

# **Chinese Global Media's Communicative Strategies During COVID-19: An Analysis of TV Content Aimed at African Audiences**

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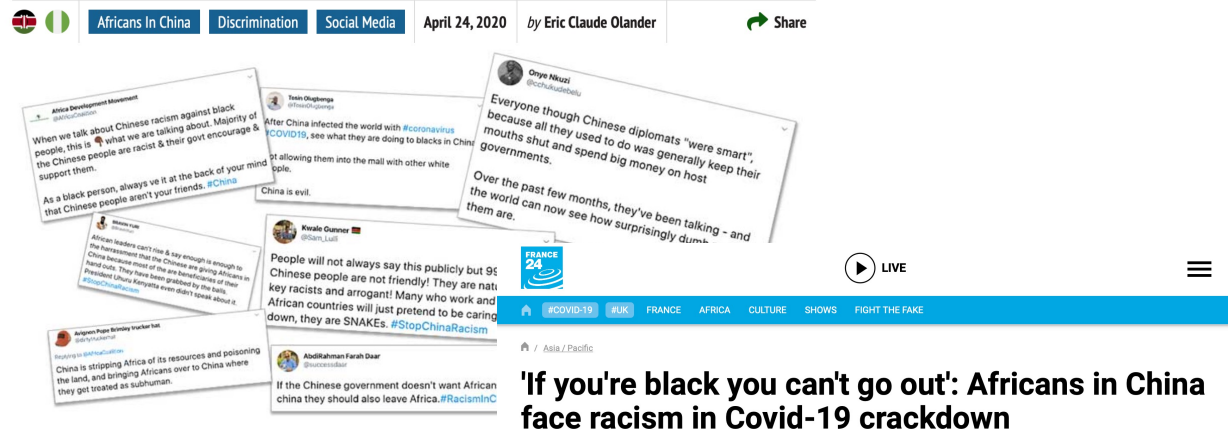
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# China, Africa and COVID-19

- The presence of Chinese media in Africa has been growing since the mid-2000s.
  - Largely driven by State-owned media (Xinhua, CGTN, China Daily) but also with new private actors (StarTimes).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic there was increased scrutiny of all things China around the world.
- In Africa, there was a mix of narratives, including those that praised the help provided by China, and those that attacked the country's response.

# “Charm offensive” or “charm defensive”?

## This Is What Twitter Data Tells Us About the Worst Week in China-Africa Relations



Last week, the world witnessed a defining moment in China-Africa economic collapse in Africa, the unified voice of Africans against t China on social media became a forceful agent in diplomatic affair engagement typically defined by closed-door agreements between distinctively public and elevated.



This file photo taken on March 2, 2018 shows people gathering on a street in the "Little Africa" district in Guangzhou, the capital of southern China's Guangdong province. © Fred Dufour / AFP

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# Research Questions

- RQ1: Were global Chinese TV stations aimed at African audiences reactive or proactive in their international broadcasting efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: How diverse, balanced and neutral was news coverage on global Chinese TV stations aimed at Africa audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ3: To what extent was there a unified communication strategy across Chinese television stations aimed at African audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?



# Sources

- CGTN and CNC are State-owned/controlled media, while StarTimes is a private enterprise.
  - Before COVID-19 StarTimes did not produce news content.
- Coded 3 full (randomly selected) weeks in Mar-May'20 ( $N = 435$ ).
  - CGTN  $N = 188$
  - CNC  $N = 133$
  - StarTimes  $N = 114$

CGTN



StarTimes



CNC



# RQ<sub>1</sub>: Reactive vs. Proactive messaging

Topic	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Covid-19 symptoms, prevention and treatments	78.2%	60.2%	79.8%
Covid-19 confirmed and death cases	36.3%	46.6%	55.8%
Asian people become the target of racism during the Covid-19 outbreak	1.1%	--	--
China received criticism on being the origin of the coronavirus	1.1%	6%	--
China supports other countries with medical aids	8.5%	18%	7.9%
Africans in Guangzhou were suffered from discrimination	2.7%	--	--
Many countries claimed to receive bad quality medical kits from China	--	--	--
New Covid-19 outbreak in China	2.7%	0.8%	--
Other topics	31.6%	30.1%	26.3%

# RQ<sub>1</sub>: Reactive vs. Proactive messaging

	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Stories about Africa	73.4%	6.0%	38.1%
Stories about Asia (but not China)	8.5%	21.8%	15.8%
Stories about Europe	21.3%	42.1%	40.4%
Stories about the US	15.4%	38.3%	17.5%
Stories about China	26.2%	40.6%	19.3%

	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Reactive	63.3%	36.7%	50%
Proactive	36.7%	63.3%	50%

## RQ<sub>2</sub>: Diversity, neutrality and balance

	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Opinionated/Clear “Agenda”	34.0%	42.1%	13.2%
Not Opinionated/Clear “Agenda”	66.0%	57.9%	86.8%
Multiple Sides to the Story	35.1%	4.8%	28.6%
Single Side to a story	64.9%	95.2%	71.4%



# RQ<sub>2</sub>: Diversity, neutrality and balance

	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Male	69.3%	78.0%	75.0%
Female	30.7%	22.0%	25.0%
Chinese	7.1%	16.9%	--
African	78.7%	5.1%	100%
Other	14.2%	78.0%	--

	CGTN	CNC	StarTimes
Gov officials	31.5%	52.5%	75.0%
Non-gov sources	13.5%	13.6%	--
Businesspeople	5.6%	11.9%	--
Experts and Analysts	0.7%	1.7%	--
Scholars	5.2%	8.5%	--
Ordinary citizens	22.1%	3.4%	--
Craftspeople	0.7%	1.7%	--
Journalists	3.7%	1.6%	25.0%
Other	16.9%	5.1%	--

# RQ<sub>3</sub>: How coordinated was the messaging?

- Far from a unified messaging strategy.
  - Different themes and topics
  - Geographic spread of news coverage was wide
  - Reporting styles and strategies differed substantially across stations.
- There are very distinct roles for each media organization.
  - CGTN Africa mostly covered African issues, in line with its usual programming.
  - CNC's coverage was institutional, global and dry, much like the Xinhua news agency to which it belongs.
  - StarTimes' coverage depended on others' content, thus limiting its ability to report "differently".

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