

Encountering ‘Terrorism’ through ‘Sufism’: Institutional Analysis of “The National Council for the Promotion of Sufism, Pakistan”

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Abstract



The New World Order after September 11, 2001, changed not only the course of American history but impacted many other nations of the world, most significant among them was Pakistan, a close ally and neighbor of the Taliban-led Afghanistan. Pakistan under the military-led government of General Pervez Musharraf witnessed a wave of terrorism incidents all over the country due to its earlier support of Jihad against the foreigners during Soviet war and under pressure from America renamed them from 'jihadi' to 'terrorist'. General Pervez Musharraf's government terrorism took several steps providing the army with the latest equipment, increasing the security of government installations, and further establishing a state institution namely "The National Council for the Promotion of Sufism" in 2006 to counter the ideology behind the terrorism. This institution remained functional until the end of Musharraf's government and his predecessor Asif Ali Zardar's government renamed it as Sufi Advisory Council. This paper while going through its working procedures, profiles of its members, and activities performed by this institution available in media and archives will attempt to reveal the goals of this institution and its impacts on Pakistani society. It concludes that the doctrine of Sufism for a traditional Pakistani society could have been more effectively used to encounter the ideology behind the terrorism but the will of the government seems dubious in using it for the stated purposes.

Keywords: Sufism, Politics, Terrorism, Extremism, Sufi Council

Introduction

Since the establishment of Pakistan, it has been held by successive governments that it was established in the name of Islam and further it was the gateway of Islam in the Indian Sub-continent. Further, it has been the cradle of prominent Sufi saints that became the chief source of the spread of Islam in the sub-continent through centuries. The influence of the successors of these renowned sufis has been so immense that after the creation of Pakistan, they always remained a common denominator in various governments. Before going into the details of the use of this 'Sufi doctrine' to counter 'terrorism' it would be pertinent to first briefly discuss the term Sufism and its history in the subcontinent.

We start our discussion with the question of what is Sufism and who is called Sufi. There are various interpretations regarding the connotation of the word 'Sufi'. This word traces its origin from the word "Suf" which means wool.¹ Some historians believe that *Ashab-e-Sufa* was called Sufi because they stayed in one *Sufa* of the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. Sufis aloof themselves from the material world and devoted their lives to Allah almighty.² Major Sufi orders in the subcontinent are *Chishtiyya*, *Qadriyya*, *Suhrawardiyya*, and *Naqshbandiyya*. With time Sufism went to the process of institutionalization, in which from teacher to disciple, the Sufi teachings were transmitted. The shrines of saints became the centers of social welfare for humanity. The primary objective of Sufism

¹ M. Hassanali, "Sufi Influence on Pakistani Politics and Culture", *Pakistan: A Journal of Pakistan Studies*, vol.2, no.1 (2010), 23- 45.

² C. Melchert, "Before Sufiyat" *Journal of Sufi Studies Vol5* (2016): 115-139.

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in the Subcontinent was the expansion of Islam but at the same time, this cult took consideration in their mind to help the Muslim ruler for their political hegemony. Seeing the political significance of the saints, the Muslim sultans attempted to subjugate the *Pirs* by giving them huge estates and funding the construction of shrines. With time Sufis indulged more and more into politics and worldly affairs.

The *khanqah* has been a focal point of Sufism since its inception. Throughout history, *Sufis* and Shrines have had great influence on the society of the *Indo-Pak* Subcontinent. Political elites in India were aware of their power, and the Sufi leaders in turn developed connections with them.³ The history of India has several examples of state-sponsored Sufism. Government representatives visited the Sufi sites on several occasions.⁴ *Jagirs* were granted to the *Sufis* to maintain political and social cohesion and further to use their allegiance to quickly dispatch military recruits to the authority whenever required.⁵

This relationship between the state and *Sufis* persisted until the 20th century. While going through the pages of history it is visible that Delhi Sultans, *Mughals*, and British attempted to establish such ties with the Sufi saints due to their spiritual authority. After the partition of the Sub-Continent, the government of Pakistan also tried to deal with Sufism like its predecessor governments. Ayub Khan the president of Pakistan (1958-1969) aimed at the ties of Islam and rapid economic expansion would support a strong central authority.⁶ Z. A. Bhutto carried out a nationalization program and General Zia-ul-Haq stressed *Islamization* during his rule in 1977-1988. However, it is clear from these many agendas that authorities frequently tried to link the *Sufis* with their political ambitions. It is evident that General Ayub Khan by promulgating the "*West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance of 1959*" attempted to enforce Governmental authority over the religious sphere.⁷ Zia takes a slightly different approach towards *Sufism* compared to his predecessors. His zeal for Islamization resulted in sectarianism not only between Shia and Sunni but also between *Deobandis* and *Barelvi*. The Movement for the restoration of Democracy in September 1983 was led by the *Pirs* of Sindh it was after this movement that General Zia began to promote Sufism, recognizing its influential role in society.⁸

Like predecessors, the other governments of Pakistan also used Sufism to spread the message of a particular brand of Islam, notably a moderate one. General Parvez Musharraf after taking over the country witnessed a great wave of extremism due to the War against Terrorism. The incident of September 2001 altered the politics of the whole of the world. Pervez Musharraf established a "National Sufi Council" to enhance a positive perception of Pakistan in September 2006 and in an attempt to use it to counter Terrorism. After the Musharraf government, Asif Ali Zardari of the Pakistan Peoples Party continued the promotion of Sufism, through this institution however its name was changed to "Sufi Advisory Council".

President Musharraf in his approach to governance can be termed as nearly opposite to General Musharraf. As General Zia ul Haq used the slogan of Islam and *Islamization* to rule the country, the later Civilian Martial Law administrator used the term enlightened moderation to rule the country. However as General Zia was lucky the attack of the Soviet Union over Afghanistan in 1979 gave a legitimization and international recognition, likewise the September 11 attacks on the United States of America and accusation that Afghan Taliban were supporting him provided him international recognition. These attacks changed the continuing world order and Pakistan to maintain ties with America was under pressure to take a U-turn against the Taliban. This decision by the Pervez Musharraf government proved disastrous for the country. As the remnants of the Taliban government turned against the Pakistani armed forces and country witnessed an abrupt increase in terrorist attacks. Among other steps, one of the steps taken by his government was to establish the National Council for the Promotion of Sufism in 2006.

³ J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (England: Oxford University Press, 1971), 22.

⁴ C. W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics* (Albany: New York Press, 1992), 192.

⁵ R. Hassan, "Religion, Society and the State in Pakistan: Pirs and Politics" *Asian Survey* vol. 27 (1987): 552-565.

⁶ K. Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan", *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 42, (1983): 251-263.

⁷ Ibid, 251-263.

⁸ A. F. Buehler, "Currents of Sufism in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century" Vol. 87, (1997): 299-314.

Having discussed its history it is now pertinent to discuss its composition, as it will reflect the government's internal thinking of using Sufism to counter Terrorism. The Chairman of the Council was *Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain* and the President General Pervez Musharraf was nominated as its principal sponsor. NCPS's nominated Vice-Chairman was Mian Yousaf Salahuddin. Further Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Hammed Haroon, Abbas Sarfraz, and Jam Mohammad Yousaf were appointed as its members. The Director General of the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) was nominated as secretary of NCPS.⁹

This section of the paper will now examine the profiles of the members of the NCPS, one by one, and will attempt to explore by going through their profiles that why this institution failed to perform its objectives. The chief Pattern, General Pervez Musharraf, was a prominent figure on Pakistan's political, military, and strategic fronts, Pervez Musharraf was the country's tenth president and thirteenth army head. He was a highly competent, strategic, and experienced army general.¹⁰ In New Delhi, India, on August 11, 1943, Pervez Musharraf was born. During the 1947 partition, his family moved from New Delhi to Karachi. He initially used Saint Patrick's School as his primary learning facility after relocating to Karachi. Later, he enrolled in the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul, where he eventually earned his degree in 1964. In the Pakistani Army, he later became a commissioned officer. General (r) Pervez Musharraf's first combat experience occurred in the 1965 Indo-Pak War, where he served from 1966 to 1972 with the prestigious Special Services Group (SSG). Musharraf led a company of an SSG commando battalion during the 1971 war with India. After 1971, he continued to perform exceptionally well in several military tasks and quickly advanced within the army.¹¹ Pervez Musharraf, who developed throughout his career in the military, had a variety of positions in the artillery, infantry, and commando units as well as served as a professor at the National Defense College's War Wing and the Staff College in Quetta. General Musharraf was chosen as the head of the armed forces in October 1998 by the late former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Regrettably, General (r) Pervez Musharraf and former Prime Minister Sharif could not keep cordial and trustworthy relationships and became enmeshed over specific political and national issues. Then Sharif abruptly fired him and attempted to stop the jet-flying Musharraf home from landing at the airport in Karachi. While Musharraf was abroad on October 12, 1999, Nawaz Sharif attempted to remove him from office. As a result, the military overtook the government's reign and ousted Sharif. General (r) Pervez Musharraf, who in 1999 suspended the constitution and disbanded parliament, was widely regarded as having moderate views both nationally and internationally. He also vowed a restoration to civilian administration in the future. He thereafter established the National Security Council, which was composed of military and civilian officials, to govern Pakistan in the meantime. From 2001 until 2008, he also served as Pakistan's president. The US invasion of Afghanistan after the 11 September attacks in 2001 altered South Asia's geopolitical, strategic, and economic outlook the most significantly. To combat Islamic radicals along the Afghan-Pakistan border, the US government developed tight diplomatic and strategic ties with Musharraf. He also wrote an autobiography "The Line of Fire" in 2006. He passed away on February 5, 2023, at the age of 79, while receiving treatment in a hospital in Dubai for amyloid.

Chairman, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who served as the 16th Pakistani Prime Minister, replaced Shaukat Aziz during the transitional period. Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain is a prominent politician from Gujrat and a business tycoon. Hussain holds degrees from the Punjab University and the FC College University. Hussain joined the family firm after graduating, which included numerous industries, farms, mills for sugar and flour, textiles, and other agricultural products.¹² In 1981, he was elected in *Majlis-e-Shoora* as a public representative. Later he contested for seats in the National and Punjab Assemblies as well from Gujrat. He also served as minister of industries in the cabinet of Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo. After being elected, he continued to serve in the national parliament for 4 more terms (1988, 1990, 1997, 2002).¹³ Since 2003, he has been the Chairman of Pakistan Muslim League Q. There was only one Pakistan Muslim League (PML) up until General

⁹M. A. Zuberi, *Business Recorder*, "Council to Promote Sufism Set Up" (26 Sep 2006), [https:// www.brecorder.com/news/amp/3322000](https://www.brecorder.com/news/amp/3322000), last accessed September 15, 2023.

¹⁰ [http:// en.daily Pakistan.com.pk/05-Feb-2023/Profile general.r. Pervez. Musharraf.](http://en.dailyPakistan.com.pk/05-Feb-2023/Profile-general.r-Pervez-Musharraf)

¹¹ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2006), 11- 45.

¹² [https:// gujrat.punjab.gov.pk/ important personalities.](https://gujrat.punjab.gov.pk/important-personalities)

¹³ Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. [https:// en-academic.com/ dic.nsf/enwiki/398064.](https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/398064)

Musharraf ousted Prime Minister Nawaz on October 12, 1999. After that, it broke up into two factions: the PML-Q, which sided with General Musharraf instead of Mr. Sharif, and the PML-N, which was formed by those who stuck by Mr. Sharif.¹⁴ Pir Sarwar Chishti, the guardian of Khwaja Moeenud Din Chishti's renowned Indian shrine in Ajmair Sharif, fastened his turban to Chaudhry Shujat Hussain.¹⁵

Vice-Chairman, Yousf Salahuddin, was a Lahore-born socialite, philanthropist, former politician, and well-known cultural figure from Pakistan. Maternally, he is the nephew of Javed Iqbal and the grandson of the eminent poet and literary scholar Allama Iqbal. The first Muslim Lord Mayor of Lahore was his paternal grandfather, Mian Amiruddin.¹⁶ On November 1, 1951, Yousuf Salahuddin was born in Lahore, Pakistan. He was first elected to Pakistan's National Assembly in 1988, and from 1993 to 1996, he was the country's federal minister of education. After leaving parliament in 1997, he became active in a range of philanthropic and social causes. For his services to promoting Pakistani art and culture, Main Yousuf is highly known. He moved to the renowned *Haveli Barood Khana* in the Walled City of Lahore, unlike other public figures who remained in corporate societies in uptown Lahore. The *Haveli* is a work of art and aesthetic beauty in and of itself, and Yusuf has done it justice by making it available for cultural and artistic activities.¹⁷ In preserving and advancing Pakistan's cultural heritage, he has played a crucial role.

The Council by its manifesto was given the responsibility of spreading and supporting Sufi literature in many languages, both in Pakistan and abroad so that the message of love and peace can be inculcated in the minds of the general public to encounter the poison of terrorism otherwise becoming popular day by day. Further, through its work it was supposed to spread a message of tolerance, and brotherhood; This institution was further supposed to end regional diversity with national harmony using the Sufi teachings; Last but not least it was further expected to interact and work with religious scholars and institutions both indigenous and around the world to promote nationalism in the country. Additionally, it will promote beneficial ties between Islam and the West in the areas of philosophy, religion, and mysticism.¹⁸

To perform the above-mentioned duties, the NCPS also had the support of the Pakistan Council of the Arts and the Pakistan Academy of Letters. It was further provided the support of the Ministry of Education.¹⁹ The NCPS was to accomplish these gigantic duties by organizing conferences, workshops, and literature festivals at academic institutions.²⁰ Another such attempt where NCPS was seen was when it organized "*Apna Muqam Paid Kar*" a drama. It was inspired by the Sufi poetry based on Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal.²¹ It further organized an exhibition of the photographs taken by American photographers visiting Pakistani shrines.²² As is evident from the earlier discussions, NCPS was given too heavy tasks: like inculcating tolerance in a generation that was nurtured to do Jihad/holy war against the foreigners under the General Zia government. Further, it was only a tenure of two years when it became ineffective as in 2008 General Pervez Musharraf's government ended and he was replaced by President Asif Ali Zardari as elected President of the country. Lastly regarding the composition it was supposed to be a Sufi Council and yet no renowned Sufi was included in it. Instead, the allying politicians like Chaudhry Shujaat Husain were made its Chairman, which reflects that the Pervez Musharraf government was sincere in its work, instead it was merely an eye ash to appease the American intelligentsia that Sufism doctrine can be used to counter terrorism in the country.

¹⁴ Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Forthcoming Pakistan Elections: A Profile on Pro- Musharraf Political Parties", *ISAS*, no.49,(5 Feb 2008), 1-3.

¹⁵ Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, Yet disputed, the object of political ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the crossroads", *In State and Nation Building in Pakistan*, ed. R. D. Long, Ian Talbot, et al, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 150.

¹⁶ Suneela Zulfiqar, "The Life And Times of Mian Yousuf Salahuddin", *Economy in Personalities Reading time*, (July 19, 2022). [https:// www.economy.Pk/ the life and times of Mian- Yousuf- Salahuddin/](https://www.economy.Pk/the-life-and-times-of-mian-yousuf-salahuddin/).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tereasa Ann Drage, *The National Sufi Council*, 135.

²⁰ Ibid, 135.

²¹ Teresa Ann Drage, *The National Sufi Council*, 137.

²² Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot ed., *State and Nation Building in Pakistan*, (London: Rutledge, 2016), 153.

President Zardari, like his predecessor, struggled to win over the citizens to his plan to keep up the controversial strategy of working with the US in the "war on terror." Due to rising religious extremism and social intolerance, Pakistan has had to deal with horrible terrorist attacks all over the country. Sufism's philosophy was once again to be utilized, this time through the same institution however with a new name.²³ It was to be composed of Seven members: ²⁴ Hafiz Muhammad Tufail, Abdul Ahad Haqqani, Dr. Ghazanfar Mehdi, Sahibzada Sajidur Rahman, Maulana Syed Charaghuddin Shah, Rawalpindi, Iranmullah Jan, Director General Ministry of Religious Affairs, and, Deputy Director R&S) MORa are additional members of the SAC.

This part of the study will now have a look at the profiles of the SAC members appointed by the President Zardari government, to examine why SAC failed to perform its given tasks during this regime.

Chairman, Haji Muhammad Tayyab, a former federal minister and member of the illustrious Memon Community, was born on November 19, 1947. He earned his LL.B. from Federal Urdu Law College (now Federal Urdu University), where he studied law, and his Masters in Islamic Studies from the University of Karachi. He was elected to four terms as President of the renowned All Pakistan Memon Federation (APMF) and has been a life member of the World Memon Organization (WMO), which has its headquarters in the United Kingdom. From 1983 until 1987, he served as a councilor for the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. He had been chosen to be a Member of the National Assembly from Karachi in the general elections of 1975, 1977, and 1985. He also served as Federal Minister for; 1985–1986 Labour, Manpower, and Overseas Pakistanis, Natural Resources and Petroleum, 1986–1987 Housing Projects and Environmental Issues, 1987-1988.²⁵ He served on the committee set up by Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, Minister of Religious Affairs, to develop suggestions for *Ittehad Bain-ul-Muslimeen* and for creating Pakistan as an Islamic Welfare State. He established and currently serves as chairman of the 1983-founded Al-Mustafa Welfare Society. The country as a whole appreciated the services that the Al-Mustafa Welfare Society provided during the earthquake in 2005, the floods in 2010, 2011, and 2012, and other disasters. Al-Mustafa Education System provides education to poverty-stricken, and Al-Mustafa Welfare Society provides social services to thousands of people daily through 40 hospitals, 15 schools, 47 mosques, 4 skill development centers, and Free Eye Surgeries Camps. He was given an honorary degree by the University of Karachi in honor of his social work.²⁶

Sufi Advisory Council collaborated with different institutions of the government to attain its goal of countering terrorism. The Pakistan Academy of Letters, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) are a few of these. However, PAL played a leading and prominent role in achieving the aims of SAC.

To achieve the set goals, PAL suggested promoting Sufism through conferences, seminars, and by dint of the production of academic articles, books, and documentaries in each of the six official languages of the United Nations. After the International Conference of Writers and Intellectuals on Sufism and Peace in 2010, PAL initially declared its intention to make several Sufi documentaries.²⁷ The International Sufi Council was established in 2010 after the International Conference on Sufism and Peace held in Islamabad. 75 delegates from 40 countries and 250 delegates from all over Pakistan attended this International moot.²⁸

The establishment of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences at Bhatti Shah is a big example of Sufism's promotion during the Zardari era. The charter of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences was approved on 21st November 2011 under letter No. PAS/Legis-B- 21/2011 dated 21/11/2011 and was initially established as a campus of the University of Sindh Jamshoro.²⁹ Now the University is itself an independent University of Pakistan. Sufism was also promoted through press coverage during that era. This includes more in-depth coverage of important Sufi saints *urs* festival

²³ *Government of Pakistan: Ministry of Religious Affairs*, 1 June 2009.

²⁴ "Sufi Advisory Council", *The Dawn*, Islamabad: 7 June, 2009. (accessed, 17 June 2023)

²⁵ "CITATION OF (HAJI) MUHAMMAD HANIF TAYYAB", *AL-MUSTAFA WELFARE SOCIETY*, <https://almustafa.pk/haji-muhammad-hanif-tayyab/> (accessed on 17 June 2023).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Press Release", *Pakistan Academy of Letters*, 22 July, 2010.

²⁸ <http://www.internationalsuficouncil.com/>

²⁹ <https://usms.edu.pk>

dates, the celebrations themselves, Sufi conferences and seminars, and festivals celebrating Sufi music and art.³⁰ The blasphemy legislation controversy and the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011 deteriorated the relations between Pakistan and the USA. With the Killing of bin Laden the war on terror came down. And promotion of Sufism through institutionalization backed by the USA also came down. The Council's operations were suspended on August 29, 2011, by the Pakistan People's Party administration, reportedly owing to a lack of funding.³¹

An increase in Suicide attacks on Sufi sites can be seen in Pakistan during the promotion of Sufism at the official level. The atrocious acts of the fundamentalists including the attacks on Rahman Baba in Peshawar, Abdul Shakoor Malang Baba in Peshawar, Abu Saeed Baba in the Khyber Agency, Bahadur Baba in Nowshera, Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi, Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, Baba Farid Ganj Shakkar in Pakpattan, and Sakhi Sarwar in Dera Ghazi Khan.³²

There is also much increase in tussle between Deobandis, and Barelvis, as well as Barelvi extremism. The differences in doctrine between the Ahl-e Hadith, Deobandis, and Barelvis are not recent. However, as time went on, their reach widened and gave place to mobilizations based on religious identities that supported a political purpose.³³ *Barelvi* leaders have attempted to unite themselves into a united platform to forward their ideas because their very existence is challenged by the Taliban phenomenon, influenced by *Deobandi* theology, and hostile to widespread Sufism. The *Sunni Ithad Council* (SIC) a collation of several *Barelvi* organizations coming into front to counter the Taliban atrocities. The government had already arranged several meetings with the ST and other *Barelvi* group leaders to persuade them to lead a mass movement against the Taliban.³⁴ *Sunni Tehreek* held its first protest in Peshawar, which was then, followed by the commencement of the *Barelvi* force's "Save Pakistan" campaign.³⁵ In short tensions and tussles were inflamed or became greater than that of peace and harmony due to politicizing of Sufism.

Sufism, a significant source of Islamic expression, plays a significant role in Pakistani identity politics and is frequently employed in very contradictory ways by both groups and citizens to negotiate and explain their identities. State as well as non-state actors have frequently used Sufism and its centers differently, as a political measure and as a solution for justification. Before Pakistan was created, Muslims of the subcontinent advocated Sufism and its principles, engaging in both conciliatory and conflicting relations with state authority. While patronizing Sufism by the state remained an important factor. Shrines were viewed as regional centers of authority under the British Raj's colonial rule, which meant they had to be under official supervision because they could not be ignored. Sufi orders encouraged support for a separate state, which helped the independence campaign. Following Pakistan's declaration of independence, the following authorities further regulated the shrines to control their influence as centers of modernization for the country. Zia reduced shrines to welfare centers, dissolving traditional structures. Sufism and Sufi agents were driven out of Pakistani politics by partisan conflicts between the Soviet-backed Afghan government and US/Saudi Arabia-backed militias until 9/11 when Sufis reappeared as ambassadors for counter-terrorism policy. Sufism symbolizes ongoing ideological dispute over Pakistan's identity, especially since 2001's "War on Terror," as the nation navigates political turmoil. Deeply ingrained in Pakistani culture, the Sufi world evolved into a powerful ally and a tool for public attraction. The establishment of NCPS (2006-2008) and SAC (2009-2011) are some examples of Pakistan's approach towards Sufism. One method of promoting Pakistan's good reputation is through public diplomacy, which

³⁰ Ibid, 162.

³¹ Muhammad Suleman Shahid and Tahir Ahmad, "Institutionalization of Sufi Islam After 9/11 and Rise of Barelvi Extremism in Pakistan", *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language*, Vol. 2, No.1, (January 2016), 33-53

³² Imran Ali Sandano, Irfan Ahmad & et all. "Enlightened Message of Sufism Towards Peaceful Pakistan", *Grassroot*, Vol.53, No.11, (July-December, 2019), 221-233.

³³ Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, Yet disputed, the object of political ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the Crossroad" in *State and Nation Building in Pakistan*, ed. Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot (London: Routledge, 2016), 156.

³⁴ Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, Yet disputed, the object of political ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the Crossroad" in *State and Nation Building in Pakistan*, ed. Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot (London: Routledge, 2016), 156.

³⁵ Ibid, 156.

entails giving foreigners a favorable view of the country as a Sufi nation to change their perspectives and, as a result, get the support of their governments.³⁶ NCPS is the first Sufi Council established at the National level in Pakistan. Before it, there was not any kind of Council just like NCPS, and sets a unique example of State Sponsored Sufism in Pakistan. Although it did not succeed as a whole, another effort to create a "soft image" of Pakistan in the international eyes was continued through the Sufi Advisory Council. SAC was set up by the Zardari government for almost the same purposes as NCPS. National Council for the Promotion of Sufism proved as a forerunner of the Sufi Advisory Council.

Since they were recognized as potent barriers against terrorism in 2005, many Sufi leaders and shrines came under heightened attack. Shrines are currently being attacked by the Pakistani Taliban to topple the government and hamper its recent political goals. The *Barelwi* a major *sufi* order of Pakistan came on front with the establishment of NCPS and its successor SAC. The *Sunni Ithad Council* (SIC) a collation of several Sunni Barelvi parties came into front to denounce the Taliban's atrocities committed on Sufi Shrines. In April 2010, a delegation of *Barelwi* leaders was even invited to Washington, where they met with officials from the State Department and NGOs.³⁷

However several political and Sufi figures, as well as journalists and intellectuals, criticized the government's Sufi initiative to twist Sufi symbolism to cast the military dictatorship in a mystical light. Others criticized it as an attempt to employ a "sweetened" form of Sufism as a neocolonialist instrument, giving Islam a moderate tone that Western powers might accept.³⁸ According to Alix Philippon, Sufism was also referred to to validate Musharraf's "enlightened moderation" policies and acts in light of Pakistan's Islamic history.

Additionally, it is always debatable whether the government should actively promote religion, especially in light of the general lack of confidence in the community. Even those who are more supportive of the idea of promoting Sufism in society as a counter to *Wahhabism* have expressed doubt about the motivations behind the initiatives. This is because some have expressed skepticism about what they perceive to be an aiding role for foreign states, like the United States, in this process, despite the absence of any concrete evidence to support this claim.³⁹ The main reason for the attacks on Sufi shrines was the Western patronage of Sufism. Because a tussle already existed between the Taliban and the USA. The promotion of Sufism at the international level was purely an agenda of the USA to counter the militancy of Al-Qaudha and other extremists. In reality, publications from think tanks have been published looking at how Sufism fits into US foreign policy objectives, specifically about "the War on Terror."⁴⁰

In short, the NCPS and SAC succeeded at varying degrees but due to enough political indulgence in this matter, the set goals could not be achieved properly. Every policy has both positive and negative effects, in the same way, the government policy of promoting Sufism at the official level also has both of these effects. To some extent soft image of Pakistan has been created at the international level but at the same time, Sufi shrines were also attacked by the Taliban a radical faction of Islamic society. The establishment of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences at Bhatti Shah is a big example of Sufism's promotion during the Zardari era. The establishment of The International Sufi Council in 2010 with its headquarters in Pakistan was also a great achievement of SAC.

There is a need to popularize Sufism more at the cultural level rather than at the political level. The infusion of Sufi teachings through culturalization may bring peace and harmony in the society but politicizing Sufism reversed the situation. This is a big quality of culture to adopt any

³⁶ Salman Yousaf and Li Huaibin, "Branding Pakistan as a Sufi Country: The role of religion in developing a nation's brand", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol.7, No. 1,(March 2014), 90-104.

³⁷ Alix Philippon, "Positive branding and soft power: The promotion of Sufism in the war on terror", *Brookings*, 13 December 2018.

³⁸ Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, Yet disputed, the object of political ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the Crossroad" in *State and Nation Building in Pakistan*, ed. Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot, (London: Routledge, 2016), 154.

³⁹ Fait Muedini, *Sponsoring Sufism How Governments Promote Mystical Islam in their Domestic and Foreign Policies*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 122.

⁴⁰ Fait Muedini, *Sponsoring Sufism: How Governments Promote "Mystical Islam" in their Domestic and Foreign Policies*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 169.

tradition gradually or in a way that rational encounter may not be worse. There is no doubt that the cultural adoption of any policy or tradition may take decades but at the same time, its stronghold might be more than that of politicizing. A Sufi Social Movement should be formed to combat violent extreme Islamism to promote Sufism. Promoting Sufi literature, including its concepts and contributions, starting academic discussions, and engaging the media in discussions about love, tolerance, universalism, diversity, and festival arrangements would all help society recover. Sufism has proven to be resilient and adaptable, flourishing in modernity and secularism. It has reemerged in response to the materialism and consuming tendencies of technological culture, fascinating sensible people and groups.