The Uyghurs of China:
A Genocide in the Making

Tracking the Stages of Genocide

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Abstract

Recent reports on the forced sterilization of Uyghur women in the People's Republic of China prompted experts to recognize the on-going situation as genocide. The aim of this thesis is to examine the different events that constitute the current genocide of the Uyghur nation in China, what led to it, and how it is likely to further develop. Based on Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide, a simple historical process research is conducted to analyse the causes and stages of the Uyghur genocide, and to make predictions regarding the ensuing stages and international intervention. By applying the theory of constructivism to the analysis, it becomes evident that genocide is a process that is produced by the social, economic, and political international structure, which renders many prevention measures ineffective. The thesis concludes that only immediate international intervention and prosecution of the perpetrator on the count of genocide conspiracy can prevent the irreversible destruction of the Uyghur nation.

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Table of Contents

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I. Introduction

We study International Relations (IR) because we want to understand the internal complexities and external factors that influence the international system and the issues that come with it. We want to influence policy-making that prevents international conflicts, and sometimes it is urgent. One of those urgent issues is genocide, which is not a new phenomenon, but the 21st century has already produced a significant number of cases. Especially cases that are still in their developmental stages need to be addressed before any escalation becomes irreversible. A current case is the situation of the Uyghurs[1] of the People's Republic of China (from here on referred to as China), who are reportedly being detained in so-called re-education camps in numbers of up to 1,5 million, and are allegedly subject to non-violent and violent brainwashing methods (BBC, 2019) as well as brutal torture (HRW, 2018). A recent report discovered the forced sterilization and abortions performed on Uyghur women, as well as the threat of detaining any woman who has more than two children or is about to give birth to a third (Zenz, 2020). In light of this report, Dr. Zenz and many other experts determine that China's persecution of the Uyghurs officially meets the legal definition of genocide, more specifically section D of Article II of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) which states that the intentional act of "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group" constitutes genocide (UN, 1951). Despite this recent recognition, the plight of the Uyghurs has been internationally acknowledged for several years, including early reports on Chinese crackdowns on Uyghurs (Wee, 2015), and the re-education camps whose existence was first denied by Chinese officials (Cumming-Bruce, 2018) and later advertised as 'vocational training centers' (Kuo, 2018). This raises the questions for how long this genocide has been developing, what led to it, why the world is reacting so slowly, and when we can expect international intervention. All these questions will be addressed throughout this thesis while attempting to answer the following research question: *How can the events constituting the Uyghur genocide explain its development?*

The hypothesis of this paper is that genocide is a process of social, economic and political dimensions and is inherently international in nature. This means that the case of the Uyghurs has not suddenly become a genocide, but rather is a genocide in the making that displayed

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[1] Different spellings of the word Uyghur exist, including Uighur (which is commonly used in Western writings) and Uygur (which is mainly used by the Chinese government in English-language publications). However, the group largely prefers the spelling 'Uyghur', as it resembles the native orthography of the word the most and therefore it will be used in this paper.

obvious signs of genocide in the earlier stages and thus, could have been prevented or at least reduced in terms of severity. In order to support this claim, I will explore the development of the Uyghur genocide in relation to Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide (2016) to understand the history of the issue, determine the international and political implications for China and the Uyghurs, and formulate predictions concerning next stages and international intervention. I will analyse certain events that took place in the course of this genocide through a simple historical method and apply Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide (2016) as a tool to determine which stage the crisis of the Uyghurs is situated in. Furthermore, the theory of constructivism will be applied to the definition of genocide and subsequent analysis to focus on the systemic international production of genocide and the concepts of individual and state identities.

II. Literature Review

As previously stated, the Uyghur case has only recently been recognized as genocide. And although the case has been associated with the term 'cultural genocide' for a few years now (see for example Cronin-Furman, 2018), there is barely any IR literature on the Uyghur case. Thus, in this literature review I want to explore the many ways in which genocide has been studied within IR so far, with a focus on themes that are relevant to this thesis, including reasons and origins of genocide (Midlarsky, 2005; Saideman and Jenne, 2009; Toft, 2009), the prevention of and intervention in genocides (Krain, 2005; Gregory et al., 2018), and methods of studying genocide (Midlarsky, 2009; Scherrer, 1999). However, before I can review such literature, it is important to define the concept of genocide. Thus, the first section will address the definition by drawing upon previous legal and scholarly definitions which will be elaborated on in the theory section of this paper. Following, the mentioned themes will be briefly discussed in separate sections for clarity.

II.i. Definition

In order to analyse genocide, it is first important to define it. Due to the elements of genocide varying from case to case, genocide is a highly debated concept with dozens of definitions across various disciplines. But not only the different contexts of each case affect how we define genocide, the context of the study we conduct matters as well. Mazur (2017: 134) explains that the definition of any concept always depends on the purpose of the study, meaning that when we are analysing a specific variable, we will be sure to include it in our definition. In this paper,

I want to find out in what stage the Uyghur genocide is, in order to predict the next stages and international intervention. Since the international community likely only reacts in case of breaches of international law, I need to put a special focus on the legal definition. However, as Mazur (2017: 142-144) notes, the legal definition lacks depth in the sense that genocide is an ever-evolving phenomenon. On the one hand, modern technology and the ability to learn and adapt from previous cases enables perpetrators to commit genocide on a larger or faster scale while simultaneously masking the act to evade the law. On the other hand, the legal definition understands genocide as a mainly domestic issue (Mazur, 2017: 144; Shaw, 2011: 647-648), which makes it easier for states to avoid intervention on the basis of sovereignty. While we will come back to the international dimension of genocide in the next section, it becomes clear here that the legal definition alone will not suffice for the analysis of the Uyghur case. Instead, Bachman (2020) refers to the original definition of genocide by Raphael Lemkin[2]. In his study on the most studied cases of genocide, Bachman (2020) finds that within two of the most influential genocide journals the majority of studies analyse the same type of cases and perpetrators using the same kind of definition. This "hegemonic understanding of genocide" is often too narrow and focuses solely on the physical destruction of a group as an end result, whereas Lemkin, in his original definition, understood genocide as process that included many different elements (Bachman, 2020: 15-17). Considering these aspects, the definition of genocide in this paper is a combination of the legal definition, in order to analyse what stage meets the criteria for international intervention, and a broader, more fluid definition which understands genocide as a process enabled by the international system. This means that any of the acts described in Article 2 of the UN CPPCG (1951) (including a. killing members of the group, b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group) are committed throughout a process that may start subtly and exponentially increase in severity and brutality. However, Lemkin's ideas about social, cultural and religious aspects (Bachman, 2020: 15) are considered in my definition as well, in the context of forced cultural assimilation of a certain ethnic group with the intent of the destruction of religion, language, culture and history. While the destruction of an

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[2] Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959), a Polish-Jewish lawyer, first coined the term 'genocide' as a description for the acts committed against the Jews during WWII, which was later adopted by the UN Convention on genocide prevention and punishment. The term genocide is a combination of the Greek word *genos* (family or kin) and the Latin word *caede* (killing).

ethnicity in the social sense is not included in the legal definition of genocide, I view it as an element included in the process of genocide, which can lead to the biological or physical destruction of an ethnicity. Lastly, I must mention that in this paper, genocide is defined as committed by the state. However, I understand the state as the perpetrator who is supported and enabled by the (ethnic) majority of the population and the international system. This will be further explained in the next section and the Theory chapter.

II.ii Origins of Genocide

One of the most studied themes regarding genocide seems to be its origins. In order to prevent or solve a conflict, it is important to understand the roots of the problem. Of course, genocide is not a two-sided conflict that can be solved through a compromise, the only acceptable solution is the perpetrator ceasing the violence. Nevertheless, to prevent any further escalation, we have to understand what the main causes of genocide are, and we can start the inquiry by examining the parties involved: perpetrator and victim. As mentioned earlier, I understand the state as the perpetrator who initiates the violence against a specific ethnic group who becomes the victim. This leads us to the questions what exactly is an ethnic group? And why do they become victims? Toft (2009) notes that there are two types of groups – ethnic groups and nations. She understands an ethnic group as people that share common traits including language, race, or religion and the inhabitation of a certain geographical territory, which is often due to exclusion (Toft, 2009: 231-232). Such group can become what is commonly understood as a nation through self-recognition as an 'other' in opposition to the majority of the population and recognition through others, most often the state of residence (Toft, 2009: 232). However, the simple existence of different ethnic groups within one state does not lead to ethnic violence, let alone genocide. Instead, Toft suggests two major ways that lead to the violence: first, if the ethnic majority makes up the government, there is a possibility that such group may abuse their power to act on emotions such as hatred or anger against the other group (Toft, 2009: 232, 245-6; Midlarsky, 2009: 288). The second way would be a perceived provocation from the minority group. If the minority group considers itself a nation, it may want to increase its (territorial) autonomy and self-determination, which in the eyes of the majority group may seem like a threat to their sovereignty and territory (Toft, 2009: 232).

Midlarsky (2005) shares a similar sentiment. Examining the issue from a realist perspective, Midlarsky argues that genocide can result from territorial, economic, and/or authority losses or the fear of such from the majority to the minority group (2005: 83-86). Furthermore, he believes

that applying the concept of *Realpolitik* to genocide supports the argument that genocide is not a domestic issue but rather an international one (Midlarsky, 2005: 85). The argument implies that, as pointed out by Toft above, the minority group may be considered a nation and thus may lay claim to a certain territory, which would include autonomy over economy and government. Whether or not such autonomy is desired within or outside of the state is not relevant to the government, the possibility of loss to another nation may be considered as a threat to the authority of the state (Midlarsky, 2005: 83). This argument is important as I will come back to it later on in this thesis. But it also lets us understand some of the international dimensions of genocide already. While I do not find realism to be a suitable theory in the study of genocide as it does not take the concept of identity into consideration, Midlarsky's argument about *Realpolitik* does point out that genocide is a conflict between nations (thus, literally, an international conflict), whether they are sovereign or not.

In fact, a significant number of IR scholars argue that genocide is inherently an international issue. Of course, there is 'physical evidence' of the international dimensions of genocide including refugees crossing borders (Saideman & Jenne, 2009: 262) or simply breaking international law which requires international intervention (Shaw, 2011: 647). Nevertheless, Saideman and Jenne argue that ethnic violence or genocide in one place can set in motion ethnic divisions in other places through spillover effects or diffusion (2009: 262-263). Modern communication technologies make it easier for the victims to publicize their dissent or plight which brings awareness to their kin outside of the state or other groups in similar situations (Saideman & Jenne, 2009: 262-263). Shaw, on the other hand, argues that genocides are ultimately committed against the 'international enemy' of the time period, for example Jews or Communists respectively (2011: 647). Today, Muslims may be considered to be such international enemy, as for example Morgan and Poynting (2012: 1) point out that Islam and Muslims are internationally viewed as 'folk devils', which drastically intensified since the September 11 attacks. A rather simple argument in support of this theory is the fact that the Uyghur Muslims in China, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and Muslims in India are all facing ethnic oppression and violence right now, in addition to the US travel bans on Muslim-majority countries. This alone showcases a deeper international connection between the case at hand and other contemporary issues.

Nevertheless, Shaw (2011) argues for an even more entrenched issue on the structural level. He explains that genocide always occurs within an international context, meaning that genocide can never be purely domestic since the international system shapes the interaction between states or nations (Shaw, 2011: 652-3). The international system directs and shapes the actions

of the actors involved (perpetrator, victim, 'bystander') but it also provides a space which can be influenced by powerful actors, usually the perpetrators, where genocide can take place and even spread (Shaw, 2011: 652-4, 657). This argument takes a constructivist approach by alluding to the classic structure-agency model. However, Shaw believes that a post-colonial approach to genocide may be beneficial as well, seeing that historic or contemporary colonialism is a structural root cause of genocide (2011: 653, 657). Further, he argues that terminology such as 'othering' highlights the structural relationship between perpetrator and victim, as it indicates an unequal power dynamic between the two actors (Shaw, 2011: 657).

Ultimately, in contemporary IR genocide research there seems to be a consensus that genocide is an international issue after all, which originates from structural and territorial imbalances among states and nations. Whether we view genocide from a realist, constructivist or post-colonial lens, there are several hypotheses regarding the origin or causes of genocide, as well as arguments for its IR relevance.

II.iii Genocide Intervention and Prevention

The main goal of genocide research is the establishment of effective prevention measurements and early detection for targeted intervention. As I am analysing one specific case and hope to make predictions as to if and when there will be intervention, the following literature that I am reviewing will be focused mainly on the reasons that constitute a need for intervention, not on methods of intervention or prevention.

One of the main questions surrounding intervention is what events trigger an international response? Generally, the answer should be that as soon as one of the acts described in the UN Genocide Convention are committed, intervention is legitimized. Unfortunately, it is not always that easy. States may refrain from labeling a situation a genocide, as explained by Southwick (2018: 131) who points out that if the genocide is not officially recognized there is no legal obligation to intervene. Although her article concerns the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya people, it is still applicable to the situation at hand. For example, Southwick notes that accusing another state of genocide may complicate political and economic relations and projects, and thus states with interests in the perpetrator state may want to retain these relations for as long as possible before they fully acknowledge the situation by intervening (2018: 131). But foreign interests are not the only reason why states do not intervene. Gregory et al. (2018), who conducted a study on more effective decision-making processes for genocide intervention, find that national security has a significant impact on decision-making as well. If the decision-

makers believe that the national security of their own state might be at risk due to intervention in another state, the decision if or how to intervene may turn out to be detrimental to the situation (Gregory et al., 2018: 111, 125). This also has to do with the emotional aspect of genocide, as decision-makers often feel a responsibility towards the lives at risk (Gregory et al., 2018: 110). However, Gregory et al. also explain the phenomenon of 'psychic numbing', which describes the feeling of being unable to help people in large numbers, as opposed to only one or a few people, thus believing that any action would be ineffective which consequently leads to inaction (2018: 114-115). This means that the longer the violence is occurring, and the more people become victims, the lower could be the incentive to intervene. And although this is not very logical (which emotions are not either), it does have some explanatory value seeing as many interventions occur far too late, if at all.

Similar to Gregory's et al. argument on national security, and Southwick's argument on national interests, Saideman and Jenne find that states tend to intervene for their own praise, and not on behalf of the victims (2009: 274-276). They explain that states tend to only intervene if they believe such intervention to be successful (Saideman & Jenne, 2009: 274). The reason for this is that success will be praised internationally and rewarded at home, whereas failure can mean consequences for the individuals involved. Recalling the previous arguments which can be summarised as self-interest, Krain (2005: 373) argues that diplomatic and economic relations affect the decision to intervene and at the same time affect the pressure felt by the perpetrators. In this sense, it can be argued that states with bigger economies that many other states rely on can worry less about repercussions than states with smaller economies do. So, does that mean economic sanctions might be enough to end the violence? Not according to Krain (2005), who argues that challenging military intervention is the most effective intervention method. Although he only compares different methods of military intervention in his study, Krain finds that "simple signaling of world interest is not sufficient to deter a regime bent on eliminating a domestic group. Something must also be done to reduce the amount of resources that the perpetrator can expend on a policy of genocide […]" (Krain, 2005: 368). While sanctions have the potential of reducing the perpetrator's resources, they often hurt the disadvantaged population of the state more than the actual government. Thus, Krain (2005: 368, 379, 380) finds military intervention that directly challenges the perpetrator or supports the victim is the most effective method.

By summarizing the works of the above, we find that self-interest is the main driving force for incentive or restraint to intervene. Thus, if we want to predict if and when the international community might intervene in the case of the Uyghur genocide, we need to take into

consideration the diplomatic and economic relations and interests in China. Furthermore, if the intervention is supposed to be militarily in order to be effective, the security risks coming from China need to be assessed as well. This may even be the most important factor to consider as Saideman and Jenne (2009: 273) write: "countries that are engaged in internal conflict also tend to be more dangerous internationally."

II.iv Studying Genocide

After having reviewed some of the most popular topics regarding genocide, I now want to review how exactly genocide is studied within IR and social science in order to gain insight into the most useful methods. In relation to that, Midlarsky (2009) analysed the effectiveness of large-N studies in comparison to small-N studies in genocide research. His findings suggest that while both types can contribute to genocide prevention, large-N studies are more effective in the study of general causes of genocide (including what type of regimes are more prone to commit genocides, or what type of group is more prone to become victims of genocide), whereas small-N studies (including single case) are beneficial in policy-formation (Midlarsky, 2009: 296, 284). Similarly, Hiebert points out that the ultimate goal of genocide research is policy-formation and that comparative research can be a crucial method for prevention policies by assessing previous successes and failures (2008: 334-335).

Nevertheless, she explains that the desire for generalizability should not prevent a thorough analysis of a given case with unique attributes (Hiebert, 2008: 334). It may be important to mention here that genocides are unique in their elements indeed. A fitting term here might be 'false universalism', which refers to the wrong assumption that theories regarding one case are universally applicable to others. While comparative research can be both, beneficial and detrimental, to the ruling out of false universalism, it is a reminder that comparisons have higher validity if variables are properly assessed and spurious associations are ruled out. Brunk (2008) and Desch (2006) both researched the problem of making analogies in the formation of intervention or prevention policies. Although they are not concerned with scholarly research on genocide, they both argue that by comparing the situation at hand with previous cases of genocide, misguided policies were made in many instances (Brunk, 2008; Desch, 2006). More specifically, the 'Somalia Syndrome' (fear of intervention after the failed mission in Somalia in 1992) led to the failure of the intervention in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (Brunk, 2008: 303, 306, 308). Similarly, Desch found that the 'Holocaust Analogy' (the ability of policy-makers to convince the general public of their decision based on feelings of responsibility or

lack thereof) jeopardized the intervention policies in the Bosnian genocide (2006: 111, 132-138). I believe that these understandings of comparison need to be taken into account when formulating and deciding on a method suitable for the study. The researcher must remain critical of any generalized assumptions and theories concerning genocide, especially in regards to predictions and policy-formation.

A last sentiment to consider in the study of genocide is the cleavage between theory and empirical knowledge. Appropriately, Scherrer (1999: 21-22) describes how many scholars conduct purely theoretical research without acknowledging the actual human cost of the atrocities and tend to physically distance themselves from the situation. While Scherrer (1999: 22) points out that during the time of his writing there were no proper research methods regarding genocide, he explains that it is crucial to find a balance between the theoretical and empirical study in order to draw appropriate conclusions for genocide prevention methods. Mazur agrees, illustrating that in order to understand the causes of genocide, the researcher must put themselves in the position of the perpetrator, figuratively speaking, and see the situation through their lens (2017: 139). This would allow the researcher to understand the categorization of groups and, in the best-case scenario, the intent on the behalf of the perpetrator, as opposed to a researcher who wants to remain an outsider third party (Mazur, 2017: 139).

To conclude this chapter, reviewing previous IR and genocide research literature provided many valuable insides to the study of genocide. It helped me formulate my definition of the concept, and it built the foundation for the rest of the thesis as I will be able to base my theory and methodology on the reviewed literature. Furthermore, the third section provided a crucial understanding of the mechanisms of international intervention which will be applied in the predictions of the analysis. The paper will now continue with the theoretical framework.

III. Theory

The theory chosen for this paper, as already mentioned, is constructivism. This chapter will be kept relatively short as I will explain the basic assumptions of constructivism and the relevance to this case, as well as why this theory is the most effective in the scope of this paper.

Constructivism is a critical theory concerned with the relations between states, which assumes that such relations are socially constructed through non-material factors such as

language. First coined by Nicholas Onuf[3], Alexander Wendt (1992) largely contributed to the common understanding of today's constructivism. Wendt (1992) criticized the focus on rationalism, self-interest and materialism in realist and liberalist theories, and insists that social constructs of (state) identity constitute the international structure of the world. Constructivism is further concerned with agency and structure; states, especially powerful ones, have the ability to shape the international structure, whereas said structure is what enables (or restrains) the agency of states in the first place. It is further important to notice that it is the identity of the state which determines how states perceive the international structure, in direct opposition to power politics. In fact, Wendt (1992) argues that the material aspect of power politics cannot explain how states perceive military threats, as the sheer military capabilities do not frighten other states, it is the social behaviour of such state that determines whether others perceive this state as hostile. The social behaviour of a given state can change depending on their interests, which are a product of the state's identity. State identity concerns how a state perceives itself in terms of capabilities, status in the world, foreign relations, etc., which means interests can vary widely from state to state, and with it their behaviour.

Although constructivism is largely concerned with state identities, it is also applicable to ethnic identities. In fact, ethnicity is commonly understood as a mainly social construct of identity, as has been pointed out earlier by referring to Toft (2009: 231). A shared language and religion are two main characteristics of ethnic groups, as well as a shared history. Thus, as a social construct that acts within the international system and influences the international structure, ethnic groups can be analysed through a constructivist lens. Furthermore, even though ethnic groups are usually found within one region, many do not have a claim to sovereignty over their territory, which means those would not find a meaningful place within realism. In constructivism, ethnic groups (or nations) are considered to have agency and thus the ability to influence the interests of other nations. In the case of the Uyghurs, who have no claim to a sovereign state, the group has the ability to influence its relation with the government of China which in turn shapes China's identity and interest. This has considerable effects on China's behaviour within the international structure but also in its domestic affairs. This understanding is crucial for this thesis, as it may explain China's domestic and international actions and behaviour, as well as how other states may perceive such behaviour and how they would react to it. It is crucial as it aids the making of predictions in the analysis.

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[3] Nicholas Onuf (b. 1941) is an IR scholar and professor who coined the term 'constructivism' in his book "World of Our Making" (1989). In his work, he examines the 'rules' of social interaction between states.

Therefore, a realist perspective, for example, would not be sufficient in explaining China's behaviour and even less so in predicting international intervention, as material or military capabilities are not the main variables driving international relations. Other critical theories, however, may be suitable for the analysis of genocide or ethnic groups, such as IR Feminism or Post-colonialism. As we have already seen in the literature review, post-colonialism can be beneficial in the study of the origin of ethnic conflict or genocide, as it presupposes unequal power relations between actors that originated during colonial times or modern colonialist practices (Shaw, 2011: 653-657; Scherrer, 1999: 14-21). Seeing that the autonomous region of Xinjiang, which is the historical region of the Uyghurs, has been conquered by the Qing dynasty in the 18th century and is thus a product of imperialism, post-colonialism may be a suitable theory for the analysis of the origin of the violence. However, this thesis is not concerned with the origin of the conflict, but rather with the current situation and its implications on international relations. Similarly, IR Feminism may be a suitable theory in the analysis of genocide practices, as genocide is also an inherently gendered issue. Bemporad (2018: 2) writes: "Mass rape often becomes the first stage for the annihilation of the enemy group. […] By breaking down moral order and kinship structure, mass rape serves as an instrument of ethnic cleansing." But not only the raping of women is a gender-specific issue. In the case at hand, it was the forced sterilization of Uyghur women that first prompted the recognition of the situation as genocide. And while a feminist approach to the Uyghur genocide would certainly be important, it does not suit the context of this thesis as a whole.

To summarize, critical theories seem to be more suitable in the analysis of genocide, as opposed to mainstream theories such as realism, due to their understanding which goes beyond material capabilities. However, in the context of this thesis, where I want to find out at what stage of genocide the situation of the Uyghurs is located and based on this make predictions of the next stages and international intervention, constructivism is the most appropriate theory. Due to constructivism's assumption that states behave according to their identities and interests, which are based on how they perceive themselves and others within the international system, this theory allows me to make predictions regarding the behaviour of China, based on the conflict with the Uyghurs, and the international community, based on how China's behaviour is perceived internationally.

IV. Methodology

Having explained and justified the choice of theory for this paper, this chapter will now explain the chosen method for analysing the genocide of the Uyghurs. As mentioned in the introduction, I will use a simple historical research method to track and explain several events that will be categorized according to Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide (2006). The aim is to identify the current stage of the Uyghur genocide, which might help predict future events and international intervention. This chapter will be divided into two sections in correspondence to the sections of the analysis. The first section will elaborate on the chosen method of this thesis – historical process research. In the second section, I will go briefly into detail how I will make the predictions in the second section of the analysis.

IV.i Historical Process Research

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the stage of genocide at which the Uyghur situation is located, and simultaneously to identify the first stages that should have already notified the international community of genocide in the making. There are three aims of making these observations: first, it should help us make predictions of next stages and international intervention; second, it should help us understand the current situation and act accordingly; and third, it should showcase how genocide in general is a process that develops overtime and that early warning signs should never be ignored. In the analysis, I will analyse the Uyghur case through a historical process research method. As the hypothesis of this paper assumes that genocide is a process, I will analyse it as such.

Historical process research is a simple method for a longitudinal single case study. As the analysis focuses on the case of the Uyghurs, this method is the most appropriate to understand the mechanisms that enabled the genocide and how it progressed over time. The idea is to look at a number of events that took place over the span of different periods of time and to identify how these events progressed from the first to the last one. The main concern is which events should be included in the research, thus the events have to be delimitated. In this case, as it is an on-going situation, we know the last (or latest) event[4] on the spectrum of the process and thus want to find out where the process began and how it led to the current situation.

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[4] Since the situation is on-going, new events may occur in the course of writing this paper. As I do not have the possibility of rewriting my entire analysis or thesis in the last few weeks or even days before submission, I must settle on one event as the latest stage and thereby running the risk of submitting a thesis that is not completely up-to-date. However, as the aim is also to identify earlier stages, this should not invalidate the relevancy of my paper.

Nevertheless, it is not always easy to identify the crucial events for the analysis, especially if the exact starting point is initially unknown. Some longitudinal methods (e.g. process tracing) presuppose a delimitation of events as they are concerned with the process between two distinct events. In this case, however, another tool is needed to determine which events need to be examined in the analysis.

As I want to determine the current stage of the Uyghur genocide, it is reasonable to make the delimitation based on an existing set of stages that were previously developed by scholars. Therefore, I will utilize Gregory Stanton's[5] (2016) Ten Stages of Genocide not only as a guide for the delimitation of events but also as a tool for analysing such events within their respective stage. The advantage of this is that it provides me with a clear indication of which events are crucial in this study, and furthermore gives me the liberty to examine events in a meaningful context without having to develop theoretical stages prior to my analysis, which would be too broad in the scope of this thesis. I am convinced that Stanton's work is a suitable and reputable resource, as it is a project that has been continuously progressing since its original publication as "The Eight Stages of Genocide" in 1996, and further has been applied to several studies of genocide cases (see e.g. Chavez Cameron & Phan, 2018; Memišević, 2015; Burleson & Giordano, 2016). The next section of the methodology will revisit Stanton's stages for further use in this thesis.

Based on Stanton's work, the first section of the analysis will examine in more detail the events in the context of their respective stage. This will be done by explaining each respective stage and simultaneously comparing the elements of the events to it. By applying a constructivist approach to each event, I am aiming to understand the structural relations that led to and enabled said event, and in turn how it affects the international structure. To identify these events, I will draw upon a combination of primary and secondary sources. Unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain access to official Chinese domestic policies, and as I do not speak a Chinese language I am limited in my own research. However, I will use primary accounts of refugees who claim to have been detained by Chinese authorities or have otherwise witnessed the situation, and other primary sources of experts who have investigated the situation. Secondary sources such as news articles will be utilized as well. The findings of this section of the analysis will constitute the basis of the second section. Furthermore, these findings will lay the

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[5] Dr. Gregory H. Stanton (b. 1947) is a professor of genocide research and founder of Genocide Watch, an organization with the aim of early detection and prevention of genocide. Stanton is practically experienced in genocide prevention and punishment policies through his work in the U.S. State Department and the United Nations.

theoretical groundwork and understanding of the Uyghur genocide which will then be translated into predictions in the following section.

IV.ii Predictions

In the second part of the analysis I will make predictions regarding the future development of the Uyghur genocide according to Stanton's stages. Based on the findings of what events happened in accordance to each stage, the goal is to predict what kind of events are possible to follow in the Uyghur case, and when the international community may intervene, if at all. In general, such predictions are important because they give us an indication of where and when prevention or intervention efforts need to be implemented. However, it is not easy to make predictions in situations of genocide, as every case is unique and methods are evolving, thus I need to be very cautious in my predictions.

Assuming that all genocides have the same basic structure according to the 10 stages of genocide (which do not have to be linear but often are overlapping), the analysis of the Uyghur case should allow us to make predictions regarding a general direction of the situation according to the stages that have not yet been reached. However, Stanton's stages alone cannot predict the actual events that may occur. First, the social, economic and political role and relations of China in the international structure according to constructivist assumptions need to be assessed. Only if we understand what enables the Chinese state to commit genocide in the first place, productive predictions and later policy-decisions can be made. Furthermore, current global issues need to be taken into consideration as well, such as border security conflicts and the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, since they may reshape or reinforce the international structure and the behaviour of the states within. Therefore, based on China's social, economic and political role, as well as the influence of the Uyghur nation on these aspects, the second part of the analysis will formulate predictions regarding the future development of the Uyghur genocide and international interference.

This thesis is largely empirical in nature as I am mostly concerned with explaining real events that constitute the Uyghur genocide. The main function of theory in this paper is to help understand what genocide is and how different events were products of the international structure. The analytical value lies within the understanding of genocide as a process that is affected by different international factors which is not only applicable to the Uyghur case but all other instances of genocide. It furthermore must be said that genocide is an incredibly biased issue (the bias of the perpetrator against the victim on which the genocide is based), meaning

that it is not easy to remain completely impartial. Thus, based on Scherrer's sentiment to not forget the human cost of genocide (1999: 21-22) I must acknowledge that this paper argues in favour of the victims.

V. Analysis

In this analysis, I want to find out what events constitute the Uyghur genocide based on the Ten Stages of Genocide. Based on that, I will then make predictions regarding the ensuing stages of the Uyghur genocide, including international intervention in the conflict. The goal of this analysis is to answer the research question "How can the events constituting the Uyghur genocide explain its development?" which aims at uncovering how the genocide of the Uyghurs has unfolded over time, what events might have exhibited early warning signs, what the possible next steps are that need to be prevented and why the international community is not intervening in the crisis. In order to do so, this analysis will be divided into two major sections. In the first section, I will identify and analyse the events of the genocide according to Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide (2016), which serves the purpose of understanding which events led up to the current situation and how they each constitute the Uyghur genocide. In the second section, I will make predictions on the further development based on China's role in the international structure according to constructivism.

V.i The Stages of the Uyghur Genocide

In order to analyse the events of the Uyghur genocide, this section will be comprised of several smaller sub-sections, each according to their respective stage of genocide. Each section will begin with an explanation of Stanton's stage and will be followed by the analysis of the affiliated event. The stages that the Uyghur genocide has not yet reached will be explained in the second section.

The ten stages that Stanton describes are: (1) Classification, (2) Symbolization, (3) Discrimination, (4) Dehumanization, (5) Organization, (6) Polarization, (7) Preparation, (8) Persecution, (9) Extermination, and (10) Denial. Before I begin, it is important to note that Stanton (2016) understands that the process is not linear (yet chronological) as stages can overlap and "continue to operate throughout the process" of genocide. Furthermore, Stanton describes what kind of preventive measures apply to each stage, which will be applied to the analysis of each event as well.

(1) Classification

The first stage of genocide is the classification of ethnic groups, which serves to increase an 'us versus them' mindset. While the simple naming of a group does not constitute a genocidal action, especially when such group classifies itself, it is important for the state and society to stress the similarities between such groups instead of the differences. Such similarities include a common language, religion, values, etc. When the differences between groups are constantly highlighted it will increase the 'us versus them' mentality (or 'othering') which is the first step to genocide and quickly evolves into the second stage.

In the case of the Uyghurs, the classification started as early as the integration of Xinjiang into the Chinese Republic. According to Jakimów and Barabantseva (2016), the formation of the concept of citizenship in China has always closely been linked to the social and ethnic status of the people. While Han Chinese were (and are) viewed as the epitome of the Chinese nation, Tibetans and Uyghurs (among other minorities) were seen as 'weak', 'backward' peasant nations (Barabantseva 2011: 86). This classification therefore was not targeted directly against Uyghurs, but rather targeted against any ethnic minority in China. However, it certainly had an impact on how the classification of several minorities in China developed.

The Uyghurs have been officially recognized as an ethnic minority nation in China, native to Xinjiang and mainly speaking the Turkic language Uyghur. The majority of Uyghurs identifies as Muslim, and many Uyghurs live in countries bordering the region of Xinjiang, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Due to the history of the region of Xinjiang, specifically the two short-lived East Turkestan republics (1933-34, 1944-49) and several further attempts to gain independence from China, its ethnic inhabitants (Uyghurs) became known as separatists and religious extremists. After 9/11 and the start of the global 'war on terror', the association with religious extremism largely turned into terrorism, which increased after the unrest in Xinjiang's capital Ürümqi in 2009. A report on the 2010 national defense plan in China references the East Turkestan Independence (ETI)[6] movement several times as a separatist group whose supporters require a 'crackdown', while simultaneously equating separatism, extremism and terrorism (State Council, 2011). Although the report does not state further how exactly such crackdown is to be conducted and how to identify supporters of the ETI movement, it is reasonable to believe that any Uyghur or Muslim may be associated with the ETI

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[6] The East Turkestan Independence movement calls for the independence of the autonomous region of Xinjiang as an Uyghur or Muslim republic. Supported by groups globally recognized as terrorist organizations, support for the East Turkestan Independence movement is currently recognized as a terrorist ideology only by the People's Republic of China.

movement. In an official report on the terror attack of 2014 in Xinjiang, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)[7] is credited with the attack, whereas participants of the violence are interchangeably referred to as terrorists and gangsters (State Council, 2014). Another report from the same year describes the punishment of fifteen officials from Xinjiang for their religious beliefs (Jia, 2014). The report states that due to the beliefs or participation in religious activities, which is forbidden for government officials, several officials were either removed from their position or investigated by police, insisting that the region threatens 'ethnic unity' and officials need to be 'tough enough' in the fight against terrorism (Jia, 2014). Solely the possession of religious texts or religious gatherings are described as illegal and 'compromising social stability'.

The language used in these reports paints a clear picture. Uyghur Muslims are equated with separatists and terrorists, even gangsters, which classifies Uyghurs not only as 'weak peasants' but as threats to the stability and unity of the entire state. The single classification of Uyghurs thus started around the time of violent conflicts in Xinjiang and the 'war on terror', when they were unofficially declared as part of the common enemy – terrorism. An attempt to emphasize similarities between Hans and Uyghurs would not have been successful, as the image of the Uyghur as a terrorist or separatist with no common grounds has already been painted.

(2) Symbolization

The second stage describes the symbolization of the group. This means that the 'other' group will be associated with certain names and symbols, as was the case with the yellow stars which Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust. At this stage, the othering of the victim group first becomes obvious (especially to outsiders) and increasingly dangerous. Furthermore, the symbols do not have to be forced upon the group, instead, existing symbols may be criminalized or at least become socially unacceptable and thus forcing the group to refrain from showcasing their symbols. This can include any type of clothing, styling, body modification or similar. If the government is involved in the legal status of symbols (either the forced symbolization or criminalization of existing symbols), it is the responsibility of the majority population to disregard the symbols and as such deprive them of their meaning.

As a majority Muslim group, it may be obvious that in this stage any type of Muslim symbols will be subject to symbolization. And indeed, already in 2015 China banned "abnormally" long

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[7] The East Turkestan Islamic Movement, founded in 1988, is an organization today known as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). It is globally recognized as a terrorist group and distinct from the East Turkestan Independence movement based on its organization. However, support for each other exists.

beards, wearing headscarves in public and fasting during Ramadan in Xinjiang (Kuo, 2015). Especially long beards and headscarves (such as the burqa, hijab, niqab) are commonly associated with Islam, and thus the banning of displaying these symbols is supposed to serve as a measure against Islamic extremism. However, proper measurements to enforce these new bans were not in place yet, except the barring from taking public buses. In 2017, it was reported that these bans will be sanctioned from then on forward, and new restrictions on religious weddings were implemented as well (BBC, 2017). In regards to preventive measures, Kuo writes: "as long as Chinese officials tell residents they will be safer if religious expressions are kept to a minimum, these measures are likely to continue."

(3) Discrimination

As soon as the victim group is associated with symbols, it becomes easier for law enforcement and society to openly discriminate against the group. In the third stage, discrimination becomes institutionalized through laws that deprive the group of certain rights. Civil rights, voting rights, right to citizenship, freedom of expression of religion, marital and family rights, among others can be affected, either at once or throughout time. When laws prevent a certain group from engaging in politics, society, or infrastructure, they have no legal protection against discrimination and easily become victims to more severe crimes. Especially in the case of denied citizenship, the government attempts to rid itself of any responsibility toward the victim group and instead pushes the issue onto the international stage.

The Uyghurs have been subject to several types of institutionalized discrimination. Of course, freedom of religion has been severely repressed by policies regarding the wearing of Muslim symbols and participation in Muslim traditions in Xinjiang, as has already been discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, the Chinese government ordered the return of all passports of Xinjiang citizens in 2016 (Solomon, 2016). As with previous restrictions on Uyghurs, the government cited the unrest and extremism in the region as reason to limit travelling. It was further stated that the travel plans of 'ordinary people' will not be affected, as only 'criminals' will be prevented from leaving the country (Solomon, 2016). Based on the language used previously by Chinese officials, one can argue that 'ordinary people' most likely refers to Han Chinese, whereas any Uyghur Muslim displaying religious affiliation can be classified as a 'criminal'. This measure greatly impedes on the freedom of movement, hindering Uyghurs to safely emigrate or to ever return to China.

Although China's heavily criticized one-child policy has been lifted in 2015, family policies are still targeting Uyghurs. Previously, ethnic minorities in China enjoyed the privilege of

having less restrictions on reproduction than Han Chinese. In 2017, a new policy was implemented which called for ethnic equality by allowing Han Chinese to reproduce at the same rate as ethnic minorities (Hincks, 2017). While the policy itself is not a discrimination of Uyghurs, it has been argued that this policy is intended to increase the Han population, especially in Xinjiang (Hincks, 2017). This policy may be coupled with the policy of 2014, when the government of Xinjiang started offering financial support to inter-ethnic couples, in an attempt to assimilate Uyghur culture (Kaiman, 2014). The incentive is to promote marriages between Uyghurs and Hans, with the goal of limiting Uyghur cultural influence on children. Interestingly, in other instances of genocide family-planning policies targeted inter-ethnic couples in the opposite way: in Myanmar, Rohingya couples reportedly have to pay high fees and often are denied permission to get married (Amnesty, 2004: 30) whereas inter-ethnic marriage is commonly discouraged and opposed (Wardle, 2015).

Ultimately, the Uyghurs became subject to legal and social discrimination in the form of restrictions on travel and expression of religion, as well as the promotion of Han culture for the assimilation of Uyghur culture. Due to China's justification of the passport policy (preventing criminals from traveling) and the family policies not being restrictive, it is difficult for the international community to intervene or offer support to the Uyghurs. It is thus unclear what kind of preventive measures could have been useful in these instances of discrimination.

(4) Dehumanization

After discrimination becomes institutionalized, the dehumanization of the discriminated group begins. While the discrimination takes place on the legal level, the dehumanization is primarily in the social sphere. Hate propaganda deprives the victim group of their humanity through name-calling and depiction as anything less than a human being, which serves the purpose of reducing the population's aversion against violence, torture and even murder of the victim group. At this stage, Stanton suggest the first involvement of the international community by directly targeting perpetrators with sanctions. Local leaders and public figures need to get involved as well, condemning the dehumanization of the group.

Under Chinese law, ethnic minorities (including Uyghurs) are protected from discrimination. However, the framing of Muslims in state media largely contributes to the general population's perception of Muslims. Luqiu and Fang (2018) conducted a study over a 10-year period examining Chinese state media's reporting on Muslims and Islam, and how this reporting affects how Muslims are perceived by non-Muslims and themselves in China. Due to the strict laws concerning media and information, all news outlets are controlled by the government,

some more and some less, and international reports are almost exclusively derived from Western news agencies (Luqiu & Fang, 2018: 602-603). Any type of agenda, whether Chinese or Western, is thus exclusively aired to the population which perpetrates perceptions and stereotypes. The authors found that Western media tends to report on Muslims and Islam negatively, usually perpetrating the terrorist stereotype, which means that Chinese news on international issues will portray Muslims and Islam negatively as well (Luqiu & Fang, 2018: 603). This issue is related to Morgan and Poynting's (2001) assertion of Muslims being the global 'folk devil', as has been previously discussed in the literature review section on the origins of genocide. Such international, structural stereotyping of Muslims clearly influences the development of genocide in China.

Furthermore, education about Islam (or any religion for that matter) is strictly prohibited in China in order to preserve the national Chinese ideology, leading to misunderstandings about Muslim traditions. Such misunderstanding contributes to the negative portrayal of Muslims in China, and policies that are intended to benefit ethnic minorities anger the Han majority, as they often do not understand (due to lack of education on the issue) why such policies are necessary in the first place (Luqiu & Fang, 2018: 609). Luqiu and Fang's study (2018) further attests to the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims, as it shows that non-Muslim participants largely attribute negative words with Islam. While the dehumanization in this case may not be overt, the association of Muslims with terrorism and solely negative connotations dehumanizes them to terrorists and criminals. In a country like China, where cases of capital punishment are the highest globally and 'lesser' crimes than terrorism are punishable by death, the perception of Muslims solely as terrorist is equally dehumanizing, as it reduces the population's aversion to their persecution, torture, and death.

This can be further witnessed by looking at the murals that were painted near a mosque in Xinjiang in 2015. The BBC (2015) has published several images of these murals depicting the killing of terrorists by the PRC and many other depictions of the 'unacceptable' behaviour of Muslims. While it is not clear who painted these murals, they are a visual representation of the public's perception of (Uyghur) Muslims and Islam in China. Whether international campaigns to reduce the dehumanization of Uyghurs would be successful is unlikely. Due to the restrictions on the internet and social media as well as education, the local population would most likely not receive much information from outside of China. A more structural preventive measure would be a change in international and specifically Western media and news that would refrain from stereotyping Islam and instead focuses on the struggles faced by Muslims globally, as well as a more informed reporting to raise awareness. Furthermore, Western media

and news outlets have the responsibility to clearly distinguish between terrorism and Islam, and report more often on other forms of terrorism such as nationalist, white supremacist and populist terrorism.

(5) Organization

The fifth stage of genocide is the organization. At this point, the process of genocide turns from social and institutionalized discrimination and hate into an organized persecution of the victim group. Whether it is the state's official military or a type of militia or otherwise supported group (in order to divert responsibility for the crimes away from the government), the government is employing and training troops or groups for the espionage, persecution and even murder of the victim group. This stage becomes visible through the purchase and distribution of arms to those militias and groups. Here, the international community must stop the distribution of arms and military gear to the perpetrator state, and impose targeted sanctions and embargoes.

As China is a heavily armed and militarized state already as one of the top five arms exporters (China Power, 2020), this stage may be less obvious to recognize as an outsider, and prevention efforts may be relatively useless. Nevertheless, reports exist about special training and deployment of paramilitary forces in Xinjiang specifically, always justified as a counter-terrorism effort. In 2015, for example, a year-long 'security campaign' was launched in Xinjiang in response to several violent attacks in Kashgar, one of the most important cities economically in the country's west (Gracie, 2015). Military presence was and is more concentrated in Xinjiang (and other regions with great numbers of Muslims) than in Han-majority regions. A similar picture can be seen in 2017 when within one week several thousand troops have been deployed to Ürümqi in another anti-terror strike (Phillips, 2017). Later, at the end of 2019, Reuters reports on another paramilitary drill in the Pamir mountains located in Xinjiang, training for the targeting of 'thugs' in an anti-terror campaign (Wu, 2019).

Here, again, the framing of these drills and deployments as anti-terror campaigns makes international involvement difficult. However, as has been already established in earlier sections, Uyghurs and Muslims are universally understood as separatists and terrorists, and using language such as 'gangsters' and 'thugs' puts a greater target on Uyghurs in the region. These drills and parades can be understood as a symbolic threat to the native population, as a way of showing off the military capabilities and incentive to put a stop to the unrest in any way necessary. The behaviour of the Chinese state and military is clearly threatening towards the Uyghur nation even though the power dynamics are already incredibly unequal. In terms of prevention measures, as stated in the earlier paragraph, arms embargoes would have most likely

been unsuccessful as a measure against the armament of troops in Xinjiang. Nevertheless, targeted sanctions against military officials, as proposed by Stanton, have been imposed. Unfortunately, these sanctions were imposed way too late by the U.S. government in July of this year (Palmer & Gramer, 2020), when preventive measures such as economic sanctions have barely any impact on the situation anymore. I will come back to this later in the analysis.

(6) Polarization

In the sixth stage, the discrimination is taken further by polarizing the population. The 'moderate', less biased center is the main group that may oppose the persecution and genocide of the victim group and thus poses a threat to the perpetrator. Polarization, the exaggeration of the 'us versus them' mentality, is the perpetrator's weapon against a moderate center in order to garner support from the majority of the population. Hateful propaganda spread by mass media, laws that prevent marriage or reproduction between opposing groups, and the disarmament of the victim group are all measures that further the gap and conflict between the groups. Depending on the situation of the group at this stage, the international community has the responsibility to provide the victims with resources that help their defense, either through humanitarian assistance or, in an extreme situation, the distribution of arms.

It may be not obvious at first if propaganda is still at the symbolization stage, dehumanization stage or already at the polarization stage. In the case of the Uyghurs, this stage may be even more blurred. Hateful propaganda has already been identified in an earlier stage, and in another earlier stage we found that marriage and reproduction between opposing groups are actually encouraged in Xinjiang. So, what event may constitute the sixth stage of polarization in the Uyghur genocide? Even though the government and media have already succeeded in the classification and dehumanization of Uyghurs as terrorists and separatists, the government further tried to erase Uyghur history in an attempt to invalidate any Uyghur national sentiments. A white paper published by the State Council's information office in 2019 claims that the East Turkistan state has never existed (Jia, 2019). The white paper claims that terrorists and separatists were "distorting history and facts", and that the absorption of Xinjiang in 1949 into the newly founded People's Republic of China was a 'peaceful liberation' (Jia, 2019). The report concludes that under the leadership of the ruling communist party, "people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang strive together with people from all over the country, and the region is now in the best development stage in its history with the economy in the region developing sustainably, the social environment harmonious and stable, people's lives continuously improving, religions developing soundly and people unifying" (Jia, 2019).

Although the phrasing, especially of the conclusion, may not seem polarizing at first, this white paper should be understood as an attempt to erase certain Uyghur history and with it any claims to an Uyghur national identity. By invalidating the identity and history of the Uyghurs, the government is signalling to the general population that any wish to be sovereign is a threat to China's stability and security. Any foreign mention of the East Turkistan republic would be seen as extremist propaganda and a direct threat to China's sovereignty. The goal is to convince the moderate population that Uyghur national identity is a foreign terrorist plot that intends to break apart the Chinese state and thus the moderate population would side with the government in the fight against the 'international' threat. Preventive measures as suggested by Stanton are almost impossible to be implemented in this situation. The paper does not mention any organized groups specifically, only 'separatists' and Uyghurs, but one can assume that the ETI movement and Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) are referenced. Whereas the ETI movement is not an organized group but rather a collective of national sentiments, the TIP is organized and universally recognized as a terrorist group. Thus, any international support for TIP would constitute an explicit threat against China and the military may be incentivized to counter-attack. A possible preventive measure in this case would be education campaigns about Uyghur history and national identity but as stated earlier, internet and media restrictions most likely prevent international awareness campaigns for the general, moderate population.

(7) Preparation

After the indoctrination of the general population, the perpetrator begins the planning and preparation for the mass murder. Of course, the perpetrator (state) does not admit to planning a genocide. Rather, covert language will be used that would legitimize or justify a militarized attack against a group, such as 'counter-terrorism' or 'counter-insurgency' in the case of an on-going war/conflict. Once such language becomes obvious, which it should in the context of the previous stages, Stanton argues that prosecution of the perpetrator on the count of incitement and conspiracy to commit genocide needs to be launched, referring to article 3 of the Genocide Convention. This seventh stage is the last stage to prevent a severe mass killing.

Throughout the process of the Uyghur genocide, Uyghurs have always been associated with terrorists, thus the planning of any 'counter-terrorist' attack in Xinjiang must be understood as the preparation for genocide. Of course, as we already saw in previous stages, the anti-terror campaigns were omnipresent and it may be difficult to distinguish which campaign or attack should be understood as the starting point of the preparation, if not all of them are part of it. Instead, the preparation in this case may be better understood as the increasing deportation of

Uyghur Muslims to the so-called re-education camps. From there, a labour transfer programme has been established that sends tens to hundreds of thousand Uyghurs to factories of forced labour that supply international corporations (BBC, 2020). From what we know, at this point, the detention camps are not 'death camps' (yet) and thus I understand these camps as preparation facilities for the following persecution.

These re-education camps are believed to be operational since 2017, when footage and witness accounts gained world-wide attention. At first, the Chinese government denied the existence of the camps completely. In response to criticism from the United Nations, senior official of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Hu Lianhe assured that there are no internment camps in China and Xinjiang and that all minorities lived in harmony (Cumming-Bruce, 2018). Furthermore, the Chinese ambassador to the UN in Geneva claimed that the reports on the internment camps were solely separatist propaganda aiming to break China apart (Cumming-Bruce, 2018). However, once the evidence of the existence of these camps increased, China changed its course and no longer denied their existence. Instead, the government started to advertise the camps as vocational education and training centers that provided the citizens of Xinjiang with education and skills on a voluntary basis (Kuo, 2018). As usual, China cites the unrest and terrorist activities in Xinjiang as reason to establish these camps, further claiming that "[they] may not operate flawlessly, but aim to stop impetuous killings and comfort people frightened by violent terrorist activities" (Kuo, 2018).

Of course, countless reports from eye-witnesses, journalists and refugees claim that these camps are not, in fact, voluntary. Any Uyghur in Xinjiang who openly practices Islam (e.g. wearing religious symbols as per the second stage) or has otherwise been identified as a 'threat' to the Chinese state may be deported to one of these camps without any official charges against them (HRW, 2018). The BBC reported about a leak of official Chinese documents to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which detail how these detention camps are to be run (BBC, 2019). According to these documents, the goal of the camps is not de-radicalization and the teaching of skills, but rather to use torture, punishments and brainwashing for cultural assimilation. Inmates must speak Mandarin Chinese and are not allowed to speak Uyghur, must adhere to Chinese national identity, and must not practice any religious customs. The goal is clearly to eliminate Uyghur national identity and culture, which initially prompted the classification of the situation as a 'cultural genocide'. Much like ethnic cleansing, which is often defined as the attempt to physically rid a territory of a certain ethnic group, 'cultural genocide' is not necessarily aimed at the physical destruction of a group but quickly leads to it. Thus, once this situation was acknowledged in 2019, the United Nations and

the world had the responsibility to intervene. Unfortunately, the UN has yet to acknowledge the situation as 'cultural genocide', let alone genocide. Only 22 member states of the UN Human Rights Council issued a statement criticizing China for their mistreatment of Uyghurs and called for the end of the mass detentions, yet again avoiding the term genocide (HRW, 2019). This lack of international responsibility and proper acknowledgement enabled the Chinese state to go forth with their persecution of the Uyghurs.

(8) Persecution

The eighth stage describes the logical stage after preparation: persecution. Members of the victim group are identified and actively persecuted, which includes the expropriation of property, deportation to ghettos or concentration camps, and forced sterilization or abortion. At this stage, torture and extrajudicial killings increase to extreme numbers, indicating genocidal intent. Stanton describes this stage as the last test to evaluate the intention of the international community to intervene, or if other states become bystanders to the atrocities. If prevention measures have failed or not been implemented to this point, the international community must intervene militarily, as (economic) sanctions will no longer prevent the genocide.

I argue that this is the stage where the Uyghur genocide is at now. As has already been described in the introduction, Uyghur women are being forcibly sterilized or performed abortions on (Zenz, 2020), which is an act of genocide specifically mentioned by Stanton and the Genocide Convention. It is plausible to assume that after the international community acknowledged the situation but showed no intent to intervene in any way, the Chinese government concluded that more extreme measures to erase Uyghur identity can be employed. Although the government is not resorting to the actual killing of the Uyghur population (at the moment), the prevention of birth of Uyghur children coupled with the policies to promote inter-ethnic reproduction discussed earlier is a long-term attempt at physically destroying the Uyghur nation and identity. As in most of the stages, it is not quite clear when exactly this persecution began, as Zenz' (2020) report indicates that as early as 2015 the population growth in Xinjiang decreased significantly, but the rates were incredibly low in 2019 and 2020. The earlier decrease in population growth can be attributed to a general attempt by the Chinese government to control national population growth, whereas official documents from 2019 detail plans for mass female sterilization in Xinjiang for the past year. Zenz also noted a significant increase in the number of (young) female Uyghur widows starting in 2017 when detention camps were fully operating, meaning that it is likely that many men (who constitute the majority of inmates) died due to the treatment they received in those camps (Zenz, 2020: 19). Whether these deaths are

results of physical violence or abuse such as malnourishment, drugging, lack of medical attention, over-exhaustion and the like is not clear, although both might be possible.

A clear attempt at genocide is becoming visible at this stage, and many organizations and countries are using the term to describe the current situation. Soft prevention measures are not suitable anymore and physical intervention is needed to prevent the situation from escalating. As already mentioned, the United States recently implemented targeted economic sanctions against Chinese and Xinjiang officials, but they are unlikely to de-escalate the situation. The U.S. and China have been involved in a trade war since 2018, therefore any more economic conflicts between the two states are unlikely to influence the development of the current genocide.

V.ii Predicting the Course of the Uyghur Genocide

While analysing the events of the Uyghur genocide in correspondence to their stages, it became quite obvious how intertwined and overlapping the stages are. Especially the chronology of the events of the last few stages became increasingly blurred with omnipresent anti-terror campaigns and deportations to re-education centers. The hostility of not only the government but the majority population against Uyghurs specifically and Xinjiang Muslims in general started quite early but the terrorist attack in 2009 can be argued to be the trigger that set in motion the increased classification of Uyghurs. The stages of symbolization, discrimination, dehumanization, and organization followed comparably slowly and chronologically, whereas the other stages appear to have occurred in a relatively short time-span starting in circa 2017 until now and are tightly intertwined. Based on the events that we know of, I conclude that the genocide is currently at the eighth of ten stages, only one stage away from irreversible physical damage to the population of the Uyghurs. And since the last stages occurred so fast, it is important to act as quickly as possible. If the development of suitable intervention methods is the ultimate goal of genocide research, it is important to understand the current domestic and international context of the situation that helps predict how the process of genocide is likely to develop. Therefore, this section will be divided into two parts. The first part will examine China in the context of the international structure in relation to the genocide and whether this context makes intervention likely, and in the second part I will formulate my predictions regarding the development of the situation in accordance to the remaining stages.

V.ii.a International structure and intervention

First, we need to understand the importance of the region of Xinjiang to China. According to Wong (2014), Xinjiang is a hub for energy production, as approximately 40% of national coal reserves and the largest national gas reserves can be found in the province. Oil production and refining, as well as oil, gas and coal transport are all soaring, rendering Xinjiang as one of the most important Chinese regions in terms of national energy production and exports. With a booming economy and industry, as well as the world's largest population, China is heavily dependent on Xinjiang's energy sector. Thus, the threat of losing that territory explains China's hostility towards the group inhabiting it – the Uyghurs. As already discussed in the literature review, Midlarsky (2005: 83, 86) argues that state vulnerability and the fear of (territorial) loss are the main progenitors of genocide. Such loss of territory does not have to be strictly geopolitical – decreasing autonomy over socio-economic spaces and sectors threatens the state and its assets. Therefore, it is likely that the threat of separatism and even increased Uyghur autonomy triggered China's resort to hostility. Ever since, the international 'war on terror' has been used as a justification for China's persecution of Uyghurs and Muslims, since international objections to the persecution of the 'folk devil' (Morgan & Poynting, 2012: 1) or 'international enemy' (Shaw, 2011: 647) were less likely.

In terms of energy production, Xinjiang is an important region for China and Central Asia, as it is the main distribution hub. However, Xinjiang is also prevalent in the global supply chains of clothing and medical equipment through forced labour. The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) recently published findings of multiple international clothing corporations being complicit in forced labour in Xinjiang. The press release included a list of the many corporations that have been linked to forced labour through the usage of cotton produced by Uyghur detainees (UHRP, 2020). In fact, China is the world's biggest cotton supplier with approximately 84% of its cotton production sourced in Xinjiang (Workman, 2020; Kelly, 2020). Thus, the international structure of global supply chains forces the international community to economically support the forced labour of Uyghurs, making them complicit in the related genocide. And not only clothing is produced in labour camps. The current COVID-19 pandemic increased the national and global demand of medical equipment mainly produced in China, including P.P.E. face masks. Xiao et al. (2020) of the NY Times found that not only have several new medical equipment factories opened in Xinjiang, face masks produced by Uyghur workers are also being supplied within the USA. This situation is difficult to resolve as medical grade face masks are currently highly in demand and medical suppliers may be reluctant to end their trade with the Chinese factories.

Besides the economy, the current political and diplomatic context of China is important to consider as well. In the literature review, we found that states usually only intervene in conflict when they expect the mission to be successful (Saideman & Jenne, 2009: 274, 276), if diplomatic missions and relations are not endangered (Southwick, 2018: 131), and if the intervention does not pose a security risk to the interventionist (Gregory et al., 2018: 111, 125). In the case of China, most likely none of these criteria will be met. China has one of the largest and strongest militaries in the world, is a P5 member of the United Nations with veto power in the Security Council, and is an NPT member which legally permits China to possess nuclear weapons. Furthermore, China is known to be adamant on state sovereignty within the UN, thus any intervention in China's sovereignty will be viewed as an attack that may require defense. Therefore, policy-makers likely will not believe a military intervention in China to be successful, will find it to endanger diplomatic relations, and may even prompt a threat to the national security of the third-party state. Another current event to consider here is the recent conflict in the Himalayas on the de-facto border to India, where 20 Indian soldiers died at the hands of Chinese troops (Griffiths et al., 2020). After all, a state that is involved in domestic and international conflict may be more hostile in case of an intervention or attack.

V.ii.b The remaining stages

Understanding China's role in the international economic and political structure, I will now make predictions regarding the next stages of genocide. But first, we have to look at stages 9 (extermination) and 10 (denial). The ninth stage is characterized by brutal mass killings, dismemberment of bodies, torture, mass rapes, destruction of cultural or religious properties and sites. It is the final stage that aims to physically destroy the victim group and can only be prevented by immediate military intervention. This stage is what most countries, organizations and legal institutions first refer to as 'genocide', prompting the international responsibility to protect and intervene. Although scholars have already termed the Uyghur situation a genocide, it is likely that the international community will refrain from doing so unless the atrocities of the ninth stage are committed and witnessed. Even then, it is uncertain whether the international community has any intention of militarily intervening in China, seeing as there are no plans to intervene in a much smaller (economically, militarily, geographically) country like Myanmar, where we are currently witnessing brutal murder and mass rape of the Rohingya people (Southwick, 2018). But what could the ninth stage look like in China?

As discussed earlier, through modern communication technologies it has become much easier to raise awareness of humanitarian crises in other countries, but it has also made it easier

for the perpetrator to adapt to the challenges of covering up their actions. The perpetrator is also able to adapt to current events and the international structure, which we have already seen as the Chinese government uses the 'war on terror' as a cover for their actions. China likely would refrain from openly and publicly exterminating their Uyghur population, whereas the detention camps are likely extermination sites. In these camps, Uyghur women have already been subject to forced sterilization, and more Uyghur men in Xinjiang died (under partially unknown circumstances) since the camps started operating (Zenz, 2020). The current pandemic has the potential to be used as an indirect murder weapon in those camps. The Chinese government keeps quiet about the situation in the camps, but one can assume that the virus has likely entered the camps and factories, and due to the conditions including crowding, malnourishment and lack of medical attention the virus is able to spread easily and seriously harm, if not kill the detainees. Recently, on July 29, cases started to spike again with 96 of 105 new cases in China being recorded in Xinjiang (Wu & Hua, 2020). Therefore, the uncontrolled spread of the novel corona virus in the camps and factories may be used as a less brutal, yet efficient, method of mass extermination. Another possibility, of course, could be another 'anti-terror' strike in Xinjiang of much bigger dimensions. The Chinese government is able to orchestrate a (possibly fake) terrorist attack in the region and then strike back with stronger military power. Under the guise of counter-terrorism, the Chinese military has the possibility to kill a large number of civilians and claim that those were separatists/terrorists. There is no physical evidence to support this theory, but it does fit within the on-going theme of the genocide. International wars have been started based on made-up claims without consequences (e.g. the 2003 US invasion of Iraq), so it is possible that the Chinese government may at least consider it.

The tenth and last stage is the denial throughout and after the atrocities. Not only does the perpetrator deny the actions that they are accused of, they will actively try to destroy any evidence that could prove and remind of the genocide. Investigations of the crimes will be blocked and the victims will be made responsible for what happened. Of course, this is already happening by accusing the victims of being separatists/terrorists and insisting that the concentration camps are actually voluntary vocational training centers. While international awareness of the situation is high, the Chinese government is able to keep their population largely unaware of the actual situation, in the present and future. Due to censorship and state control of the internet, social media and news outlets, the Chinese state can control what their population is exposed to and label any international claims as foreign or terrorist propaganda. A fitting example of the power of the Chinese state is the censorship regarding the massacre at Tiananmen square in 1989. What is internationally known as a symbol of suppression of

democracy and human rights is remembered in China as an event that put a necessary end to 'political turmoil' which helped China's economy to prosperity (Griffiths, 2019). It is continually erased from history books in China, and many younger citizens have never even heard about the massacre (Lau & Zhang, 2019). A personal encounter with a young man from mainland China living in the United Kingdom (who will not be named) revealed to me that he had only heard about the event from relatives and that he believes the violence and killing of protestors was justified and necessary. Such understanding of the event is quite common in China and reveals the ability of the government to influence their population's opinions and knowledge of national history. Having already discussed the wide-spread propaganda against Muslims and Islam, which negatively influences the majority population according to Luqiu and Fang (2018), China is well prepared for the further denial of the atrocities committed against the Uyghurs. According to Stanton, it is the responsibility of the international community to punish the perpetrator in an international tribunal in order to fight denial of the genocide. But if we learned anything from past examples of genocide, it is that prevention and intervention efforts by the international community always come too late, if ever.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the development of the Uyghur genocide according to Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide, in order to understand when and how it started, what could and should have been done to prevent each stage, what stage it is at now, how to prevent further atrocities, and what the remaining stages could possibly look like in this case. The research question asked "How can the events constituting the Uyghur genocide explain its development?" and by applying a constructivist approach to historical process research I have explored the development of the Uyghur genocide based on the events that constitute the process of genocide.

Applying constructivism to the thesis provided the understanding of genocide as an inherently international issue. On the one hand, through constructivism I understand the Uyghurs as a nation without sovereignty that are persecuted by another nation with sovereignty, which already constitutes an international conflict. On the other hand, the economic, political, and social international structures all contributed to the production of genocide (or ethnic conflict) in China and arguably other countries (such as Myanmar, India). This includes the global 'war on terror' under which the persecution of Uyghurs is legitimized, as well as the global Islamophobia that frames Muslims as the 'folk devil' or 'international enemy' and

influences Western media, which in turn is translated into Chinese news. The language used by the Chinese government and media, as well as international media and powerful leaders contributes to the classification and dehumanization of Uyghurs and Muslims in China. As already briefly mentioned, constructivism understands language as a tool for the construction of identities and thus shapes inter-ethnic or international relations. Furthermore, global supply chains are tainted with Uyghur forced labour, and international power structures put China in a position that largely frees the government of fear of intervention.

The historical process research of events in accordance to the 10 stages of genocide showcased that genocide is indeed a process beyond a measurable number of casualties, which lets me conclude that the Uyghurs are, in fact, victims of genocide even if the ninth stage has not (yet) begun. To measure genocide in casualties is problematic as it only prompts international intervention when irreversible damage has already occurred. Thus, Stanton's stages are a helpful tool to determine a possible case of genocide and accordingly react. In the case of the Uyghurs, the genocide process began as early as 2009 after the terrorist attacks in Xinjiang and developed rather slowly up until approximately 2017, when the situation took a turn for the worse and covert genocidal intent on the behalf of the Chinese government became visible. Preventive measures could have been implemented at most stages but economic and diplomatic relations with China, as well as China's military capabilities and sovereignty principles likely compromised third-party intervention intentions. The international community has to intervene immediately, beyond economic sanctions, in order to prevent the extermination of the Uyghur nation. On a long-term basis, to prevent future genocides, the world needs a social restructuring that is not based on the othering of any ethnic group and instead promotes equality between groups domestically and globally. Furthermore, the international community must react quicker to indicators of genocide and start prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators on the count of genocide conspiracy.

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