



# The Politics of the Uyghur Genocide

“A War on Words”

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## **Abstract**

Throughout history, genocide has been occurring, subjecting particular groups and minorities to human rights violations. The most significant aspect of the genocide is the international community's interference which tends to be inefficient due to their prolonged responses. In the present day, the Uyghur genocide is occurring, and millions of innocent Uyghur Muslims have been subjected to arbitrary camps and the labeling of terrorism by the PRC. This thesis aims to examine the discursive methods utilized by the international community when speaking about the human rights violations occurring in Xingang towards the Muslim Uyghur minority. It will also, analyze China's response to the backlash they received from the international community and the discourse methods they utilized. Both stances will be compared and examined together through a discourse analysis and a theoretical framework of poststructuralism with the concepts of discourse and deconstruct.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, minority groups across diverse regions such as Africa, Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, South America, and the Middle East have been deliberately subjected to targeted victimization, as noted by the Genocide Education Project (2018). Despite having received advance notice of these heinous acts, the global community failed to act expeditiously to alleviate the resulting human affliction and avert loss of life, as stated by (Zawati, 2010). It appears that history is repeating itself, as evidenced by the present-day targeting and singling out of the Uyghur community in Xinjiang, China, based on their perceived differences from the dominant Han Chinese population. Generally, China often portrays itself as a country with a homogeneous cultural identity, with the Han Chinese constituting the predominant ethnic group in the region (Finnegan, 2020). However, the area is experiencing governmental suppression intended to suppress separatist uprisings, leading to the arbitrary targeting of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, which is the primary focus of this research. The present policies of the Chinese administration in Xinjiang have given rise to concerns regarding the potential perpetration of large-scale atrocities (Fiskesjö, 2019). At the onset of the twenty-first century, Uyghurs were branded as a "terrorist," not on account of any activities on their part, but rather due to a politically motivated procedure initiated by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and validated by the US following intense lobbying (Roberts, 2020). Though this classification pertained solely to a solitary, little-known Uyghur exiled faction in Afghanistan, it has exerted a considerable influence on Uyghurs globally, especially in China. The Uyghur genocide has been classified as the most significant coerced confinement of an ethnoreligious minority since World War II has transpired, with more than a million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims held captive in 1,300 facilities for the purpose of re-education and manipulation of the mind (Finley, 2020; Genocide Watch, 2020).

As a result of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "preventive suppression" of religious extremism and separatism, mass monitoring has been deployed in Xinjiang. Detainees are compelled to relinquish their Uyghur cultural customs and Islamic religious convictions, while being subjected to political indoctrination within the confines of the camps (Genocide Watch, 2020). The international response to the events taking place in Xinjiang has been notably muted compared to other instances of genocidal acts, despite the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine serving as a guideline for global responses to such calamities (United Nations, n.d.). However, UN Security Council (UNSC)-sanctioned interventions run the risk of being ineffective, as the interests of the five permanent member states (P5) may dictate the

agenda and ultimately determine whether the international community responds to mass atrocities (Mennecke and Stensrud, 2021). As per a recent report, Uyghur women are subjected to coerced sterilization, IUDs, abortions which have dropped birth rates by 60 percent, and threats of detention home stay programs that assign Han Chinese spies to live with Uyghur families (Zenz, 2020; Genocide Watch, 2020). The Mandarin language and the performance of songs and recitals that glorify the Communist Party of China are being mandated for Uyghur individuals. Furthermore, these individuals are being denied the ability to engage in prayer or utilize Muslim greetings and are being coerced into consuming pork and alcohol, actions that are strictly forbidden under Islamic law (Genocide Watch, 2020). Those who resist such directives are subjected to severe mistreatment, including acts of torture, sexual violence, and even death. Despite official claims that these detention facilities are intended to provide vocational training for unemployed Uyghurs, the reality is that they function as jails (Genocide Watch, 2020).

However, the situation of the Uyghurs has been well-known globally for some time, with early accounts detailing Chinese crackdowns on Uyghurs in Xingang (Wee, 2015). This raises several concerns, such as the duration of this genocide, the anticipation of international aid and the slow response of the international community. Thus, this study adopts an international relations (IR) perspective to investigate the response of the international community to the ongoing persecution of the Uyghur Muslim minority in China and the counter response from China and the discourse they implement. Since, genocide is and crimes against humanity occur within an international context rather than domestically, the allegations against China raise legal and moral obligations for the international community to act in accordance with international law and practice, it provides an IR relevance (Shaw, 2011). In the field of international relations, scholars suggest that genocide is intricately connected to global politics. This is because the international system has a significant impact on the functioning of governments and nations, which means that genocide cannot be confined to a purely domestic context, but rather occurs within an international framework (Shaw, 2011). The international system governs and shapes the behaviour of both the perpetrators and victims, while also creating a context in which genocide can take place and even proliferate due to the influence of powerful actors, who are often the perpetrators (Shaw, 2011). The international context plays a crucial role in either perpetuating or preventing genocide. Ethnic conflicts or genocides in one location can trigger similar events in other places due to spillover effects (Saideman and Jenne, 2009). Additionally, Muslims are often

seen as a global threat in the post September 11 era, which has resulted in increased prejudice and violence towards them in countries such as China, Myanmar, and India (Morgan and Poynting, 2016; Störig, 2020). This evidence highlights a strong international connection between current events and other issues.

This research aims to compare and examine the methods used by the international community in responding to the atrocities in Xinjiang, as well as China's response to the backlash and the range of discourse tactics employed against the Uyghurs. This will be achieved by conducting a discourse analysis with the concepts of discourse and deconstruction through a poststructuralist lens, analyzing official statements and speeches made by various international political actors and governments. The study will begin with a historical background about the beginning of the perception of the Uyghurs as a terrorist threat which eventually led to an international recognition, literature review to provide necessary contextualization, followed by a description of the theoretical and methodological framework employed, and an analysis of the selected texts from international actors and China. The research questions are:

**What are the discursive strategies employed by the international community in response to the Uyghur genocide?**

**What strategies has China employed in response to the backlash from the international community over the Uyghur genocide?**

## 1.1 Historical Background – Three Evils

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prolonged historical atrocities committed against the Uyghur minority, it is essential to consider the context and history of the Uyghurs.

In the early 2000s, the Uyghurs were identified as a danger of terrorism, although this wasn't because of their relationships or behaviour; rather, it was because of a PRC-initiated political process that the United States legitimized after heavy lobbying. Despite the fact that this designation only applied to a single, hidden Uyghur exile group in Afghanistan, it has had a significant impact on Uyghurs worldwide, particularly in China. Undoubtedly, the PRC embarked on this categorization deliberately, but it was additionally rendered possible by the

ambiguity of the GWOT's enemies under the United States (Roberts, 2020). In October 2001, the Chinese government launched a systematic campaign to portray its opposition to Uyghur demands for independence as an international "terrorist threat" associated with Al-Qaeda. Similarly, in the 1990s, China in the former Soviet Eurasia employed the terms "terrorist" and "extremist" frequently to delegitimize domestic opposition. Such discourse was the initial cause of the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) used to be known as the Shanghai Five group (Huasheng, 2004). The Shanghai Five group, representing China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, was founded in 1996 as a way of settling issues of boundary delineation and diplomatic ties between China and the four states of the former Soviet Union with whom it bordered (Roberts, 2020; Huasheng, 2004). These sessions would swiftly move beyond discussions of diplomatic relations and boundary markings to a security-related agenda. The PRC would growingly emphasize its concern over Uyghur nationalist objectives in its demands for concessions from the surrounding countries during the subsequent Shanghai Five discussions (Huasheng, 2004; Roberts, 2020).

In 1998, the organization added a new focus to their cooperation by pledging to "combat separatism, religious extremism, and international terrorism," a trio of dangers that would later be referred to as the "three evils" (Akihiro, 2005). The power of three evils were undeniable and had the capacity to conflate the boundaries between three distinct perceived threats and treat them as a single threat. The inclusion of the "terrorism, extremism and separatism" in the three evils was crucial to discredit domestic opponents in the eyes of the international community, especially given the Uyghur calls for self-determination (Roberts, 2020). The group proclaimed the creation of a new regional security cooperation organization in 2001, when it renamed the group to SCO. The drafting and ratification of the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism," which was enacted in June 2001, was one of the new SCO's first tasks. This group gave each of the SCO members the opportunity to link domestic rivals, be they independence movements or rival political forces, to the rapidly growing global security threat of Islamic terrorism (Roberts, 2020).

The way the Chinese government presented its purported Uyghur "separatist" threat "domestically" did cause the PRC to start referring to Uyghur dissidents as either terrorists or separatists when reporting to the world at large. According to a report from January 2001 on the dissolution of a suspected Uyghur independence organization, the PRC indicated that the

group had committed numerous "terrorist acts" (Roberts, 2020). Even though this story about Uyghur 'terrorism' in Chinese state discourse was still inconsistent at the time, it had already started to appear there before the September 11 attacks. As a result, the PRC was well aware of how to include the Uyghurs in the global war on terrorism that George W. Bush launched in late 2001 (Roberts, 2020).

### 1.3 Chinas Terrorism Campaign

In the years that followed, Chinese authorities dramatically stepped up their repressive practices against Turkic Muslims of the ethnic Uyghur in Xinjiang, frequently portraying their acts as being a part of the global war on terror (Schaack, 2021). The "People's War on Terror," which was carried out through 2014 and 2016 declared by the Chinese President Xi Jinping launching a campaign of multifaceted effort to cleanse Uyghurs of Islamic influences through cultural obliteration, extrajudicial mass incarceration, indoctrination, torture, and forced labour (Roberts, 2020; Smith Finley, 2019). It involved a concentrated effort to root out and violently punish those considered to be "extremists" and "terrorists," and also efforts to change Uyghur social behaviour and cultural customs. From the beginning, this ideological battle to combat 'extremism' was itself very extreme. The adoption of religion in any form was strongly opposed in schools, and pupils were urged to report their parents' religious activities. The general public "anti-extremism" campaigns gave rise to repeated attempts to stop Uyghurs from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan to encourage alcohol and cigarette use by implying that abstaining from these behaviours was a sign of extremism, and to tighten controls on mosque participation and the religious components of customary Uyghur life cycle rituals (Roberts, 2020; Grieger 2014; Tharoor, 2014; Demick, 2014). In order to advance its campaign, China enacted its first comprehensive anti-terrorism law in 2015, opening the door for increased mass surveillance, which included the creation of a database of Uyghurs in Xinjiang as part of a "preventive policing" program (Roberts, 2018, p. 221). The internment camps established in Xinjiang since 2017 have provided a multitude of justifications for the detention of Uyghur individuals. These rationales, which range from the seemingly innocuous practices of growing a beard or abstaining from smoking, have been deemed suspect and are among the various grounds upon which Uyghurs have been detained (Greer, 2018).



The People's War on Terror has significantly increased the size and reach of China's global repression. Since 2017, China targeted, imprisoned and forcibly repatriated Uyghurs from countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, the UAE, and Uzbekistan, where all are listed in a Chinese police records as "suspicious countries" that have sizable Uyghur populations (Lemon, Jardine and Hall, 2022). In addition, previously safe havens for Uyghurs like Saudi Arabia and Turkey are now unsafe. The Saudi government has endorsed China's treatment of the Uyghur people. The nation signed a letter expressing support for China's campaign of mass imprisonment in Xinjiang in 2020 together with 45 other nations (Putz, 2020). Since then, it has been reported that Riyadh has deported no fewer than eight Uyghurs since 2017 (Lemon, Jardine and Hall, 2022).

## 2. Literature Review

Despite the Uyghur genocide being ongoing for years, it has only recently garnered international attention, resulting in a limited body of literature on the subject within the field of international relations. To address this gap, this thesis aims to contextualize the situation through a review of three relevant themes: (1) historical case studies, (2) the interpretation of genocide, and (3) humanitarian intervention.

### 2.1 Historical Case Studies

This subsection aims to contextualize the Uyghur genocide by examining past atrocities and the international community's response to them. The Uyghur people are currently facing denial and marginalization, which is reminiscent of the past atrocities that have been overlooked or forgotten.

In 1989, the withdrawal of Kosovo's autonomy and the subsequent campaign of repression against the area's ethnic Albanians by the then Serbian president is an example of a historical atrocity. Hansen (2006) conducted a discourse analysis on the Western debate surrounding the Bosnian war and found that the concept and identity of 'the Balkans' were negative. The Balkan discourse emerged from this spatial division and defined "the Balkans" as violent, tribal, hateful, and backward, as well as embodying Otherness for hundreds or thousands of years. As a result, the West lacked both the power and the moral obligation to intervene and end the war due to the confluence of spatial and temporal identity, which meant that "the

Balkans" could not break these patterns and advance toward more civilized and Western forms of behavior (Hansen, 2006). This research contextualizes the Uyghur genocide study as an example of how the international community's response negatively impacted the victims.

Moreover, in April 1994, Rwanda experienced a genocide, and senior officials of the United Nations instructed the commander of the peacekeeping mission, Roméo Dallaire, to stand down, as they lacked the mandate to intervene and halt the massacre (Linde-Mattsson, 2021). Using a legal methodology, Linde-Mattsson (2021) argues that one reason the genocide continued was because a representative concluded that Rwanda held no interest and possessed no natural resources or value. Additionally, Rwanda's population density exacerbated the situation, and the genocide persisted for four months, resulting in the deaths of 800,000 people, with no intervention from the international community. Similarly, Dallaire and Beardsley (2005) wrote the book "Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity," in which they argued that the world community, which failed to stop the genocide, and the individuals who committed the atrocity were both included in the subtitle. In terms of humanity, both had failed, shattering people's hopes (Dallaire and Beardsley, 2005).

Grono's (2006) arguments are in line with Hansen (2006) and contends that the international community has exhibited persistent indecisiveness and failure in protecting and reacting to the atrocities in Darfur, Sudan. He observes that despite extensive documentation and publicity by various journalists and NGOs focused on genocide prevention, decision-makers and leaders worldwide remain aware of the severity of the situation, rendering any claims of ignorance untenable. While the United Nations (UN) is perceived as a reliable authority for an authentic international response, Grono (2006) observes through a cross-methodological examination that their efforts have been sluggish in compelling the Sudanese government to cease its activities and convening gatherings to impose penalties, which took about two years to actualize. Similarly, regarding the Uyghurs in China, the UN has been slow to acknowledge and comment on the heinous offenses committed against them, resulting in a prolonged period without an official response. Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2009), using qualitative data obtained from interviews and advanced statistical analyses of the 2004 Atrocities Documentation Survey (ADS), contend that despite the crucial role of the international community's response in halting these severe crimes, their reaction remains hesitant despite their occurrence.

Based on official reports, resolutions, and documents, Mennecke and Stensrud (2021) gives an analysis of the ongoing situation in Myanmar and the failure of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) philosophy. Myanmar has emerged as a leading illustration of R2P's failure, despite the adoption of R2P in 2005 and the international community's commitment to averting the repetition of atrocities. In the past ten years, the Rohingya people has been the victim of several atrocity crimes and genocidal massacres. The military takeover in February 2021 has further highlighted the absence of international intervention to defend the people of Myanmar from atrocities and crimes against humanity. The majority of countries have stood by as continued crimes continue to be tolerated, while only a few have denounced and condemned the most recent cycle of bloodshed. According to Mennecke and Stensrud, 2021, the anticipation that China and Russia would oppose any UN resolution sanctioning the use of force was the main reason why the Rohingya issue was not addressed in any Security Council resolution. This finding is significant to the current study since the events in Xingang show how China's influence in the Security Council and makes it likely that it will block any action taken to help the Uyghur victims. Furthermore, a number of nations have allied with China and put their own interests ahead of those of human rights.

Returning to the Nuremberg trials' legal methodology, it is interesting to note that the 1945 London Agreement, which served as the foundation for these trials, did not specifically include the crime of genocide. Instead, the pertinent deeds were labeled as "crimes against humanity," while the Nazis' actions were referred to as "atrocities" (Aydin, 2014). The argument over whether the *nullum crimen nulla poena sine praevia lege poenali* principle—which was not expressly stated in any contemporaneous legal document—was broken when "genocidal acts" were prosecuted at the Nuremberg trials. Aydin (2014) claims that because the court declined to label the Nazis' actions as "genocide," they were not prosecuted for a crime that did not technically exist.

## 2.2 The Interpretation of Genocide

Establishing a contextualization is crucial when analyzing the various international responses to genocide, as the definition of genocide is a topic of intense debate, and there are variations in its application across different cases and definitions.

Raphael Lemkin is recognized with coining the term "genocide" in international law in 1944. This term provided a framework for classifying mass atrocity crimes that were previously unofficially acknowledged and were known as "crimes without a name" (Stone, 2005; Schabas, 2000; Wilson, 1997). Schabas (2000) claims that Lemkin coined the term "genocide" to characterize the crime of killing persons who belonged to a certain group by combining the Greek terms "genos" (community, people, or race) and "cide" (killing). According to Lemkin, the idea of genocide encompassed a wide range of actions, including not only the deprivation of human life but also the elimination of a group's existence through techniques like sterilization, the destruction of infrastructure, the segregation of families, and the confinement of people in internment camps. Lemkin recognized eight main types of genocide, all of which aim to erase the existence of a group and are driven by political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral considerations (Schabas, 2000; Aydin, 2014).

As shown by the Muslim Uyghurs, who are the most unique group from the Han Chinese, the atrocities are committed against entire groups, and the choice of individuals for destruction is exclusively based on their group affiliation. The systematic murder of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War, known as the Holocaust, did not, however, result in a legal definition of genocide as a global crime against humanity (Aydin, 2014). The extensive and systematic actions of the Nazis were described using words like "massacre, mass killing, and destruction" although these inadequately reflected their goals. The purposeful, full or partial targeting of a particular group is at the core of the present legal definition of genocide. According to Aydin (2014), the crime of genocide has been committed if the perpetrators choose their victims based on their shared traits with the targeted people's ethnic, racial, national, or religious group and they carry out any of the acts detailed in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

In "Essentialist Thinking Underlying Definitions of Genocide," Mazur (2017) contends that the definition of genocide varies depending on the research objectives. This study adopts a qualitative approach and analyzes various research, including legal and worldview perspectives. As a result, international intervention generally only takes place when there is a violation of international law, and the legal definition of genocide is considered the foundational definition. However, Mazur (2017) notes that the official legal interpretation of genocide is superficial, as genocide is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. This

superficiality can enable perpetrators to exploit the loopholes in the law and avoid being held accountable for genocide by invoking sovereignty as an excuse. Similarly, Theriault (2010) argues that despite the scholarly and legal definitions of genocide, there remains a problematic aspect that facilitates denials of genocide. Denials often involve manipulating information and claiming that the alleged genocide-related crimes do not fit the UN definition of genocide. The definition of genocide itself is not inherently problematic, but the approach taken to it can lead to denial (Theriault, 2010).

To investigate the issue further, Bachman (2020) conducted a textual analysis and collected data from 393 articles on well-studied genocide incidents, using Raphael Lemkin's original definition of genocide. The study found that most analyses of genocide focus on the same types of cases and offenders, using a narrow understanding of genocide that prioritizes physical destruction of a population. This "hegemonic understanding of genocide" fails to capture the multifaceted nature of genocide that Lemkin intended to convey (Bachman, 2020: 13). On the other hand, Shaw (2011: 645) challenges the prevailing notion that genocide has a purely domestic origin and critiques the methodology of "comparative genocide studies" from a constructivist perspective. He argues that the international system plays a crucial role in shaping the occurrence and spread of genocide, rather than it being solely a domestic phenomenon. The international system influences the actions of both the perpetrator and victim parties, and it also provides a context for genocide to occur and spread, particularly through the influence of powerful actors. According to Saideman and Jenne (2009), the effects of genocide, such as ethnic conflict or mass displacement, can spill over into neighboring regions, causing further instability. Thus, Shaw's (2011) research highlights the importance of the international community in defining and preventing genocide.

Last but not least, in the paper titled "On What Conditions Can a State Be Held Responsible for Genocide?" Gaeta (2007) examined legal texts from the convention and provided her arguments. Gaeta (2007) contends that international law does not make a connection between a state's responsibility to stop genocide and a person's criminal responsibility. Although genocide can happen without a state-level genocidal program, the state's international culpability requires the presence of one. In addition, it is not necessary to establish that the state as a whole or one or more of its leaders had a specific purpose to commit genocide before bringing up the issue of the state's international obligation. Gaeta (2007) challenged the court's incorrect finding that the state bears international responsibility for genocide rather

than the person carrying out its commands. In most cases, the Criminal courts can only evaluate whether a person has committed a crime under the assumption of innocence. When analyzing China's treatment of the Uyghur community and other states' reactions to the Xinjiang genocide, this information can be useful. In comparison, Greenawalt (1999) agrees with Gaeta (2007) that it might be challenging to determine who is to blame for mass tragedies. He contends that the rigorous interpretation of genocidal intent can present problems since it enables defendants to use ideology and hierarchy to avoid responsibility for genocidal atrocities. The fair administration of justice may be hampered in such situations by the rigid interpretation of genocidal intent (Greenawalt, 1999).

### 3.3 Humanitarian Intervention

The primary objective of this subsection to provide information on genocidal intervention in current humanitarian goals and the establishment of effective preventative measures and early detection.

It has been identified that sovereignty is the basis of international relations and humanitarian intervention. Lupel and Verdeja (2013) conducted research on the responses to genocide and noted that sovereignty is a fundamental principle in international relations and humanitarian intervention. The United Nations (UN) Charter establishes the sovereign equality of nations and the universal recognition of human rights as the two central tenets of the international order. According to this system, international law existed only between states and individuals had no inherent status in international law, which did not extend beyond national borders. However, since the end of World War II, the notion of non-interference has become increasingly contentious, and international law has been developed in the name of humanity. Lupel and Verdeja (2013) writes that although the Convention on the Crime of Genocide has been introduced to protect people from egregious crimes and does not uphold state sovereignty. As a result, rigid concepts of state sovereignty are no longer tenable. In the context of maintaining global peace, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the idea that political authority cannot transcend national boundaries (Lupel and Verdeja, 2013).

This background information is relevant to the present research as it establishes the precedent for possible humanitarian intervention by the international community in China, despite the lack of such action thus far. Southwick (2018) provides a sociological perspective on the inadequate international response to the prolonged plight of the Rohingya minority in

Myanmar. She argues that there is no obligation to intervene until the genocide is officially recognized. Some states, which have established relationships with the perpetrator state, may choose to avoid condemning genocide to avoid complicating political and economic ties (Southwick, 2018). Gregory, Harstone, and Slovic (2018) conducted research utilizing negotiation analysis, psychology, and decision analysis to investigate efficient decision-making procedures for intervening in genocides. They found that decisions on intervention were influenced by national security concerns, with states less likely to intervene if their national security was at risk. Moreover, the phenomenon of "psychic numbing" is addressed, whereby individuals may feel unable to help large numbers of people, leading them to believe that any action would be ineffective (Gregory, Harstone, and Slovic, 2018: 114-115). Additionally, Williams (2007) writes that a number of geo-political factors present obstacles to significant humanitarian intervention in the foreseeable future. The lack of an established legal framework for intervention is a major contributing factor, compounded by China and Russia's opposition to humanitarian interventions, as demonstrated by their use of the Security Council veto. In addition, the increased conflict between military forces and aid organizations in conflict zones, the scarcity of military resources among states, and the political will required to justify risking soldiers' lives for strangers, all limit the ability of actors to carry out effective interventions, casting doubt on their necessity and effectiveness (Williams, 2007).

Saideman and Jenne (2009) asserts that states often prioritize their own reputation over the interests of victims, echoing the arguments of Southwick (2018) on national interests. The authors contend that states are more likely to intervene in a conflict only if they anticipate success, as success brings international recognition and domestic rewards, while failure can have adverse consequences for those involved (Saideman and Jenne, 2009). Drawing on the role of self-interest, Krain (2005) maintains that diplomatic and economic relations, and the level of pressure exerted on the perpetrators, influence the decision to intervene by the international community. He suggests that states with larger economies will be less concerned about the impact of their actions (United States and Russia, etc.) compared to governments with smaller economies. However, Krain (2005) argues that economic sanctions alone are unlikely to halt violence. Rather, he posits that military intervention is the most effective form of intervention, as the signaling of international interest is insufficient to have a dictatorship fall and stop them from destroying a certain group. Hence, Krain (2005)

concludes that direct military involvement, either opposing the offender or aiding the victim, is the most successful strategy.

Parekh (1997) in “Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention” presents an alternative perspective that diverges from Krain’s (2005) conventional thinking. He argues that the concept of humanitarian intervention is inherently flawed because it presupposes and aims to surpass the state-centric mode of thinking that has governed political affairs for more than three centuries (Parekh, 1997). The author scrutinizes the characteristics, historical context, and supporting theories of humanitarian intervention and determines that while it may be suitable in specific circumstances, it is too restricted, delayed, and superficial to produce enduring effects. Rather than relying solely on humanitarian intervention, Parekh (1997) proposes a more comprehensive approach that incorporates it as part of a broader strategy to establish a just and non-state-centric global order. In Seybolt’s (2008) study reveals that the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in preserving human security remains unclear. His analysis of seventeen humanitarian programs demonstrates that slightly over half of them were successful in saving lives, defined as the ability to save more lives than would have been possible in the absence of an intervention. Notably, Seybolt (2008) finds that UN-led missions have generally failed or produced inconsistent outcomes compared to coalition- or unilaterally led interventions, which have higher success rates. Based on these findings, Seybolt (2008) recommends that the UN should not lead humanitarian interventions. This highlights the inadequacy of the UN’s response to the Uyghur crisis, as numerous critiques have pointed out the organization’s delayed and insufficient actions, including its report on the situation which has been criticized for failing to acknowledge the ongoing genocide.

The literature overview provided sheds light on past crimes, international responses to them, the nuanced definition of genocide, and how they connect to the ongoing genocide against the Uyghur people. Historical case studies demonstrate that, for a variety of reasons, the international community has frequently failed to protect victims of atrocity crimes and genocidal horrors. These reasons include spatial and temporal identities, indecision, a lack of mandate, and the prioritization of national interests. Devastating repercussions, including the deaths of several thousand of people and the continuation of human rights violations, have resulted from this inaction. The examination of historical events emphasizes the significance of global responsibility and action in stopping atrocities. The R2P doctrine’s failure in Myanmar and China and Russia’s veto power in the Security Council serve as examples of



how frequently national interests take precedence over human rights considerations. The similar failure of the international community to act in Xingang to protect the Uyghur victims underscores the difficulties and constraints associated with defending human rights on an international level. Furthermore, interpreting genocide needs contextualizing each event because it is a complex and dynamic issue. The concept of genocide varies depending on the study goals, and the official legal definition is viewed as superficial, which might allow offenders to take advantage of legal weaknesses and escape responsibility. The international community faces difficulties when considering whether to engage in circumstances of genocide and the intricacies of humanitarian involvement in such cases. The idea of state sovereignty as a cornerstone of international relations and humanitarian aid has come under scrutiny more and more, and strict notions of state sovereignty are no longer tenable in the context of preserving world peace. The literature underlines how governmental self-interest and national security issues frequently take precedence over victim interests. Lastly, the evaluation emphasizes how inadequate the reaction to the Uyghur crisis was and the necessity of strong preventative measures and early detection to stop further tragedies.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section is to present an overview of Poststructuralism theory and how it can be applied in discourse analysis. The discourse that has been chosen will be examined using the principles of Poststructuralism, discourse, and deconstruction to uncover a more profound comprehension of the message that is being conveyed within the text.

#### 3.1 Poststructuralism

According to the Poststructuralist theory, language is essential to our capacity to understand the world because it enables us to communicate and comprehend ideas through a shared system of rules (Hansen, 2020). In the realm of politics, language is important in politics because politicians and other international actors need to use language to convince their audiences that their foreign policies are appropriate. However, the language we use to communicate has political overtones and meanings, therefore it is not neutral. According to poststructuralism, language is an active generator of meaning rather as a passive medium for communication (Hansen, 2020). Due to its focus on language, the poststructuralist theoretical framework is particularly helpful because it enables us to better understand how language affects and forms our perceptions of reality. This theory contends that language serves as a

battlefield where many discourses fight it out for control of the meaning. This may be important when discussing genocide because the term may have intrinsic flaws that the established academic and legal definition does not account for (Therriault, 2010). Discourse analysis and poststructuralism are intertwined in the study of international relations since both methodologies emphasize how language shapes our perception of historical events like the Uyghur genocide (Hansen, 2020). These techniques provide distinctive perspectives and analytical tools for examining this complicated issue of the responses of both the international community and China. The dominant nations frequently ignore humanitarian emergencies and poststructuralism is a useful theoretical framework from which to approach this problem since it can shed light on the processes that are often hidden.

According to Edkins (2007) questions what is regarded as knowledge and truth, poststructuralism primarily offers a critical lens to international politics. Poststructuralism challenges the odds of discovering universal truths since the universe is never free of individual perceptions (Hansen, 2016; Hansen, 2020). Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes are just a few that among other well-known poststructuralist scholars as they are skeptical of universal narratives that assert to provide an unbiased viewpoint on the world because hegemonic ideas produce such presumptions (Edkins, 2007; Cano, 2021). Poststructuralism strives to draw attention to current frameworks of truth and demonstrates that traditional theories of international relations are unable to recognize how certain scenarios are completely erased by discourses (Miller, 1998). Taylor and Vintges (2004) assert that poststructuralist ideas are frequently taken into account in the context of human rights regimes and in countries that are affected by conflict or dealing with its aftermath. The justifications listed above provides a strong argument in favor of applying poststructuralist concepts to the study of international and Chinese responses towards the Uyghurs.

## 3.2 Framework of Concepts

### 3.3 Discourse

Discourse, according to poststructuralist theory, is a series of representations and behaviors that result in the production of meanings, social interactions, and ultimately, political phenomena (Cano, 2021). Discourse, according to poststructuralist theory, is a series of representations and behaviors that result in the production of meanings, social interactions,

and ultimately, political phenomena. Language is necessary for our ability to understand the world and language is social because without a shared set of conventions, we are unable to make our thoughts clear to others (Hansen, 2020). In light of this, it is essential to grasp how language functions in order to comprehend how political and social life is structured (Selby, 2007; Cano, 2021). Furthermore, Language plays an important role in politics because politicians and other actors that play a role in global politics need to convince audiences both at home and abroad that their foreign policies are appropriate. The words we choose to describe something are not neutral; rather, they have political connotations (Hansen, 2020).

### 3.3 Deconstruction

In Jacques Derrida's research deconstruction was developed and became frequently used in poststructural IR approaches (Edkins, 2007). It can be employed very loosely to signify the reverse of "construction," or "taking apart," although this is not how Derrida used it in his writing. Derrida's work, and in particular his discussion of deconstruction, is a critique of definition itself as well as an analysis of the results of attempts to define concepts and establish procedures and plans. According to him, such efforts to establish certainty are totalizing actions meant to exclude the possibility of the ethical and political (Edkins, 2007). According to deconstruction, language is made up of oppositional categories, such as developed and underdeveloped, contemporary and pre-modern, civilized and wild (Hansen, 2020). These distinctions are not 'neutral' because one term is always better than the other in each situation. This could be between the developed-modern-civilized and the underdeveloped-pre-modern-barbaric, portraying a distinct hierarchy (Hansen, 2020).

## 4. Methodological Framework

The objective of this section is to expound on the methodology proposed to examine the varied narratives and responses concerning the Uyghur genocide. As previously indicated, the emphasis is on comprehending the international community's responses to the atrocities by employing discourse analysis and a poststructuralist framework of discourse and deconstruct.

The study by Lene Hansen (2006) on the Western debate over the Bosnian war and intervention offers a useful framework for studying a related topic and will be implemented in my research. Hansen discovered that the Balkans were portrayed negatively, which caused the international community to ignore the conflict, through the use of discourse analysis. The

applied methodology for examining the Uyghur genocide entails a comparative discourse analysis of secondary qualitative data sourced from official statements, speeches, and press releases disseminated by governments, politicians, and international organizations (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The present study will rely on official sources, such as governments or reputable organisations, as well as reputable news outlets that have obtained information through interviews or press conferences with international political actors regarding the Uyghur genocide. While acknowledging the potential for validity issues with the latter, these sources have been used in numerous studies and are considered reliable. This methodological approach will enable the researcher to identify and deconstruct the various discourses attributed to different actors within the topic of the Uyghur genocide, thereby revealing underlying assumptions and biases embedded in the international community and China's representations of the issue. The corpus of data will encompass various phases of the Uyghur genocide, including the pre-genocidal period, the genocidal stage, and the present state of affairs.

The primary aim of the analysis will be to elucidate the language utilized to articulate the atrocities inflicted upon the Uyghur minority, with particular emphasis on the underlying interpretation and the potential influence of power dynamics on international reactions to the crisis, particularly those contingent upon China's resources and support (Southwick, 2018). Furthermore, the analysis will consider China's counter response about the Uyghur genocide, and the precise terminologies employed to portray and depict them in certain images to fit their narrative and justify their actions. The global context plays a crucial role in facilitating, abetting, or preventing genocide. China, for example, as a member of the P5 and the Security Council, wields significant influence in setting the agenda and exercising its veto power when necessary (Aydin, 2014) (e.g., Stensrud and Mennecke, 2021). The rationale behind selecting data from international organizations or governments is the assumption that language is a critical factor in shaping and influencing political realities. The proposed study aims to reveal concealed meanings, assumptions, values, and power dynamics through an examination of the selected samples from international bodies (Hansen, 2006; Halperin & Heath, 2020).

The methodology employed in this study involves a comparative approach whereby discourse from the international community will be compared with China's response to such discourse, and subsequently, to identify any underlying terrorist or evil rhetoric employed by China in justifying their atrocious actions towards the Uyghurs (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The

research aims to comprehend how discourses have influenced and legitimized the actions of the international community through comparing (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The comparative method is widely utilized in political science to investigate a range of political phenomena, such as democracy, institutional structure, and public policy. In line with the perspectives of Peter Mair (1996) and van Biezen and Caramani (2006), the comparative method is primarily understood as a set of rules, standards, and procedures that facilitate the identification and explanation of differences and similarities across cases, which are often, though not exclusively, defined in terms of countries, through the application of concepts that have broader applicability (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The comparative discourse analysis of mediated constitutions of fracking, as presented in this study, provides a valuable opportunity to scrutinize a variety of arguments that require ongoing analysis (e.g., Turner, 2016).

Since the terms "discourse" and "deconstruct" refer to discourse analysis, it aims to examine how reality and discourse interact in a particular setting, particularly by examining the justifications for the language used (Halperin & Heath, 2020; Hansen, 2020). In order to gain an understanding of political behaviour, it is imperative to grasp the implications that individuals ascribe to their actions. This strategy is relevant to the current investigation because it makes it easier to understand the significance that political actors attach to their verbal political involvement and how this significance affects their motivation to act (Halperin & Heath, 2020; Hansen, 2020). Consequently, the concepts engenders opportunities for interpretation by rendering alternative understandings nearly inconceivable. The concepts of "discourse" and "deconstruct" furnishes a framework for examining the language utilized by international actors and can reveal recurring patterns and underlying assumptions that may shed light on how the international community and China have reacted to the Uyghur genocide (Halperin & Heath, 2020; Hansen, 2020). This strategy can help challenge the legitimacy of dominant ideologies promoted by international actors and help unravelling them (Halperin & Heath, 2020; Hansen, 2020). Discourse analysis will be employed to investigate the discursive strategies and repercussions of the language employed by the international community.

Furthermore, the discourse analysis that will take place during the analysis will look at speeches or statements that have been directly quoted by nations or political actors. Throughout the analysis the organization of the discourse is through sets of extracts that were divided in three. It will first start with the section of the "international community" in

“Extract 1” and then it will be “Extract 2” and lastly, “Extract 3”. Then the contrasting side of China’s response in the “China’s Counter Responses” consisting of, “Extract 1” and “Extract 2”. All followed by an application section. Additionally, to clarify in Extract 1, I have compared all the discourses simultaneously and intertwined. However, in the rest of my discourse analysis I analyze the text separately in order to provide more explanation and deconstruction of the discourse.

## 5. Analysis

This section seeks to apply the poststructuralist theoretical framework, applying the discourse and deconstruction concepts as well as the discourse analysis methodology. The subsequent analysis of each extracts concerning the international community and China will serve to assist in answering the research questions. A thorough study and comparison of the results will then be presented, followed by a concluding section.

### 6.1 International Community Responses

The responses from the international community are essential when issues of conflicts, wars, genocides and crimes against humanity occur. Their stance on the matter provides accountability and verification of the situation which can aid in protecting more lives and upholding everyone’s human rights.

### 6.2 Extract 1

*(1) “I encouraged the Government to undertake a review of all counter terrorism and deradicalization policies to ensure they fully comply with international human rights standards, and in particular that they are not applied in an arbitrary and discriminatory way.”*

*(Michelle Bacheletf, OHCHR, 2022)*

*(2) “Serious human rights violations have been committed in XUAR in the context of the [Chinese] Government's application of counterterrorism and counter-'extremism' strategies.”*

*(Michelle Bacheletf, OHCHR, 2022)*

(3) *“The implementation of these strategies, and associated policies in XUAR has led to interlocking patterns of severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights. These patterns of restrictions are characterized by a discriminatory component, as the underlying acts often directly or indirectly affect Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim communities,” stated the report.*”

*(Michelle Bacheletf, OHCHR, 2022)*

## 6.3 Application

This extract significance is analysed through the concept of language and discourse. According to the discourse concept, language produces meaning rather than serving as a passive transmitter. The way we define things in words does not give them an objective meaning (Hansen, 2020). According to the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Michelle Bachelet after her official visit to China indicates that she has raised questions and concerns about China’s counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation measures but also stated that she was “unable to assess the full scale.” This is unusual as despite numerous studies, legal views, academic articles, and conferences on the subject, the UN report does not attempt to compare the charges of genocide made against China to the standards outlined in the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide (Finley, 2022). Her report on the situation in Xingang portrays a type of encouragement and a mere suggestion of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to review their counter terrorism and de-radicalization policies as if genocide is not occurring. This can highlight that her selective language is implemented as neutrality but within the concept of discourse that there is no form of knowledge that is objective or neutral (Miller, 1989). This level is introduced by discourse power, it is argued, that if they separate speech concerning or knowledge of that reality, objective falsehood inevitably enters the picture. That is, if the world is as the discourse claims it to be, then the discourse will be objectively true; otherwise, it will be untrue (Miller, 1989).

Moreover, the discourse implemented “encouraged...to undertake a review” makes no attempt to measure genocide allegations and actually gives China the power to deconstruct and alter their biased strategies and discourse on the Uyghur matter. Additionally, it was noted by a news outlet Politico that the OHCHR team sent the report to China for a preliminary review, and was rewriting portions of Beijing’s version just before publication

(Lau, 2022). According to one diplomat, the clause on forced sterilization was watered down to avoid the potential claims of genocide—which has been fought to deny (Lau, 2022). The suggestion of a “review” is swapped in essence of taking action. To suggest China to review their own counter terrorism and deradicalization policies will inevitably have the conclusion of China denying any issues in their policies just like how they previously said that the allegations against china is "ridiculously absurd" and "a complete lie" (BBC, 2021).

According to the discourse concept language plays an important role in politics because politicians and other actors that play a role in global politics need to convince audiences both at home and abroad that their foreign policies are appropriate (Hansen, 2020). Furthermore, the Uyghur situation is described in the OHCHR report that “patterns of severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights... have patterns of restrictions are characterized by a discriminatory components”. The words chosen to describe the alarming un-neutral Uyghur genocide as un-alarming and consisting of “discrimination” lessens the moral pressure on the international community or in this case the United Nations to take action against an internationally recognised crime. This can be made in comparison to the 2011 Libyan revolution where R2P was applied and enforced based on the allegations of genocide occurring due to Gadaffi utilizing language that could be compared to the radio broadcasts calling for genocide in Rwanda (Weiss, 2016). The UN and its members were very quick with their decision on R2P and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) interference in Libya to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 (Weiss, 2016). Although, Libya’s situation is different than China’s, the UN report still does not acknowledge the word of genocide and undermine the situation. This proves that particular discourses in particular situations have the ability to persuade statements to be true (Hansen, 2020). The OHCHR (2022) report identifies solid evidence for acts that satisfy the requirements, even though it does not frame those crimes in the overall framework of the United Nations Genocide Convention. The report provides evidence of torture, imprisonment, and even forced labor where it primarily finds "indications" that labor and employment policies "appear to be discriminatory" and "involve elements of coercion” (Finley, 2022; OHCHR, 2022).

## 6.4 Extract 2



(1) *"We urge China to allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including the High Commissioner."*

(Canada, GAC, 2021)

(2) *"We will keep standing up and speaking out until China's government stops its crimes against humanity and the genocide of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang".*

(US Ambassador to the UN, Al Jazeera, 2021)

(3) *"The New Zealand and Australian Governments today reiterate their grave concerns about the growing number of credible reports of severe human rights abuses against ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. In particular, there is clear evidence of severe human rights abuses that include restrictions on freedom of religion, mass surveillance, large-scale extra-judicial detentions, as well as forced labour and forced birth control, including sterilisation."*

(Mahuta, 2021)

## 6.5 Application

In the **first** extract Canada issued a joint statement on human rights situation in Xingang and alongside multiple nations at 47th Session of UN Human Rights Council (GAC, 2021). It can be seen that Canada and alongside others frame that situation requiring foreign involvement and examination. This body of knowledge is built upon a certain set of presumptions and beliefs, including the conviction in the value of openness and accountability as well as the understanding of the limitations of the amount of information that can be gathered through indirect observation and engagement. By using the words "immediate" and "meaningful" it could be perceived that it is a serious situation that cannot be delayed in its research despite not indicating whether it is a genocide. It was reported that Trudeau and his administration have refrained from using the term "genocide" to describe China's treatment of the Uyghur people, claiming that additional proof from unbiased investigations is required (MacDonald, 2021). This can also be linked to the previous extract as in poststructuralism the concept of discourse that the chosen words has political implication in order to not have total responsibility (Hansen, 2020). In addition, the statement reflects a specific discourse that is influenced by larger historical and cultural settings, including social and political issues like the power dynamics between China and the rest of

the world. The usage of calling for “unfettered access” to Xinjiang for neutral observers embodies a certain set of ideas and perspectives that are deeply rooted in Western discourses on human rights.

In the **second** statement the US Ambassador to the UN by applying Foucault’s concept of discourse. The Ambassador highlights the use of the phrase “crimes against humanity” and “genocide” which constructs a discourse around what is occurring in Xingang and the Chinese Governments part in it being morally and legally unacceptable according to the Genocide Convention. The discourse indicates that the narrative around Xingang which effects the way it is and will be interpreted by others as truth. This aligns with the goal of a Foucauldian approach is to show how discursive processes and other social practices are interconnected. One of Foucault's most important contributions to political analysis is his illustration of the relationship between knowledge and the types of subjectivity or subject-hood that it generates (Edkins, 2007). Moreover, the phrase “standing up and speaking out” creates a specific narrative around the US's position on the matter, establishing the US as a moral authority and implying a duality of opposition between the US and China. Thus, the US is put into a positive realm while China’s stances negatively which an approach of power discourse is seen reinforcing the notion of superiority (Miller, 1990).

In the **third** statement the New Zealand and Australian Governments frame China in a negative connotation as they use “credible reports” as their backing of their discourse consisting of human rights abuses targeting mainly the Muslim Uyghur population in Xingang. They reassure and legitimate their argument and stances of China’s “severe human rights abuses” by stating that “clear evidence” exists the reassurance seems needed in case of an outside party to dismiss the claims as a “rumour” (Hansen, 2020). Following that their usage of providing examples compared to other opposing discourses provides how power is being conceived through language and shapes the perception. Moreover, it is noted that despite the New Zealand and Australian Governments vocally and undeniably construct the Uyghur situation as grave and “severe” their lack of usage of genocide seems to undermine the so called severity. According to the Rafter (2016: 2), the crime of genocide, a “violation of the rights to life, liberty, and security, is the worst form of violence among humans.” Without the classification of genocide victims in Xingang are left with having to live in an oppressed society labelled their culture as “terrorism” (Roberts, 2020). To note, New Zealand’s Labour party which is the majority of the parliament would not support the

resolution unless the word "genocide" was eliminated (McClure, 2021). It can be seen that New Zealand's efforts tried to strike a balance between its obligations in regard to human rights and those of its biggest trading partner. This could be seen as a reason their stance on the Uyghurs isn't referred to as genocide since trade with China accounted for more than 40 percent of meat exports, almost 60 percent of forestry goods (McClure, 2021).

## 6.6 Extract 3

(1) *"We respect and support China's rights to take counter-terrorism and de-extremism measures to safeguard national security."*

*(Saudi Crown Prince MBS, Jardine, 2021)*

(2) *"We commend that the Chinese government pursues the "people-centered" philosophy in advancing economic and social sustainable development, eradicating poverty, increasing employment, improving peoples' living standards, and promoting and protecting human rights. We note with appreciation that China has undertaken a series of measures in response to threats of terrorism and extremism in accordance with the law to safeguard the human rights of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. There was no single terrorist attack in Xinjiang in the last three years. People of all ethnic groups enjoy their happy life in a peaceful and stable environment...China maintains openness and transparency by, among other things, inviting more than 1,000 diplomats, officials of international organizations, journalists, and religious persons to visit Xinjiang who witnessed Xinjiang's remarkable achievement. On Xinjiang related issues it is an imperative to respect the basic facts rather than making unfounded allegations against China and interfere out of political motivations and bias."*

*(Cuba's U.N. Representative, Putz, 2020)*

In the **first** statement the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) endorsed China and their "counter-terrorism and de-extremism measures". The use of this discourse phrase portrays China's actions against the Uyghurs of forcing them in re-education camps and sterilising women as an essential act to ensure that China's national security isn't jeopardised due to Islamic terrorists by which Crown Prince MBS is doing as well. This discourse highlights a dichotomy distinguishing that there is not political or moral obligation on Saudi Arabia's part as based on their terms or definition China is safeguarding its country (Hansen, 2020). Also, their justifications all seem to be in the name of fighting terrorism, similar to

George W. Bush's past efforts. Additionally, the use of "respect and support" constructs that the policies and rectifies of China in any way towards the Uyghurs as appropriate and reasonable giving China the moral high ground to construct to their liking which is establishing a hierarchy of knowledge (Miller, 1990). The Crown Prince MBS establishes in their discourse "China's rights" as it forms that the truth is subjectively from China being what it may be and their rights even if it mean eradicating and oppressing individuals in order to pertain peace, autonomy and national sovereignty (Miller, 1990; Hansen, 2020; Edkins, 2007). Saudi Arabia portrays a support of eradicating terrorism and justifications towards the Uyghurs however it is argued that the Uyghurs in Xingang are not considered a terrorist group and haven't collectively been linked to organisations (a few Uyghurs that reside in Afghanistan have but they are not associated with the ones in China) (Roberts, 2020). It also seems like Saudi is purposely speaking on the matter of China committing genocide in order to show that their alliance in ties and trade is strong.

In the **second** statement Cubas UN representative read a statement on behalf of 45 countries in support of Chinese policies. Through the application of the concept of discourse the statement utilizes positive language in defence and commendation of Chinas actions to combat "terrorism and extremism" towards Uyghurs in Xinjiang and "safeguard all" ethnic human rights (Miller, 1990). They use a positive justification discourse in order to positively put their anti-terrorism strategies as effective since "there was no terrorist attack...in the last three years". The speaker, based on the dynamic seems to be an ally of the PRC and joining hands with the other 47 countries seeks to dominate the narrative around the crisis in Xinjiang. The discourse of "respect the basic facts", "unfounded allegations" hints at a deliberate effort to undermine these findings and create a narrative that is supportive of the Chinese leadership. A power dynamic seems to be present and their collective assertion disregards a plethora of accounts and proof of human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims in the area, which have been extensively documented and denounced by the international community (Mc Mower, 2018; Miller 1990). The language use of "interfere out of political motivations and bias" contends that the already opposing nations, mainly Western seem to be interfering, advocating and standing up against China only due to their self interest and motivations to potentially knock china off their political standing (Hansen, 2020). Nabers (2015) contends that social reality through language can intensify a crisis by deflecting media attention and furthering political agendas. China asserts that they are open and not hiding anything in Xingang since they "maintains openness and transparency" and

invite “more than 1,000 diplomats, officials, journalists, and religious persons” they use this discourse as their justification and portray themselves in a propagated manner than welcoming of all especially religious persons just like the Uyghurs who are majority Muslim. Furthermore, by characterizing any criticism of China's activities in Xinjiang as politically motivated or prejudiced, the remark can be interpreted as an effort to intimidate opponents and perpetuate the status quo (Mc Mower, 2018; Miller 1990). Certain characters, ideas, and events are paired together in hierarchical sets called binary oppositions through language, where one element of the set is preferred over the other in order to establish or maintain meaning (Mc Mower, 2018).

## 7. China’s Counter Responses

The responses from China pertaining the backlash from the international community serves to assist in understanding their strategies they implement in their language when dismissing claims of genocide or any type of human rights violations occurring in Xingang against the Uyghur Muslims.

### 7.1 Extract 1

(1) *“Our European friends know what genocide is.”*

*Wang Yi (Myers and Bradsher, 2021)*

(2) *“We call for a thorough and impartial investigation into all cases where crimes were committed against Indigenous people, especially the children.”*

*Jiang Duan (MacDonald, 2021)*

(3) *“When it comes to 'genocide', most people think of native North Americans in the 16th Century, African slaves in the 19th Century, Jews in the 20th Century, and the indigenous Australians who are still fighting today.”*

*Wang Yi (BBC, 2021)*

In the **first** statement, the deconstruction approach is most appropriate since language is made up of dichotomies, and they are never 'neutral,' as one term is always greater than the

other (Hansen, 2020). First off, with the use of the term "our European friends" suggests that the speaker and their European counterparts are in solidarity and share similar beliefs creating a condensing discourse. Thus, this establishes a duality between "them" (undoubtedly individuals that do not agree with their ideals) and "us" (the presenter and the European friends) (Hansen, 2020; Edkins, 2007). Following that, the usage of the term "genocide" inserts that there is a common meaning that both the presenter and the European friends share. Since there is a common meaning between them it indicates that they both "know" that the European friends have been partaking in genocide in their colonial past long before China allegedly did. They use these dichotomies to portray a difference between each others moral pasts since according to China they are superior in not having a colonial superpower past like Europe (PRC, 2022). They presume that Europe is well advanced in genocide practices so much that they are almost the definition of it.

In the **second** statement, the concept of discourse finds that China in their counter response to Canada they declare that it is important to look into crimes against Indigenous people. The discourse of "thorough and impartial investigation" conveys an understanding of equity and fairness and that there is a power element in the statement as well, with those making the request for an investigation being seen as China having the right to do so. They contend with their statement that the Canadian Government that holds authority and those who are oppressed both hold disproportionate amounts of power (Miller, 1990). Additionally, the phrase makes the assumption that crimes have been done against Indigenous people, supporting the notion that they have traditionally been neglected and oppressed similar to how Canada claimed that the Uyghurs are undergoing oppression. This presumption is important because it acknowledges the part that power dynamics play in how Indigenous people are treated. In contrast to acknowledging Indigenous people's agency and fortitude in the face of oppression, it also serves to perpetuate the notion that they are fundamentally oppressed second class people in Canada. Whereas the Uyghurs in China all live in harmony.

In the **third** statement, China partakes in providing a historic analysis of genocide against States who have actively opposed them. The use of deconstruction is to "de-naturalize" speech by revealing as much of the meaning and intent that underlie the discourse that we use and value (Harcourt, 2007). Discourse effectively facilitates the clear declaration China gives about "genocide" historical occurrences with certain countries. In particular China uses the assumption there is the same common meaning of genocide is shared and thus the normal

individual upon thinking about the word “genocide” will see “native North Americans in the 16th Century, African slaves in the 19th Century, Jews in the 20th Century, and the indigenous Australians who are still fighting today”. The usage of this phrase highlights the us versus them distinguishment (Hansen, 2020). China puts themselves at a superiority and their statements to be considered the truth (Mc Mover, 2018). Furthermore, the deconstruction of the text reveals that China suggests these opponents have no reason to express their disapproval of the nation's policies or their worries about possible genocide. This tactic reinforces power disparities and prevailing narratives by diverting attention from the nation's own activities and placing it on the human rights records of others (Hansen, 2020; Edkins, 2007).

## 7.2 Extract 2

(1) *“Facts have proven that there's no genocide in Xinjiang. This is the lie of the century made up by extremely anti-China forces.”*

*Wang Wenbin (Jones, 2021)*

(2) *“The OHCHR's so-called assessment on Xinjiang is orchestrated and produced by the U.S. and some Western forces and is completely illegal, null and void.”*

*“It is a patchwork of disinformation that serves as a political tool for the U.S. and some Western forces to strategically use Xinjiang to contain China.”*

*Liu Pengyu (VOA, 2022).*

In the **first** statement, with the use of discourses hold power that the statement offer an objective truth by positioning itself as a declaration of a fact. Mc Mover (2018) writes that the power of dominant discourses consists in their capacity to exclude alternative viewpoints to the point where thinking outside the discourse's parameters is viewed as illogical. It is crucial to understand that what is seen as "fact" is constantly influenced by the objectives and principles of those in positions of authority. The Chinese government is utilizing its considerable influence over how the world views Xinjiang in this instance to refute claims of genocide as they construct that the statement of “facts have proven that there's no genocide”. China presents facts that evidence from their own sources indicating there are no issues in Xingang relating to the Uyghurs and that the “lie of the century” is genocide even shown small signs of being there. Another issue with the statement is that it divides people into two

groups: those who accept the "facts" as provided by the Chinese government, and those who are branded as "extremely anti-China forces." This duality polarizes the conversation and marginalizes individuals with opposing views. By portraying China as the victim of unjust charges rather than appreciating the treatment of the Uighur minority, it strengthens the power dynamic between China and its opposition.

In the **second** statement, Derrida aims to eliminate dichotomy by carrying out it in an approach that calls into question the underlying hierarchy of the opposition. The manipulation of audiences through argumentation fallacies does so by highlighting gratifying arguments while leaving other ones ambiguous (Mambrol, 2016). The construct of assertion indicates that the OHCHR's evaluation of Xinjiang is not reliable or legitimate since it is purportedly influenced by US and Western forces with a goal to "contain" China. This implies a duality of hostility between China and the US/West, with the latter represented as a danger to China's interests and autonomy. It also suggests a power dynamic in which China is presented as the victim of aggression, excluding the potential that China may assert its own power and influence in the international community (Miller, 1990; Mc Mover, 2018). Furthermore, the usage of the words "disinformation" and "patchwork" in the statement shows that the OHCHR's evaluation is not supported by reliable data or facts. Post-structuralism would, however, draw attention to the reality that "facts" and "truth" are not neutral or objective; rather, they are created through discourse and power dynamics (Mc Mover, 2018). The statement also indicates that the official Chinese account is the only reliable information source, discrediting the opinions and experiences of people who have spoken out against Xinjiang's human rights violations. Overall, the statement represents a rhetoric that aims to delegitimize any criticism or investigation from outside sources and legitimate China's activities in Xinjiang. The statement aims to cast doubt on the OHCHR's evaluation and discredit any claims of human rights abuses in Xinjiang by portraying it as an outside political tool. Post-structuralism, on the other hand, would serve as a reminder that language and discourse are never neutral or objective but are instead constantly entwined with power relations and open to interpretation and dispute (Hansen, 2020).

### 7.3 Discussion



One of the objectives of this paper is to compare the two differing narratives and evaluate them in light of the notion of strategic narratives, and that is what the discussion will seek to accomplish.

Based on the analysis of the findings, it found how the language used in the statements were found to have underlying meanings and create power relations, hierarchy in terms of morality and establish a general truth about the situation in Xingang. In binary oppositions, which are hierarchical pairs of actors, ideas, and events, one part of the set is preferred over the other in order to establish or maintain meaning. This relationship's embedded power relation serves to support the favored interpretation inside the discursive construct (Mc Mower, 2018). The international community were found to have varying perceptions and opinions of the Uyghur genocide. The discussion below will divided the findings into subsections in order to provide an organised contextualization of the results.

### **Neutral Political Actors**

The finds in Extract 1, was that there was a dominant discourse of neutrality and diplomacy. The statements and reports made after years of promise, research and pressure only concluded in broad, unspecified and unaccountable discourses despite valid evidence being applicable and available. The statements presented arguments of neutrality, and in particular, only urged China to reassess its counterterrorism and counter-radicalization strategies. However, there is no neutral or objective knowledge within the concept of discourse. (Miller, 1990). The use of “urge” rather than “demand” or “require” provides different narratives. Using “urge” only makes it appear like they are suggesting to China to evaluate their terrorism policies and make a voluntary assessment if there are any human rights violations. Such a response is inadequate as China has already before the statements and reports publication has denied and even went further to go after other states who pertained a negative opinion on the Uyghur genocide. Their discourse of cannot be maintained when responding to serious situations where they include deaths and threats. The claim of neutrality in order not to cause a bigger issue only acting as if their actions have no bearing on the sequence of events that result in the suffering to which they are in response could worsen the situation (Seybolt, 1996). With this, China may be able to dismantle and modify its discriminatory language and methods on the Uyghur issue.

Furthermore, the report's wording choices, such as “discrimination” or “crimes against humanity” decreases the moral responsibility of the international community to act against the internationally acknowledged crime of Uyghur genocide. Both of the terms are broad and encompass a widespread of human rights violations. The report presents evidence of serious human rights abuses, including torture, imprisonment, and forced labor, but it fails to contextualize these crimes within the context of the UN Genocide Convention. According to the analysis, specific discourses can persuade assertions to be true in specific circumstances. Moreover, the restively neutral discourse of the report and statements portrays that the there is an inability to fulfill the fundamental duty for the promotion and protection of human rights (Finley, 2022). It also shows China's decades-long initiative's remarkable success in replacing the notion that human rights are unnegotiable and subject to state prerogatives with the idea that they are negotiable and subject to those prerogatives. Lastly, in the discourse concept the language used by political actors international is important as they serve to have impact and convince audiences both at home and abroad that their foreign policies are legitimate (Hansen, 2020).

### **Opposing Nations and Political Actors**

Furthermore, in extract 2, the opposing nations and political actors to China's violations demonstrate the many political viewpoints and discourses surrounding the human rights situation in Xinjiang, China. The statements were assisted in emphasizing the situation and acknowledging that foreign intervention is needed. It was finds found that in their discourses they portrayed a severity of the situation and demanded undulated response and action. This language choice creates a specific narrative that emphasizes the value of openness, responsibility, and third-party validation. By phrasing it in this way, the discourse indicates a lack of transparency in China's current Xinjiang policies or activities and the need for outside observers to rectify this supposed problem. It demonstrated the varying ways the international community has reacted opposing to China while still maintaining certain implicated stances.

However, such stances can be highlighted in the discourses failing to acknowledge China's violations towards the Uyghurs as genocide despite the legal simplicity and detailed, reliable reports and documents serving as sources of genocide confirmation. This shows that there is a redundancy with the word "genocide," and the international community thus tries to downplay the atrocities than how severe they are due to their political interests (Hansen, 2020). This is not meant to diminish the positive impact of what they have previously said,

but more action is required. This is because, according to the concept of discourse in poststructuralism, the acknowledgment of genocide will constitute the issue as more severe and grave, thus having all international communities have a moral obligation to act and physically intervene rather than retreat. This has already been seen before occur in high profile situations like Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia and low profile ones in Sudan and Guatemala (Seybolt, 1996). These remarks' language use is a powerful example of discourse's influence over how outsiders view and interpret the situation in Xinjiang. The use or non-use of specific phrases, such as "genocide," can have significant political ramifications and highlight the precarious equilibrium between commitments to uphold human rights and economic concerns. It also showed how political interests of the nations or actors can interfere in their statements of either acknowledging the genocide, reducing its severity or denying its occurrence. The excerpts ultimately demonstrate that the situation in Xinjiang is a complicated and varied matter that calls for continuing attention and investigation from the international community.

### **Supporting Nations and Political Actors**

Lastly, in Extract 3, concerning the supporting nations and political actors, it was found that the two statements demonstrate the rhetoric employed by political actors to defend China's conduct regarding Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Both arguments create a narrative that defends China's actions as essential in the fight against terrorism and extremism and characterizes detractors as politically motivated and partial. The language used by both political players fosters a power dynamic that benefits China's viewpoint and downplays the substantial record of abuses of Uyghur Muslims' human rights. This demonstrates how language shapes social reality and can exacerbate a crisis by diverting media attention and advancing political objectives of both the political actors. The self-interest of the situation pertains to be more important. It is evident that language is used to sustain the status quo and the predominant narrative by creating a hierarchy of knowledge and maintaining binary oppositions. To have a thorough grasp of the situation, it is crucial to analyze the political actors' language and their underlying motives. However, it is crucial to recognize the numerous reports and evidence of human rights violations against the Uyghurs and keep holding China responsible for its deeds.

### **China's Counter Responses**

Thought the evaluation and the application of the theory it was found that China employed two types of strategies in their discourse: (1) Good Versus Evil and, (2) Denial.

### **Good Versus Evil**

The use of binary oppositions, such as good versus evil, is a common strategy China uses to portray its moral superiority over other countries. They have used language carefully in their responses to construct power dynamics, dualism, and dichotomies between "us" and "them" and their superiority over Western countries. Their use of language serves to obscure their actions in favor of the human rights records of others, maintaining power imbalances and dominant narratives. They use the comparative narrative in their favour by portraying how the West has committed multiple genocides and crimes against humanity in their colonial pasts. There is no denying that those countries who have committed those genocides are not in the wrong but the diversion of a situation through the comparison of the other is appearing. It is unfair to both the victims to be compared and be put to a lesser extent based on the disturbing results of the genocides. Moreover, by comparing the evil acts the opposing nations or political actors have employed it can portray that overall, China is in a superior moral standing. To China, it is common knowledge that they do not have a colonial significant past such as the West thus they implement the "good" narrative on their end. They portray with their discourse that such nations with colonial pasts have no right to speak or comment on China's internal affairs since they have committed the same and even worse genocidal actions. This dichotomous representation tries to highlight China's position as morally superior to their counterparts.

### **Denial**

The denial response is another strategy used to refute claims of genocide. It involves discrediting the sources of such allegations and dismissing them as political tools Western forces use to contain China. It is essential to be aware of the language used by different actors in shaping these discourses. China uses words to refute accusations of genocide in Xinjiang, highlighting the significance of language in determining how we interpret events. China's counter-reactions have occasionally been successful in influencing the conversation in their favor, but they have also drawn criticism and censure from other countries. Their discourse aims to show contradiction in the prevalent language on human rights and casts the analysis as the work of American and Western powers, suggesting a political goal rather than a neutral assessment. By implying that the OHCHR is biased and subject to outside influences, this

strategy seeks to weaken its legitimacy. Since it presents the assessment as a staged event their perspective, is portrayed as the truth in this discourse, is contrasted with the alleged misinformation in the assessment. They present it as unlawful, invalid, and lacking credibility by challenging its legitimacy. This analysis demonstrates a tactic for diverting focus away from the assessment's actual substance and onto assumptions about the creators' hidden agendas and prejudices. As a result, language remains a powerful tool in shaping our understanding of global events.

Overall, the data shows the critical role language played in determining how the world responded to the Uyghur genocide. Political actors, China, and the international community's language choices have the potential to perpetuate dominant narratives, generate power dynamics, and minimize crimes committed against Uyghur Muslims. China, on the other, is essential to examine the language used by political actors and their underlying motivations in order to fully understand the issue. It can be interpreted that the international community is overall not the source to blame for the slow interference in Xingang as China is a member of powerful groups such as the P5 at the Security Council. Generally, the Security Council is able to intervene with military action only when it endangers the international peace and security. China has previous used their veto privilege in the past to their advantage and dismissed interventions such as the R2P Mynamnar. The failure of the Xinjiang resolution serves as a reminder to concerned nations that more work needs to be done collectively to uphold the core idea that everyone has the right to fundamental freedoms (Finley, 2022). Thus, language continues to play a significant role in how we interpret current events on a global scale, and it is crucial to be aware of the language that various actors are employing to shape these discourses. Language is one of the most important factors in the development and maintenance of a dominant discourse (Mc Mower, 2018).

## 8. Conclusion

To answer the proposed research questions: What are the discursive strategies employed by the international community in response to the Uyghur genocide? And What type of response has China used in reaction to the international community's backlash against the Uyghur genocide? This paper has demonstrated the multiple strategies the international community employs, whether it is neutral, opposing, or supporting the violation of human rights towards

the Uyghurs in Xingang. Also, China's response discourse was shown in the analysis portraying high hostility towards any type of criticism or describing the Uyghurs as victims of genocide. This was done through the methodological application of discourse analysis and the theoretical application of Poststructuralism alongside the concepts of discourse and deconstruction by analyzing reports, statements, and official documents.

This paper established that the international community response was somewhat different depending on the country or political actors' interest in the issue. It portrayed that the discursive strategies the international community implemented ranged from neutrality to opposition and support. Within these strategies of neutrality, the vagueness of the description of what is occurring in China portrayed that the OHCHR is not ready to yet to take accountability and find out what happened. In the opposition, it showed that many discourses did not implement the word "genocide" or even tried to avoid it as the word has severe meaning and implications that needed a call for action immediately if described as one. Also, it was found that states whose discursive strategies were in support and encouragement of China often had a power dynamic. Likewise, China's strategies that were employed consisted of good versus evil, where China would compare, explain and expose nations who criticized China relating to the genocide. In this discourse, china portrayed a superiority dichotomy, an "us" against "them." This gave China the leverage to look innocent of past colonial or genocidal crimes compared to other nations. Consequently, they employed a denial response where they would deny anything negative said about China. In this discourse, china portrayed itself as the actual victim being accused of committing genocide in Xingang.

This paper provided a contextualization of the Uyghur genocide in Xingang alongside a historical background in order to portray the long condemnation Uyghurs have faced. Also, the literature review provided that similar cases of genocide also had similar slow, neutral, and even denial responses resulting in devastating results that cost millions of people's lives that could have been avoided. Similar cases show that if the Uyghurs do not get the adequate support and help they need, then there is genocide happening again in front of our eyes despite the promise of never again. This also shows how the interpretation of genocide is so wide and that every researcher, lawyer, philosopher, and individual interprets it differently. The complexity of its interpretation portrays that this could be an issue of the Uyghur's slow and ineffective international community response. This can be further researched in future studies. This vagueness of the interoperation of genocide also affects humanitarian

intervention in general. This is due to the fact that they rely on each other, and also, there are sovereignty and country interest issues where one nation may not be ready to start a war or conflict they cannot finish or have the resources to partake in.

To conclude, the findings of this research have answered the research questions and proved the answers to be reliable through the use of discourse analysis and poststructuralism theory, and the concepts of discourse and deconstruct. This essentially shows the significance of this research that can be used and further research in the future, providing a different stance on the Uyghur genocide and international community response.

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