



## ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>  
 Vol. 05 No. 02. April-June 2026. Page# 840-845  
 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.3006-2497) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.3006-2500)  
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://openjournal.org)



**From Khudai Khidmatgar to Awami National Party: A Comparative Study of Ideology and Political Legacy**  
**Khayal Muhammad**

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Loralai.

[Mkhayal2003@gmail.com](mailto:Mkhayal2003@gmail.com)

**Dr. Abdul Ghafoor**

Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Loralai.

[abdul.ghafoor@uoli.edu.pk](mailto:abdul.ghafoor@uoli.edu.pk)

### ABSTRACT

*The study provides a brief overview of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party (ANP). The Khudai Khidmatgar, founded by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan), was a socio-political reform movement in North-Western India that mobilized Pashtuns through non-violent resistance against British colonial rule. After Pakistan's creation, the movement's members joined the National Awami Party (NAP), which embraced leftist, secular, and socialist politics. Though influential, NAP eventually fragmented, leading to the formation of the ANP, which claims to uphold the Khudai Khidmatgar legacy. This research critically examines the strategies, aims, ideologies, and organizational structures of both movements, highlighting continuities and transformations. Using a qualitative and analytical approach, it explores how ANP represents a continuation of Khudai Khidmatgar principles while adapting to new political contexts, noting both similarities and differences in their agendas and legacies.*

**Keywords:** *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Non-Violent Resistance, Pashtun Mobilization, British Colonial Rule, National Awami Party, Secular and Socialist Politics, Awami National Party, Political Legacy.*

### Introduction

The Khudai Khidmatgar movement, founded by Bacha Khan in 1929, was a socio-political reform movement in the North-Western Frontier Province (modern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Rooted in non-violence, its members, known as *Red Shirts*, resisted British colonial rule while advocating Pashtun political representation and women's rights. After Pakistan's creation, the movement evolved into the National Awami Party (NAP) in 1957, a coalition of sub-nationalists. NAP was later banned in the 1970s, resurfaced briefly as the National Democratic Party, and eventually transformed into the Awami National Party (ANP) in 1986 under Abdul Wali Khan, son of Bacha Khan. ANP carried forward the Khudai Khidmatgar legacy with agendas of democratic socialism, secularism, provincial autonomy, land reforms, and non-alignment in foreign policy, particularly stressing peaceful relations with Afghanistan.

While the Khudai Khidmatgar was a socio-political movement and ANP a registered political party, both share continuity in non-violence, Pashtun nationalism, women's rights, and opposition to extremism. Differences lie in their timeframes, organizational structures, and approaches to state institutions. Inclusively, ANP is widely regarded as the continuation of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement's principles and legacy.

### Background of the study

The Khudai Khidmatgar movement, active in the pre-independence era, was a revolutionary social movement that sought to reform Pashtun society and achieve independence for a united

India through non-violent struggle against British colonial rule. Despite its impact, the movement has often been marginalized in historical narratives. In contrast, the Awami National Party (ANP) emerged in the post-independence period as a strong, organized political party, particularly influential in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Rooted in the legacy of Khudai Khidmatgar, ANP continues to advocate for Pashtun rights, secularism, and democratic values. This research aims to present an unbiased evaluation of both entities, highlighting their objectives, philosophies, and political roles, while tracing the continuity and transformation from a socio-political movement to a modern political party.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party (ANP) share a common legacy of non-violence, Pashtun representation, and social reform, yet they differ in their political agendas, historical contexts, and organizational structures. While the Khudai Khidmatgar was a socio-political movement in the pre-independence era, ANP emerged as a registered political party in post-independence Pakistan, adapting its strategies to modern political realities. Their approaches toward state institutions also diverge, with Khudai Khidmatgar adopting a non-cooperative stance and ANP engaging actively within institutional frameworks. Despite these differences, ANP continues to identify itself with the Khudai Khidmatgar tradition, carrying forward its philosophy of non-violence, commitment to women's rights, and opposition to extremism. This research therefore aims to critically compare the two entities, analyzing both their continuities and transformations to understand how ANP represents the evolution of the Khudai Khidmatgar legacy.

### **Significance of the Research**

This research is significant as it provides a comparative understanding of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party, two major political entities that shaped Pashtun socio-political identity across different historical contexts. By critically analyzing their ideologies, structures, and political agendas, the study highlights both continuities and transformations in Pashtun politics. It contributes to the broader field of South Asian political history by documenting how a non-violent socio-political movement evolved into a modern political party, and how legacies of reform, secularism, and nationalism were adapted to new realities in Pakistan. The findings will be valuable for scholars, students, and policymakers interested in Pashtun nationalism, democratic movements, and the role of political parties in shaping identity and governance.

### **Research Questions**

- 1 What was the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and how did it shape Pashtun identity?
- 2 What similarities and differences exist between Khudai Khidmatgar and Awami National Party?
- 3 Is Awami National Party a continuation of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement or a divergence from it?

### **Limitation of the Study**

This study is limited in scope as it focuses only on the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party, without extending to other Pashtun or nationalist movements in South Asia. The research relies mainly on qualitative analysis of historical records, secondary sources, and available literature, which may not capture every perspective or undocumented experience. Time and resource constraints restrict the depth of fieldwork and primary data collection, meaning the

findings reflect selected viewpoints rather than the entire spectrum of Pashtun political identity. Furthermore, differences in historical context, colonial versus post-colonial Pakistan, make direct

comparison challenging, and interpretations may vary depending on source reliability. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the continuities and transformations.

### Literature Review

Although extensive scholarship exists on the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the life of Bacha Khan, with nearly five doctoral dissertations and more than four hundred books dedicated to his contributions (Abbasi, 2013), there remains a gap in literature directly connecting the Khudai Khidmatgar movement with the Awami National Party (ANP). This study seeks to fill that gap by examining their relationship and comparing their political nature.

Bacha Khan's autobiography, *My Life and Struggle*, provides a first-hand account of the movement, offering reliable insights into his philosophy of non-violence and his leadership in the freedom struggle (Khan, 1969). Banerjee (2001), in *The Pathans Unarmed*, explores the rank-and-file members of the Khudai Khidmatgar, analyzing why Pashtuns, often stereotyped as violent, embraced non-violence and reformed their traditional codes of honor. Gandhi (2004) adds fresh insights in *Ghaffar Khan: Non-violent Badshah of the Pakhtuns*, highlighting Bacha Khan's ability to redirect Pashtun society from violent traditions toward peaceful resistance.

Constitution, manifestos, and historical documents of ANP provide clarity on its structure and ideology. Lieven (2011), in *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, dedicates a chapter to the ANP, analyzing its politics, leadership, and evolution through interviews with party figures. Ullah's doctoral thesis at Quaid-i-Azam University, supervised by Syed Waqar Ali Shah, offers a detailed evaluation of both the National Awami Party and ANP, situating them within Pakistan's broader political history. Furthermore, Abbasi (2013), writing in *Dawn*, critically links the origins of ANP to the foundations of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement, emphasizing their shared leftist, secular, and anti-imperialist character. Together, these works provide valuable insights into the ideologies, structures, and political agendas of both entities, while highlighting the need for comparative research to establish the continuities and divergences between the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the ANP.

The Khudai Khidmatgar movement, meaning "Servants of God," was founded by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan) in 1929. Its members, known as *Red Shirts (Surkh Posh)*, were mobilized to abandon arms and adopt non-violent resistance against British colonial rule. Though dominated by Muslim Pashtuns, the movement rejected discrimination and even protected Hindus and Sikhs during communal violence. Inspired by Islamic teachings and Gandhi's philosophy, Bacha Khan emphasized that non-violence was a "weapon from the Prophet," linking it to patience, righteousness, and service to humanity.

The movement began with social reform in North-Western India but evolved into a political force, joining the Indian National Congress in 1930–31. It opposed the partition of India, with Bacha Khan lamenting Congress's acceptance of the plan, saying, "you have thrown us to the wolves." Its ideology centered on non-violence, tolerance, and unity, with volunteers trained to resist oppression peacefully. Bacha Khan sought to eliminate tribal feuds and bloodshed, redirecting Pashtun energy toward collective struggle.

Born in 1890 in Utmanzai, Bacha Khan's early education in Peshawar and exposure to colonial injustices shaped his political philosophy. He rejected military service under the British and instead pursued reform through education and activism. His alignment with Congress reflected his dream of a united India, though his disappointment at partition led him and his followers to advocate for Pakhtoonistan.

The Khudai Khidmatgar movement, led by Bacha Khan, adopted non-cooperation as a central tool of non-violent resistance. Members boycotted foreign goods, promoted local products,

refused to pay taxes, resigned from government jobs, and established their own schools and councils to avoid British institutions.

The British responded harshly, arresting thousands, torturing prisoners, and carrying out massacres such as Qissa Khwani (1930), Takkar (1930), and Hathikhel (1931), where hundreds of unarmed Khudai Khidmatgars were killed. Despite repression and propaganda branding them as communists or anti-Islam, the movement remained committed to non-violence.

During the partition of India (1947), Khudai Khidmatgars opposed the division and demanded a third option of Pakhtoonistan, but their demand was rejected. They boycotted the referendum that placed NWFP with Pakistan, later pledging loyalty to the new state despite persecution by the Muslim League government. With the passage of time, the movement evolved into political organizations, eventually leading to the formation of the Awami National Party (ANP) in 1986, which carried forward the Khudai Khidmatgar legacy of secularism, Pashtun nationalism, and non-violence.

### **Theory and Methodology**

This study is guided by Human Needs Theory, which explains how unmet social, political, and cultural needs can lead to frustration and conflict. The theory is relevant because both the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party emerged as responses to the Pashtun community's need for political representation, dignity, and social reform. The framework helps analyze whether ANP continues or diverges from the legacies of Khudai Khidmatgar in addressing these needs.

The research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on historical interpretation and comparative analysis. A documentary analysis method is used to examine autobiographies, party constitutions, manifestos, books, and scholarly articles. This is complemented by thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes such as non-violence, nationalism, secularism, and relations with state institutions.

Data sources include primary materials like Bacha Khan's autobiography *My Life and Struggle*, and secondary sources such as Banerjee's *The Pathans Unarmed*, Gandhi's *Non-violent Badshah of the Pakhtuns*, and Lieven's *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. These texts provide both eyewitness accounts and scholarly evaluations.

### **Findings and Data Analysis**

The findings of this study reveal that the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party (ANP) share a common ideological foundation but differ significantly in their political practices and organizational structures. The Khudai Khidmatgar movement was rooted in the philosophy of non-violence, inspired by both Islamic teachings and Gandhian ideals, and mobilized Pashtuns to resist colonial oppression through peaceful means. In contrast, ANP, while continuing to uphold non-violence in its discourse, operates within the framework of Pakistan's political system, engaging in parliamentary politics and electoral competition.

The analysis further shows that both entities sought to represent Pashtun identity and dignity. Khudai Khidmatgar achieved this by mobilizing masses against colonial rule and promoting social reform, while ANP institutionalized representation through party structures, provincial autonomy demands, and advocacy for Pashtun rights. However, their relationship with state institutions marks a key divergence: Khudai Khidmatgar resisted cooperation with colonial administration, creating parallel structures such as village councils and schools, whereas ANP actively participates in governance and policymaking within Pakistan.

Another important finding is the emphasis both placed on social reform and women's rights. Khudai Khidmatgar challenged tribal feuds and conservative norms, promoting unity and tolerance, while ANP continues this legacy by integrating gender equality and progressive

policies into its agenda. The data also highlights continuity in values such as secularism, nationalism, and non-violence, but divergence in context, as Khudai Khidmatgar was a socio-political movement under colonial rule, whereas ANP is a registered political party in a post-colonial state.

Generally, the analysis demonstrates that ANP can be seen as the continuation of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement, though adapted to modern realities. It carries forward the legacy of non-violence and Pashtun nationalism, but its transformation into a political party reflects the changing demands of Pakistan's political landscape.

### Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party (ANP) are historically and ideologically connected, yet shaped by different contexts. Khudai Khidmatgar, under the leadership of Bacha Khan, mobilized Pashtuns through the philosophy of non-violence, social reform, and resistance against colonial rule. Its emphasis on dignity, equality, and service to humanity created a unique identity for Pashtun politics. ANP, while inheriting this legacy, transformed into a modern political party operating within Pakistan's parliamentary system. It continues to advocate for non-violence, secularism, and Pashtun rights, but adapts its strategies to contemporary political realities.

The findings highlight both continuities, such as shared values of non-violence, nationalism, and social reform, and divergences, particularly in organizational structure and relationship with state institutions. While Khudai Khidmatgar resisted colonial governance, ANP works within Pakistan's political framework. Thus, ANP can be seen as the continuation of Khudai Khidmatgar's legacy, though reshaped to survive in a post-colonial state.

### Recommendations

This study recommends that scholars undertake further research to explore the under-studied relationship between the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Awami National Party, particularly examining how historical legacies continue to shape contemporary Pashtun politics. Greater emphasis should also be placed on documentation and awareness, as the history of Khudai Khidmatgar has often been marginalized in official narratives; reviving this memory will highlight its non-violent struggle and contributions to South Asian political thought. At the policy level, the ANP's engagement should be strengthened, especially in advocating for provincial autonomy, women's rights, and social reform, thereby ensuring continuity of Khudai Khidmatgar's vision in modern governance. Finally, educational integration is essential: universities and schools should incorporate the study of Khudai Khidmatgar and ANP into curricula to help students understand the evolution of non-violent political movements in South Asia and their relevance to present-day democratic development.

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