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## The Impact of Covid-19 Blame Game Towards Anti-Asian Discrimination Phenomena

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to explain how the relationship between foreign policies based on the 'Blame Game' could affect the social conditions of society, especially in terms of discrimination against people of Asian descent. Accusing other Western countries of China over who should be responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic has tense and heated international political conditions. China's defensive foreign policy strategy turned out to be aggressive and even distorted information regarding the truth of the origins of the pandemic. So the result is a Blame Game that is destructive, uncooperative, and makes problems unresolved where dealing with a global pandemic requires collective action. This also leads to the increase of discrimination acts towards the Asian community. This paper uses an explanatory-qualitative method, with data collection techniques through literature study. Constructivism theory and the concept of Political Racism are used as analytical tools to explain the relationship between the research variables. As a result, political elites create identities through the blaming game on various media platforms, especially social media, which impacts the creation of xenophobic perceptions toward the Asian community.*

**Keywords:** *anti-asian discrimination, covid-19 blame game, constructivism, political racism.*

**Paper type:** *Research paper*

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## INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 has caused unstable global conditions both from a political perspective to a social aspect. China, the epicenter of the spread of the virus, has become the international spotlight because the outbreak took a toll on 1800 people and infected 75,000 people in just 40 days (Khan et al. 2020). The virus did not only transmit within China but also spread to 186 other countries within six months (Ali et al. 2020). With this situation, the international world is in a global pandemic due to the vast scale, reach, and scope of the spread of the virus itself.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made the political elites create narrations to blame certain parties/institutions accused of being responsible for the current global chaos, often called a 'blame game'. Political elites (politicians, policymakers, advisers, etc.) have substantial control and influence in shaping public perceptions, especially amidst the rapid spread of information flow through social media, which now cannot be separated from each individual's life. Moreover, politics cannot be separated from the narrative process, which aims to make an idea/value be accepted or rejected by the public. The narrative process itself has become a political tool that can be used to justify the behavior of the political elites, even though it also has a function as a tool to win public perception (Asril 2013). So, both narrations with positive and negative connotations will impact the formation of public opinion.

Through the 'blame game' practice, political elites could create a particular narration to shift responsibilities onto others, find a scapegoat, and pinpoints a target. In a broader scope, such as international relations, the political elites (politicians, policymakers, advisers, etc.) tend to play a blame game to avoid the accusation of failure by the domestic public for their incompetency in handling Covid-19. These interests can encourage political elites to create narrations such as blaming each other and even spreading conspiracy theories to the public so that they can influence many parties to discredit certain parties/countries accused of being the cause of this pandemic problem (Flinders 2020).

The stigmatization of the Covid-19 virus carried out by political elites through certain narrations affected public opinion, either directly or indirectly.

Narrations carried out by various political elites from various countries in the world, one of which is Donald Trump, who calls the Covid-19 virus the "Chinese Virus", "Kung Flu", "Wuhan Virus," and various other negative mentions that are spread through social media and news channel is a form of xenophobic and racist narrative (Benjamin 2021). The speech has connotations that seem to be scapegoating a specific institution or community—which in this case is China and the Asian community as if to be the source of this problem.

After the blaming game carried out by Donald Trump, the negative stigma received by the Asian community shows a significant increase. In March 2020, it was reported that 14% of Asian Americans in the U.S. experienced discriminatory behavior, violence, and racism (Gao and Liu 2021). In addition, 31% of Asian Americans were also targeted by racist ridicule, and 39% of these communities experienced alienation from other communities. According to the AAPI (Asian Americans-Pacific Islanders), there were 4000 reports of hate speech incidents from the start of the pandemic to March 2021, an increase of 149% compared to the 2019 total (Jeung et al. 2021). These numbers indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused (even exacerbated) the level of xenophobia of the local community towards a particular ethnic/community. It can be said that the issue of discrimination against the Asian community, or in general, is not just a domestic problem but a global problem that needs to be addressed together.

So it can be seen that Covid-19 is not just a pandemic that only makes an impact in the context of health. However, political segregation between countries and social discrimination indicates that this phenomenon is complex. This study aims to determine the impact of political elites' blame game on discrimination against the Asian community. Therefore, the crucial issue described in this article is "how the Covid-19 blame game could impact the Asian community and create discrimination towards them?".

Based on these research questions, this study will use the concept of Political Racism and Constructivism theory in analyzing the blame game during the Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship to increasing anti-Asian discrimination behavior to answer the research question. Political racism is a term from "Political

Elite" and "Racism". There is no standard definition of political racism, but we must first know the two terms to understand it. Based on this definition, racism, or what can be called a racist ideology, is a perception that classifies races into an implicit racial hierarchy (Howard 2007). The existence of racism will make a group experience oppression both morally and materially. The racial hierarchy of racism can also form a group relationship that influences public policy and political mobilization. This is in line with the argument that social domination is established and maintained throughout the social system. A clear example of this practice occurs in Caribbean society, where the white race is the 'upper class', in contrast to the black race, which is considered 'lower class', as well as mixed races, which belong to the 'middle class'. The existence of this racial hierarchy is a classification with an unclear basis in determining the fate of groups and individuals and can raise problems if used politically (Howard 2007).

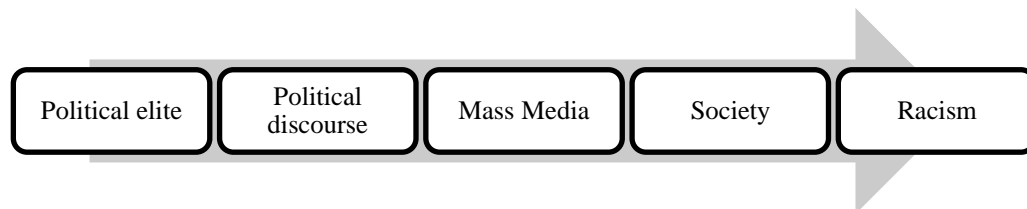
Racism can cause various problems; racial violence or discrimination is one example. Racial violence is oppressing a person or group based on a racial hierarchy or a justification based on race, both physically and verbally. Racial violence emphasizes the existence of power and strengthening authority over a group having a low and wrong position in some respects, and violence against them means 'natural defense'. The racial discrimination that occurs in society is an emphasis that racism exists at all scales, which is inherent in individuals, groups, and regulations in everyday life (Howard 2007).

Racism can emerge quickly because of the existence of the political elite. By definition, political elites are politicians and bureaucrats with a central role in society, such as policymaking. In this case, the political elite can shape policies or actions against certain immigrants or ethnicities. In dealing with a situation, politicians are the people who should explain the situation to the public. However, this can give rise to problems such as political racism if it is done by marginalizing an ethnicity or race. Actions of politicians toward the public (speeches, news, press releases, etc.) are a form of political discourse that can influence social, mental, and ideological knowledge, action, interaction, and dialogue from the community. Thus, there is a possibility that political elites produce prejudice and racism in society (Van Dijk 1997).

To clarify, the explanation regarding the formation of racism by politicians can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**

**The process of forming racism by political elites (van Dijk 1997)**



Politicians can form racism when there is a political discourse, such as topics on race, ethnicity, immigrants, refugees, and other minorities, and provide arguments or responses that they are a source of social problems and threats. This political discourse affects the media so that it spreads to society and leads to the formation of public opinion that leads to hatred (Van Dijk 1997). This research uses political racism in explaining the formation of anti-Asian discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic so that it can explain the various actors involved and explain the forms of racism that exist against Asian descendants during the pandemic. Constructivism is a theoretical approach or perspective in International Relations Studies that was popular in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War. Along with the emergence of non-state actors, the development of international issues has also become one of the factors for this approach to look at. The inability of neo-realists and neo-liberals to explain emerging international issues makes constructivists an alternative to explaining these issues. Neo-realists and neoliberals can only explore how interests can be realized but cannot explain how interest is formed (Dugis 2016).

According to Alexander Wendt, constructivism is a structural theory based on the assumption that actors are socially coupled. The basic assumptions of constructivists, namely, ideas, norms, and identities, are non-material aspects that can shape the actions of an actor in international relations. Identity is the basis of interest, which will determine action. This explains that the state's interests are formed according to the country's identity, where actors within the country form the identity through existing ideas and norms. Constructivists do not ignore the influence and role of material forces (military capability, economy, etc.) but

assume that a set of ideas in international norms also determines how actors act in the international world. State and non-state actors are considered as 'agents' and the international community as 'structures'. These two aspects cannot be separated because, basically, the actors themselves create the international world order through agreed ideas and norms (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 2001).

Constructivists present shared meanings and interpretations as essential analytical components behind actors' actions. This can be seen from the constructivist assumption that non-material structures can influence how actors think in determining what actions can and cannot be taken to achieve a goal. For example, country A considers country B an ally, so it does not matter to let it produce weapons. However, country A considers country C an enemy, so it prohibits country C from producing weapons because it is considered a threat to country A (Reus-Smit 2005). In the case of anti-Asian discrimination, constructivism can explain the actors in constructing public thought and shaping the identity of anti-Asian discrimination.

This study uses several previous studies as a reference for comparison to find research gaps and differences, such as theories, concepts, and results. Regarding the phenomena of anti-Asia discrimination that occurred, Cary Wu explains that during the pandemic, hate crimes against Asian descendants increased significantly, especially in the United States, where the highest number of cases of discrimination occurred among Asian American and Asian immigrants who were discriminated against in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic (Wu, Qian, and Wilkes 2021). Tyler T. Reny and Matt A. Barreto supported the explanation that there was a link between the Covid-19 pandemic conditions which led to stigmatization, violence, and discrimination against Asian descendants. In addition, there is evidence that anti-Asian behavior is related to xenophobia and policy preferences (Reny and Barreto, 2020). Jianhua Xu also explained the existence of stigma, discrimination, and hate crimes against the Chinese-speaking community, and even there are cases of discrimination within China itself (Xu et al. 2021). Jakovljevic also describes that Covid-19 is not just a pandemic, but it is also an infodemic because nowadays, the information about the virus itself is almost hard to divide between the truth and false information, and then the politicians with various interests use misinformation and blame games as tools to

gain influence among people, leading to an unhealthy and unhappy society (Jakovljevic et al. 2020).

The previous studies also explain how blame game practices have occurred, Binoy Kampmark shows that the blame game of natural diseases in history is a common occurrence, but the Covid-19 blame game has created a pandemic lawfare that erodes China's sovereignty with international investigations and demands for compensation by rival countries (Kampmark 2020). That also explains why the United States is making such a maneuver to China because, in research by Chereen Shurafa, the Trump administration wants to hold its reputation and power against the critics and blame the Democrats for their incompetency in handling the increasing Covid-19 cases. To maintain power and electability for the upcoming election, their strategy is to throw the blame on China as a causal problem and create conspiracy theories among the public (Shurafa, Darwish, and Zaghouani 2020). The media also have a significant role in this blame game practice, where the U.S. media outlets such as New York Times tend to have pro-Trump narrations against China, while at the same time, the state-controlled media like Xinhua from China has an opposing narration against Trump's rhetorics. The media framing of Covid-19 plays a significant role in shaping public opinions (Meydianto 2020).

Various statements blaming China for the spread of Covid-19 that were thrown out to the public shifted China's narrative and attitude. This is explained by Lye Liang Fook in his research. In the early days of the spread of Covid-19, China's narrative and attitude tended to be more cautious and defensive but became offended and aggressive after the

Covid-19 blame game on China (Fook 2020). There have been various world responses to the Covid-19 blame game phenomenon, including many world politicians and scholars who demonize China for the origin and spread of Covid-19. Nevertheless, Allan Behm explains that the blame game will not produce the results demanded by the global community and suggest that the key to solving the coronavirus problem is through active, confident, and constructive international diplomacy, as well as promoting truth and humanity (Behm 2020).

Previous research has explained how the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society in many countries, such as the emergence of xenophobic phenomena, stigmatization, and discrimination of Chinese and Asian descent. In addition, previous research has generally discussed the blame game phenomenon during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, previous research has not explained in detail the connection between the Covid-19 blame game from world politicians on the emergence of anti-Asian discrimination trends. This is important because antiAsian discrimination during the Covid19 pandemic often continues. It is necessary to have an academic study that explains the causes of this phenomenon and then becomes a consideration for solutions that can be taken.

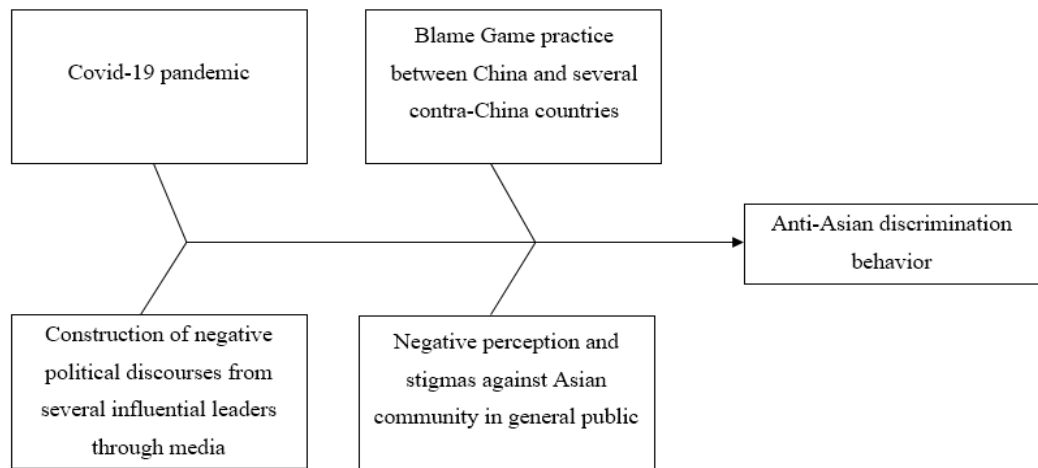
## **METHOD**

This article uses an explanative-qualitative method in explaining the relationship between variables where the X variable is "the Covid-19 blame game" while the Y variable is "anti-Asian discrimination". This article uses secondary data collection technique based on various literature studies, including collecting data from journals that discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society, books or e-books that explains used theories and concepts, various reports on the increase in racism cases in various countries, etc to enrich the findings of Covid-19 and the blame game practices, as well as its impact on social behavior. In addition, literature on Political Racism and Constructivism approach are used as an analytical tool to link the causes between the construction of discriminating political discourses by several world leaders in media and the impact on the Asian community. The analysis techniques in this research are data collection, data presentation, and conclusion.

To understand the research design in this article, the author uses a fishbone model analysis diagram to categorize various potential causes and analyze them to find out the details of an existing process.



**Figure 2.**  
**Research design in the fishbone diagram**



The Figure 2. diagram shows that an Anti-Asian discrimination phenomenon is a causality process. The combination of factors starting from the existence of Covid19, which led to the Blame Game practice by political elites from various countries, to the impact on changes in people's social behavior from the negative stigmatization created, is a series of processes that caused Anti-Asian discrimination phenomena. Therefore, it is vital to know the linkage between causal and effect factor and explain the empirical impacts that have already happened in society.

*RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS The Covid-19 Blame Game*

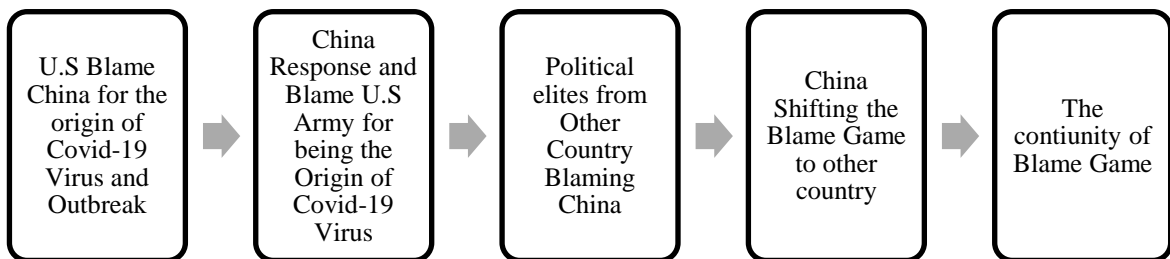
Political elites in various countries carried out blame games during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because many countries have been affected due to this pandemic, making the political elite (as one of the main actors) create narratives that blame certain parties/institutions accused of being responsible for the current global chaos. This practice of cornering parties through narrative/speech is called the 'blame game'. The cause of the blame game during the Covid-19 period is due to the unclear origin of the Covid-19 virus. When the country was first hit by this virus, China did

not recognize that it came from its territory (Winter 2020). This lack of clarity was followed by the spread of the Covid-19 virus, which is increasingly widespread in various countries and has harmed various areas of life.

Responding to the uncertainty of the source of the Covid-19 virus, political elites in various countries then issued statements that cornered them. The United States, through President Donald Trump, cornered China by saying that the Covid19 virus originated in China and possibly came from a lab leak in Wuhan, so Trump called Covid-19 the "Kung Flu", "Chinese Virus", and "Wuhan Virus" (Benjamin 2021). Donald Trump's statement then made China respond strongly, blaming the United States as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus (Davey 2020). Then it continued to other countries that also blamed China, thus provoking China to respond strongly again, until this condition happened again and again. More clearly can be seen in the following image:

**Figure 3.**

**Blame Game during the Covid-19 Pandemic**



Based on Figure 3., it can be seen that the blame game stems from the United States' statement regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which then made China respond firmly and reject the accusation. China, through the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Cui Tiankai, strongly condemned Trump's statement, then explained that what Trump was doing was very dangerous and could affect the relationship between the United States and China in the future (Winter 2020). Then, the situation was exacerbated by a statement from Zhao Lijian, a spokesman from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his tweet saying that the United States army who brought the Covid-19 virus to Wuhan, also

said that the possibility of the Covid-19 virus came from the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in the United States (Davey 2020).

The endless debate between the United States and China led to various statements by politicians in various countries blaming China for the Covid-19 virus. Among them is hate speech by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a form of Sinophobic sentiment that aims to create a public narrative to discriminate and corner China. Bolsonaro's views have received support from several political elites in Brazil, such as Brazil's Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes, who said that China was the creator of Covid-19, and also supported by Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub, who supported the theory that the Covid-19 pandemic stems from a virus lab leak in China (Quinan, Araujo, and De Albuquerque 2021).

Politicians from various European countries, namely Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, gave many statements blaming China for the Covid-19 pandemic, thus further clouding the blame game. In Germany, various parties openly blame China for the Covid-19 pandemic, then criticize the improper handling of the spread of Covid-19 in China (Seaman 2020). In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson commented on the subject of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which he stated that: "I think it's pretty clear that most of the evidence pointing to this disease (Covid-19) comes from Wuhan." (Global Times 2021). Then, in Italy, a politician and also the Chair of the Italian Government Opposition, Matteo Salvini, stated that "If China finds out about the virus, then China can be prosecuted for crimes against humanity" while sharing a video in 2015 which is considered to be a documentation of the origin of the Covid-19 virus (Seaman 2020).

The many responses from various countries that blamed China for the origin and spread of the Covid-19 virus made China do a "blame-shifting" strategy, which means removing and changing the stigma of these bad countries from China. The method used in shifting blame is to make reports, research, or news about the true origin of the Covid-19 virus (Verma 2020). It has been noted that the Chinese media have repeatedly blamed other countries as the origin of the Covid-19 virus, including other than the United States, namely India and Australia. Various local

Chinese media reports say that Chinese researchers explained that the Covid-19 virus could have originated in India (Indian Times, 2020). Then, various reports and investigative reports from the Global Times as the Chinese media blamed Australia as the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which accusations were based on the presence of imported Australian frozen meat in the Wuhan market as the first place where the Covid19 case was detected (WION Web Team 2021).

The blame game regarding the origin of Covid-19 continues after all. During the new President of the United States administration, namely Joe Biden, the United States again demanded the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which then resumed the blame game round. President Joe Biden wants further reports on the origin of the Covid-19 virus, one of which is thought to have originated from a leak at the Virology Laboratory in Wuhan, China (Horton 2021). President Joe Biden's request was then supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) to conduct further studies and investigations regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus in Wuhan. However, China refused because the request "ignores common sense and goes against science." (CNBC 2021).

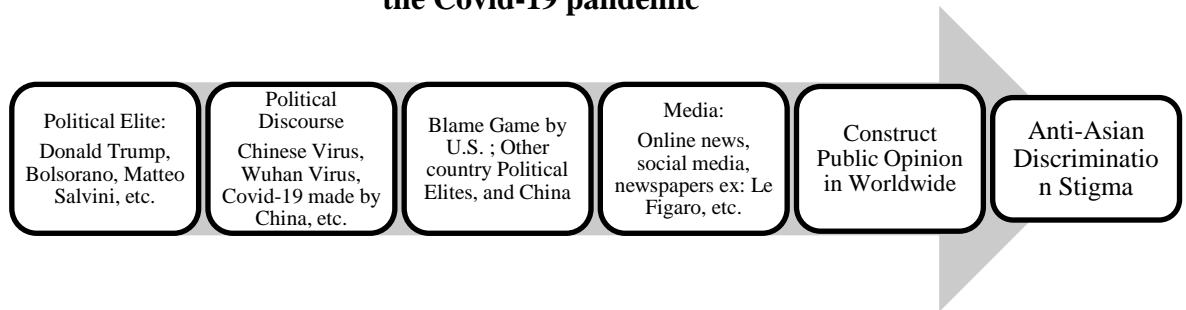
#### *The Blame Game Practices of Political Elites*

We argue that the blame game regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus described above is the product of the political elite, which forms political discourse to construct public thoughts/opinions about China as the origin of the Covid-19 virus. On the other hand, China is also doing the same thing where political elites shape political discourse and then, together with the Chinese media, try to eliminate the image of China as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus by rejecting all accusations against it and forming accusations about the origin of the Covid-19 virus. Actually, from another country.

We also argue that the blame game regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which is mainly targeted at China, has other impacts, such as the increasing phenomenon of anti-Asian discrimination. The relationship between the blame game and anti-Asian discrimination can be seen through a study of the theoretical framework of Political Racism and Constructivism, which can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4.

The process of the formation of the Anti-Asian discrimination Stigma during the Covid-19 pandemic



Based on Figure 4, political elites have substantial control and influence in shaping public perceptions, especially in the rapid spread of information flow through social media, which is now part of each individual's life. Political elites carry out a narrative process that aims to create an idea/value so that it can shape public opinion. Narratives or political discourses created by political elites can win public perception, thereby achieving their goals in forming these narratives (Asril 2013). Based on this, it can be seen that political discourse from Donald Trump and political elites from other countries has formed a stigma that China is the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus, which can be seen from the persistence of this stigma.

The most influential stigmatization of the Covid-19 virus against China is the stigma of Donald Trump. This is because Donald Trump, who is the first political elite to publicly confirm that China is the source of the Covid-19 virus by calling the virus the "Chinese Virus", "Kung Flu", "Wuhan Virus," and various other negative mentions that are spread through the internet. Social media and news channels are forms of xenophobic and racist narrative (Benjamin 2021). The utterance has a connotation that seems to form the image of China as the scapegoat for the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has spread widely.

Donald Trump's political discourse and stigmatization of China is a political maneuver that aims to realize Trump's political jargon, namely "America First," by creating a political discourse that discriminates against and corners certain groups. Moreover, the U.S. mainstream media also serves to serve and promote these political agendas, such as the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the New

York Times, and The Washington Post (Jia and Lu 2021). Then, the agenda/political discourse was further strengthened by the support of political elites from other countries for Trump's statement.

The influence exerted by the political elite that has been described previously impacts the formation of community stigma. This is because the political elite has strong power and influence to construct public opinion. Political discourses that are launched are a strategy to create a public perception that China is a threat to the country's domestic situation, and this is supported by the media framing process (Merrienboer 2020). On the other hand, China is also framing media in shaping its image as not the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus. However, the implication of the blame game in various countries is an increase in the stigma and crime of anti-Asian discrimination in various countries.

#### *Anti-Asian Discrimination Rising Trend*

The narration process carried out by political elites impacts increasing racism and discrimination in various countries. Then it also encourages the intensification of violent practices and public anxiety, especially among those of Asian descent, who become afraid of being discriminated against and feel pressured over their physical appearance, which confirms their racial identity (Park 2021). This is related to the political discourse carried out by the political elite, which creates a racist community condition and attacks based on xenophobics everywhere (Benjamin 2021). Degrading treatment includes prejudice and ridicule based on race, harassment against people of Asian race such as spitting, and hateful acts justified by law as the definition of hate crime experienced by Asian communities in various places.

Various cases of racism in various countries increased after the blame game. For example, many Asian citizens in Australia have become targets of hate in daily life and cyberspace. Many individuals become victims of hate-based violence, which even impacts the decline in Chinese restaurant businesses founded by people of Asian descent by 70 % (Zatira and Prakoso 2020). This also has an impact on the Asian community in the U.S., which often experiences violence which can be seen from the 4000 reports to the AAPI, and the worst was when a

shooting occurred in Atlanta which killed 6 (six) people of Asian descent (Lynch and Volcovici 2021).

In addition, in Brazil, after Bolsonaro's anti-Asian rhetoric received support from other political elites, it then impacted the lives of the Asian community in Brazil, where they were also targeted by local people's hatred (Fleck 2021). In Europe, various countries are experiencing an increasing trend of anti-Asian discrimination, one of which is the U.K., where the Asian community experienced a 16% increase in hate crime rates in March 2020, compared to February 2020 with only 3-7% (Gray and Hansen 2021).

There are also increasing cases of anti-Asian discrimination in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and others. Based on September 2020 data, Canada has more than 600 reported incidents of racism against Asian descent, of which 70% of the victims are women. The racist behavior that occurs covers 65% of verbal abuse, such as racial insults, threats, and negative comments, and 30% includes attacks, such as physical violence, spitting, and coughing (Project 1907 2021). In New Zealand, the Human Rights Commission reports 54% racial discrimination against people of Chinese descent. In the United Kingdom, there has been a sharp increase in hate crimes against Chinese, East Asians, and Southeast Asians by 300% since the lockdown was imposed in May 2020 (Haynes 2021).

### **Media as a Strengthening Factor of the Anti-Asian Discrimination?**

Negative political discourses, such as discrimination against particular ethnicity thrown by the political elite to the public, affect the creation of anti-Asian discrimination behavior in society. This is even worse because the people who have constructed their thoughts are racist toward Asian descent and discriminate against them directly and through social media. Anti-Asian discrimination rampant on social media shows how big the influence of racist discourse is created and spread by the political elite through various social media. On Twitter, there has been an increase in hate speech against the Asian community, which is marked by an increase in the use of hashtags that say "Kung-Flu" and "Chinese Virus" to "ChingChong" by 222,221,841 tweets and 16,808,191 posts on Twitter (Liam

2020). Of course, this has an impact on psychological things such as stress and anxiety, and even inhibits someone from seeking medical services the inhibition of work productivity cycles in the office because they are worried about discriminatory treatment (Gao and Liu 2021)

The increasing trend of anti-Asian discrimination described above is the impact of racist discourses thrown by the political elite to the public through media as a political tool to form an anti-Asian discrimination identity. This is supported by the research of Azmi et. al. explain that politicians often use social media to express their opinions to their supporters and to the public in general (Azmi, Sylvia, and Mardhiah 2018). Social media is a tool in a conflict between political actors, thus making the political discourse disseminated to the public more comprehensive. Suppose it is applied to the blame game Covid-19 phenomenon. In that case, social media strengthens the spread of the blame game and antiAsian racist discourse in it so that the following impact arises the spread and formation of racist identities in society, resulting in anti-Asian discriminatory behavior.

The bonding of social media to each individual's life makes the use of the media as a political tool to spread various kinds of narratives even more effective.

During the current pandemic, the significant role of social media in shaping public perception is unavoidable, primarily when information about health and developments related to the pandemic is channeled through the platform. The existence of this moment is used by many media (especially in the West) to label and generalize Asian ethnicity as the Chinese race, which is suspected to be the cause of the Covid-19 pandemic. Coupled with repetitive narratives such as the dictions 'Kung-flu' and 'Chinese virus', the negative stigmatization sticks in the public's mind. This habit has made negative labeling of Asian ethnicity familiar and impacted people's perceptions of the Asian community, which is directly tied to certain stigmatizations.

This is in line with the findings by Ittefaq et al., which state that the mindset of the people (especially in Western countries) has been constructed in such a way thanks to the massive biased information spread by various media channels, both online and conventional media (Ittefaq et al. 2022). The construction of this mindset has led to various unpleasant behaviors towards the Asian ethnic



community, ranging from jokes about labeling an individual as a virus to hateful and violent behavior explicitly directed at individuals of Asian ethnicity, coupled with the existence of racist narratives published in the media by various state leaders such as Donald Trump, which increasingly worsen the situation. So this strengthens the argument that social media also contributes to the phenomenon of discrimination against the Asian community thanks to the existence of strong negative narratives that shape public opinion significantly.

### *CONCLUSION*

The Blame game about the origin of the Covid-19 virus is a political discourse from the political elite which forms the construct of public opinion towards China as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus. Prolonged blame games will increase political discourse, construct public opinion through social media, and increase anti-Asian discrimination in various countries. This is because China is the target of many political elites to blame when discussing the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. To stop the increase in anti-Asian discrimination in various countries, countries' political elites should stop issuing political discourses in the media that could corner China and increase anti-Asian discrimination. In addition, on the other hand, China must also be able to stop acting aggressively by shifting the blame to other countries. This is because that method will not improve the blame game situation; instead, the blame game will get worse. So, to solve the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic and anti-Asian discrimination, it should take collective action to reduce political discourses that can trigger the blame game and start building neutral communication and working together to deal with Covid-19 problems, both bilaterally, multilaterally, and through WHO. This research has limitations in the scope of the analysis. It only covers the behavior of the political elite during the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the increase in anti-Asian discrimination in society. Therefore, further research is expected to be able to explain and analyze the efforts of both state and non-state actors in reducing the level of anti-Asian discrimination, both in the real world and on social media.

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