

Africa-China relations amid Covid-19

Media Representations, narratives, and discourses

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FOCUS:

- Media representation/ 'The voice of China in Africa'
- The Role of the 'Guangzhou incident'/ African migrants in China
- Changing discursive framings, narratives
- Post pandemic recovery

‘The voice of China in Africa’ (Jiang, LI, Rønning, Tjønneland, 2016)

- China’s media voice in Africa has sharply increased as symbolized by the opening of the CGTN (CCTV) Africa headquarters in Nairobi in 2012
- Media outlets: instrument to challenge Western narratives about China, and China-Africa relations aside from being a political and ‘soft power’ initiatives; Gabore (2020)
- 2018 report :“China’s Pursuit of a New World Media Order” by Reporters Without Borders; Africa represented one of the regions where China’s media engagement is now more present
- “Political propaganda machine” (Hu, 2007, p. 336)

Different views

China's media coverage in/of Africa



China portrayed a positive alternative image of Africa compared to Western media outlet (Gagliardone, 2013)

Li and Running (2013) supported *“that many stories about Africa in the Chinese press are not so unlike the reports that one finds in the Western media about African developments*

TIMELINE



Liminal Space

- Evokes a period of time/space 'in-between' typically during an individual's rite of passage (Turner, 1974, 1982; Van Gennep, 1960 [1909]).
- Van Gennep's theory states that this period of liminality is transitory, temporary and can be an anxious time where, for example, known norms, behaviours and identities are suspended thus giving way to uncertainty

Phase 1: The liminality of COVID-19

- **China's private and governmental medical donations to African Countries (China Health Diplomacy; China's "Mask Diplomacy")**
- **China's experience in fighting covid-19 'travel' to Africa**
- **Need for African countries to accelerate the diversification of partners/ Debt Relief (Procopio, 2020)**
- **Breakout event: Guangzhou Discrimination**

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Jack Ma and Alibaba Foundations Donate COVID-19 Medical Equipment to African Union Member States



22 MARCH 2020

Theme

Emergency Response and Preparedness

Region

Eastern Africa

John Nkengasong, Director of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), said: “This is a great honour and a great sign of solidarity that the world needs at this critical time”

As virus spreads, Africa gets supplies from China's Jack Ma

As the coronavirus quickens its spread across Africa, the continent has received a much-needed care package from Chinese billionaire Jack Ma

By **ELIAS MESERET** and **ANDREW MELDRUM** Associated Press

22 March 2020, 19:47 • 5 min read



The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), The Jack Ma Foundation, Alibaba Foundation, and Alibaba Health

Present a special webinar on

Global MediXChange for Combatting COVID-19 (GMCC) The Experience of China

Date: 28 April 2020

China-Africa Cooperation in Fighting COVID-19

中文 FRANÇAIS



A polio-free Africa can help spur economic growth and development

The expertise gained from polio eradication will continue to assist the African region in tackling COVID-19 and other health problems that have plagued the continent for so many years and ultimately move the continent toward universal health coverage. This will be the true legacy of polio eradication in Africa



Egypt set to mass produce China-developed COVID-19 vaccine

Egypt is set to become a vaccine manufacturing center for the African market, mass producing one of five COVID-19 vaccines developed in China

Current Cover Story



As women become more capable, they are also taking more responsibilities in society, as shown by the female health workers in the fight against COVID-19

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Previews

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Archived Stories

COVID-19: Nigerian doctors oppose Chinese team's visit

Spike in coronavirus cases, deaths in Italy coincided with arrival of Chinese team, says Nigerian Medical Association

06.04.2020



NIGERIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Member Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria (APBN), African Medical Association (AFMA)
Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA) and World Medical Association (WMA)

President	Dr. Francis Adedayo Faduyile	NATIONAL SECRETARIAT 8, Benghazi Street Off Addis Ababa Crescent Wuse Zone 4, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria P.O. Box 8829, Wuse Abuja Tel: 0803 5870 494, 0805 5216 939 e-mail: nationalnma@yahoo.com website: www.nationalnma.org 5 th April, 2020 Date:.....
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THE NIGERIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (NMA) VEHEMENTLY REJECTS THE INVITATION OF CHINESE DOCTORS INTO THE COUNTRY IN THE GUISE OF OFFERING ASSISTANCE

- (1) The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) received the news of the intention of the Federal Government of Nigeria to invite Chinese doctors into the country at this time of a global pandemic with great dismay and utter disappointment.
- (2) It is a thing of embarrassment to the membership of the Association and other health workers who are giving their best in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic under deplorable working conditions, and a fragile health system to be subjected to the ignominy of not being carried along in arriving at such a decision.
- (3) The lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), grossly inadequate test kits and test centres across the country, and the absolute lack of any form of insurance for the workforce are primordial issues begging for attention at this time.
- (4) We are therefore profoundly dismayed to learn that the Federal Government is instead inviting the Chinese who from available accounts are not out of the woods themselves. The spike in cases and the death toll from COVID -19 in Italy coincided with the arrival of the Chinese in the guise of offering assistance. Even the United Nations has only just recently commended the efforts of Nigeria so far.

“In addition, the claims, worldwide, that the equipment sent by China is defective, counterfeit, substandard is something that resonates with Africa where perception that Chinese-made goods and medicine are of poor quality is widespread, damaging China's reputation and undermining its attempts to present itself as a benefactor” (Olander, 2020)

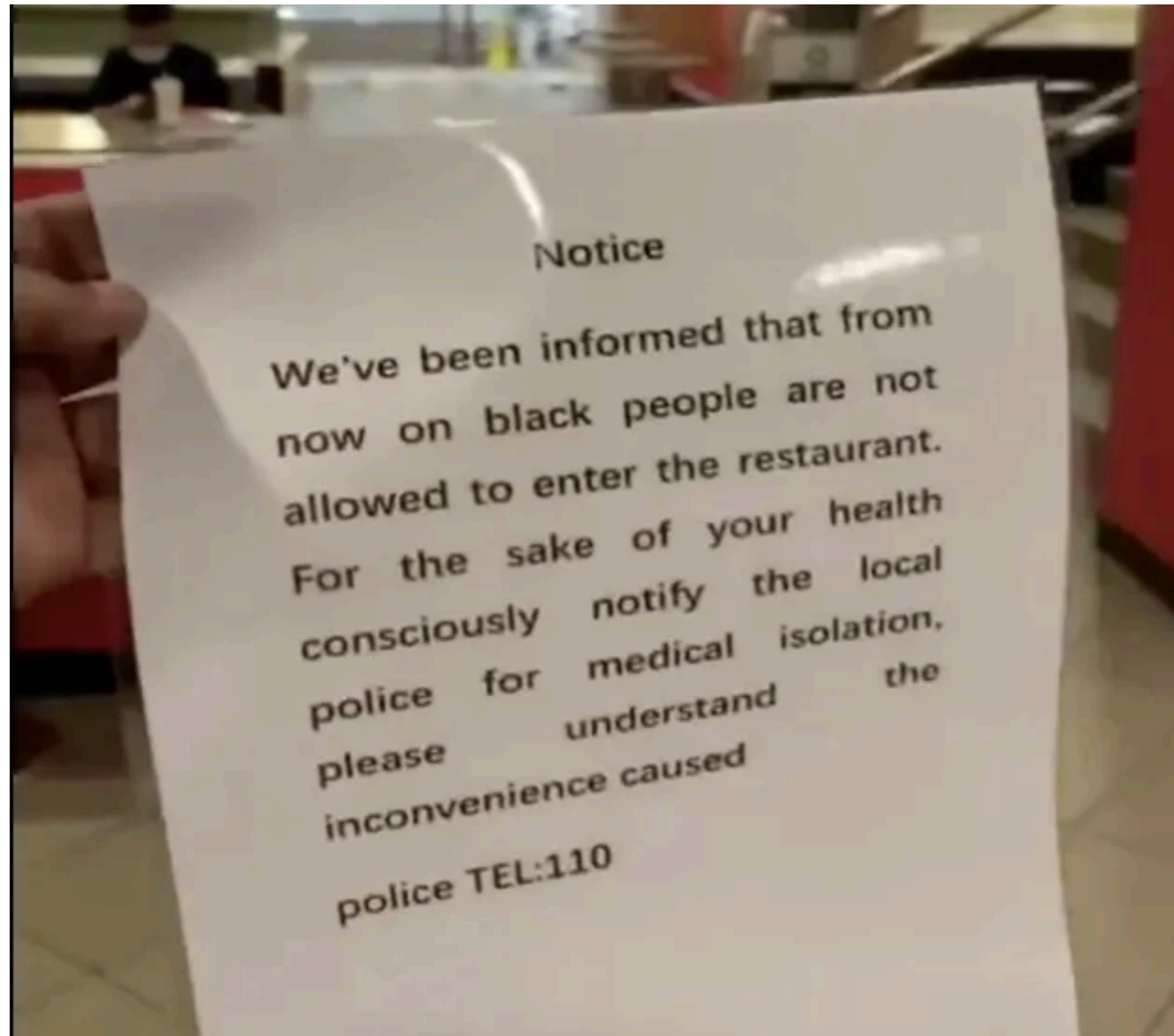
#nochinesedoctors

The Guangzhou 'incident'

- In early April: wave of evictions and forced detentions of Africans living in China, especially in the southern city of Guangzhou
- The narrative is associated with the idea that the second wave of corona pandemic in China was brought from foreigners entering China:
 - anti-foreigner sentiment
 - anti-black discrimination
 - racism
- The Chinese government framed the issue as a “wedge driving attempt” by western governments and media. China, according to the party line, does not discriminate against anyone; JUST a problem of poor communication
 - Beijing reclaim long friendship of China-Africa rooted in historical relations; *'immense value China places on its relationship with Africa and China's commitment to protecting and developing this relationship'* Chinese Ambassador to the African Union, H.E. Amb. Liu Yuxi

China McDonald's apologises for Guangzhou ban on black people

© 14 April



<https://twitter.com/i/status/1251151615219732481>

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1252577566365548545>

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1248973495603789825>

#AfricansinChina

Situating Guangzhou

- Guangzhou is one of China's largest African community; “Chocolate City” or “Little Africa,
- There are no available government statistics on the exact number of Africans in Guangzhou. According to some scholarly estimates, the number is probably around 20,000 (Li, Ma & Xue 2009; Haugen 2012; Yang 2012).
- Guangzhou City had about 86,000 foreign residents by the end of 2019

Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging (Lan, 2017):

- 2009: An undocumented African was severely injured after jumping from the second floor of a trade mall in order to evade passport check by the Chinese police. Later that day, more than one hundred Africans launched a protest outside a local police station demanding for justice (Tang and Gong, 2009).
- 2012: Open clashes broke out between African traders and the Chinese police over the death of a Nigerian man in police custody (Beech 2012; Branigan 2012).

African diplomatic row

← Tweet



My Office invited the Chinese Amb to the AU, Mr Liu Yuxi, to express our extreme concern at allegations of maltreatment of Africans in #Guangzhou+called for immediate remedial measures in line with our excellent relations. The African Grp in #Beijing is also engaging with the govt



Reactions

Open letter on the Xenophobic, Racist and Inhuman Treatment of Africans in China

-Letters to Africa Union chairs-person by civil societies, feminist and student movements:

“Your Excellency, the AU has done well by officially protesting to its Chinese counterparts. We now urge your good offices and African leaders to demand a full and independent investigation into the violations referred to above and immediate remedial action is taken. At the very least, we believe that the spirit of solidarity and partnership demands that China apologise and makes good the grave offence to the African Peoples’. We believe that China understands that we, as African people, deserve respect and equal treatment.

<https://www.acdhhs.org/2020/04/open-letter-on-the-xenophobic-racist-and-inhuman-treatment-of-africans-in-china/>

Western Media Reactions

New narrative: China-africa breaking relations



The image shows a screenshot of a news article from DW (Deutsche Welle). The header includes the DW logo and the tagline "Made for minds." Below the logo is a navigation bar with "TOP STORIES" highlighted, and other options: "MEDIA CENTER", "TV", "RADIO", and "LEARN GERMAN". A secondary navigation bar lists categories: "GERMANY", "CORONAVIRUS", "WORLD", "BUSINESS", "SCIENCE", "ENVIRONMENT", and "CULTURE". Below this, it says "TOP STORIES / BUSINESS". There is an advertisement banner that reads "More about advertising on dw.com". The main article title is "COVID-19 pandemic to transform China-Africa relations" under the "BUSINESS" category. The lead text reads: "The coronavirus outbreak has revealed cracks in the China-Africa dynamic. Gone are the days of Chinese big loans and major borrowing. Beijing's relationship with its African partners is changing, experts say."

Extract from the Diplomat:

‘Rebuilding the image of a benevolent power, a source of opportunities to all, will be difficult’

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/decoding-xi-jinpings-speech-at-the-world-health-assembly/>

Extract from POLITICO:

Coronavirus ends China’s honeymoon in Africa
Beijing has spent billions to win friends and influence politics in Africa. But the virus is threatening to upend years of careful work

<https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-ends-chinas-honeymoon-in-africa/>

Phase 2: In-between Covid-19

- To restore its image china has playing the “longstanding relations” card. Africa is central in china’s discourse. Xi declared that would support at the G-20 Africa debt relief and pledged 2 billion for fight corona pandemic in developing countries.
- World Health Organization Assembly (18th May); Xi Jinping’s Speech at the World Health Assembly
- Extraordinary China-Africa summit on solidarity against COVID-19 (June)
- China-Africa virtual summit on enhancing cooperation in fighting COVID-19 (August)

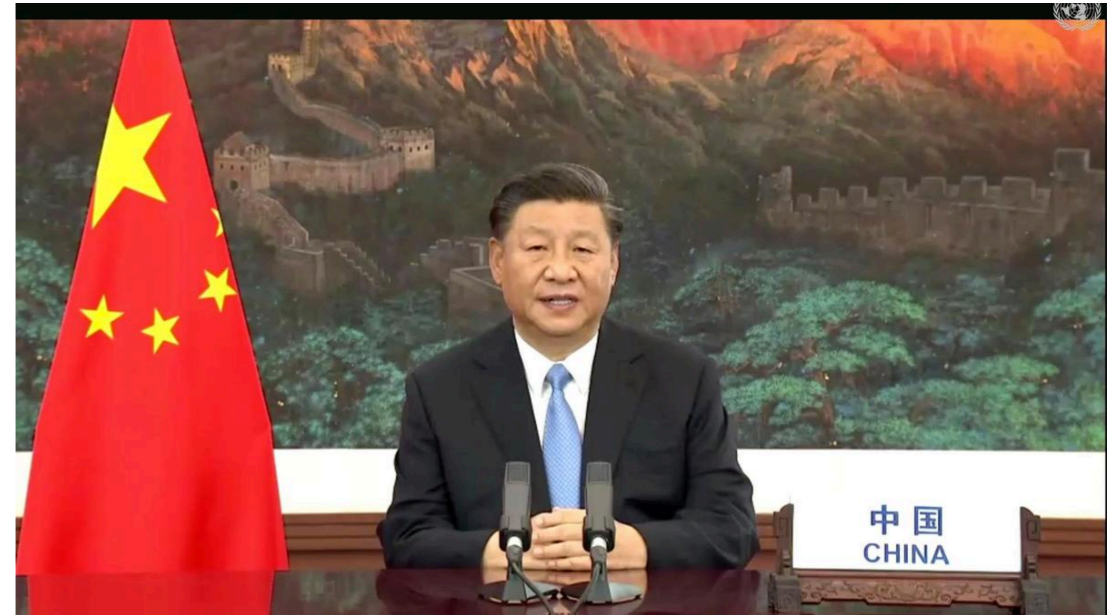
Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping At Virtual Event of Opening of the 73rd World Health Assembly

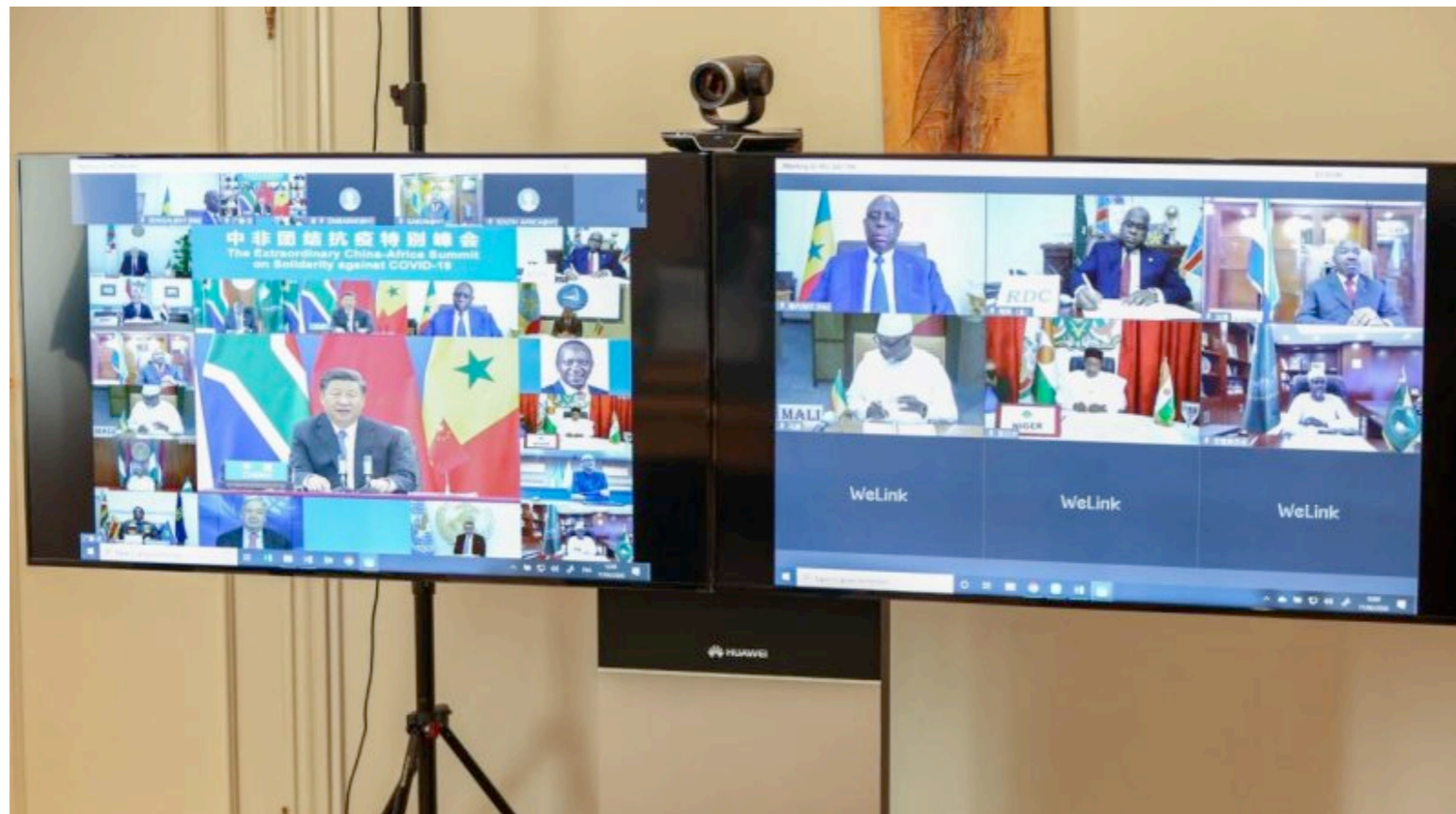
-Main target of Xi's speech is the global south and especially africa: Africa is central in china discourse.

- **Third, we must provide greater support for Africa.**

Developing countries, African countries in particular, have weaker public health systems. Helping them build capacity must be our top priority in COVID-19 response. The world needs to provide more material, technological and personnel support for African countries. China has sent a *tremendous amount* of medical supplies and assistance to over 50 African countries and the African Union. Five Chinese medical expert teams have also been sent to the African continent. In total, in *the past seven decades*, over 200 million people in Africa have received care and treatment from Chinese medical teams. At present, 46 resident Chinese medical teams are in Africa helping with COVID-19 containment efforts locally.

- China will establish a cooperation mechanism for its hospitals to pair up with 30 African hospitals and accelerate the building of the Africa CDC headquarters to help the continent ramp up its disease preparedness and control capacity.





‘At such a critical moment in the global fight against COVID-19, we are gathered together in this Extraordinary China-Africa Summit. Friends old and new are connected via video link to discuss our joint response to COVID-19 and to **renew the fraternity between China and Africa**’
Xi Jinping opening discourse at the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit On Solidarity Against COVID-19



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0DFIBZjJxo>

Phase 3: Post pandemic recovery

Virtual expo on China-Africa digital cooperation (October)

Cooperation models including: digital cooperation platforms, online promotion conferences and e-shopping powered by livestreams have served China and African enterprises and driven the export of African specialty products to China

China-Africa Think Tanks Forum from November 5 to 6 in Beijing

- Fighting corona pandemic
- How China can help Africa to resolve the debt issue



-Beijing's pledge to support African nations by expanding imports (as a part of the FOCAC 2018 initiatives) – especially beyond natural resources :

- 'We are now closely working with the China Chamber of Commerce and Export of Foodstuffs, Native Produce, and Animal Byproducts to link Chinese buyers with Tanzanian suppliers of those two products' Mbelwa Kairuki, Tanzanian ambassador to China.

-China-Tanzania agreement to start exporting soybeans to China (Agreement on Phytosanitary Requirement for the Export of Soybean from Tanzania to China)



China-Africa Media Cooperation Forum
中非媒体合作论坛

China-Africa Media Cooperation in the Digital Era
数字时代的中非媒体合作

17 November 2020 Nairobi 2020年11月17日 内罗毕

Co-host: Media Council of Kenya
Chinese Embassy in Kenya 联合主办: 中国驻肯尼亚使馆
肯尼亚媒体委员会



TO COCLUDE:

- Ability of the Chinese Government to quickly recover and maintain its image**
- The role of China's media in representing China-Africa relations and keep vivid diplomatic relations**
- For same aspects: the pandemic has proven to be an opportunity for Beijing to cement its relations with African states; the importance of African partners has been further entrenched during the pandemic**
- In the first half of 2020, the trade volume between China and Africa, saw a year-on-year decline of 19.1 percent to \$82.4 billion but is on a pick-up track. In June, China's imports from Africa went up by 16.2 percent while bilateral trade with Africa increased by 8.6 percent.**
- Important role that African regimes and governments in supporting China in international relations**
- Role of African agency (Obeng-Odoom F, 2020, 'Covid-19, Inequality, and Social Stratification in Africa', African Review of Economics and Finance, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 3-37., Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3592122>)**

New Short Doc Showcases Black Lives in China



November 12, 2020



Africans In China

Culture

Race



Mini-documentary, produced by the Beijing-based independent production company Arrow Factory, provides a rare glimpse into the lives of China's diverse Black community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mS-xW7qkvM>