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## Consistency in the EU's Normative Foreign Policy: Crimean Tatars and Xinjiang Uyghurs

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### Abstract:

Public Consistency in reactions to human rights violations is an essential part of any normative foreign policy. Human rights abusers usually exploit these cases to delegitimize international norms and cover up their abuses. This usually happens when cases of violations are similar, but the reactions are different, due to some geopolitical concerns. Crimean Tatars and Xinjiang Uyghurs are two Muslim minorities that have a kind of confrontation with two non-western rising powers, Russia and China. The article investigates the EU's reactions to these two cases of human rights violations by looking into documents, statements, press releases, and speeches. It is normally expected that the EU pays more attention to the Crimean Peninsula, as it is so close to Europe's homeland. However, despite some slight nuances, the EU maintained a passable rate of consistency in its normative foreign policy which has not been affected by geopolitical concerns and differences are explicable by normative concerns.

**Keywords:** Crimean Tatars, Xinjiang Uyghurs, European Union, Human Rights, Normative Policy

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### Introduction

Crimean Tatars are a Muslim minority in Europe's homeland, and the Crimean Peninsula is located so close to Europe that makes Tatars a more important case than Uyghurs who live thousands of miles away from Europe's mainland. The question is whether the EU's response to these two cases of human rights violations was different. It is normally ex-

pected that the EU pays more attention to Crimea. This hypothesis puts the consistency in the EU normative foreign policy under a big question mark.

Since the EU has multi-level governance, every foreign policy is the result of give-and-take between member states and supranational institutions. As a result, generally, consis-

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tency in the EU's foreign policy is always a concern. Jan Gaspers maintains that consistency can make the EU a "credible actor". In the quest for consistency, he explored the role of the Lisbon treaty and the "institutional innovations" that it initiated to see how it helped the EU to reach coherence in its international role. He discovered some flaws in such innovations that not only cannot contribute to consistency but also give rise to new inconsistencies (Gaspers, 2008).

In another research, Ha Hai Hoang & Daniela Sicurelli questioned the EU's consistency in trade relations with Singapore and Vietnam. The authors adopted a qualitative method by studying position papers and press releases as well as trade statistics. They realized that although the EU provided more favorable market access to Vietnam, it imposed more pressure on Vietnam to follow standards. They concluded that it was just because of differences in their bargaining power, competition with third parties like the US, and the economic structure of these two countries that caused this change in the EU's external behavior. They regard this inconsistency as a discredit to the EU's normative power (Hoang and Sicurelli, 2017). The same argument has been followed by Robert Falkner in the area of agricultural external policy. The author here questioned consistency in the EU's "green normative power" (Falkner, 2007).

This article discovers any consistency or inconsistency in the EU's normative foreign policy in the area of human rights. Like Hoang & Sicurelli, a qualitative method will be used by studying statements, declarations, and speeches made by EU officials. It is divided into six sections and a conclusion. In the first section, the theoretical foundation of normative foreign policy will be discussed. In the second section, we explore the EU's nor-

mative policy-making against genocide. In the third section, the human rights situation of Crimean Tatars will be described, then in the next section, the EU's reactions to the violations of Tatars' human rights in the form of declarations or individual speeches published on the website of the EU's External Action Service will be explored. In the fifth section, the human rights situation for Uyghurs in Xinjiang will be described, then the EU's reactions will be investigated in the sixth section. At the end, two cases will be compared to conclude the consistency or any inconsistency in the EU's normative power.

### **EU's Normative Foreign Policy and the Case of Genocide**

Norms are important for the EU's policymaking, both at home and abroad. Soft power developed by Josef Nye and Robert Keohane in the 1980s is an umbrella term to include all methods of achieving by attraction and not imposition (Nye 2008: p. 94). Hedley Bull rejected this idea and maintained that actors like the EU have soft power only when other hard powers engender an appropriate environment. Therefore, the EU is not an actor in his opinion (Bull 1982: p. 151).

The article Ian Manners wrote in 2002 was the beginning of the discussion on normative power in International Relations. He defined normative power as the power that determines what is a norm and what norms do (Manners 2002: p. 236). This definition has been widely accepted by academia (Kavalski 2013: p. 248). It is noteworthy that having values and being a normative power are two different things. Values are parts of every political entity which make it act in a specific way, even when it costs valuable resources (Creppell, 2011: p. 470). Every player has values, or even to some extent, normative clout, but they are not necessarily

regarded as normative powers. What Manners sees in Europe is its capability to build international norms.

Manners chose the case of the death penalty to show that the concept of national interest cannot explain the amount of effort that the EU devoted to abolishing it. He asks what benefits the abolition of the death penalty brings to the EU. As was shown by the European Council, in some countries public opinion does not support the abolition of the death penalty. European citizens are not even aware that the EU launched such a campaign (Manners 2002: p. 251). Because the number of citizens who are in danger of the death penalty is not significant, the EU did not intend to enhance its public image and serve its public diplomacy. Moreover, in the international arena, the US was one of the countries that had the most cases of the death penalty. That means this campaign challenges the strategic relations between the EU and the US, which is not in the EU's realistic interests (Manners, 2002: p. 251).

Two different approaches to international norms come from International Law and International Relations. The source of norms in the former is the law, but in the latter, it comes from intersubjective communications (Puetter and Wiener 2007: p. 1068). So, the term "normative power" can indicate either definition. For example, one can claim that human rights norms originated in law, while non-proliferation norms came from intersubjective communications. Kavalsky claims that the difference between them lies in their different logic. He says the first type follows the "logic of appropriateness", while the second type follows the "logic of relationships". Against this backdrop, he claims that China is a normative power in the second sense of meaning (Kavalski, 2013: p. 249).

The source of normative power can originate from within societies, such as a democratic political structure, prosperous civil society, higher levels of development, or higher standards of human rights, or it can have origins in interactions with other nations. Kavalsky claims that although interaction with other countries is important, the context determines which ideas play a more important role (Kavalski, 2013: p. 250). For example, in the context created after the first World War, Wilsonian idealism became an international norm, while two decades later, chauvinism absorbed minds and hearts in Germany and elsewhere. In the case of Europe, Manners holds that elite-driven, treaty-based, and legal order are the main elements of the EU's normative power. According to the Copenhagen Declaration, the EU's norms include democracy, rule of law, social justice, and respect for human rights. He introduces a categorization that entails two groups. The first group that contains peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and human rights have been mentioned in the Union's law, and are indeed core norms. The second group which includes social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance, is minor norms (Manners, 2002: p. 242).

To be a normative power, the EU must be able to transfer these norms. Manners introduced six mechanisms for such a process: the first method is through contagion which happens unintentionally. For example, countries in Mercosur, GCC, or African Union try to follow the EU's integration as a model. Second, it diffuses through information sharing and strategic communications. Third, it transfers through procedures that help to bolster relations through institutionalization. The membership procedure is an example here. Transference is the fourth way which hap-

pens through trade and aid. Physical presence is another way and the last method is the EU cultural impact and attractiveness which might end up changing identities and forming new ones. (Manners, 2002: pp. 244–245).

Despite all, the essence of the EU's normative power might still be looked askance at. Some may even doubt the whole idea of pure normative power because one can easily interpret the EU's efforts to abolish the death penalty as the result of its elite-driven structure which is a rare case in international relations and sooner or later will come back to the reality of the real politics and follows member states' national interests. Thomas Diez, by referring to hegemony based on Gramscian understanding, claims that normative power should not be defined in a way that humiliates the concept of power in International Relations (Diez, 2013: p. 195)). If a player exercises hard power to diffuse norms, it is a hegemon, while if it diffuses norms through non-coercive measures, it is a normative power (Diez, 2013: p. 199). With this short review of writings on normative power, it is not difficult to understand the existence of norm-driven policymaking in the EU and the way it disseminates it.

### **Genocide and the EU's normative foreign policy**

Based on the definition in Article no. 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which entered into force on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1951, five acts including killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting their conditions of life, preventing birth, or transferring children, will be deemed as genocide if they committed intending to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group (Elements of crimes, 2011: p. 3)). The “framework Decision on combating Racism

and Xenophobia” approved by the Council of the European on April 20, 2007, highlights the EU policy in cases of genocide. Moreover, the decision of the European Parliament on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, racism, and the verdicts of the European Court of Human Rights indicate what are the EU's norms about genocide. Accordingly, not only those who commit crimes but also those who wish to commit them must be punished. The rules about hate speech are so strict that some believe it violates freedom of speech and freedom to research history (Elósegui, 2017: pp. 52–54)). Denial of genocide is against the EU norms but those who are criminalized are limited to cases that are recognized as an act of genocide by international courts (Elósegui, 2017: p. 85).

The EU has acted on its judiciary and domestic affairs in a way that prevents the EU's territory to become a safe place for the genocide perpetrators. To drop the immunity of perpetrators and support member states in prosecuting them, the Council of the European established a genocide network containing contact points with perpetrators of genocide crimes, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. This network held biannual meetings in which member states, police, judicial authorities, and experts gather together, facilitate cooperation between states and suggest best procedures, as well as share information (Strategy of the EU Genocide Network to combat impunity for the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes within the European Union and its Member States 2014: p. 4)). Now that the EU's normative power and its stance towards genocide have been discussed, in the next three sections, data on the historical background and human rights situation will be reviewed.

### **Crimean Tatars' historical background**

The history of Tatars dates back to 1240, when Batu Khan, one of Changiz's grandsons occupied the Crimean Peninsula to dominate Russia. This indicates the geopolitical importance of the peninsula (Williams, 2016: xi). Access to the Mediterranean Sea was the driving force of Russian leaders to invade and occupy Crimea. This was also the main reason for the Tatars' persecution throughout history, especially after Catherine the Great waged war against the Ottomans in 1770 to occupy Crimea (Williams, 2016: xiii). Catherine encouraged Russians to immigrate to Crimea. This discovers the political influence of the Russian settlers in Crimea. In 1783, Russia annexed Crimea which caused the Tatars' mass exodus, mainly to the Ottoman Empire. Russia's defeat in the Crimean war exacerbated the situation for Tatars because they were accused of acting against them during the war and they sought revenge (Bayrasli, 2019).

In the Soviet era, the situation became even worse. In 1927, Stalin sent 40,000 Tatars to concentration camps in charge of being the national bourgeoisie. Things worsened during the Second World War. In 1944, Stalin deported 200,000 Tatars by cattle cars with only 30 minutes' notice because he believed that they fought alongside Nazis with the Red Army. Half of them died en route, because of hunger or illness and dead bodies were taken out to each station (National Geographic Society, 2015)). If they had come back, they would have had to spend 20 years in jail ((Mirovlev, Mansur, Sinyakov, Denis, 2014)). Some thousands of Tatars who managed to escape to Turkey or Europe were not allowed to come back to Crimea before 1989. In that year, Mikhail Gorbachev declared Tatars' deportation illegal and allowed them to come back to Crimea. However,

many of them did not wish to come back to their fatherland under Moscow's sovereignty (National Geographic Society 2015). Those who returned, could not find their homes. They were surrounded by the Russian majority and Tatars were the minority of Crimea. Moscow does not allow them to march to commemorate the 1944 deportation (Mirovlev, 2018)).

After the victory in the Ukrainian revolution in late 2013, Russia, again, annexed Crimea and, Tatars' opposition to the referendum held in March 2014 started another round of persecution against them (Bayrasli, 2019)). This tragic moment left only two options for them: "a homeland without freedom or freedom without a homeland" (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)).

Tatars have two political organizations: Hizb Al-Tahrir and Mejlis. There was a conflict between them before annexation. Members of the Mejlis were elected every five years (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019). Islam also has a special role in Tatars' community, because Islam preserves their racial and cultural identity amidst occupation by foreign entities, the same role that the Catholic church played for Polish to resist communism (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)). Turkey, which supports Tatars, owing to their racial ties, proclaimed that is ready to host as many Tatars as possible in its homeland (Mirovlev, Mansur, Sinyakov, Denis 2014)). This stance did not resent Moscow yet and Russia did not hinder Turkey's investment in Crimea (Mirovlev, 2018)).

Moscow calls the Tatars terrorists and Putin, in a meeting with pro-Russia activists in Crimea, claimed that 4000 jihadists who are Tatars came back from Syria and they seek to launch bloodshed in Crimea (Mirovlev, Mansur, Sinyakov, Denis, 2014). These kinds

of accusations are dangerous because the same accusations commenced the persecution of Chechens and Tatars worried that the same might happen to them. In many single-person pickets in Crimea, Tatars hold banners that say "Tatars are not terrorists" (Mirovalev, 2018)). This brief report indicates how crucial the situation was.

### **Human Rights Situation for Crimean Tatars: Velvet Genocide**

In 2019, about 250,000 Tatars were living in Crimea, the same population lived there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; in that time, they consisted 85 percent of the whole population in the Crimean Peninsula, while now it consists only 12 percent of the whole population. The violation of Tatars' fundamental rights has a long history, but was slow enough not to attract much attention. Here, we focus on what has been happening since the Crimean occupation by Russia in 2015. Since then, nearly 250,000 Muslims persecuted in various ways to encourage them to leave the peninsula. So far, around 20,000 of them have done so (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)). In the wake of the referendum in March 2014, several Tatars died, many disappeared, and many more were arrested. Reshat Ametov was one of these activists who were abducted in front of the Council of Ministers building in Simferopol, the capital city of Crimea (Bayrasli 2019)), while Kremlin claims that the annexation of Crimea was "bloodless and voluntary" (Mirovalev 2018)).

The cases of human rights violations have reached 422 so far, as reported by a non-governmental organization. Among them were 42 cases of forced disappearances (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)). In these years, their TV and radio stations have been shut down and their language classes have been banned. In April 2014, the head of

Mejlis was banned from entering Crimea, and Mejlis itself was shut down two years later. Mustafa Dzhemilev, the former head of Mejlis, speaking in the American Association of Crimean Tatars in Brooklyn, New York, expressed his deep concern about the brainwashing of the next Tatars generation by Russia, which make them alienated from their own culture, language, religion (Bayrasli 2019)). Public schools and public-run health clinics fired many of them (Mirovalev 2018)). Also, 72 people were arrested because of solo picketing (Mirovalev 2018)). From mid-2014, Russia began calling them Tatars, not Crimean Tatars, to show that they are part of a greater community and do not belong specifically to this peninsula (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)). Amid the Ukrainian election in 2019, Russia arrested 23 Crimean Tatars (Human Rights Watch 2019)). Ironically, many of these detentions happened before annexation, when even according to Russian domestic law, Crimea had its own jurisdiction. Thus, these detentions must be unlawful in Russia's internal law. For the sake of these arguments, since 2018, almost half of the political criminal cases are considered under the title of non-political terms such as illegal possession of weapons, and damage to property (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)). This is totally against the recommendations of the UN High commissioner for Human Rights (The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2017)).

One of the examples of Russia's attempt to dilute Tatars' identity is permeating and changing them from the inside. After Mejlis's dissolution, Moscow established the Council of the Crimean Tatar People formed by pro-Moscow Tatars. Even these people could not save their place in the Crimean local government. Vasvi Abduraimov was one of these

people who later regretted his role in following Moscow's agenda and changing the Tatars' community. However, after Russia threatened to confiscate Mosques, clerics relinquished Moscow's policies. As a result, a large mosque was built in Crimea's capital city and Tatars were permitted to go on pilgrimage to Mecca (Wilson and Urcosta 11 April, 2019)).

Another way of persecution was to relate them to foreign Islamist groups like Hizb Al-Tahrir or Chechenia secessionists. Since the annexation, 31 Tatars charged in this way. Membership in these organizations is not forbidden in Ukraine (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2019)). As the consequence of such pressures, political activists have been limited to just a small group of political prisoners and their families and lawyers. The website of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group has released the names of 100 political prisoners and prisoners of war many Tatars are among them (Coydash 2019)).

### **The EU's stance and actions on Crimean Tatars**

In this section, the EU's reactions to Tatars' human rights violations will be reviewed. Needless to say, that the EU adopted extensive measures against the annexation of Crimea by Russia, but we only focused on human rights, and only on Tatars. To this end, we collect all declarations, speeches, and statements and cite the most important ones here in short. These reactions can be categorized into several categories:

**1) Objection to detention:** the EU expressed concerns about the illegal detention of Tatars on many occasions. For example, it issued two separate declarations on 27 August 2016, and 28 September 2017, addressing the illegal detention and grave condition

of Ilmi Umerov, the deputy of the head of Mejlis (European External Action Service 2016b)). The Spokesperson of the EU's external action service also reacted to the illegal detention of a human rights lawyer, Emil Kurbedinov by issuing two declarations on 31<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017. He was arrested on 26<sup>th</sup> January in Simferopol (European External Action Service 2017a)).

On 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017, the EU Parliament asked Russia to release Ukrainian prisoners and stop the forced imposition of Russian citizenship, abusing media, and restricting freedom of speech (European External Action Service 2017c)). Moreover, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017, Federica Mogherini cited Mykola Polozov and Emil Kurbedinov who endangered themselves to be "presented with criminal charges". She also mentioned violations of the rights of the Crimean Tatars, banning Mejlis and their media (European External Action Service 2017d)).

On 6<sup>th</sup> October of the same year, the EU parliament issued a declaration to ask Russia to end the persecution of Crimean Tatars and asserted that it regards Crimea's occupation as illegal and accusation of terrorism, extremism, and separatism is the first step toward human rights violation, restricting freedom of speech, and freedom of association (European External Action Service 2017e)). On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the High Representative of the EU issued a declaration on the human rights situation in the Crimean Peninsula and mentioned Volodymyr Balukh who was sentenced to prison for three years because of protesting against the illegal annexation of Crimea and also mentioned Bekir Dehermendzhy for being prisoned in Simferopol for three years and seven months for an unknown reason. She asked for medical care for him, because of his severe physical condition (European External Action Service 2018a)).

Additionally, the EU issued two declarations on 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and addressed the arbitrary detention of activists (European External Action Service 2018b))European External Action Service 2018c(). The EU's spokesperson also issued a declaration on 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 and named Edem Bekirov, who was arrested while he was arriving in the peninsula on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018. With regards to his health condition, he needed daily medical care, and this declaration asked for his freedom instantly, and also "urgent and appropriate medical care" (European External Action Service 2019a)).

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019, at the 21<sup>st</sup> EU-Ukraine summit, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, issued a joint statement and asked Russia to release all detainees, including Crimean Tatars (European External Action Service 2019g)). Moreover, on 13<sup>th</sup> November of the same year, the spokesperson of the EU's Neighborhood Policy reacted to the prison sentence of six Tatar activists, ranging from 7 to 19 years. This statement asserted that the EU does not recognize the illegal trial of Crimean citizens in Russia and asked Russia to stop this court procedure (European External Action Service 2019h)). All these declarations and statements were issued while it was not easy to find out the real conditions of these people, because independent media did not have access inside the peninsula.

**2) Objection to the dissolution of Crimean Tatar's institutions:** in addition to these arbitrary detentions, the EU paid attention to the dissolution of institutions and media outlets. For example, on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015, in an emergency meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, called by Federica Mogherini in the wake of an attack on Mariupol and

subsequent violence, they condemned the attack on the ATR television and restrictions on freedom of speech (European External Action Service 2015a)). A similar declaration was issued on the first of April in the same year by the spokesperson of the EU's External Action Service (European External Action Service 2015b)).

One of the most outstanding of these institutions is Mejlis. On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the spokesperson of the EU's External Action Service issued a statement and reacted to the decision made by the Supreme Court" of Crimea to ban Mejlis (European External Action Service 2016a)). Federica Mogherini reacted similarly on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017, in the 4th association council between the European Union and Ukraine (European External Action Service 2017f)). The EU's ambassador to the United Nation reacted to the violation of the Tatars' human rights and restrictions on their media, banning their Mejlis, and persecution of their leaders (European External Action Service 2019b)).

**3) Objection to restrictions on cultural activities:** in this section, we explore the restrictions on their gatherings and ceremonies by Russia. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015, the spokesperson of the EU's External Action Service condemned the restrictions on the commemoration of the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Tatars' deportation by Stalin (European External Action Service 2015c)). On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017, the press and information team of the delegation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg cited the cost that Tatars had to pay for their beliefs. Among them is the prohibition of the commemoration of their deportation in 1944; Mejlis is banned; Media outlets are shut down; and cases like forced disappearance, torture, and killing that were not yet investigated properly (European External Action Service 2017b)).

On the fifth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea, the press and information team reacted to the prohibition of media, Mejlis dissolution, and persecution of Tatar leaders and said that Russia is expected to end imposing pressure on the Tatars' community. They asserted that Tatars as well as other ethnic and religious minorities must be able to observe their culture and preserve their cultural heritage and be able to develop their education and identity (European External Action Service 2019d)).

**4) The EU's activities in international institutions:** considering the short time that each government or intergovernmental and non-governmental players have in international institutions and forums, the time that the EU devotes to Crimean Tatars indicates how much it is important for the EU's normative foreign policy. As Ian Manners explained, one of the ways to absorb the attention of the international community to an issue is through international institutions, the EU employed this method. For example, on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the EU embrace the opportunity provided by the UN human rights council to react to the dissolution of the Mejlis in Crimea (European External Action Service 2016c)). Also, on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, in the EU and Ukraine joint press release after the annual Human Rights Dialogue, both sides expressed their concern about the Crimean Tatars' human rights situation (European External Action Service 2018d)). Same concerns were expressed in other annual Human Rights Dialogues. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018, in a press release after the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU and Ukraine Association Council, they condemned the persecution of those who protested against the Crimea annexation as well as the exacerbation of the human rights situation in the peninsula (European External Action Service 2018g)). On 25<sup>th</sup> September

2018, in the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UN Human Rights Council for the periodical review of the human rights situation in Ukraine, the High Representative, in her speech, expressed her concern about the human rights situation, especially among minorities like Tatars (European External Action Service 2018e)).

On 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019, in the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council, Federica Mogherini expressed her concern about the systematic persecution of Crimean Tatars and called for urgent medical care for Edem Bekirov and one other Ukrainian citizen (European External Action Service 2019e)). Such statements have been released in the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> sessions of HRC by the EU. In other sessions held by the UN about the human rights situation in Ukraine, the EU expressed its concerns.

#### **The EU's Reactions to Xinjiang Uyghurs**

In this section, the EU's reactions to the human rights violation of the Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang province of China will be discussed. Like the previous sections, all speeches, statements, and declarations will be collected from the website of the EU's External Action Service and will be reviewed to compare with the same reactions to Crimean Tatars. But before that, the human rights situation among Uyghurs will be discussed briefly.

Xinjiang Uyghurs have Mongolian origins and they were Manichaeism before converting to Islam (Starr, 2015: p. 40)). There is no reliable estimate for the population. According to the latest census in 2010, the population should not be less than 9 million. In the 1950s, when Mao Zedong initiated the so-called "cultural revolution", which eradicating religion was part of it, Uyghurs were under heavy pressure. This policy was contin-

ued until 1978 when Deng Xiaoping rose to power and his tolerance promoted the place of Islam in this region (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: pp. 61–62)). After 9/11 and the war on terrorism, pressure on Muslims increased again. Some of the terrorists who were detained in Afghanistan and transferred to Guantanamo came from Xinjiang (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: p. 73)).

Ürümqi riots in July 2009, to a large extent, was the incident that first grabbed the attention of human rights organizations. The protest sparked by Uyghurs on 5<sup>th</sup> July soon became the first ethnic riot in the history of the People's Republic of China: the death toll stands at 197, 1600 were wounded, and a great amount of damage was inflicted on properties (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: p. 74)). The source of the conflict goes back to the conflict between Uyghurs and Hans. The first generation of Hans who came to Xinjiang usually paid respect to Uyghurs, but the second generation did not follow suit (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: p. 69)). At first, protesters wanted a proper investigation into two Uyghurs' death in a workplace brawl. But gradually it became a protestation against the discriminatory behavior of the Chinese government towards Uyghurs in comparison with Hans (deHahn 2019)). Since then, every year on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, Uyghurs commemorate this day (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun 2018, p. 96)).

Turkey cautiously defended Uyghurs. At the time when the Ürümqi riots were running, Turkey was a member of the security council and this helped to boost its position and give more significance to its support (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: p. 143)). Ironically, China criticized its ally, Pakistan, because they believe Pakistan insti-

gated the riot (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: p. 148)). Additionally, in the wake of the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo's office in France, wearing the burqa in Xinjiang was prohibited (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Ercilasun, 2018: pp. 66–67)). Even at their houses, the Chinese government banned using traditional decorations and instead force them to use Chinese furniture, mainly produced by Han manufacturers (Radio Free Asia 2020a)). There are reports of sending body organs to Saudi Arabia, in one case there are 37 Saudi citizens who received organs from Uyghurs. These are called "Halal organs" because Saudi wealthy Muslims do not accept organs from the infidels who use alcohol or pork. Chinese government forcibly removes organs of political prisoners who are Muslim and sell them to Saudi recipients (Werleman 2020)).

In another case, satellite images show that the Chinese government destroyed nearly 100 cemeteries belonging to Uyghurs so far (Rivers 2020)). Moreover, China refuses to extend the passport for Uyghurs who live in Saudi Arabia, instead, they issue only a one-way travel document so that they can draw Uyghurs who live abroad into the mainland of China (Radio Free Asia 2020b)). With all that is said, in the timeframe of this research, the internment or concentration camps sparked the heaviest international objection, especially among Europeans. Here, the most distinguished reactions to the Muslims in this region will be mentioned.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018, in a speech on behalf of Federica Mogherini in the EU Parliament, the arbitrary and collective detention of Uyghurs and Kazakhs was mentioned and it asked the Chinese government to follow the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and expressed deep concerns on reports about

these detentions. In this speech, the stories of some of the European citizens who had Uyghur origins were mentioned. Some of them said that they are under heavy pressure to come back to China or give information about their relatives in China. Even in some cases, the Chinese government confiscated the travel documents of people to prevent them from leaving the country. In the EU-China human rights dialogue in July 2018, these topics were brought up several times (European External Action Service, 2018f)).

The EU brings the issue before international forums, like the UN HRC. The EU's representative in the HRC session on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 expressed concerns about the political re-education camps, widespread surveillance, and other restriction against Uyghurs (European External Action Service, 2019c)). The same speech was given in the session on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 (European External Action Service, 2019f)).

Additionally, the EU delegation to China on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019 which is Human Rights Day, admitted that China made great progress in terms of reducing poverty, gender equality, improving access to education and health, and reducing maternal and infant mortality, but China did not ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which they signed in 1998. In this declaration, after the issue of the death penalty, the situation of Muslims and Uyghurs was mentioned. Restrictions imposed on human rights, freedom of associations, freedom of religion and belief, "extra-judicial detentions", "destruction of mosques, temples, and other religious sites", detention in political re-education centers, and intimidation by mass surveillance are the items which have been reported so far. The EU called on China to give unrestricted, unconditional access to international authorities like the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights, journalists, and independent experts to be able to come and visit Xinjiang and Tibet. The declaration also mentioned other regions in China (European External Action Service, 2019i)).

In December 2019, the High Representative and Vice-President Joseph Borrell said in his speech during the EU Parliament session dedicated to Uyghur's situation in Xinjiang that the EU is working on the issue, and will take actions like bringing it up in the UN HRC session in September in that year, especially mentioning the so-called re-education camps which affected more than one million people until then. The other concern is the usage of advanced technologies like biometrics, artificial intelligence, and facial recognition technologies to control every single individual in Xinjiang. He said "although no one disputes the right of any country to take legitimate measures to combat terrorism and ensure security, to our understanding, the policies applied in Xinjiang appear disproportionate to the stated aim of fighting against terrorism and extremism" (European External Action Service 2019j)) . He referred to 12 reports issued by the United Nations Special Procedures mandate holders and asked China to follow its own international obligations. For more serious measures, he admitted that the US played a more active role by sanctioning 28 governmental institutions and private companies, but he claimed that the EU has a "different system". He said that he is trying to launch an initiative equivalent to Magnitsky Act<sup>1</sup>. However, he did not supply more details (European External Action Service, 2019j)).

In a symbolic attempt, the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was granted to Ilham Tohti who has been in jail since 2014. He fought for the rights of Uyghurs in China and was faced with separatism-related

1. This law has been ratified in the US congress in 2012. The purpose was to penalize those who were engaged in the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian citizen in prison in 2009. Since then, this act provides the legal basis to punish any person who violates human rights in anywhere in the world (Netherlands Helsinki Committee 2019).

charges. The EU's Parliament President David Sassoli gave the prize to his daughter in the EU Parliament (European External Action Service 2019k).

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the WHO declared "a public health emergency" for the global outbreak of Coronavirus (World Health Organization 2020)). The Chinese government first was unforthcoming about the spread in Xinjiang, but the situation exacerbated so much that they confirmed some cases. However, by the media restriction in East Turkestan, it is hard to rely on these numbers. Uyghurs in these internment camps live in close contact and there is a high possibility of infection as a result. This grows concerns for the international community (Abdulla 2020)).

### Data Analysis

This article first studied the historical backgrounds of Crimea and Xinjiang and then explored the EU's reactions to human rights violations against Tatars and Uyghurs. Here, both of these data, historical backgrounds, and the EU's reactions will be analyzed.

First, about their historical backgrounds, these two minorities have similarities and differences. The most important similarity between them is that they both are Muslim and, in the backwash of 9/11, terrorism became the main source of allegations against them. The most important difference is that Uyghurs live in China's homeland while Tatars live outside Russia. Therefore, the EU's reaction to Uyghurs may be criticized as if it is a kind of meddling in China's domestic affairs, whereas not only this is not the case for Tatars, but also the EU can depict itself as the guardian of Ukraine's right of sovereignty against Russia intervention.

There are other differences: Tatars have well-organized political institutions; there are well-known Tatar activists; Tatars have seen

democracy and as a result of being in the vicinity of the European countries, democratic culture has developed better. On the contrary, Uyghurs live close to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. They have a high potential to be taken by religious and extremist groups. The other difference is that the duration of human rights violations in Xinjiang is not as long as it is in Crimea, but it seems harsher and more severe. Therefore, we have two situations, one that is harsher but shorter, the other that is longer but less intense.

Second, when one compares statements, declarations, speeches, and actions, several points are recognizable: first, after the EU Parliament election in May 2019, newly-elected officials took some practical measures, including sanctions on human rights violations like Magnitsky Act. For Tatars, the EU did not go further to take more serious actions, probably because there were already sanctions in place for the illegal annexation of Crimea and they felt that there is no need to implement more serious actions. For China, such measures have not been adopted before<sup>1</sup>, and they might feel that it is more appropriate to take more restrictive measures. However, in normative policy making, strategic communications, as Ian Manners suggested, play an important role, and it is necessary to make it clear for Russia that for the EU, human rights violation is as important as an illegal occupation.

Second, the number of EU reactions to Uyghurs human rights violations is less than Tatars. One reason may be the fact that the

problem of Uyghurs rose after 9/11, and became serious after the Ürümqi riots. To some extent, China's crackdown used to be proportionate in the past. Just recently the international community started to express concerns about re-education camps, mass

1. China is only under some limited sanctions on the acquisition of various kinds of weapons (Lester QC, O'Kane).

surveillance, and some other new technologies that have been used to control and in fact restrict the population. The EU does not reject the idea that there were some connections between Uyghurs and some terrorist organizations. These kinds of allegations are not acceptable to Tatars.

Third, Tatars had a better opportunity to visit the EU officials and better access to international media, while Uyghurs had not these opportunities. Still, this has not made difference.

Fourth, the EU addresses Tatars as part of Crimea, while Uyghurs are addressed directly by the EU. Tatars, on some levels, are a geopolitical issue as well as a humanitarian subject, while Uyghurs' problem has nothing to do with East Turkestan, and there is no problem in that region other than human rights violations towards Uyghurs, and to a lesser extent towards Kazakhs.

In this article, just like the method that Manners used to show the EU's normative power, it has been shown that the consistency in the EU's reactions to two different cases of human rights violations cannot be explained by rational interests, therefore, it reveals the normative logic of the EU's foreign policy-making. The EU's relations with Russia and China are important for the EU's foreign policy. This importance necessitates differences according to the geopolitical significance of each player. But the normative foreign policy requires consistency and should be less affected by these considerations.

All that is mentioned here was related to human rights violations. The EU took more severe measures following the illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia that did not fall into the scope of this research. Finally, in cases where a human or natural crisis happens concurrently with human rights violations that exacerbate the situation, the international

community pays more attention. The spread of coronavirus along with the media restrictions in China and criticism about Chinese denial of the outbreak at the beginning of the crisis, worried the international community, including the EU official, about the situation in Xinjian and therefore provoke more reactions.

### Conclusion

In this research, the authors used the same method that Ian Manners used to prove the existence of normative power. It has been shown that the geopolitical difference between Crimea and Xinjiang did not make a significant difference in the EU's normative reaction to the human rights violations in the two regions and therefore, our hypothesis has not been approved. Realistically it is expected that the EU's reaction to the human rights crisis in Crimea is stronger than Xinjiang, because of the geopolitical conflict that exists between the EU and Russia. But this was not the case. The EU maintained its consistency according to its human rights norms and standards.

This result should not be surprising. The EU, which has a structure mixed with inter-governmentalism and supranationalism, is less concerned about geopolitics than national governments. Moreover, geopolitics can both escalate and de-escalate human rights reactions, because national interests can justify consuming resources to uphold norms, or it can discourage following them. All in all, the EU's reactions in both cases were more or less consistent. This becomes clearer when you compare the EU's reactions with those of Islamic countries.

Among the methods of norm diffusion that Ian Manners introduced, contagion is not recognizable and even if it is, it is hard to prove. The second way is the way that we

think works here. The EU can diffuse human rights norms through strategic communications with China and Russia. Needless to say, that the third method, through membership, is not a matter here. Transference was not under investigation in this research and can be a fruitful subject for another research to see how much the EU brings the idea of human rights in cases of Uyghurs and Tatars, in its bilateral trade relations with Russia and China. Physical presence and attractiveness are other method that can also be investigated in another research.

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