to Taiwan in the late 1990s fed right into a growing Taiwanese nationalism, its booming economy in the last two decades has made China a global market that Taiwan cannot afford to ignore. Under this circumstance, the question becomes much less about when and how Taiwan can achieve *de jure* independence than about how and for how long Taiwan can maintain *de facto* independence.


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