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## Battle for the Covid-19 Global Narratives: The Tanzanian Online Discourse on Millard Ayo's Instagram

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### ABSTRACT

Amidst COVID19, Beijing was in a diplomatic tension with its 'all weather friend' Africa for allegedly targeting Africans in efforts to combat imported cases. As it is in the battle for covid-19 global narrative, U.S. and China faced off. The U.S. took a "condemning China approach", while China applied "blaming the U.S. of sowing discord on China-Africa friendship". This study purposely and comparatively picks the two narratives with 1253 pro U.S. and 683 pro China total comments as posted on a Tanzanian blogger Millard Ayo's instagram page of 7.2 million followers. It further randomly selected 514 (41%) and 276 (40.4%) comments from the two narratives respectively. Through tracking online discourse, coding and analyzing dominant thematic issues, findings reveal that, few netizens asserted China's narrative on the incidents with a significant number supporting retaliation against China. Nonetheless, whereas the U.S. "condemnation narrative" received high approval, majority of comments also questioned its moral authority. Interestingly a considerable number of comments branded both U.S. and China 'imperialists' racing for Africa's natural resources and wealth. Overall, this research reveals the prevalence of flaws on Sino-Africa relationship and that the reported discriminations have further worsened ties at least for ordinary people.

### Keywords

Covid-19, global narrative, Africans, discriminations, China-U.S.

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the first cases of covid-19 were reported in Wuhan China and later spread across the world infecting millions of people and claim hundred thousands of lives, China's focus has been in constructing and pushing its own media narratives. According to Rosenberger, Beijing launched an assertive external information campaign aimed at sculpting global discussion of its handling of the virus as criticism from western countries led by the U.S. mounts. "This campaign has clear goals: to deflect the blame by western countries and to highlight other governments' missteps, portraying China as both the model and partner to first resort for other countries" Rosenberger (2020). China's external information efforts have typically focused on promoting positive narratives (as its covid-19 related assistance) and suppressing criticism. The recent published paper by Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) realizes China's global battle for covid-19 narrative. It suggests

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to Chinese government the following basic focus. First; raise the awareness of public opinion and immediate response to negative information, second; to establish a coordination mechanism of external communication on major events, third; to play full role of public opinion supervision, to increase trust and dispel doubts; forth; promote the diversified construction of foreign communication subjects, fifth; improve creativity in external communication techniques, improve the level of empathetic communication and establish an objective, fair and credible media image, lastly; strengthen the training of foreign communication talents for utilization.

However amidst pushing of Covid-19 positive narratives and respond to international backlash, Beijing was caught in a rare diplomatic crisis with African countries after videos and images of Africans discriminations in China went viral causing uproar among Africans and their governments. This research focus on the reported discriminations of Africans in China where Africans were subjected to mandatory testing for covid-19 despite not having symptoms, forced quarantine regardless of travel histories, or contacts with infected people, barred from accessing public services and locations. The incidents were motivated by China's success in containing domestic transmissions of covid-19 cases and started to label all new cases as imported hence subjecting foreigners especially Africans to scrutiny and suspect them to be corona virus carriers. Videos and images of African migrants facing discrimination in southern port city of China's Guangzhou began flooding the internet. Cheng and Ohikere (2020) reveal that more posts showed Africans wandering the streets of Guangzhou with their suitcases in tow after landlords and hotels evicted them, as well as men sleeping on the sidewalk in the bitter cold. The hashtag #ChinaMustExplain stormed into social media platforms calling accountability and proper actions on the Chinese government. According to Burke et al (2020), these discriminative acts against Africans provoked rare official protests to China by several countries despite African leaders reluctant to criticize China, which has loaned governments massive sums, provided medical assistances to tackle the pandemic but also the two sides have long history of friendship and solidarity. "Many African leaders were shocked by the vehemence of the online reaction in Africa to the incidents" said Cobus Van Staden quoted in the Guardian Report<sup>i</sup>. While the matter was brought to the formal communications<sup>ii</sup> between China and Africa, later the narrative of the incidents took a competitive tone between China and U.S. The U.S consulate general in Guangzhou issued health alert<sup>iii</sup> to African Americans in the city, advising them of existing discrimination acts. In U.S. the Department of States called on China to stop discriminating Africans and condemned the incidents. On the other hand while China admitted on the existence of the matter and acted upon, it however blamed western media and the U.S. for stirring accusations to damage the China-Africa relationship. Chinese state media and Foreign Affairs Ministry repeatedly blamed the U.S and also refuted the allegations.

The two narratives of game blaming between the two sides have been common throughout the Covid19 pandemic. From blaming each other of early mishandling of the pandemic, to accusations on the origin of patient zero and growing information warfare on winning the narrative of the whole crisis. Therefore, the two world powers also faced off in the middle of these discrimination acts. As part of its communication strategy Beijing rushed to alter the narrative of the events. It took the approach of "blaming the U.S." of "sowing discord on China-Africa friendship" while the U.S. took a "condemnation approach" of the incidences. As stipulated by Mazzar et al (2018) China and U.S. are strategic competitors, the competitions grounded in their identity. With the identity differences between U.S. and China, whereby the former is perceived as a revisionist power, seeking to alter the distribution of goods in international politics, increase its relative power, status, and voice in the system set by western liberal values, the two countries have always collided not only throughout COVID-19 but also within the African continent. Their competitions as revealed previously are also vivid in the media industry where information warfare has been top in their agenda.

Indeed, scholars have long argued on the media narrative and why it matters for organization or states to control it. There is wide agreement that it is imperative to controlling how to tell a story of particular event but also persuade the audience to agreeing with a particular narrative. That means whoever controls the narrative that gets wider public acceptance, has also the powers to influence how the public think and act. Consequently, pushing ones narrative of events means stretching muscles in winning particular agenda. As Fulton (2005a) argues, in a world dominated by

print and electronic media, our sense of reality is increasingly structured by narrative.....as long as human being have had the power of speech, they have been speaking in narratives, goes the theory (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2002, p. 127, as cited in Fulton, 2005a). Yet there is nothing natural or universal about narrative, which is a form of presentation. As such, it is historically and culturally positioned to turn information and events into structures that are already meaningful to their audiences. Since the media are now the major controllers of narrative production and consumption in the western world, the stories that seem the most 'natural' are the one to which the media have accustomed us (Dunn, 2005). Therefore news, however, is not unmediated reality (although it is about the real), but is constructed through processes of editorial selection as well as through its visual and audio elements. This does not mean that it is invention, bias or falsehood; rather, that is particular reality, affected by cultural, historical and economic factors in the process and ideology is inevitably manufactured and promulgated. Ideology is used here in the sense of culturally specific beliefs about the world that are seen as unremarkable and are taken for granted (Fulton, 2005b). As revealed previously, controlling narrative, means controlling certain agenda hence gaining influence to the public. And this according to Larreguy and Marshall (2019) has three classifications. The first tradition is rooted in the communications literature, rests on the idea that media outlets can control the political agenda and persuade people to change their beliefs and preferences. By controlling, the media outlets can frame and filter news to determine which issues and information define political debate. The second tradition is Zaller's (1992) receive-accept-sample (RAS) model. In its first step, common people (audience) can be exposed to a message and may process that message. They next decide whether to accept the message, by incorporating its content in the corpus of facts and arguments that they consider acceptable, on the basis of how persuasive the message is and cues about the credibility of the message's sender. Finally, when expressing an opinion, people (audience) sample from this corpus, such that the likelihood that they express a view on an issue reflects the fraction of such facts and arguments in their corpus. Nonetheless, as Lovell (2002) argues, Media Power represents the extent to which individuals or groups influence the content of media messages relevant to their interests. As mass media are the primary image builders in contemporary society, an ability to shape the contents of media has become central of impression management and public relations.

Indeed, China and the U.S or Western powers in general have been in permanent information warfare due to their ideological and values differences. Western mainstream media dreads China's rise, seeing it as a threat to the liberal world order while in China, Chinese media portrays Western liberal democracy as not an ideology to admire or follow (Copper, 2018). Although the status of media as "an ideological apparatus for political and state control" is weakened in the process of media commercialization, Chinese media remain the mouthpiece of the CCP government and a "political propaganda machine" (Hu, 2007, p. 336). This is the reason why, in the West, China's rise has been viewed with anxiousness. Due to China's rapid economic growth, military modernization, a large number of energy demand in recent years have made many in the United States talk about a "China threat" to long standing liberalism (Al-Rodhan, 2007, pp. 41-42).

Moreover, when comes to the African question, China and Western powers to be specific the U.S have been permanently taking antagonistic welfare and framing of their engagements in two different directions. For instance, there are continuing attempts by Western media to portray China as the new colonizer, creating a perception that China is the new bully on the block, and positioning it as a country that should be watched and monitored with suspicion regarding its economic intentions. "Some resistance and criticism have emerged from some quarters of the press, which accuse China of neocolonialism, racism and exploitation in Africa" (Leslie, 2016). Headlines such as "Chinese neocolonialism in Africa," "China exploits African workers," and "China supports anti-democratic regimes," have become normative as Western perceptions of China as a threat to Western interests in Africa proliferate. For instance in one of his piece of work former New York Times correspondent to China Edward Wong argues that on the international stage, China acts as an empire whose power is mostly based on military and economic might instead of on ideas and values. Domestically, he argues, the government resorts to hard power and coercion in dealing with its own people. This is a very familiar concept in much of the western media's China coverage. The Western media has been an important factor in spreading labels that "seem" to fit the Asian country.

Hernández (2012) articulates that both Chinese and Westerners find themselves at the crossroads between two seemingly opposite positions, a powerful aversion and a solid attraction towards the other. What could best define the encounter between China and the West is indeed the difficulty to delineate. No attempts seem to suffice for a thorough understanding of unparallel histories, ideologies, ways of thinking and everyday practices, all of which merge, nevertheless, within the stream of a globalised world.

Indeed, faced with anti China contents in western medisphere and international communications many scholarships suggest that China has been focusing on counteracting the negatives and reshaping its image while pushing its own narrative. For instance, Wekesa (2013, p. 66) argues that the expansion and globalization of Chinese media is drastically going hand in hand with focusing on stories that showcase China as peace-loving; emphasis on commonality of China and other developing countries (Africa); accentuating mutual benefits and win-win principles; focus on cultural exchanges; and China as a development role model. Furthermore, Keane (2016) explains that the primary role of Chinese media is to counter Western media as there is a huge sense among powerful elites and academics that China needs to counter negative reporting from the West, often foreign journalists and also a political mission especially of spreading The Communist Party ideology and propaganda in a compulsory job of accelerating its domestic and international legitimacy..

However, while it is significantly enough to realizing how far Chinese media are challenging Western media in framing and representing China's own global initiatives, Owen (2018) argues, the rise of the new media system have complicated the political media system and previous mass media powers. New media can relay information directly to individuals without the intervention of editorial or institutional gatekeepers. Thus new media have introduced an increased level of instability and unpredictability into the political communication process. Therefore the ability to dominate Social Media political communications and influencing public discourse within networks has received high academic attention. Historically, power has rested to among those with the ability to master the art of communication and control the flow of information. The interrelationship of communication media and authority suggests that a loss of information control by those in power threatens their authority and legitimacy within social order.

Indeed, Beijing goal in competing to the global stage is not only to push but also control its narrative and positive information whenever there are geopolitical events of national interests. Rosenberger (2020) writes that Beijing has long understood that harnessing information can be a means of exercising geopolitical power. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) doctrine has emphasized the importance of "discourse power" – "Beijing's aspirations is not only to have the right to speak on the international stage but also to be listened to, to influence others' perceptions of China, and eventually to shape the discourse and norms that underpin the international order," Nadege Rolland of the National Bureau of Asian Research (as cited in Rosenberger, 2020).

Nonetheless, with Social Media altering the traditional diplomacy and international communications, Beijing has also stretched muscles in expanding global influence via social media tools. According to Mohammad (2019), the current Chinese administration considers social media 'the main battlefield for public opinion struggle' between the official discourse and those challenging it. Research by Insikt Group (2019) shows that, Chinese government and the Communist Party have been using techniques such as search engine key words filtering, government-paid social media commenters and astroturfers, social media account blocking, topic filtering, content censorship. Other methods include; state run media monopoly and censorship, mandatory real-name account registration and the use of so called "50 cent party", a group of people hired by the Chinese government to surreptitiously post large number of fabricated social media comments, as if they were the genuine opinions of ordinary Chinese people. However the question remains how particular state information or news narrative echoed by a third-party platform reflects official discourse where the government organized manipulation has no reach? The crucial factor in pushing certain narrative and make it acceptable in today's social media communications is freedom; a concept that regularly occurs in many media narratives, free choice, free competition, free market and free subject of discourse especially where governments have no direct discourse intervention.

Therefore, this research answers the question on how official narrative and response by both U.S. and China on the discriminations against Africans in China were perceived by digital citizens in

Tanzania. Given the fact that, the official responses were communicated (translated) in Kiswahili, a language commonly understood with almost all Tanzanians and East Africa netizens and also the important factor that the contents are of significance proximity, affecting histories and friendship between China and Africa, this research also gauges the influence between China and U.S on the region. It further gives analysis of key thematic issues dominated the online discourse. The underlying factor of this research is to add to the scholarship world the China-U.S competition in shaping global agenda of major events but also controlling narrative. This is because as argued by Fee (2020) China's narrative strategy throughout covid19 is to centralize public opinion management, both domestically and overseas to strengthen the general public's perception of Beijing's response to the virus. The long strategy is through the use discourse power where China employs a wide range of methods to influence foreign audiences as it amplifies pro-Chinese material online to promoting negative narratives about the United States. Unlike China, the U.S has lacked a coherent centralized strategic narrative during the crisis. However Fee explains that the United States especially Republican politicians led by Donald Trump and his Secretary of State Michael Pompeo have largely agreed to synchronize their COVID-19 rhetoric around a common narrative: "the Chinese Communist Party caused this pandemic". Equally, the United States has accused China of engaging in a coordinated influence campaign during the pandemic to advance Beijing's interests. Moreover, this research reveals the Public Relations status of the echoed historical connection and engagement between China and Africa as reflected among common people with disregards to government crafted communications and manipulations.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES**

This research uses mixed design whereby quantitative approach is used in gauging number of comments by Tanzania's digital citizens and assigns them to various thematic issues appearing on the discourse. Qualitative design is applied in analyzing those thematic issues by adding discussion on the implications surrounding them. Further the study purposely selects two antagonistic contents on similar issue of "discriminations of Africans" by the two main global powers, China and U.S. in order to comparatively measure public coding and reactions. The first content by the U.S. took a tone of "condemning racial discriminations against Africans in China"; it received more than 33, 852 likes and 1,253 comments. In the post, the blogger narrated that, despite China's promise to end discriminations against Africans as it accuse them of spreading covid-19, the U.S. condemned those discrimination acts perpetuated by government officials. The U.S. said the acts mean open hate of Africans by China. The second content is by Chinese government response. It is a video by CGTN, where Foreign Affairs spokesman Lijian Zhao is featured saying "We have understood the U.S intention; it is immoral to sow discord at this time of fighting covid-19. The U.S. should focus on fighting corona within its borders...China and Africans are partners, relatives and good friends of all the time..." The post which is in the video form received more than 126,898 views and 683 comments.

In understanding a gauged China-U.S influence on the discourse and online public reaction on the posted two contents, in the first video of pro U.S content, the research randomly sampled more than 514 (41%) key comments with high level of engagements and visibility. Similar methodological approach was applied to the second video of pro China content whereby more than 276 (40.4%) comments were randomly sampled. The study tracks online discourse and uses coding and thematic analysis in order to realize the following: First, understanding the number of comments that favored China's narrative compares the U.S. ones. Second; indentifying dominant thematic issues within the discourse so that to analyze their relationships for determining effectiveness of the echoed official responses and lastly; determining the extent of China-African relationship as reflected within the online discourse. It is also imperative to note here that the targeted social media users on the Millard Ayo's instagram account were simply randomly selected with disregards to their displayed profile descriptions. This means no specific preferences were considered and there was no direct communications with them to get personal data. The focus was solely on their posted comments to the selected two posts. However, Tanzania's social media users were preferred in this study due to the fact that, the country is considered as one of the most China's friendly, with strong historical connection. Apart from China's constructed Tanzania-Zambia (TAZARA) Railways in 1976, the

2016 survey by Afrobarometer<sup>iv</sup> shows that 40% of Tanzanians favored China compare to 31% of the United States.

### Millard Ayo Blog

The focus of this study is on Millard Ayo, a prominent blogger in East Africa. His Instagram page of more than 7 million followers has been consistently posting official communications from both U.S and China regarding covid-19 pandemic in comparison, game blaming and competition framing. The posts that are in Kiswahili language, a Tanzania's national language and widely spoken in East and Central Africa, have received massive online public discussions and draw consistent attention of netizens on all matters of U.S-China tensions with regard to Covid-19 pandemic. The table below shows some of the posted contents, their reach and level of engagements:

**Table 1.** The posted China-U.S. contents on COVID19 as posted on Millard Ayo's Instagram page  
(Source: Author)

No.	Pro U.S. Posts	Likes/Views	Comments	Pro China Posts	Likes/Views	Comments
1	China still owe the World	116, 226 (views)	314	U.S. stop Smearing Campaign against China	70,325 (views)	210
2	Trump: Corona virus originated in Wuhan lab	46, 983	1,209	China: Let's Believe Science on Corona	79,805 (views)	175
3	Pompeo: Corona originated from Wuhan Lab	126, 311 (views)	219	China: When did Corona started in the U.S?	37, 536	844
4	Investigation: Corona virus was made in a Wuhan lab	39,866	1,049	China: Corona virus isn't a lab leak	38,936	847
5	Trump: China is faking number of deaths	49, 793	1979	Additional death Toll: China "We made mistake"	34, 519	974
6	Pompeo: WHO is pro China	27, 818	565	U.S. isn't hurting WHO rather the World	31,455	645
7				China and Africans one family in fighting Covid-19	32, 317	1,262
8	Pompeo: China should tell the truth to the world	33,273	1,052	China: We are not hiding the truth about covid19	21, 682	379
9	Pompeo: China is wronging the World	26, 471	496	China: The U.S is struggling	21, 337	341

Nonetheless, the discrimination acts against Africans in China received much attention from the blogger. With videos and images circulating online, Millard Ayo via his Instagram account posted numerous global responses regarding the matter. However, for this research the focus is on the two antagonistic blog posts. The first post is by U.S. titled "America condemns Discriminations of Africans in China" (Marekani yalaani ubaguzi Waafrika China) posted on April 13, 2020 with 33, 880 likes and 1253 comments; and the second is by China titled "China: America is sowing discord in our relationship" (China: Marekani anatumchonganisha) posted on April 14, 2020 with 126, 856 views and 683 comments.

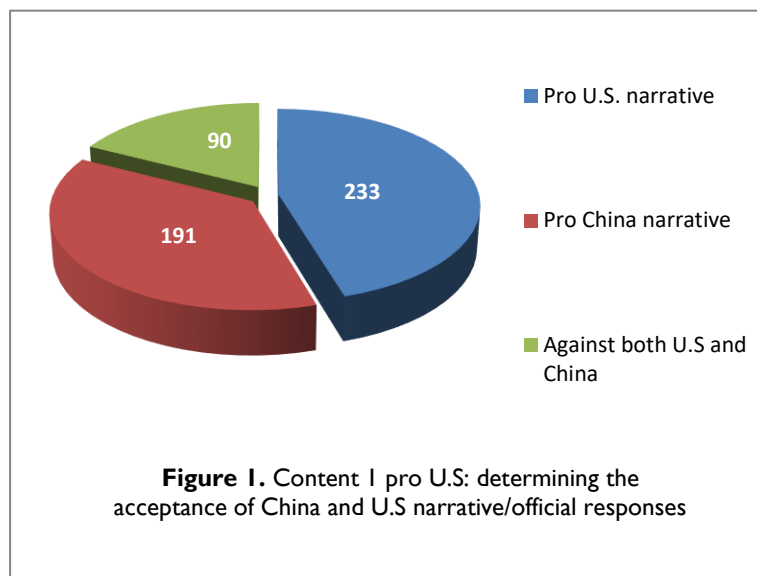
### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings are presented in the order of tracking and comparing number of comments that favored China's narrative compares to the U.S ones, followed by indentifying dominant thematic issues within the online discourse and determining the extent of China-African relationship as reflected

within the discourse. Nonetheless, the study first presents the pro U.S. narrative which is referred as 'Content I pro U.S' and pro China narrative which is labeled 'Content II pro China'.

### Content I pro U.S: Determining effectiveness of China-U.S. narratives

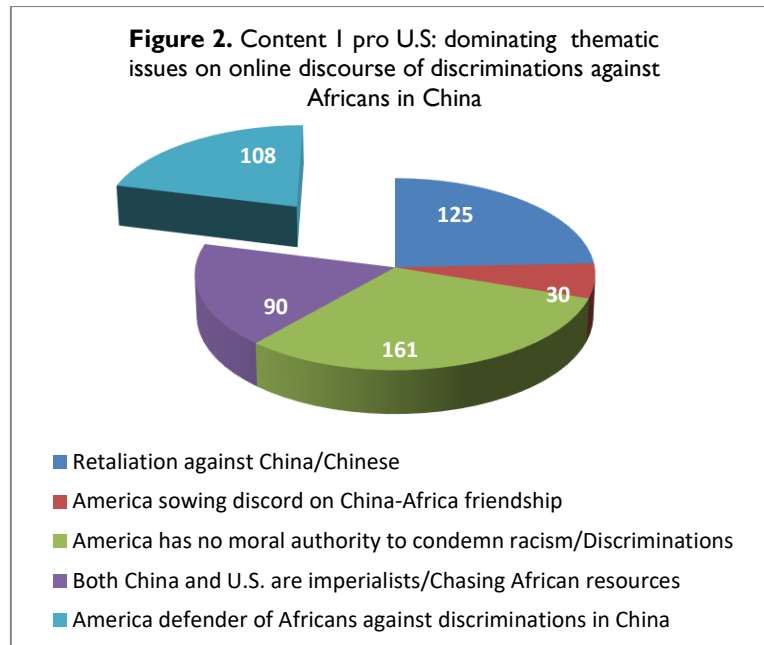
The first section of findings identifies number of comments that favored China's narrative compares to the U.S. ones. In the first pro U.S content titled "America condemns Discriminations of Africans" the research gauged the 514 comments by Tanzania netizens and findings were as follows below: 233 (45.3%) comments supported U.S. official line of condemning discriminations against Africans in China, compare to 191 (37.1%) comments that were against the U.S as they either aligning with China or criticizing the U.S. of interfering on China-Africa affairs and failing to focus on its own mishandling of the pandemic. Nonetheless, 90 (17.5%) comments were against both China and U.S.



### Content 1 pro U.S: Dominating thematic issues within the online discourse

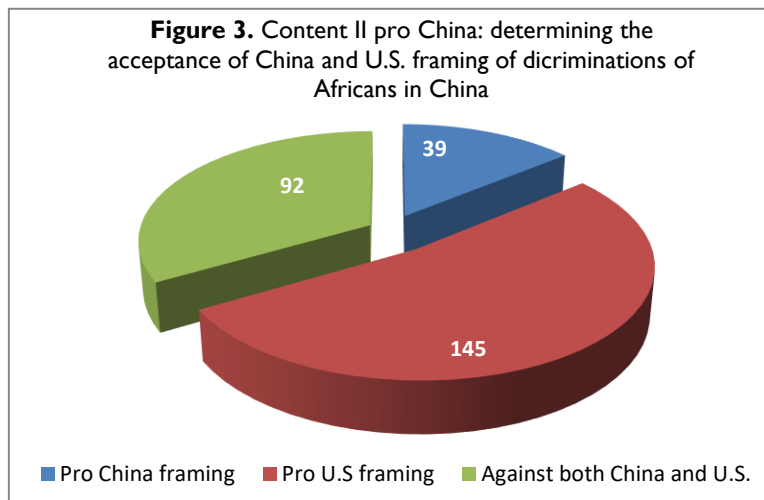
Furthermore on this pro U.S blog post, the study focused on indentifying dominant thematic issues within the discourse so that to determine effectiveness of the echoed official responses. Findings reveal that there are major five thematic issues that dominated the discourse as follows:

- i). Retaliation against China (With issues such as attack Chinese nationals, boycotting Chinese products, discriminate Chinese in Africa, ban Chinese imports, deportation of Chinese) received more than 125 (24.3%) comments
- ii). America sowing discord on China-Africa friendship (With issues such as China a true friend of Africa, China supports Africa) received 30 (5.8%) comments
- iii). America has no moral authority to condemn racism or discriminations (With issues such as racism is wide spread in the U.S., anti immigrants, America is a source of chronic diseases in Africa, America hypocrisy dominating) received 161 (31.3%) comments
- iv). Both China and U.S are imperialists, chasing Africa's resources, not true friends of Africans, received 90 (17.5%) comments
- v). America is defender of Africans against China's discriminations (Sympathized with discriminated Africans in China, China need to apologize, be accountable and take measures, America is truly in solidarity with Africans and Africa), 108 (19%) comments.



**Content II pro China: Determining effectiveness of China-U.S. narratives**

In the second pro China post with a title “China: America is sowing discord on our relationship” we analyzed the randomly selected 276 (comments from the sampling frame of 683 comments. Findings show that more than 145 (52.5%) comments opposed China’s framing the discriminations of Africans in China as U.S. issue while only 39 (14.1%) supported China’s official response. The majority who opposed China’s approach favored the U.S. with issues such as China deflecting blame, China ignoring the facts and China disregards Africans rationality on the matter dominating the discourse. However, 92 (33.3%) comments saw both China and U.S as not friends of Africa rather competitors racing to securing Africa’s natural resources. The figure below explains in details.



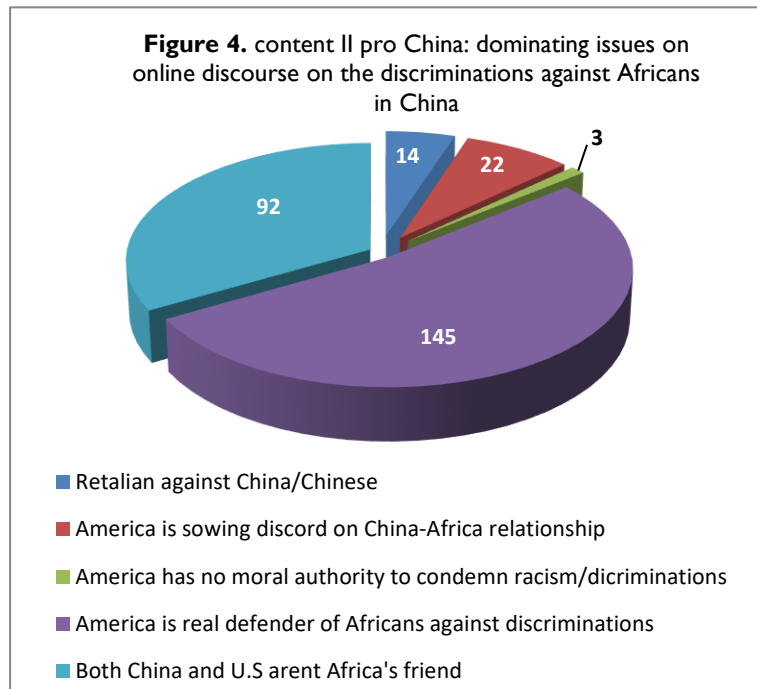
**Content II pro China: Dominating thematic issues within the online discourse**

Notwithstanding, in analyzing the 276 comments on this pro China blog post, the research also captured dominating issues within the narrative so that to determine the reception and acceptance of the official framing of the discriminations against Africans in China. As it was in the first content, the identified dominant issues were also categorized into five categories or framings as follows:

- i). Retaliation against China (With issues such as attack Chinese nationals, boycotting Chinese products, discriminate Chinese in Africa, ban Chinese imports, deportation of Chinese) received more than 14 (5.1%) comments



- ii). America sowing discord on China-Africa friendship (With issues such as China a true friend of Africa, China supports Africa) received 22 (8%) comments
- iii). America has no moral authority to condemn racism or discriminations (With issues such as racism is wide spread in the U.S., anti immigrants, America is a source of chronic diseases in Africa, America hypocrisy taking center stage) received 3 (1.08%) comments
- iv). Both China and U.S are imperialists, chasing African resources, not true friends of Africans, received 92 (33.3%) comments
- v). America is defender of Africans against China's discriminations (Sympathized with discriminated Africans in China, China need to apologize, be accountable and take measures, America is truly in solidarity with Africans and Africa), 145 (52.5%) comments.



## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This study focuses on determining the influence of the two major global powers, The United States of America and the People's Republic of China on the African continent specifically Tanzania. Since the outbreak of covid-19 in early January 2020 the two countries have dominated various media outlets including Social Networks while competing in the interests of owning and dominating global narrative regarding the pandemic. The outstanding blogger in East Africa, Millard Ayo's instagram page account of 7.2 million followers has been posting official contents from the two global powers framed on 'game blaming' between each other on various issues regarding the pandemic and gained enormous public attention and engagements. One of the events that associated with fighting covid-19 was the discrimination against Africans in China, whereby authorities and Chinese nationals used what was translated as discriminative approach in containing imported cases. The U.S. and China once again found themselves in center of these discrimination acts. While the U.S took a "condemnation" approach of the racists and discriminations, China among others took a "blaming" approach of the U.S. for sowing discord on China-Africa friendship. This study comparatively takes these two narratives (approaches) as posted on blogger Millard Ayo's instagram page, to determine the effectiveness and reception of the narratives. It also, comparatively analyzed the public discourse in order to realize key thematic issues as an approach to understand public perception of the two countries. Findings have revealed that, despite China's long strategic and historical connection with the continent especially Tanzania, the discriminations incidents in China have impacted the relationship due to the following key points. First, both the pro U.S. and pro China contents have shown significant number of call for retaliation against China at 24% and 5.1% respectively, with issues such as attack on Chinese nationals within the continent, boycotting Chinese products,

discriminate Chinese in Africa, ban Chinese imports and deportation of Chinese consistently appearing. Secondly; there is a significant tone equaling China to 'imperialist' U.S racing to exploit Africa's natural resources at 17.5% and 33.3% respectively. This undercuts the 'notion of China-Africa friendship' which is widely formally stated. Furthermore, the narrative 'blaming the U.S' China was pushing on the discriminations against Africans under Content II pro China has received low approval of only 8% of 276 comments compare to 53% supporting U.S condemnation and responsiveness. It is also similar with Content I pro U.S, where only 5.8% of the 514 comments supported China's narrative, compare to U.S's 19% of condemnations. This implies that, China's narrative of 'blaming the U.S' or deflecting blame has less impacts compare to the U.S's narrative of 'condemning China'. However, there is also a significant question of U.S's moral authority in condemning racial based discriminations. Of the 514 comments under content I pro U.S, more than 161 (31.3%) comments questioned the morality of U.S in condemning racism and other forms of discriminations. However, similar observation is less prevalent in content II pro China with only 3 (1.1%) of 276 comments questioning U.S's legitimacy. This explains the reason why majority of comments didn't buy the narrative of 'blaming the U.S'.

### Research shortfall and recommendations for future Research

Although this research have managed to gauge the online discourse in Tanzania on the discrimination against Africans in China and also go further to comparatively analyses dominant thematic issues on the perception of China-U.S. influences, there is a possibility that the unveiled public responses may not reflect the wider Tanzania public. This is because the research focused on instagram platform while there are multiple platforms with different users' characteristics. In addition, given the fact that, this research measures the influence between the two powers at a time when China is accused of discriminating Africans, findings may also be influenced by temporary moods which can otherwise not be considered permanent. However since this research finds to understand receptions and effectiveness of narratives or responses on the particular issue by both China and U.S. findings may still be rational and be generalized. Because they still represent a fraction of digital citizens who freely expressed their views and opinions regarding the posted China-U.S. narratives. However, it is also important for future researches to focus on measuring perception of China before, during and after the discriminations of Africans without including the U.S. in order to realize whether there is perceptual shift spurred by the incidents. Also, future researches may focus on determining winning of covid-19 narrative between U.S. and China by featuring any of the 'game blaming' framed contents on Covid-19 pandemic.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> China fails to stop racism against Africans over covid-19” The report published by the UK based newspaper The Guardian detailing various discriminations against Africans in China and the reaction from different parts of the world. The report was published on Monday April 27, 2020 and can be accessed here <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/27/china-fails-to-stop-racism-against-africans-over-covid-19>
- <sup>ii</sup> MFA: Assistant Minister Chen Xiaodong Meets with African Diplomatic Envoys to China [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/t1769665.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1769665.shtml). In this formal communication between China and Africa as posted on PRC foreign affairs website on April 13, 2020, it is reported that China is paying attention to the issues raised by some African diplomatic envoys regarding the situation of Africans in Guangzhou and elsewhere involved local outbreak response

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- iii Health Alert: U.S. Consulate General Guangzhou, People's Republic of China- read here <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/health-alert-u-s-consulate-general-guangzhou-people-republic-of-china/>. The first paragraph reads, "In response to an increase in COVID-19 infections, officials in the Guangzhou metropolitan area escalated scrutiny of foreign nationals. As part of this campaign, police ordered bars and restaurants not to serve clients who appear to be of African origin
  - iv Afrobarometer Round 6, new data from 36 African countries on China's growing presence in Africa wins largely positive popular views. The survey Afrobarometer Dispatch No.122 |was compiled by Mogopodi Lekorwe, Anyway Chingwele, Mina Okuru, and Romaric Samson in 2016 and can be accessed here [https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab\\_r6\\_dispatchno122\\_perceptions\\_of\\_china\\_in\\_africa1.pdf](https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r6_dispatchno122_perceptions_of_china_in_africa1.pdf)