



RESEARCH PAPER

An Analysis of Anwar Zeb's Contributions and Perspectives on the Revival of the Democratic Students Federation

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the significance of the Democratic Students Federation (DSF), a left-wing student political organisation, focusing on its historical origins and revival in the 1980s. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar established the DSF in 1950, but the Pakistani government banned it in 1954. In 1981, Anwar Zeb and his associates started the revival of DSF in partnership with the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). The study uses an in-depth, semi-structured interview with Anwar Zeb to explore his contributions and perspectives on the resurgence of DSF. The research incorporates various methods such as historical resources, thematic analysis, archival record comparison, and ethical considerations. The study concludes that DSF emerged as a symbol of opposition to the repressive Zia dictatorship, and despite efforts to suppress it, the organisation remained resilient. Anwar Zeb later joined the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and is currently active in politics. The paper recommends the reinstatement of student unions as a means to address ethnic tensions, harassment, discrimination, and extremist ideologies and to cultivate competent political leaders for Pakistan's future.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Anwar Zeb, Communist Party, Democratic Students Federation (DSF) Karachi, Pakistan, Peshawar, Politics, Social Movements

Introduction

Student politics encompasses the intricate dynamics of power distribution between students, university administrators, and governmental officials within the realm of higher education institutions. The concept encompasses both representation and activism, wherein representation pertains to the involvement of student groups, while activism pertains to the engagement in collective action. The emergence of student politics is influenced by organizational traits and strategic repertoires, which in turn shape the dynamics between students and state authorities (Klemenčič & Park, 2018).

The University campus plays a crucial role in facilitating and involving diverse student organisations in student politics and their active involvement in broader social movements. Furthermore, it simultaneously offers an opportunity for non-political students to acquaint themselves with many political ideologies and discussions, therefore equipping them to actively participate in civic endeavours and contribute to the development of their country (Dip, 2022).

The Muslim Students Federation (MSF) was the only existing student group in Pakistan at its inception in 1947 that was affiliated with the governing Muslim League. MSF aimed to attract students and young Muslims from India, establishing a distinct nation for the Muslim population. However, the Muslim League's disintegration led to fragmentation into factions, resulting in the formation of the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) in 1950 at the Dow Medical College, Karachi. DSF aimed to address academic challenges and bridge the gap resulting from MSF's fragmentation. The establishment of the DSF may be credited to Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from India, who mostly resided in Karachi and

placed significant demands on educational institutions. In 1951, DSF started a rigorous recruitment drive, therefore extending its influence to educational institutions in Lahore and Rawalpindi (Paracha, 2022).

Following the partition of the Indian subcontinent, a group of students from DOW Medical College saw the urgent need to address the challenges faced by displaced students living in Karachi. The Democratic Students Federation (DSF) was founded in 1950. The impact of DSF expanded swiftly to include other colleges and educational institutions, with prominent individuals like *Dr. Khwaja Moin Ahmed* and *Dr. Syed Haroon Ahmed* among its members. The DSF manifesto, created in 1951, presented a suggestion to foster the enhancement of pupils. The Democratic Student Federation (DSF) garnered substantial backing and achieved a notable triumph in collegiate elections, showing its capacity to attract support beyond mere association with the Communist Party. The establishment of an Inter-Collegiate Body (ICB) had a substantial influence on the formation of student politics, hence strengthening its overall effect (Khayam, 2012).

After its inception, the Democratic Student's Federation saw the need to create a publication as a mechanism to mobilise students in alignment with its objectives. One pressing need at the time was to respond to the government's dissemination of propaganda against DSF via many channels, including the national press and the student organisation "Students Voice," which was overseen by *Khurshid Ahmad*, a member of *Jamaat-e-Islami*. *S.M. Naseem* assumed the roles of editor, printer, and publisher for the Students Herald, a publication that started in 1951 and was released on a biweekly basis. However, his tenure was cut short when he, along with many others, was apprehended in July 1954. Additionally, he founded the DSF unit at S.M. College in Karachi. The Students Herald's level of quality may be assessed by its achievement of receiving the best weekly award in Poland from the International Union of Students (IUS). In July 1954, the Pakistani government imposed a ban on the journal known as Herald, which was mostly aligned with left-wing ideologies. This decision was made in light of the government's inclination towards establishing closer ties with the United States of America (Naseem, 2009).

The DSF has been around since the beginning of Pakistan, which makes its story very long. That is why researchers focused most of their attention on the comeback of DSF, which began in the early 1980s. In addition to interviewing Mr. Anwar Zeb, the study looks at historical records, books, newspapers, and academic sources. This is done to give the study's results more context and make them more trustworthy. We used a method called "semi-structured interviews" to get information from our subject, who is currently passionate about politics. The interviews covered a wide range of topics, such as the person's first involvement with DSF, the events that led to the ban in 1954, the subsequent process of revival, the person's specific contributions to the organisation, the problems they faced during the revival, and their thoughts on the journey as a whole. During the meetings, all of these issues were discussed in depth.

Literature Review

The students' movement in Pakistan has produced prominent personalities, including *Dr Muhammad Sarwar*, *Dr Syed Haroon Ahmed*, *Dr Adeeb-ul-Hassan Rizvi*, *Dr Jaffar Naqvi*, *Mohammad Kazim*, *Abid Hassan Minto*, *Sher Afzal Malik*, and *Meraj Muhammad Khan*. Students encountered several challenges, such as the events that transpired on January 8, 1953. However, they also achieved success in their pursuit of the founding of Karachi University and the provision of numerous additional amenities catering to the needs of students. Likewise, the student movement that transpired during the years 1968–1969 exerted significant pressure on General Ayub Khan, compelling him to relinquish his position and permanently withdraw from the realm of politics. Whenever students have made their demands to the government, they have encountered severe responses from government authorities, including the use of baton charges, the deployment of tear gas, and

the apprehension of prominent organisers involved in such student strikes. While political strikes, such as those organised by DSF, are often characterised by nonviolent means, they garner significant participation, hence instilling apprehension among law enforcement agencies. Consequently, these strikes often result in forceful interventions by the police, as documented by Husain (2009).

On January 8, 1953, the police in Karachi engaged in indiscriminate gunfire, targeting people of all ages, including adolescents and senior citizens. Notably, the police have shown a tendency to target those who were offering assistance to their injured fellow citizens. According to reports from hospital authorities, around twenty people have had permanent impairments, and it is anticipated that a significant number of patients would need hospitalisation for a minimum period of one month before discharge. The untimely demise of *Man Sukh Lal*, a youthful Hindu scholar who was engaged in aiding the wounded individuals near Paradise Cinema, represents a narrative of law enforcement aggression that has had enduring repercussions on many lives. The acts undertaken by law enforcement have had an enduring influence on the individuals who have been impacted by these occurrences (Sarwar, 2009).

A peaceful rally in Karachi, organised by students from Women's College and DSF, led to the arrest and detention of several detainees. The district magistrate ordered the prompt release of the imprisoned pupils, leading to the temporary closure of educational institutions in *Sukkur*. The government's inept reaction to the protest led to the DSF's transformation into a widespread movement throughout the country. The DSF leadership used influence to encourage calmness, and Prime Minister *Khwaja Nazimuddin* expressed remorse for the incidents. However, he was terminated from his position. The International Committee of Biologists (ICB) representatives met with *Mohammad Ali Bogra*, who committed to examining the committee's requests. The establishment of the University of Karachi was initiated, along with the government's strategic deliberations to construct a prospective capital near Rawalpindi (Sarwar, 2016).

The DSF (Democratic Students Federation) throughout the 1950s and 1954 included notable students of that era who afterwards pursued careers in medicine. However, it is important to note that the DSF also had female members such as *Shahida Haroon* and her younger sister *Rashida*. The role of females in DSF is evident from a play that was staged at D.J. Science College, attracting a substantial crowd. The leadership of the DSF was apprehended and subjected to acts of torture. However, it is important to note that they had overseen the organisation with a commitment to nonviolent principles. Additionally, throughout that period, the DSF deliberately maintained a distance from the communist party, aiming to foster unity among student groups in pursuit of shared objectives. The aims of the DSF were the promotion of public awareness, the provision of universal education, and the establishment of a secular and democratic framework to foster harmonious coexistence among individuals (Sarwar, 2011).

After the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1954, the DSF, along with the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) and the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), faced prohibition. The ban resulted in widespread detentions, notably the apprehension of Mohammad Sarwar, who obtained his final-year MBBS result in prison. Nevertheless, the prohibition failed to deter students, who subsequently regrouped under the auspices of the National Student Federation (NSF). The National Students' Federation (NSF) observed January 8 as an annual commemoration known as "Martyrs Day" until its decline in the 1980s, mostly attributed to official persecution, intelligence penetration, and divisions within the worldwide communist movement. The energy generated by the January 7, 1953, movement catalyzed subsequent student uprisings in the years 1962, 1964, and 1968–69. During the 1964 elections, the National Students' Federation (NSF) played a significant role in mobilising the general public in support of *Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah*, who courageously contested against the military ruler General Ayub Khan. The democratic surge that occurred

in 1968–69 compelled Ayub Khan to publicly declare his intention to abstain from participating in the next elections, signifying a triumph for the ruling authorities. Nevertheless, the faction representing the privileged and exclusive segments of society similarly dismissed the results of the 1970 elections and began a campaign of mass extermination in what was then known as East Pakistan, now recognised as Bangladesh, resulting in the fragmentation of the nation of Pakistan (Husain, 2010).

The founders of the Islamic Jihadist Movement (IJT), similar to their predecessors in the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), prioritised a '*dua*' (supplication) function instead of engaging in political activities. The competition around positions resulted in the removal of JI leaders and the establishment of the DSF, which serves as the student faction of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). The DSF effectively leveraged the discontent among the young migrant population in Karachi on tuition fees, education expenses, and educational infrastructure. By the year 1952, it had achieved success in student union elections and established the Inter-Collegiate Body (ICB) to promote student welfare. Nevertheless, its progress was abruptly halted in 1954 when it was subjected to a ban alongside its parent organisation, the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). The government levied allegations against the leadership of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), asserting their complicity with General Akbar Khan in an unsuccessful "Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case" aimed at toppling the incumbent authority. The Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case had a significant influence on progressive student groups, compelling them to operate clandestinely and align themselves with different established political factions. The internal environment gave rise to divisions among communist factions (Butt, 2009).

So this was the story of DSF, from struggle to success and later a ban on the left-wing student's political organization. An attempt to revive the DSF was made by *Anwar Zeb* and his comrades. As narrated by *Muqarrab Khan* (2023), Anwar Zeb's participation in the creation of the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) is eminent. He is a native of *Maneri, Swabi*, who shifted from his family's traditional national politics to progressive politics. *Muqarrab Khan* remembers Anwar Zeb from when his BA test results were awaited. *Muqarrab Khan* was assigned a task to work with Anwar Zeb on the student's behalf, which led them to Peshawar. The DSF had not yet been established. A meeting was held to discuss the establishment and leadership of DSF, which included *Naseer Khayyam, Jabar Khattak*, and *Anwar Zeb*. The three-day debate resulted in the creation of the DSF's manifesto and constitution, with delegates from several provinces participating. The formal announcement of the DSF was scheduled on January 8, 1981, in Karachi. *Anwar Zeb* and *Muqarb Khan* travelled by truck top from Swabi to Karachi, demonstrating their dedication to their cause (Khan, 2023).

Material and Methods

This qualitative research study investigates the resurrection of the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) through the case study of Anwar Zeb. The study employs in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore Anwar Zeb's role, experiences, and perspectives. Historical resources and thematic analysis of interview transcripts reveal recurring themes and insights into Zeb's contributions to the rebirth of the DSF.

During the first phase of this research, the data mostly consisted of information derived from a paraphrased interview conducted with Anwar Zeb, a prominent individual involved in the resurgence of the Democratic Students Federation. Nevertheless, as the research advanced, the need to include interview material within the limitations of the paper led to a shift from paraphrasing to summarising the information. This transition included the preservation of fundamental ideas and valuable insights while simultaneously compressing the information to achieve conciseness. The condensed interview preserves the initial framework, highlighting significant aspects of the rebirth of the DSF. The execution of this shift was conducted meticulously to guarantee the appropriate

representation of Anwar Zeb's opinions and experiences. The methodology prioritised the aspects of authenticity, nuanced analysis, and research goals. Through the identification of recurrent themes and essential contributions, this research aims to provide a concise but thorough depiction of Zeb's involvement in the rebirth of the DSF, while also acknowledging the practical limits imposed by available documents.

The analysis of the paraphrased and summarised interview transcripts is conducted to maintain the original conversation structure and details. Ethical concerns are prioritised, and precautionary steps are taken to preserve confidentiality and safeguard private data. The research also incorporates a Facebook post published by a founder member of the DSF to provide a personal viewpoint on the resurrection process. Although the case study offers interesting insights, the conclusions may not fully represent the overall resurrection of the DSF. Overall, this qualitative research provides a comprehensive understanding of the DSF's revival and its significance within the communist student movement.

Paraphrased Interview Transcript

Evolution of Political Identity and Activism: The Journey to Joining DSF"

Upon the enrollment of Mr. Anwar Zeb in a college, he chose to become a member of the Pakhtun Students Federation (PSF) due to his family's involvement in nationalist progressive politics, particularly their active participation in the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement* and afterwards in the National Awami Party (NAP). Following the Hyderabad conspiracy case in 1974, the National Awami Party (NAP) underwent a split, resulting in its fragmentation into three distinct factions. *Sher Baz Mazari* served as the head of the National Democratic Party (NDP), an organisation that was originally established by the family of *Wali Khan*. The Pakistan National Party (PNP) was established by Baloch Nationalists and their allies from other provinces under the leadership of *Mir Ghaus Bukhsh Bizenjo and Ataullah Mengal*. The Communist Party, a constituent of the National Awami Party (NAP), established an independent group known as the National Progressive Party (NPP). The student wings of the Nationalist Awami Party (NAP) also experienced fragmentation, resulting in the formation of many factions. The Communist Party established a distinct faction known as PSF Progressive. Mr. Anwar Zeb became a member of the PSF Progressive Organisation and engaged in active involvement within the realm of student politics. The PSF Progressive was a constituent of the Pakistan Federal Union of Students (PFUS), which included the Sindh National Students Federation, Baluch Students Organisation, Punjab Students Union, and Pakhtun Students Federation. In response to the evolving political landscape, the CPP has opted to establish a cohesive and progressive student platform aimed at addressing student issues as well as confronting and opposing overt meddling by the Martial Law government inside educational establishments. He was assigned the responsibility of reconfiguring the Pakistan Federal Union of Students into a centralised platform catering to the needs and interests of progressive and left-leaning students. In his capacity as the organising secretary, he undertook a comprehensive tour around the four provinces, engaging with the leadership of various progressive student groups and people who espoused left-leaning ideologies. The process of resolving spanned many months. The selection of its name and manifesto was determined via an extensive and inclusive process of deliberation and agreement. In the last quarter of 1981, all necessary tasks about the establishment of a new student organisation with a broad-based left ideology were accomplished. The time, date, and place have been resolved. The purpose of providing historical importance is primarily to provide specific details, such as the date and location. The former Democratic Students Federation (DSF) was banned on January 8, 1954, and DOW Medical College served as the epicentre for the initiation of the student revolution, spearheaded by the DSF. Furthermore, it is worth noting that DOW Medical College also made a substantial contribution to student engagement, notably during the 1969 revolt against the regimes of Ayub Khan and afterwards Zia-ul-Haq. The announcement was made at 4 p.m., displaying a strong sense of determination and devotion after the death of Nazir

Abbasi and other violent assaults on leftist and democratic factions. This was accompanied by the distribution of a significant leaflet titled "چلیں۔ ساتھ ہمارے دنیا آئیں" the English translation is "O world, come with us." which has historical significance (Khayam & Nawab, 2020).

"Nurtured by a Revolutionary Era: My Journey into Early Political Engagement"

Anwar Zeb's journey unfolded in a dynamic era of global liberation movements, marked by fervent trade unions, student uprisings, and a charged political climate. Immersed in this atmosphere, he engaged in political gatherings, avidly read newspapers like *Shehbaz* and *Masawat* by NAP and PPP, and encountered Left Maoist ideas through village study circles. An impactful booklet, Original Urdu sentence "شخص وقوف بے بوڑھا وہ" English translation: "The old foolish man who moved the mountain., introduced him to committed youth activists. Revolutionary poetry by *Ajmal Khattak*, *Rehmat Shah Sail*, and *Habib Jalib* further guided him. Upon college admission, Anwar Zeb's determination to engage in student politics was fueled by his heightened class consciousness, exposure to leftist political workers, and the influence of the Afghan Saur Revolution. His participation in the revolution's first anniversary in Kabul ignited his revolutionary spirit, propelling him to join the Pakhtun Student Federation Progressive. Gradually assuming leadership as its Secretary General, Anwar Zeb's Marxist orientation solidified his commitment to student politics and broader political activism.

"Sabotage and Struggle: The First DSF Convention's Battle Against Repression in Peshawar"

Anwar Zeb describes the difficult times democratic and progressive forces went through under General Zia's autocratic rule, which was characterized by the repression of anti-establishment and anti-imperialist groups. The execution of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the death by torture of *Nazir Abbasi* sent progressive forces a clear message. Under Zia's regime, political employees were terrorised by crackdowns, arrests, military tribunals, and fraudulent cases. The rise of reactionary and religious groups, especially *Jamat-e-Islami* and *Islami Jamiat Tulaba*, was fostered by the state, resulting in an obscurantist climate, the banning of student unions, and the encouragement of militancy. DSF emerged against this background as a prominent communist front, recruiting students and challenging counterrevolutionary forces. The 1985 DSF convention encountered significant obstacles, including conflicts with *Jamiat Tulaba* and venue selection difficulties. Despite efforts to thwart it, a one-day convention was conducted in Jamrud, which resulted in the formation of a central administration and committee. DSF remained a significant student resistance force, particularly within the Pakhtun student movement.

"Defending Education and Democracy: DSF's Bold Confrontation Against Militancy and Reactionary Influences"

The Democratic Students' Federation (DSF) was at the vanguard of opposition to Zia's regime and its regressive education and political landscape policies. American imperialism systematically employed political Islam inside the framework of the education system, taking into account previous instances of exploitation, such as the British Empire's use of *Bacha Saka* as a means to counteract progressive changes in Afghanistan. *Wahabism* and *Salafism*, disseminated through madrassahs funded by petrodollars, were incorporated into the curriculum at the University of Nebraska, fostering an environment of intolerance and reaction. Through study circles, video programmes, awareness campaigns, street theatre, and political processions, DSF emerged as a potent ideological counterforce, challenging this narrative. The government at that time was trying to sabotage the convention of the DSF, and it is proof that they acknowledged its ideological influence on youth. DSF pioneered resistance against reactionary forces and militant ideologies, bringing

together diverse student organisations to address student concerns and advocate for democratic, economic, and political rights. The leadership of the DSF fostered progressive alliances, such as the United Students Movement, the Quaid-e-Azam Students Alliance, the Anti-Jamiat Alliance, the Students Action Council, and the Progressive Students Alliance, thereby strengthening their fight against extremist activities.

"Echoes of Resistance: Recalling Notable Arrests, Timelines, and Locations of Key Figures"

Political activists like Anwar Zeb, who opposed Zia's dictatorial policies, endured tremendous adversities under his oppressive regime. Progressive democratic student organisations and opposition parties such as the Pakistan People's Party endured a particularly difficult period. Important figures became targets; Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was convicted of murder in a contrived trial, leading to his execution. After his detention, Nazir Abbasi, a student activist, was tormented to death. Other notable activists, including Jam Saqi, Imdad Chandio, and Hameed Baluch, were also arrested and subjected to severe treatment. The MRD movement resulted in extensive arrests throughout the nation, with activists subjected to torture, solitary confinement, and severe prison conditions. The expulsion of student activists from educational institutions impeded their education. Political and student activists in Baluchistan faced severe persecution due to their leadership role in the struggle. Similar to Pakhtunkhwa, torture chambers and prisons were used to suppress dissent in Pakhtunkhwa. Unacknowledged by the younger generation, the unrelenting struggle of these political labourers and student activists played a significant role in the fight for political rights and economic justice in Pakistan.

"Resilience and Reverberations: Reflections on the Response of Elders and Teachers During Imprisonment"

The interviewee, Anwar Zeb, offers a scholarly perspective on the historical importance of incarceration as a determinant of political action in the subcontinent, with its origins dating back to the early era of British colonial rule. The individual recalls the severe mistreatment experienced by political figures and labourers, including various methods of degradation, public exhibitions, and the seizure of assets. Zeb's early exposure to these narratives may be attributed to their familial ties with the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement*. Prominent individuals such as Bacha Khan and his paternal uncle, *Firdos Khan Alias Kuku*, who endured periods of incarceration lasting 32 and 18 years, respectively, became emblematic figures exemplifying unwavering dedication to their cause under their captivity. Zeb's initial involvement in left-wing political ideologies prompted him to draw inspiration from the literary contributions of prominent individuals such as *Kaka Jee Sanobar Hussain and Ajmal Khattak*. The author emphasises the cultural and sociological importance of imprisonment as a kind of recognition within political spheres. Zeb provides a firsthand account of his encounters with arrest, incarceration, and encounters with co-detainees throughout the Zia administration. The author highlights the difficulties encountered by educators who resisted the policies implemented by Zia as well as the discreet backing they received for their steadfast commitment.

"Reflections of Resilience: Navigating Memories of Struggle and Triumph in DSF"

Anwar Zeb, in his contemplation of the past, draws an analogy to a rearview mirror, emphasising its capacity to provide valuable insights derived from both moments of happiness and challenges encountered. Zeb's personal and political trajectory was marked by economic hardships, disparities in social conditions, and the presence of poverty. Despite the constraints imposed by limited resources, the lifestyle prevalent in rural communities provided individuals with a profound sense of self-sufficiency that was deeply intertwined with agricultural activities. The primary motivating factor was not monetary incentives; rather, political dedication and awareness served as the essential determinants. Politics was

regarded with great reverence since it was seen as a mechanism to safeguard the rights of individuals and dismantle systems of tyranny. Zeb was raised in an environment characterised by a political ethos that highly valued acts of sacrifice and contributions to society. Zeb's ideological inclination towards Marxism was shaped by the influence of prominent independence warriors like *Bacha Khan* as well as renowned worldwide personalities like *Che Guevara* and *Bhagat Singh*. His zeal for revolutionary politics was ignited by the contrast between oppressive governments and the rise of liberation movements. The presence of *Noor Muhammad Tarakai* and *Hafiz ul-Amin*, the leaders of the Saur Revolution, was a significant milestone. Reflecting on his odyssey, Zeb derives a sense of satisfaction from his historical trajectory, which serves as a source of spiritual vitality and resolute dedication to the pursuit of societal conflict as a means to achieve fairness and parity.

Analytical Review of the Paraphrased Interview

This analysis examines a paraphrased interview with the last surviving DSF politician, revealing the historical and contemporary relevance of their insights. We have illuminated their significance by combining personal reflections with a broader societal context and existing research. Inspired by historians who decipher historical narratives, we have revealed the interviewee's crucial role during the difficult era of the DSF. We've looked beyond the evident, deciphering concealed meanings in the same way that we've explored hidden currents in response to major shifts. By comparing and reflecting, we have uncovered broader implications. Our journey delves deeper into the interview and unearths lasting insights.

The comprehensive interview provides insight into Anwar Zeb's political transformation, which involves a shift from a background rooted in familial involvement in pre-independence politics to the adoption of progressive principles. The extensive perspective provided by Khan (2023) serves to emphasise his unwavering dedication. Anwar Zeb, hailing from Maneri, Swabi, played a significant part in the establishment of the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF). He actively collaborated with prominent individuals like Jabar Khattak and Naeem Lala in this endeavour. The DSF's structure was shaped via the organisation of statewide meetings, with a notable session held in Peshawar. The official foundation of the DSF on January 8, 1981, in Karachi was the culmination of their efforts. The steadfast determination of Anwar Zeb is seen in his decision, with a companion, to undertake an affordable truck voyage to Karachi, demonstrating a commitment to financial prudence. Anwar Zeb is a prominent individual who plays a crucial part in upholding the principles and essence of the DSF (Democratic Student Federation). He exemplifies unwavering dedication to progressive political ideologies and assumes a critical position in instigating transformative actions via student activism (Khan, 2023).

The interviewee's political inclination towards left-wing ideologies was fostered by exposure to revolutionary literature, which often serves as a source of inspiration for revolutionaries. The recognition of the need for ideological leadership was prominently addressed in the early stages by the first Democratic Students' Federation (DSF), as documented by Naseem (2009). Upon its founding, the DSF acknowledged the imperative need to combat governmental propaganda, which subsequently prompted the creation of the "Students Herald" in 1951 under the leadership of S.M. Naseem. Naseem assumed many responsibilities within the publication, including those of editor and publisher. The primary aim of the publication was to critically examine and counteract the dissemination of inaccurate information by the government via various communication channels. This included the act of challenging the prevailing discourse propagated by media platforms such as "Students Voice," which is under the supervision of Khurshid Ahmad, affiliated with the *Jamaat-e-Islami* organisation. The publication's significant influence and excellence were shown by its receipt of the prestigious Best Weekly Award from the International Union of Students. Regrettably, the progress of the publication known as "Students Herald" was

abruptly halted in July 1954 as a consequence of a ban enforced by the government. The imposition of this prohibition was deemed legitimate based on purported connections with the United States, eventually resulting in the apprehension of Naseem and other members affiliated with the DSF.

The interview conducted with Anwar Zeb provides insight into the ban implemented by the Zia dictatorship in 1984, which successfully suppressed progressive unions such as the DSF and other similar organisations. Shah (2015) highlights the prohibition of student politics by General Zia ul Haq, which was implemented as a purported resolution to address campus turmoil and ideological conflicts. Nevertheless, there are lingering doubts about undisclosed foreign motivations. The consequences of the prohibition have exposed a compromised environment in which the influential functions of student unions in terms of campus development, well-being, and discussions were restricted. The lack of student elections has impeded individual growth and accountable government, leading to the emergence of ethno-nationalistic organisations that prioritise sub-national affiliations. The proliferation of private institutions has seen a significant increase, hence exacerbating the existing disparity between public and private education. Despite the efforts made by prominent individuals like Benazir Bhutto and Yousuf Raza Gilani to revive student unions, the government has shown reluctance to embrace progressive ideas and promote activity. The prolonged prohibition has solidified undemocratic patterns, resulting in decreased political participation and the erosion of analytical reasoning (Shah, 2015).

Anwar Zeb drew inspiration from the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan, actively engaging in its inaugural commemoration and interacting with prominent individuals such as *Noor Muhammad Taraki* and *Hafeez Ullah Amin*. In his doctoral dissertation, *Bazai* (2008) examines the impact of the Afghan revolution on the political landscape, with a particular focus on the region of Pakhtunkhwa. Following the Saur Revolution, which resulted in the assumption of power by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), Pakistan sought to avoid engaging in open confrontation. Despite maintaining a hopeful outlook about the potential for enhanced diplomatic ties, it is important to acknowledge that internal challenges remained throughout the tenure of General Zia ul Haq. President Zia endeavoured to engage in a discourse with President *Taraki*; however, apprehensions emerged as a result of Afghanistan's affiliation with the Soviet Union, ultimately resulting in the signing of the Soviet-Afghan "Friendship Treaty" in 1979. Amid these complex circumstances, the ascent of Hafizullah Amin seemed to indicate a potential improvement in relations. However, his further challenges and subsequent involvement by the Soviet Union ultimately resulted in the ascension of Babrak Karmal after the invasion that took place in December 1979. The invasion of Afghanistan resulted in the erosion of its buffer function and posed a threat to the security of Pakistan. Within the historical framework of the Cold War, Pakistan exhibited a measured demeanour by expressing reservations and actively opposing external involvement, therefore transforming its strategic outlook. The management of diplomatic ties with Afghanistan and the Soviet Union necessitated a cautious approach, aiming to provide security while avoiding outright conflict (Shah, 2015).

The *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement*, under the leadership of *Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, had a profound impact on subsequent political figures in Pakhtunkhwa, notably Anwar Zeb. According to Kurtz (2009), the aforementioned movement used peaceful strategies to contest British colonial control in the Northwest Frontier Province of India. Motivated by the influence of *Mahatma Gandhi* and the Indian National Congress, the individuals in question founded a pacifist organisation known as the "Servants of God. This group promoted the principles of nonviolent resistance, forgiveness, and dedication to the betterment of mankind. Despite the use of severe repressive measures, including massacres and acts of torture, the movement showed remarkable resilience, ultimately resulting in the attainment of Pashtun autonomy as a consequence of the British's cooptation endeavours. Despite experiencing a decline in strength after 1947, the enduring legacy of *Ghaffar Khan*

persisted through his family's active engagement in politics and the Awami National Party's attempts to revitalise the values he espoused. The movement's strategic endeavours included various forms of civil disobedience such as demonstrations, boycotts, noncooperation, and peaceful intervention, therefore establishing a lasting precedent for nonviolent resistance anchored in Islamic principles (Kurtz, 2019).

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is renowned for its rich heritage of transformative individuals who serve as sources of inspiration for the next generation in their political pursuits. An individual of notable prominence in this context is *Kakaji Sanobar Hussain Mohmand*, who serves as a source of inspiration for the interviewee, Anwar Zeb. According to Khalil (2011), *Kakaji* had a diverse range of talents and roles, including not just academic pursuits but also political involvement, poetry, critique, research, journalism, and translation of Pashto literature. He played a crucial role in mobilising Pashtun and minority populations to resist British imperialism and oppressive laws. *Kakaji's* journalistic acumen, mainly seen via his esteemed monthly newspaper "Aslam," as well as his literary contributions in both prose and poetry, played a pivotal role in furthering his overarching objective. Despite encountering several challenges and being subjected to incarceration, *Kakaji* showed resolute commitment and steadfastness in his pursuits. This homage is to recognise the notable accomplishments, selfless acts, and significant contributions of *Kakaji Sanobar Hussain* to the *Pashtun* community and the wider subcontinent throughout the 20th century (Khalil, 2011).

The influence of *Bhagat Singh* on left-wing politicians, such as the interviewee Anwar Zeb, is undeniable. Johal (2021) examines the causes of *Bhagat Singh's* prominence among revolutionaries, 90 years after his death. Especially those depicting his distinctive turban and felt cap, images of *Bhagat Singh* have become synonymous with his image. These images have pervaded mediums such as apparel, posters, and social media, solidifying his status as a legend. In addition to his fight against colonial forces, *Bhagat Singh* fought against injustice and inequality. His admiration for *Kartar Singh Sarabha* exemplifies his commitment to shared values, as evidenced by his efforts to document the lives of martyrs through photographs and writings. Overall, this analysis casts light on *Bhagat Singh's* continuing significance in inspiring left-leaning politicians and promoting their dedication to enduring ideals (Johal, 2021).

According to Anwar Zeb, engaging in left-wing political associations in Pakistan, such as the Democratic Socialists of the Frontier (DSF), poses considerable challenges owing to substantial resistance from entities like the Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT). According to Stanford University (2023), the student organisation known as IJT, which operates as the student wing of the Islamic political party *Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)* in Pakistan, has been actively engaged in promoting the process of Islamization inside the nation since its establishment in 1947. The role of student politics has been significant and contentious, with its association with acts of violence and disputes attracting much condemnation. The methodology of IJT, which is marked by proselytization, dissemination of ideological literature, and enforcement of a moral code, was shaped by its affiliations with foreign entities like the Saudi Arabian government and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. There were recurrent confrontations with leftist and liberal elements, and subsequent disclosures suggest connections to violent formations. IJT has garnered commendation from some quarters for its advocacy of conservative principles while also attracting censure for its alleged endorsement of violence and conservative views (Cassman, n.d.).

A notable example of the on-campus activities of the *Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT)* may be seen in their engagement with Imran Khan during his visit to Punjab University. According to Hanif (2007), Imran Khan, the head of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI), was apprehended on November 14th near the university's recently established campus. The incident included alleged detention and physical mistreatment by *Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT)* militants, who represent the student faction of *Jamaat-i-Islami*. Despite receiving an

invitation from a student group endorsed by Jamaat-i-Islami, Khan was approached by members of the IJT, leading to an alleged attack and a subsequent arrest lasting about 45 minutes. Following the aforementioned events, Imran Khan was subsequently transferred to the police department. The occurrence in question gave rise to divergent assertions, as IJT denied extending an invitation to Khan and shifted blame onto the university administration, while PTI officials attributed responsibility to IJT and censured the leadership of Jamaat-i-Islami for their lack of intervention. The occurrence highlighted the existing conflicts between political elites and student organisations inside Pakistan's educational institutions (Hanif, 2007).

Anwar Zeb and his associates were subjected to incarceration, resulting in the unfortunate loss of life for some individuals as a consequence of torture. According to Paracha (2022), there is evidence supporting the claim that under General Zia's military dictatorship, there was a significant increase in repressive measures targeting opposition parties. A considerable number of activists were apprehended, and stringent actions were implemented, such as subjecting political workers and journalists to public flogging. *Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)*, which had lent its backing to Zia's programme of Islamization, subsequently found itself included in his cabinet, affording Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) a comparatively greater degree of autonomy in comparison to other student organisations. The issue saw a significant escalation during the student union election campaign at Karachi University in 1979 when members of the IJT discharged firearms at a gathering including progressive student organisations. This occurrence signified the first deployment of advanced guns such as the Russian AK-47 into a Pakistani educational institution, hence illustrating the volatile atmosphere prevalent on campus (Paracha, 2022).

During an enlightening chat with Anwar Zeb, he shed light on the anguish endured by his ideological ally Nazir Abbasi and other comrades. The research by Haroon and Hussain (2019), which sheds light on the establishment of detention facilities during the period of opposition to General Zia ul Haq's authoritarian regime, supports the user's assertion. The aforementioned cells, located inside Lahore's *Awan-e-Tajarat* (today's Children Complex) and Royal Fort, were used to incarcerate and subject political activists who expressed opposition towards the ruling government to mistreatment. Individuals such as *Malik Mukhtar Awan, Nazar Malik, Sadiq Tarrar, and Javed Iqbal*, among others, were subjected to arduous circumstances. The *Shahi Qila*, located inside the Lahore Fort, served as a place of detention for political prisoners associated with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Among the individuals incarcerated were *Javed Iqbal, Aslam Lodhanvi, Yousaf Khatak, and Talat Jaffari*, who faced charges related to their opposition to the reign of *Zia ul Haq*. During the period spanning from 1981 to 1985, over five hundred people were subjected to legal accusations while being detained in the cells of *Shahi Qila*, irrespective of their political affiliations. The cooperation between young people associated with *Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)* and the police highlights the collective obligation to meting out disciplinary measures to political activists belonging to various factions (Haroon & Hussain, 2019).

In summary, the analytical assessment provides insight into the complex political environment of Pakistan, wherein the interplay of various factors such as revolutionary literature, historical movements like *Khudai Khidmatgar* and the *Saur Revolution*, and notable figures like *Kakaji Sanobar Hussain Mohmand* and *Bhagat Singh* have significantly influenced the paths taken by individuals like Anwar Zeb. The intricate interplay of left-wing political ideologies, student organisations like DSF, and the obstacles presented by entities like *Islami Jamiat Tulaba* and *General Zia ul Haq's* dictatorship exemplifies the intricate dynamics in operation. The convergence of the voices of revolutionaries, political activists, and historical events yields a more comprehensive comprehension of how these influences have indelibly shaped Pakistan's geopolitical landscape, establishing a lasting heritage that continues to reverberate throughout the nation's trajectory.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of a transformative period marked by significant national liberation movements and fervent student upheavals across continents, the narrator's exploration of political involvement originates from a family firmly rooted in progressive nationalist politics. The *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement's enduring impact, in conjunction with a politically heated atmosphere, provided a conducive context for a first foray into the domain of activism. In light of significant political transformations, the fragmentation of the National Awami Party (NAP) after the Hyderabad conspiracy case in 1974 marked a crucial turning point. Amid societal disintegration, the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) developed as a symbol of optimism and opposition to the repressive powers represented by the Zia dictatorship. The protagonist's family connection to progressive principles effortlessly led them to join DSF, a congruent association that would significantly influence their path. The establishment of the DSF was not a singular occurrence but rather a complex interaction of ideological trends and shared objectives. Amidst this turbulent age, the narrator's affiliation with PSF Progressive serves as evidence of the dominant spirit at the time, which was influenced by Marxist ideals and fueled by the impact of the Afghan Saur Revolution. The Pakistan Federal Union of Students (PUS) emerged as a cohesive platform, facilitating the convergence of various student organisations from different provinces in a collective endeavour. The collective alliance acted as a stronghold of opposition against the imminent threat of military intervention and the implementation of martial rule inside educational spheres. Henceforth, the challenging endeavour of shaping PUS into a centralised stronghold of progressive student activism was initiated. After an extensive period of careful consideration, discussion, and collaborative efforts, the DSF initiative was established as a manifestation of shared hopes and deeply held beliefs. The meticulous development of DSF's name and manifesto exemplified the core principles of its philosophy. The selection of the specific day and site for the proclamation, namely January 8, 1954, and the esteemed premises of DOW Medical College, added a sense of historical significance to the revival of the DSF. Nevertheless, the trajectory was riddled with significant obstacles. The Zia dictatorship, in collaboration with conservative factions, made extensive efforts to suppress any kind of dissent. As DSF commenced its early stages, the governmental apparatus of suppression became operational. The conference, originally scheduled to take place in Quetta, was then relocated to Peshawar, a city that has been significantly impacted by the complex dynamics of the Afghan jihad. The resilience shown by DSF was confronted with hate and intimidation, but their unwavering drive remained unaffected. The first DSF convention is characterised by a narrative of resolute resistance in the face of formidable challenges. The state's deliberate efforts to undermine it were countered with resolute determination and flexibility. The last-minute decision to change the location to Jamrud thwarted their plans, enabling DSF to impose its presence and form a central cabinet and committee. In the face of many difficulties, the convention provided compelling evidence of DSF's unwavering dedication. Upon reflection, the narrator has a deep and meaningful sense of purpose. The battle they face resonates within a larger story of resistance against oppressive and regressive entities. The firm stance taken by DSF against militancy inside educational settings exemplified a dedication to democratic principles, the advancement of education, and social development. Within the chronicles of history, DSF arises as a prominent figure of transformation, serving as a stronghold against the gradual rise of authoritarianism and a herald of a just and fair society. The reverberations of the past persist throughout the annals of time, serving as evidence that their expedition was not transient but rather a thundering proclamation that reverberates across the passages of historical records.

Recommendations

- There is a prevailing belief that student unions have responsibility for the decline in educational quality, disruptions, the promotion of militant behaviour, and the

proliferation of weapon-related activities inside educational establishments. Hence, it is advisable to establish an investigative panel to ascertain the true perpetrators.

- The importance of student politics should be emphasised due to the significance of student unions for the general population and the future of our nation, as well as their role in fostering a robust democratic and political culture.
- It is imperative to prioritise the restoration of student union elections, therefore allowing students to engage in a democratic process of electing their representatives. In order to provide students with a forum to express their concerns and collaboratively address difficulties. It is imperative to prioritise the restoration of student union elections, therefore allowing students to engage in a democratic process of electing their representatives. In order to provide students with a forum to express their concerns and collaboratively address difficulties.
- The elected officials in provincial and national assemblies should advocate for the government to reinstate student unions, facilitate campus elections, and revoke the prohibition imposed on them in 1984.
- To foster a robust and thriving political culture, academia must disseminate success stories and exemplify good instances where student unions and political engagement have played a pivotal role. Utilise the provided examples as a means to challenge unfavourable views and showcase the capacity for constructive transformation.

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