



Jus Corpus Law Journal

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2024 – ISSN 2582-7820
Editor-in-Chief – Prof. (Dr.) Rhishikesh Dave; Publisher – Ayush Pandey

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The Politics of Genocide Denial in Pakistan: The Baluchistan Conflict in Context

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Received 11 October 2024; Accepted 12 November 2024; Published 16 November 2024

This paper discusses the concept of genocide, the politics behind its denial, and how these issues are reflected in the case of Balochistan, Pakistan. Genocide involves deliberate acts of violence aimed at destroying a particular group based on their race, religion, or ethnicity. The United Nations defines genocide but leaves some terms like 'intent' open to interpretation, which creates debate. Genocide denial happens when governments or political groups refuse to acknowledge mass killings, often to maintain power, protect their image, or avoid responsibility. In Balochistan, the Pakistani government is accused of committing violence and repression against the Baloch people, a minority ethnic group. Despite evidence of suffering, Pakistan denies these actions, framing them as necessary measures to maintain control over the region. The denial of such actions helps the government avoid both domestic unrest and international criticism. This denial is part of a larger trend where governments manipulate historical narratives to justify their actions, often ignoring the pain and struggles of marginalised groups. The Baloch people have a long history of conflict with Pakistan, seeking more autonomy, better economic opportunities, and an end to government oppression. Despite several attempts at reconciliation, violence continues, fueled by economic exploitation, ethnic marginalisation, and the government's harsh military response.

Keywords: *genocide denial, Baluchistan conflict, ethnic nationalism, state repression, human rights violations, insurgency.*

INTRODUCTION

Genocide is the intentional act of killing or causing harm to a large group of people, usually because of their race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. The word 'Genocide' was first introduced by Polish Jewish Lawyer Raphael Lemkin's book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). The very definition of 'genocide' itself has given rise to considerable controversy and there are various competing concepts of what constitutes 'genocide'.¹ Article II of the 1948 UN Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide defines 'genocide' as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.²

The convention does not explain what is meant by intent. The convention defines genocide as the intent to destroy in whole or in part of a group as such. Therefore, it is assumed that the special or specific intent has to be proven for the charge of genocide to stand, which is called 'dolus specialis'.³ The politics behind genocide denial often intersects with national identity, political strategy, and international relations. For instance, the denial of the Balochistan genocide by certain state actors can be seen as part of broader political manoeuvres to suppress dissent and maintain control over contested regions. Jain highlights the historical complexities and geopolitical factors influencing these denials, illustrating how historical narratives are manipulated for political gain.⁴ Similarly, Bennett-Jones discusses how the legacy of political dynasties and power struggles, such as those of the Bhutto family in Pakistan, impacts contemporary political narratives and denial strategies.⁵ Furthermore, the media's role in shaping public perception and political discourse is crucial. For example, Green's report on Pakistan highlights how certain struggles are often downplayed or ignored in international reporting, contributing to the broader phenomenon of genocide denial.⁶

¹ Wardatul Akmam, 'Atrocities against humanity during the liberation war in Bangladesh: a case of genocide' (2002) 4(4) *Journal of Genocide Research*
<<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=825b5eeae7081f3f8780ee8fd6e8efd0a9295666>> accessed 08 October 2024

² Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton University Press 2003)

³ *Ibid*

⁴ Jain S, *Balochistan: In the Crosshairs of History* (Knowledge World 2021)

⁵ Bennett-Jones O, *The Bhutto Dynasty: The Struggle for Power* (Yale University Press 2020)

⁶ Reuters, *Special Report The Struggle Pakistan Does Not Want Reported* (2013)

THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF GENOCIDE

Helen Fein, one of the pioneers of genocide studies, argues that the specific purposes of perpetrators might vary because not all genocide was the same. Therefore, she distinguishes genocide on the basis of the purposes of perpetrators.⁷ The political ideology of genocide is founded on extreme beliefs that frequently involve the dehumanisation of specific groups, bigotry, and nationalism. This ideology justifies the use of mass violence as a necessary measure to safeguard or purify the state or society. Genocide usually arises from extreme nationalism, in which a group is convinced of its inherent superiority over others and regards ethnic homogeneity as a necessity for the nation's survival. Nationalistic ideologies portray genocide as a means of ensuring the state's future by eradicating perceived threats.⁸ The conviction that one race or ethnic group is superior to others is a common foundation of genocidal ideologies. This form of racism, which is frequently inherent in state policies, justifies the systematic eradication of groups that are deemed 'inferior' or 'contaminating'.⁹ State-sponsored propaganda is frequently employed to disseminate genocidal ideology by depicting the target group as subversive or dangerous. The population is persuaded that genocide is not only necessary but also a moral obligation through systematic indoctrination.¹⁰ For reasons of national or political pride, some choose to ignore or deny genocide. According to George Orwell's 'Notes on Nationalism' essay, a nationalist has the unique capacity to entirely disregard the wrongs committed by their own community. For instance, the atrocities committed at Nazi concentration camps like Dachau and Buchenwald were kept from the ears of many Englishmen who approved of Hitler. The terrible famine that struck Ukraine in 1933 and killed millions of people was also disregarded by many English Russian sympathisers. Between 1975 and 1999, the Indonesian government denied the occurrence of genocide in East Timor, and throughout European colonisation, there was also a denial of genocide against the Aborigines in Australia.¹¹ Some conservatives, according to Kiernan, refuse to support left-wing causes and so reject such

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (CUP 2005)

⁹ Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression* (CUP 2021)

¹⁰ Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (Hurst Publishers 2007)

¹¹ Ben Kiernan, 'Cover-up and Denial of Genocide: Australia, the USA, East Timor, and the Aborigines' (2010)

34(2) *Critical Asian Studies* <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710220146197>> accessed 08 October 2024

cases. Furthermore, he asserts that left-wing sympathisers occasionally overlook communist state genocides, such as those that occurred in Stalinist Russia and Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge. Sometimes, ideological opponents will change sides depending on how much they find charges of genocide convincing. Iraq conducted the Anfal assault against northern Kurdish people in the 1980s. Using chemical and biological weapons, estimates of deaths in that campaign fall between 50,000 and 182,000. When the US was loosely allied with Iraq during its war with Iran, US agencies released reports that questioned whether Saddam Hussein's regime used chemical weapons. However, after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, the US changed its stance and blamed Saddam for atrocities against the Kurds. Critics like Edward Said later used a Defense Department report, which claimed Iran was responsible for a major gas attack in the Kurdish village of Halabja, to question the allegations against Iraq. In the case of the Iraqi Kurds, the inclination to accept the existence of genocide was time-limited and appears to have been motivated by political expediency.¹²

THE CASE OF BALOCHISTAN

The word Balochistan means the abode of the Baloch.¹³ The Baloch, being an ancient race residing in the mountainous regions of Southwest Asia, are an important minority group in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.¹⁴ They have been subject to invasion by empire-builders (Mongols, Turks, Arabs, and English). The Balochs have a distinctive cultural language and shared common ancestry that emerged in the 12th Century.¹⁵ The land mass of the Province of Balochistan contributes to 43 per cent of the total territory of the Federation of Pakistan.¹⁶ It shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan on the western and northern fronts. Some of its upper districts, like Zohab, Loralai, Ziarat, Killa Saifullah, Pashin, Sherani, and Zhob, are predominately populated by the Pashtu-speaking community, whereas the regions of Sarawan and Jahlawan are inhabited by Bravi-speaking Baloch and Mekran is predominantly Baloch in population which is composed of districts of Kech, Panjgur and Gwadar.

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ T M Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development* (Royal Book Company 2004)

¹⁴ D N Gichki, *Baloch in Search of Identity* (Wrigley's 2015)

¹⁵ Breseeg (n 13)

¹⁶ Kaiser Bengali, *A Cry for Justice* (OUP 2018)

The ethnic Baloch have had a troubled relationship with Pakistan, going back as early as Pakistan's creation in 1947. Pakistan's reaction to the Baloch was mostly influenced by local factors, as perceived internal challenges to the political authority of the regime were more significant than external security consequences in informing Pakistan's approach to the Baloch.¹⁷ For various reasons, the conflict between the Baloch and Pakistani regimes and their divergent responses are problematic. Initially, Pakistan responded to the minority ethnic Baloch with a combination of nonviolent and violent measures. This latest bout of violence has continued since 2005. Although Pakistan's policies towards the Baloch have changed over time, the country's persistent use of repression and non-accommodative responses seem counterproductive and therefore, perplexing because they harm the state's reputation and economic advancement while also serving to further incite violence and encourage rebels. This phenomenon is known as the 'puzzle of repressive persistence'.¹⁸ Furthermore, the answers of Pakistan are not comprehensive, as they fluctuate in their targeting of various ethnic Baloch groups across time and by different Pakistani governments.¹⁹

THE BALOCH INSURGENCY

The Baloch insurgency against Pakistan alternates between periods of relative quiet and increased bloodshed, with five periods of heightened warfare (1948, 1958-1959, 1963-1969, 1973-1977 and 2005), the longest continuous era of violence lasting until the present. Balochistan, Pakistan's largest and poorest province, has abundant energy resources.²⁰ Over 70% of the population of Balochistan is living below the poverty line, and the literacy rate in the province remains still at 44%, out of Pakistan's overall population of 230 million, around 8.6 million people – the Baloch – make up Balochistan province.²¹ The British Partition Plan of 3 June 1947 divided British India into India and Pakistan, giving the approximately 562 Indian princely states, including Makran, Kalat, Kharan, and Las Bela, located in present-day Balochistan

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Christian Davenport and Cyanne Loyle, 'The States Must Be Crazy: Dissent and the Puzzle of Repressive Persistence' (2012) 6(1) *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* <<https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-2931>> accessed 08 October 2024

¹⁹ AI Butt, *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists* (Cornell University Press 2017)

²⁰ Davenport (n 18)

²¹ 'The World Factbook: South Asia: Pakistan' (*Central Investigate Agency*, 17 December 2020) <<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/pakistan/>> accessed 08 October 2024

Province, the option of joining either Pakistan or India or remaining independent.²² In 1948, almost one year after gaining independence from India through a partition, the princely state of the Khanate of Kalat joined the newly formed Pakistani state.²³ Soon thereafter, Abdul Karim, the brother of Khan of Kalat Ahmad Yar, spearheaded a rebellion against the proposed accession.²⁴ Following this initial uprising, a low-level ethnic Baloch insurgency emerged years later against the ethnically Punjab-dominated Pakistani state, marking the longest-lasting internal violent struggle in Pakistan.²⁵ Political violence,²⁶ or more specifically, ethno-political violence²⁷ between Pakistan and the Baloch, has evolved from a few Baloch political leaders and tribes with particular goals and grievances to the idea of Baloch nationalism.²⁸ The Baloch people have insisted on increased self-governance, access to institutions, enhanced financial management of Balochistan's resources, better prospects for development and employment, and the end of governmental oppression. The Baloch conflict is among the most pressing challenges that Pakistan confronts, alongside Islamic extremism, ethno-sectarian violence, and the ongoing possibility of violent confrontation with a far broader scope.

CAUSES OF INSURGENCY

Pakistani elites blame the violence in Balochistan on two main causes: the voters' refusal to support nationalist parties and their consequent ousting from power and the feudal lords' apprehension that large-scale development projects will expose the population to other influences and undermine their dominant position, the Baloch ethnic group thinks that they have been inadequately represented in the civil administration. According to the proclamation issued by Ataulloh Mengal, the former chief minister of the Balochs, the Baloch population within the Pakistani Army is just a few hundred. Not a single Baloch is included in the prestigious Baloch Regiment. Baloch representation in the Army and high-ranking federal

²² Martin Axmann, *Back to the Future: The Khanate of Kalat and the Genesis of Baloch Nationalism 1915-1955* (OUP 2012)

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ AB Awan, *Baluchistan: Historical and Political Processes* (New Century 1985)

²⁵ Salman Rafi Sheikh, *The Genesis of Baloch Nationalism Politics and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1947-1977* (1st edn, Routledge 2018)

²⁶ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Routledge 2011)

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Sheikh (n 26)

positions is minimal, and even the majority of provincial positions are occupied by individuals from outside the region. Predictably, the unemployment rate in Balochistan is significantly greater than that of the other provinces. Based on the latest census data, the unemployment rate in Balochistan is 33.48 percent, which is higher than the national unemployment rate of 19 percent for Pakistan. Moreover, there is the matter of purported economic exploitation by Islamabad. The Balochs believe that their natural resources and assets are being used without fair allocation of advantages to the existing indigenous population. One notable example is Sui Gas, which, until General Zia established a Corps Headquarters in Quetta, was supplied to practically all households and industries in Pakistan, with the exclusion of Balochistan.²⁹ The Baloch people believe that they are being pushed aside in their own province as the number of Pakhtoons and other Pakistanis increases.³⁰ They are concerned that large development projects, such as the Gwadar Port, would attract strangers, who will eventually outnumber them and take away their identity, language, and rights. Because of this, they oppose these projects. While Gwadar is being connected to Karachi, it is not being linked to Baloch regions such as Turbat, Panjgur, and Khuzdar, resulting in limited advantages for many parts of the province. Despite possessing the longest coastline in Pakistan, the Baloch are concerned that their region is becoming increasingly isolated. Insufficient implementation of genuine federalism and decision-making during military control has exacerbated the sense of detachment among people.³¹

REVIVAL OF INSURGENCY

After a three-decade break, and with the majority of nationalists in Quetta now out of power, the violence has returned. The insurgents have primarily attacked infrastructure and development projects. The frequency with which gas pipelines, railroad tracks, bridges, power transmission lines, telephone exchanges, and government and military institutions have been targeted is concerning. Government sources state that 843 violent attacks and events have been reported in various regions of the province since 2002. Of these, 31 target gas pipelines and 54

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ Alok Bansal, 'Factors leading to insurgency in Balochistan' (2008) 19(2) *Small Wars & Insurgencies* <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310802061356>> accessed 08 October 2024

³¹ *Ibid*

target law enforcement organisations. There were 50 cases of kidnapping, 291 mine explosion occurrences, and 417 rocket firing incidents. 166 violent events were reported in the Kohlu district alone during that time. These were 110 rocket-firing occurrences and 45 bomb blast incidents. Violence was more pronounced by 2004. Among the bomb assaults in Quetta, the most lethal occurred in December, resulting in the deaths of 11 individuals and injuries to 30 others. In Kohlu and Dera Bugti districts, security forces have been targeting the strongholds of Baloch nationalists with the assistance of air force jets, helicopter gunships, and artillery. They assert that the operation is intended to eliminate the terrorist camps of the miscreants. According to reports, the situation is deteriorating. Baloch nationalists have asserted that the security forces' indiscriminate firing has resulted in widespread death and devastation. In the Dera Bugti district alone, 72 tribesmen were slain and 228 injured in a month of bombings and rocket fire, according to the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP).³² According to Senator Sanaullah Baloch, the security forces have employed poisonous gases against the populace, and a number of women and children have been slain. The government has been accused by opposition parties in parliament of perpetrating genocide against innocent citizens in Balochistan. Asma Jehangir, the chairperson of HRCP, was unable to visit Balochistan.³³ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has urged the government to stop killing Baloch in Kohlu, implement an urgent ceasefire, and resolve the situation constructively. It also stated that the military operation violated national and international rules, expressed concern over those missing in the area, and condemned the role of intelligence services in the situation. Furthermore, Nawab Bugti suggested the participation of the United Nations in the conflict and underscored that over 85 percent of the victims are women and children. According to the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Pakistani Army's retaliatory actions against Baloch nationalists are to blame for the intentional death of Punjabi civilians in Balochistan. In 2006, the Pakistani government formally labelled the BLA as a terrorist group.³⁴ Furthermore, in that same year, the UK banned the BLA and stopped its members from entering the country. Subsequently, the United States formally

³² *Ibid*

³³ 'Interview with Asma Jahangir' (*Asia Society*) <<https://asiasociety.org/interview-asma-jahangir>> accessed 08 October 2024

³⁴ *Ibid*

classified the actions of the BLA as terrorism and included the militia on its extensive roster of worldwide terrorist organisations.³⁵

POLITICS BEHIND GENOCIDE DENIAL BY PAKISTAN

Between 1948 and 2006, the Politics of Ethnicity in Baloch not only developed but also reached its peak. The period with the highest level of turbulence begins in the year 2000.³⁶ In an attempt to counterbaloch opposition, military methods have been employed. While the new government led by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) implemented various political changes following the 2008 elections, these measures were rejected by the Baloch nationalist leaders. The recently elected administration pledged to establish peace and actively pursue a policy of reconciliation for the Baloch people. As part of efforts to build trust, P.M Yousaf Raza Gilani issued an apology and released several prominent Baloch leaders. The government set up a committee to look into the problems in Balochistan and suggest solutions. In the past, a military government also formed committees to talk to Baloch leaders, but their advice wasn't followed. After 18 months, a Balochistan package was introduced, aiming to address all the issues. Despite these efforts, the situation in Balochistan keeps getting worse. Every day, there are incidents like suicide bombings, killings, and attacks on military and government sites. The region has become a major problem for Pakistan.³⁷

Baloch nationalists and certain political analysts have divergent perspectives on the present state of affairs in Balochistan. The Nationalists perceive the current crisis as a response to their exploitation by the central government, and now it intensifies into a struggle for their independence.³⁸ Alternatively, the opposing faction attributes the responsibility to Baloch Sardars, who seek to retain their control over the traditional tribal Sardari system. That is why they exerted their maximum efforts to impede the government's endeavours to develop

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Durdana Najam, 'Pakistan's Festering Wound- Balochistan' *The Express Tribune* (28 January 2010) <<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2491840/balochistan-the-bleeding-wound-of-pakistan>> accessed 08 October 2024

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Hussain Mirza and Jai Kumar, 'An Analysis of Factors of Insurgency and Current Episodes of Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan's Balochistan' (2023) 4(1) *Human Nature Journal of Social Science* <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371306646_An_Analysis_of_Factors_of_Insurgency_and_Current_Episodes_of_Ethnic_Conflict_in_Pakistan's_Balochistan> accessed 08 October 2024

Balochistan.³⁹ The challenges in Balochistan can be interpreted as a manifestation of Pakistan's strategies of forcible integration and marginalisation. The province of Balochistan was established in 1971.⁴⁰ However, the Baloch people have subsequently been divided into two distinct factions. While one faction strives for more self-governance, the other advocates for absolute sovereignty, occasionally resorting to violence. Pakistan, characterised by ethnic divisions, has thus far failed to recognise regional identities. Indeed, both civilian and military administrations endeavoured to establish a unified national identity, therefore exacerbating separatist sentiments. The Baloch rebellions seen between 1948 and 2005 were responses to the policies implemented by the central government.⁴¹ The central government of Pakistan has not yet embraced the Baloch's fervent desire for their identity and complete autonomy. The administration is emphasising the instrumentalist perspective on ethnicity, which suggests that political and economic benefits are the possible considerations for manipulating ethnicity.⁴² In an interview conducted by Najam Sethi and broadcasted by Dunya T V, Mir Herbyar Marri, the son of Khair Bukhsh Marri, explicitly expressed that his paramount concern is the pursuit of independence, with resources being of secondary importance. Authentic Baloch identity can only be preserved inside the boundaries of an autonomous Balochistan. On January 3, 2005, the Bugti tribe launched attacks against Pakistan after a female doctor employed by Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) at the Sui gas plant accused an army officer, who was the head of security at the plant, of unlawfully entering her living quarters and sexually assaulting her. Rather than conducting an inquiry into the doctor's complaint, the military administered medication to her and subsequently transferred her to a psychiatric facility in Karachi. When the military identified a Bugti tribesman as responsible, the Bugtis perceived this as a direct challenge to their sense of dignity.⁴³ On 11 January, the Bugtis, led by Brahamdagh, the main descendent of Akbar Bugti, initiated a rocket assault on Sui, the largest gas facility in Pakistan.⁴⁴ Musharraf issued a warning to the Baloch and subsequently deployed more officials, together

³⁹ Interview with Asma Jahangir (n 34)

⁴⁰ Mirza (n 39)

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Dera Bugti, 'Turning a fight into a war' *The Economist* (29 June 2006)

<<https://www.economist.com/asia/2006/06/29/turning-a-fight-into-a-war>> accessed 08 October 224

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: Deep Inside the World's Most Frightening State* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2010)

with ground and air military assistance, to protect the plant.⁴⁵ In February 2005, a commander in Dera Bugti voiced his dissatisfaction with Akbar Bugti due to the insistence of local residents not to assist the troops, work on the base, or enroll their children in the army-operated school.⁴⁶ Furthermore, armed Bugti combatants openly refused to comply with military authority. Intermittent disruptions in production were triggered by attacks on pipelines in the region, prompting the deployment of the military to protect critical installations.⁴⁷ In March 2005, Dera Bugti witnessed a tumultuous explosion between the indigenous Butti tribe and government troops.⁴⁸ On March 17, members of Akbar Bugti's clan opened fire on the FC base, causing the FC to retaliate by attacking Akbar Bugti's fort.⁴⁹ This took place during a continuous series of rocket assaults all day long. The population of Dera Bugti was almost completely displaced and numerous civilians lost their lives as a result of the conflict. About 200,000 people were displaced from the Marri and Bugti areas. On December 31, 2005, Akbar Bugti fled into the mountains, and violence spread across Balochistan. By January 1, 2006, Baloch leaders and nationalists called for an end to military actions in the conflict zones.⁵⁰ On January 16, Pakistan's Information Minister said the government was investigating if al-Qa'ida was involved in the Sui incidents. In February, the BLA killed three Chinese engineers in Balochistan just before Musharraf visited China.⁵¹ On April 7, Islamabad declared the BLA a terrorist group, and Balach Marri lost his seat in the Balochistan assembly. After the BLA was banned, its name became unmentionable in the media. In April, Balach Marri joined Akbar Bugti in the mountains.⁵² Akbar Bugti was killed by the military on August 26 in the mountains following a confrontation; however, the initial shots fired remain uncertain.⁵³ In Balochistan, his death caused a lot of riots. People blocked roads, set

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ Carina Jahani et. al., *The Baloch and Others: Linguistic, Historical and Socio-Political Perspectives on Pluralism in Balochistan* (Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden 2008)

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ Walsh D, *The Nine Lives of Pakistan: Dispatches from a Precarious State* (W.W. Norton & Company 2020)

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ 'Call for end to operation in Kohlu, Dera Bugti' *Dawn* (02 January 2006)

<<https://www.dawn.com/news/172504/call-for-end-to-operation-in-kohlu-dera-bugti>> accessed 08 October 2024

⁵¹ 'Chinese Engineers Killed in Baluchistan' *Al Jazeera* (15 February 2006)

<<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/2/15/chinese-engineers-killed-in-baluchistan>> accessed 08 October 2024

⁵² Jahani (n 47)

⁵³ *Ibid*

tyres on fire, and attacked Pakistani symbols. Bugti was buried near Dera Bugti on September 1 without his family being there. His body was not shown to the public. Several hundred political sympathisers were reportedly detained by the government, according to Baloch leaders. The insurgency among the Baloch people subsided following Bugti's death, with many of its leaders fleeing to Afghanistan and others apprehended by security authorities. This time saw a widening chasm between Islamabad and Baloch nationalists, who rallied around a new crop of conservative Baloch politicians.⁵⁴ Musharraf defended his actions in Balochistan by denying any human rights abuses and trying to protect his image and that of the military and state. He claimed that Baloch nationalists were anti-Pakistan and that military actions were historically common.⁵⁵ Musharraf dismissed reports of abuses as politically motivated and criticised the media and human rights groups for not understanding Balochistan's situation. These statements came just before his return to Pakistan in 2013 after four years in self-imposed exile.⁵⁶ Balochistan still faced poor conditions in education, infrastructure, health, and sanitation.⁵⁷ Despite the 2010 constitutional amendment aiming to shift power away from the executive, violence continued in 2011.⁵⁸ The military and intelligence agencies charged with quelling the insurgency in Balochistan persistently engaged in severe human rights abuses. Both Baloch nationalists and civilians vanished, were murdered, and their remains were then discarded along traffic routes.⁵⁹ This policy was not altered by the civilian administrations that emerged following the fall of Musharraf.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The politics of genocide denial often involve efforts by governments or political groups to hide or reject the truth about mass killings. This denial is usually tied to protecting a country's image, maintaining power, or avoiding responsibility for crimes. For example, in Balochistan,

⁵⁴ M.S. Akbar, *The Redefined Dimensions of Baloch Nationalist Movement* (Xlibris Corporation 2011)

⁵⁵ Bugti (n 43)

⁵⁶ Jahani (n 47)

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ Bennett-Jons, *The Bhutto Dynasty: The Struggle for Power* (Yale University Press 2020)

⁵⁹ Matthew Green, 'Special Report - The Struggle Pakistan Does Not Want Reported' *Reuters* (25 September 2013) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/world/asia-pacific/special-report-the-struggle-pakistan-does-not-want-reported-idUSDEE98N0AG/>> accessed 08 October 2024

⁶⁰ Akbar (n 55)

Pakistan's government has denied accusations of genocide despite the evidence of violence and repression against the Baloch people. These denials help the government keep control over the region and avoid international criticism. Denial also allows countries to rewrite history to suit their political goals, often ignoring the suffering of victims.