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Framing Russia in Vietnam: A Comparative Analysis of National Day Media Coverage

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Abstract. This article examines Russia's image in *Quan doi nhan dan* and *Dan tri* during the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam celebrations reveals a multi-layered media landscape, reflecting both the characteristics of a state-oriented media system and the evolution of modern public journalism. *Quan doi nhan dan* positioned Russia within a security-defense and friendship-diplomacy frame, emphasizing a legacy of strategic cooperation, military discipline, and symbolic strength. Its formal, standardized language reflected its role as an instrument of political communication and foreign policy. In contrast, *Dan tri* employed a human-interest and emotional frame, constructing an image of Russia as an approachable and friendly nation, thereby fostering public sympathy and cultural connection. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the portrayal of a strategic partner is not monolithic but is diversified according to the target audience and institutional logic of each media outlet. This complementary framing strategy serves to reinforce positive perceptions of Russia at both the official and public levels in Vietnam. The main limitation of this study is its limited sample size; future research could benefit from a larger corpus and a more longitudinal design to trace the evolution of media images. Despite this, the study offers a valuable snapshot into the mechanisms of international image-building within a non-Western media context, highlighting the need for further nuanced analysis of media framing in Global South countries.

Keywords: Russia's image, Russian Federation, national image, vietnamese press, vietnamese media, framing analysis

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Фрейминг России во Вьетнаме: сравнительный анализ освещения Национального дня в СМИ

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Аннотация. Рассматривается медийное конструирование образа России во вьетнамской прессе во время празднования 80-летия Национального дня Социалистической Республики Вьетнам, крупного политического и общественного события 2025 г. Основное внимание уделяется освещению участия иностранных гостей, в том числе российской делегации, в официальных церемониях. Используя теорию фрейминга и дискурс-анализ, изучено 26 статей двух газет новостных агентств: газеты *Quan doi nhan dan* («Народная армия») и интернет-газеты *Dan tri*. Результаты показывают, что *Quan doi nhan dan* преимущественно представляла Россию в контексте безопасности и обороны, дружбы и дипломатии, используя официальный тон, подчеркивающий солидарность и историю традиционного сотрудничества. В отличие от этого, *Dan tri* изображала Россию через призму человеческих интересов, эмоций и социокультурных факторов, уделяя особое внимание дружескому и открытому взаимодействию между российской делегацией и вьетнамской общественностью. В статье делается вывод о том, что вьетнамские СМИ играют важную роль в укреплении дружбы между Вьетнамом и Россией, формируя позитивное общественное восприятие ключевого партнера. Новизна данного исследования заключается в сравнительном подходе к фрейм-анализу в недостаточно изученном вьетнамском медиапространстве, раскрывающем как различная медийная повестка формирует образ стратегического партнера.

Ключевые слова: имидж России, Российская Федерация, национальный имидж, вьетнамская пресса, вьетнамские СМИ, фрейм-анализ

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Introduction

The 80th National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam celebrations, including a military and civilian parade, constituted a major political-social event in Vietnam. The ceremony took place at Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi on the morning of September 2, 2025. Notably, the event featured the participation of delegations from traditional friendly nations, such as China, the Russian Federation, Laos, and Cambodia. This participation was highlighted by the media as a demonstration of solidarity and international friendship.

Vietnam's invitation to these nations was framed by the state press as an act demonstrating “solidarity, friendship, and the bond between the people and army of Vietnam and its traditional friends”, while also affirming the nation's foreign policy of “independence, self-reliance, multilateralism, and diversification”. Throughout the event, the Vietnamese media widely covered and distributed photos of the Russian delegation. Official press outlets noted that their presence was met with “applause and cheers from the public”, reflecting a warm and friendly atmosphere.

The relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation is built on a deep and long-standing history. The Soviet Union was one of the first countries to establish comprehensive political ties with Vietnam, supporting its policies for the reconstruction and development of North Vietnam¹. Today, Russia is Vietnam's “first strategic partner” and one of its most important “comprehensive strategic partners”. In 2012, the two nations elevated their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership, fostering close cooperation across numerous fields, from defense to science-culture. This friendship continues to be promoted through cultural exchanges, exhibitions, and political dialogues².

In this context, the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception of foreign partners (Lee, Hong, 2012). The media's influence is so significant that information security has become integral to national security (Barabash et al., 2015). A thorough analysis of how the Vietnamese media constructed Russia's image during the National Day event is therefore of both academic and practical importance.

Academically, this topic contributes to the fields of nation branding and political cooperation, specifically through the lens of media content analysis concerning foreign partners. To date, studies on “Russia in the Vietnamese press” have largely focused on international publications or earlier periods, leaving a gap in research on the contemporary context and modern journalistic perspectives. This study helps fill that scholarly gap.

¹ Phạm, Q.M. (2007, November 14). Quan hệ Việt Nam – Liên Xô trong giai đoạn kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954–1975). [Vietnam – Soviet Union relations during the resistance war against America.] (In Vietnam.) <https://vnu.edu.vn/quan-he-viet-nam-lien-xo-trong-giai-doan-khang-chien-chong-my-1954-1975-post5233.html>

² Hoa, N. (2017, August 29). Công bố hơn 200 tài liệu, hình ảnh đặc biệt về quan hệ Nga-Việt. Công bố hơn 200 tài liệu, hình ảnh đặc biệt về quan hệ Nga – Việt. [More than 200 special documents and images about Russia – Vietnam relations were published.] (In Vietnam.) <https://cand.com.vn/Tieu-diem-van-hoa/Lan-dau-cong-bo-nhieu-tai-lieu-hinh-anh-dac-biet-ve-quan-he-Nga-Viet-i455079/>

Practically, this research not only offers policymakers and diplomats insight into media messaging but also helps readers identify differing perspectives across various types of journalism. Furthermore, the findings can support foreign communication strategies and enhance mutual understanding in the bilateral relationship between Vietnam and Russia. This paper aims to investigate and analyze how Russia’s image was portrayed by two leading Vietnamese media outlets: the online newspaper *Dan tri* and the *Quan doi nhan dan* newspaper. The key research questions are: How was Russia’s image constructed in Vietnamese media coverage of the National Day event? And, what are the significant differences in the portrayal between *Dan tri* and *Quan doi nhan dan*? The study will compare the tone, primary content, and media frames used by these two newspapers to answer these questions and clarify Russia’s image in contemporary Vietnamese public discourse.

Research on national image and the media’s role in its construction has garnered significant attention in international communications. A nation’s image is a strategic asset shaped by diplomacy, media, and culture (Anholt, 2006). Media serve as a primary vehicle for transmitting national values, effectively engaging in nation branding (Dinnie, 2008). This process is often part of conscious strategic narratives that states employ to shape the international environment (Miskimmon et al., 2013). In many contexts, especially where media aligns with public sector objectives, this is closely tied to reputation management (Wæraas, Byrkjeflot, 2012). International studies on Russia’s media image often reveal a stark polarization between Western media and that of its traditional partners, with the former emphasizing a security threat and the latter a “traditional friend” narrative³. In Vietnam, research has focused on the press as a “bridge of friendship”, but a gap remains in concrete framing analysis of contemporary events.

Materials and Methods

This study is grounded in agenda-setting theory and framing theory. Agenda-setting theory, proposed by McCombs and Shaw, posits that the media influences public priorities by determining “not what to think, but what to think about”. Their research demonstrated a strong correlation between the media’s news focus and public perception of issues, showing how the media “sets the agenda” for political campaigns (McCombs, Shaw, 1972). In the context of the 80th National Day celebrations, the extensive coverage of the Russian military contingent by newspapers like *Dan tri* and *Quan doi nhan dan* reflects an effort to elevate Russia’s prominence in the public’s consciousness. Framing involves selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of a reality to promote a particular understanding of an issue. A “frame” emerges when the media selects and highlights information to “define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies”

³ See: Fomicheva, I.D. (2010). *Sociology of the Media*. [Фомичева И.Д. Социология СМИ : учеб. пособие.] Moscow: Aspect Press Publ. (In Russ.); Prokhorov, E.P. (2005). *Introduction to the Theory of Journalism* [Прохоров Е.П. Введение в теорию журналистики : учебник.] Moscow: Aspect Press. (In Russ.)

(Entman, 1993). In international news, common frames include “security-politics”, “human-interest/emotion”, or “economic-cooperation”, depending on the outlet’s objectives. For example, in their coverage of Russia, both *Dan tri* and *Quan doi nhan dan* framed the Russian military contingent positively (disciplined, friendly, humane). This aligns with the argument that news frames reflect both foreign policy orientations and public information needs, with the press acting in the people’s interest to shape social attitudes, opinions, and awareness⁴.

This study analyzes two representative news organizations with distinct styles.

1. *Quan doi nhan dan*: The official organ of the Central Military Commission and the Ministry of National Defence of Vietnam. It represents the state’s voice on political and defense matters and typically adopts a highly directive tone, emphasizing the traditional friendship and strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation.

2. *Dan tri*: An online newspaper under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. It has a broad readership and covers events from a social, human-interest, and lifestyle perspective.

The study surveyed 26 articles (14 from *Dan tri* and 12 from *Quan doi nhan dan*) published between August 20 and September 5, 2025, a period covering the preparation, rehearsals, main event, and conclusion of the National Day event. Data was collected systematically by: 1) defining keywords (“Russia”, “Russian Federation”, “Russian military personnel”, “A80”, “parade”); 2) retrieving articles from the newspapers’ official digital archives; 3) selecting articles that directly reported on the presence, activities, and image of the Russian contingent at A80; 4) archiving the data, including titles, publication dates, and full-text content for analysis. This process adheres to principles of systematic, objective, and transparent content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013).

The primary method used is framing analysis, based on Entman’s approach (1993), to examine how the Vietnamese press “framed” Russia’s image during the National Day event. Articles were coded according to three criteria.

1. Main theme: defense/security, diplomacy/politics, culture/society, or human interest.

2. Tone: positive, neutral, or negative.

3. Frame type: security-defense, friendship-diplomacy, human-interest/emotional, and visualimagery. Discourse analysis was also employed to clarify the underlying messages and editorial direction of each news outlet (Fairclough, 2013).

Results and Discussion

Between August 20 and September 5, 2025, a total of 26 articles directly covering the Russian delegation’s participation in the National Day celebrations were published across *Dan tri* (14 articles) and *Quan doi nhan dan* (12 articles).

Quan doi nhan dan: Articles were primarily featured in the “Foreign defense relations” section. They were characterized by a formal tone, in-depth analysis, and

⁴ See: Prokhorov, E.P. (2005). *Introduction to the Theory of Journalism* [Прохоров Е.П. Введение в теорию журналистики : учебник.] Moscow: Aspect Press. (In Russ.)

political language, often accompanied by official photos from military journalists. The content emphasized discipline, military strength, traditional friendship, and the spirit of defense cooperation.

Dan tri: Articles appeared in various sections like “Life”, “Travel”, “World”, and “Current Affairs”, often in the form of short news pieces, photo galleries, and video clips. The approach was populist and accessible, focusing on human-interest details, moments of interaction, and visual storytelling. While *Quan doi nhan dan* dedicated more space to in-depth analysis, *Dan tri* leveraged human-interest and visual angles to attract its online readership. Both newspapers provided continuous coverage throughout the event’s timeline. Remarkably, none of the 26 articles carried a negative tone. All coverage portrayed Russia in a positive, friendly, disciplined, and approachable light. This serves as clear evidence of the directive nature of Vietnamese media in foreign affairs, reflecting the “political-filter” of a propaganda model (Herman, Chomsky, 1988).

Russia’s Image in Quan Doi Nhan Dan

The security-defense frame. From its first report, “Russian military contingent arrives in Hanoi for Parade”, *Quan doi nhan dan* framed Russia through a security-defense lens. The article detailed the formal reception for the 33 Russian soldiers, emphasizing they were from the “154th Preobrazhensky independent commandant’s regiment, a unit whose history is tied to the glory and honor of the Russian army”. Phrases like “special unit”, “symbol of glory”, and “honor-guard for heads of state” constructed a symbolic frame of Russia’s military strength and prestige. Another article, “Training snapshots of the Russian military contingent”, highlighted how the soldiers “quickly adapted to the 103 steps/minute marching pace of the Vietnam people’s army”, portraying it as a sign of professionalism, discipline, and military integration. This selection of symbolic details reinforces a frame of “strength, discipline, and reliability”, positioning Russia as a dependable and professional military partner (Entman, 1993).

The friendship-diplomacy frame. Beyond military aspects, *Quan doi nhan dan* dedicated significant coverage to the diplomatic depth between the two nations. In “Russian armed forces delegation pays tribute at Ho Chi Minh mausoleum”, the image of Russian soldiers “solemnly and respectfully laying a wreath” was presented with a formal tone. The choice to publish close-up photos of the ceremony with captions that “expressed the friendship, solidarity, and bond between the people and armies of Vietnam and its friends” placed Russia within a frame of “diplomatic friendship and mutual respect”. A softer side of public diplomacy was shown in “Public enthusiastically greets Russian soldiers at national achievements exhibition”. The reporter noted that “people waved and shouted ‘ura!’ to welcome the Russian soldiers”, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere. This use of a human-interest frame in diplomacy, emphasizing positive emotions to strengthen bilateral ties, allowed *Quan doi nhan dan* to shift its framing from the political to the personal, fostering a sense of friendship between the two peoples (Semetko, Valkenburg, 2000).

The human-interest and emotional frame. Later articles, such as “Russian ministry of defence delegation visits Vietnam military history museum”, expanded Russia’s image into cultural and personal exchange. The article noted that “many Russian soldiers, who had only known Vietnam through media or stories from their elders, were now able to directly experience the friendliness and hospitality of the Vietnamese people”. This narrative moves beyond purely political-military discourse toward human emotion, emphasizing friendship and understanding. Concluding its coverage, *Quan doi nhan dan* strategically used an image of a Russian Deputy Minister of Defence taking a photo with the contingent’s commander, symbolizing shared pride in their defense cooperation and cultural exchange. In summary, the 12 articles in *Quan doi nhan dan* focused on three primary frames: security-defense, friendship-diplomacy, and human-interest. The tone was consistently formal, positive, and unambiguous, deliberately framing Russia as a “loyal friend and partner to Vietnam” and fulfilling the foreign propaganda function of a defense publication.

Russia’s Image in Dan Tri

The security-defense frame. Dan tri’s articles on the Russian contingent also covered the military and ceremonial aspects of the 80th National Day celebrations, but with a lighter, more descriptive tone than a typical defense publication. In “Russian military contingent arrives in Vietnam for 80th National Day Parade”, the newspaper provided vivid details, describing the soldiers “in their deep red uniforms, stepping off the plane to a warm welcome”. Words like “warm”, “impressive”, and “solemn” set a positive and visually oriented tone. Articles covering the rehearsals and the main parade depicted the Russian soldiers “marching in unison with crisp, decisive movements” alongside Vietnamese units. Close-up photos of Russian soldiers, juxtaposed with their Vietnamese counterparts, created a powerful visual-imagery frame where Russia’s symbolism was conveyed through uniforms, expressions, and flags. This approach shows that *Dan tri* targeted a general audience, emphasizing the solemnity and visual appeal of the Russian contingent.

The friendship-diplomacy frame. Several articles shifted their focus to diplomatic friendship. In “Russian soldiers and international friends pay respects at Ho Chi Minh mausoleum”, *Dan tri* described the scene: “The steps of the Russian soldiers echoed as they entered the Mausoleum while Vietnam’s national anthem played solemnly”. The article quoted a Russian officer who was “deeply moved to participate in this great event for Vietnam”. Here, positive and emotional language was used to frame Russia within a friendship-diplomacy context, highlighting respect and connection rather than just military might. Another article documented the contingent’s visit to a national exhibition, noting that “the Russian soldiers listened attentively, took pictures, and expressed their admiration for Vietnam’s development achievements”. Words like “admiration”, “impressed”, and “friendly” reinforced the image of Russia as an appreciative and respectful friend. This is a form of “framing-by-empathy”, which uses positive emotional cues to foster a harmonious understanding between nations (Entman, 1993).

The socio-cultural and human-interest frame. *Dan tri* placed a special emphasis on human-interest stories and personal emotions. The article “Letter from a Russian officer thanking Vietnam aAfter the Parade” published a letter from the contingent’s commander, who wrote: “I will forever remember the smiles and friendliness of the Vietnamese people, a country that welcomed us like brothers”. The letter’s personal and heartfelt tone created emotional depth, moving from event description to personal experience and solidifying Russia’s image as a “grateful friend deeply connected to Vietnam”. Another piece, “Hanoi residents cheer as Russian contingent marches past”, captured the public’s perspective, recording the “excitement, emotion, and resounding applause” that greeted the Russians. This combination of accessible language and vivid imagery created a story that was both emotionally resonant and visually compelling, reflecting *Dan tri*’s commitment to open, peace-oriented media that not only informs but also “transmits emotion to its readers”. Through its 14 articles, *Dan tri* demonstrated a balanced media strategy, highlighting Russia across defense, diplomatic, and cultural themes. Unlike *Quan doi nhan dan*, its language was less propagandistic, focusing instead on human, emotional, and visual elements. The articles consistently used a positive and descriptive tone, conveying admiration and goodwill toward Russia. In doing so, *Dan tri* successfully projected a positive and friendly image of Russia that resonated with Vietnamese cultural values, thereby strengthening foreign relations through the lens of mass media.

This fundamental contrast in tone and strategy can be further interpreted not just through the lens of politics, but also through the differences in the professional orientations of the journalists themselves. The formal, directive tone of *Quan doi nhan dan* reflects an ethical orientation towards serving the state interest and transmitting the official position. In contrast, the emotional, human-centric approach of *Dan tri* demonstrates a playful and adaptive orientation, aimed at establishing an emotional connection with the audience and softly promoting the same strategic narratives through personal stories (Volkova, Lazutova, 2013). This difference in the communicators’ professional attitudes explains how the same political line (“friendship with Russia”) receives fundamentally different media embodiment.

The stark contrast in framing strategies between *Quan doi nhan dan* and *Dan tri* can be interpreted through the lens of contemporary theories on media image formation. The findings demonstrate that the Vietnamese media system, as a whole, employs a sophisticated, two-pronged approach to constructing Russia’s image. The formal, state-level framing in *Quan doi nhan dan* exemplifies the creation of a classic media image “by the media – for the society”, which is designed to align with official policy and strategic interests⁵. In contrast, *Dan tri*’s

⁵ Bui, T.V. (2024). Quang ba hình ảnh Việt Nam ra the gioi qua bao dien tu VietnamPlus. *Quảng bá hình ảnh Việt Nam ra thế giới qua báo điện tử VietnamPlus*. [Promoting Vietnam’s image to the world through VietnamPlus.] *Journal of Political Theory and Communication*. (In Vietnam.) <https://lyluanchinhtrivatruyenthong.vn/quang-ba-hinh-anh-viet-nam-ra-the-gioi-qua-bao-dien-tu-vietnamplus-p28655.html>

focus on personal stories and public emotions utilizes a strategy akin to personification, aiming to forge a socio-image “by the society – for the media” that feels organic and relatable (Volkova, Ashour, 2021). This complementary dynamic aligns with the characteristics of the modern Vietnamese media landscape, where traditional, directive outlets coexist and synergize with platforms practicing a more audience-oriented *social journalism* (Nguyen, 2021). Thus, the portrayal of Russia is not a monolithic narrative but a layered construct, where strategic partnership is simultaneously validated by state authority and authenticated through public emotion.

The original document included a table here comparing the two newspapers (see Table). This comparison shows that while both newspapers covered the same event, they employed different framing strategies, tones, and targeted different audiences. *Quan doi nhan dan* prioritized a “strategic frame” that emphasized power, security, and legitimacy, aligning with its political-defense orientation. In contrast, *Dan tri* expanded its coverage beyond the military sphere, focusing on cultural exchange and public reaction, thereby deploying a “human-interest frame”. By quoting personal feelings and using vivid imagery, *Dan tri* created an “emotionally-driven social narrative” rather than a “politically-directed bulletin”. This difference reflects the “personalization and de-politicization of information” in modern media, where an online outlet like *Dan tri* appeals to a younger audience interested in the human side of international relations, while *Quan doi nhan dan* maintains a formal, political standard for its core readership within the political-military system.

**Comparison of the way Russia’s image is presented in the two newspapers
Dan tri and *Quan doi nhan dan***

Criteria	<i>Quan doi nhan dan</i>	<i>Dan tri</i>
Main themes	Focus on defense – security and diplomacy – politics. Special emphasis on the role of defense cooperation, traditional friendship, and Russian military discipline	Equally distributed between defense – security, culture – society, and humanity – emotions. Focus on human stories, emotions and experiences
Language (tone)	The tone is solemn, serious, and political, with little use of emotional words and an emphasis on military terminology: “guards”, “honor forces”, “discipline”	Positive, vivid, emotional tone, close to the language of mass journalism. Use many descriptive words, images, and direct quotes: “impressive”, “friendly”, “warm”
Frame	Security – defense and friendship – foreign affairs. The image of Russia is framed as “combat friend”, “strategic ally”, “reliable partner”	Main: humanity – emotions and visual – images. Russia is framed as a “close friend”, “warmly welcomed guest”
Frequency, & Coverage	12 articles, focusing on the period of August 20 – September 5, 2025, with a tight structure, reflecting the State’s information orientation	14 articles, published from August 20 – September 5, 2025, combining news, photos, videos, interviews and on-site reports
Communication objectives	Strengthening political trust and State-level foreign relations, targeting cadres, party members, and armed forces	Spread positive emotions and images about Russia to the general public, creating social sympathy with strategic partners

Source: compiled by Van T. Nguyen, Thi T.D. Tran.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of Russia's image in *Quan doi nhan dan* and *Dan tri* during the National Day celebrations reveals a multi-layered media landscape, reflecting the distinct characteristics of Vietnam's state-oriented media system and its evolving public journalism. The study confirms that the media framing of a strategic partner is not monolithic but is strategically diversified. *Quan doi nhan dan* consistently positioned Russia within a **security-defense and friendship-diplomacy frame**, emphasizing a legacy of strategic cooperation, military discipline, and symbolic strength. Its formal, standardized language reaffirmed its role as an instrument of political communication and official foreign policy. Conversely, *Dan tri* deployed **human-interest, emotional, and visual-imagery frames**, constructing an image of Russia as an approachable, friendly nation, warmly received by the Vietnamese public. This approach aligns with the trend toward the "publicization" of information in modern journalism, where media not only reports events but also disseminates emotion and forges cultural connections.

These two distinct framing approaches function in a complementary manner. They create a balance between top-down, directive messaging and bottom-up, popular appeal, effectively solidifying Russia's image as a reliable partner at both the institutional and public levels. This dual strategy simultaneously fosters understanding and goodwill among the Vietnamese populace, demonstrating a sophisticated media ecosystem that serves both state and public diplomacy objectives.

Academically, this research expands the application of framing theory by demonstrating its utility in the under-explored Vietnamese media context. It shows that media frames are not merely a reflection of foreign policy but are also shaped by the specific audience logics and institutional mandates of different press outlets. Practically, the findings suggest that for Vietnam and similar nations, the effectiveness of international communication can be enhanced by maintaining this balance – upholding official messaging while strategically incorporating human-interest and visual elements to engage a globalized public.

Limitations and Future Research. The primary limitation of this study is its sample size, confined to 26 articles from two outlets. Future research would benefit from a larger and more diverse corpus, including social media data, and a longitudinal design to trace the evolution of Russia's image beyond a single event. Investigating public reception of these media frames through audience surveys could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the media's influence on public perception.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a valuable snapshot into the mechanisms of international image-building within a non-Western context. The portrayal of Russia in the Vietnamese press was, therefore, not merely a story of defense or ceremony, but a nuanced symbol of friendship and an enduring strategic partnership – a narrative of significant value in contemporary Vietnam-Russia relations.

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