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Sahibzada Fazal Karim's Political Journey: Anti-Terrorism Efforts and Religious Advocacy in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article examines the religio-political services of Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim (1954–2013), a prominent Sunni-Barelvi cleric, parliamentarian, and founder of the Sunni Ittehad Council. It highlights his dual role as a spiritual leader and political actor who sought to harmonize religious devotion with democratic governance. As an active participant in the Tehreek-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa and later as Minister for *Auqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Ushr*, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim focused on shrine reforms, welfare schemes, and socio-economic development while raising his voice in parliament against corruption, injustice, and extremism. His religious services included organizing major Sunni conferences, strengthening the educational role of Jamia Rizvia Mazhar-ul-Islam, and defending sensitive issues such as Khatm-e-Nabuwwat and blasphemy laws. His most influential contribution was the establishment of the Sunni Ittehad Council, which issued historic fatwas against suicide bombings and positioned Barelvi leadership as a counterforce to Talibanisation and sectarian militancy. By promoting women's education, safeguarding Sufi traditions, and mobilizing peaceful resistance against radical ideologies, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim emerged as a rare voice of moderation. The article argues that his legacy demonstrates the enduring relevance of *Sunni Barelvi* leadership in preserving Pakistan's pluralist religious identity and contributing positively to its democratic and social development.

INTRODUCTION

Religion and politics in Pakistan have historically remained deeply interwoven, with religious symbolism, clerical authority, and faith-based mobilization playing a central role in shaping the state's identity and public policy. From the *Tehreek-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa* of the 1970s to the contemporary fight against extremism, religious leaders have consistently influenced political discourse. Within this religio-political spectrum, the *Sunni-Barelvi* tradition occupies a unique space. Rooted in Sufi shrines, devotional practices, and popular religiosity, the *Barelvi* movement has long functioned as both a cultural identity and a socio-political force. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim (1954–2013) emerged as one of the most prominent Barelvi leaders to bridge the spheres of religion and politics in Pakistan. Trained as an Islamic scholar at Jamia Rizvia Mazhar-ul-Islam in Faisalabad, he inherited a legacy of both spiritual authority and public activism. His political career, spanning multiple terms in the Punjab and National Assemblies, was marked by advocacy for social justice, shrine reforms, and religious endowment management. At the same time, he played a pivotal role in organizing mass movements, defending laws related to *Khatm-e-Nabuwat* and blasphemy, and resisting sectarian militancy. The establishment of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) under his leadership added a new dimension to Pakistan's religious politics. Through the SIC, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim mobilized public opinion against Talibanisation, issued landmark fatwas against suicide terrorism, and offered a counter-narrative to extremist ideologies. His emphasis on women's education, welfare initiatives, and pluralist traditions further distinguished him as a moderate yet assertive voice within Pakistan's religio-political landscape. This article examines Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim's religio-political services with a focus on three dimensions: his role as a parliamentarian and minister, his contributions as a religious scholar and educationist, and his leadership of the Sunni Ittehad Council as a counter-extremist platform. In doing so, it argues that Fazal Karim's legacy demonstrates how Sufi-Barelvi leadership continues to provide an enduring framework for pluralism, peace, and democratic development in Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative and historical approach, combining both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collected through interviews with religious scholars, political colleagues, and associates of Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, which provided first-hand insights into his life, services, and legacy. Secondary sources including books, journal articles, newspapers, parliamentary debates, and organizational records of the Sunni Ittehad Council also consulted to ensure a comprehensive understanding. The research employs a descriptive-analytical method. Descriptive analysis highlights Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim's religious, political, and organizational contributions, while analytical interpretation situates these services within Pakistan's broader religio-political context. Thematic categorization into religious services, political services, and the Sunni Ittehad Council provides a systematic framework for examining his multidimensional role.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between religion and politics in Pakistan has been a subject of considerable scholarly attention. Works on the *Tehreek-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa* and subsequent Islamization policies (Zafar 1991; Nasr 2001) highlight the central role of religious parties in shaping political discourse. Scholars such as Usha (2012) and Abbas (2010) have examined the rise of sectarian movements and the emergence of militant outfits, while Sufi-oriented politics, particularly within

the Bareilvi tradition, has received relatively limited attention compared to *Deobandi* and *Jamaat-e-Islami* networks. Existing research on shrine culture (Eaton 2000; Werbner 2010) emphasizes the socio-religious significance of Sufi institutions as centers of both spirituality and mass mobilization. Studies by Malik (2006) and Ahmed (2012) have documented how shrine-based leadership often extends influence into political spheres, yet the role of contemporary clerics like Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim remains underexplored. The Sunni Ittehad Council has been briefly discussed in policy papers on counter-extremism (ICG 2013), but comprehensive academic work on its formation, leadership, and anti-Taliban stance is still scarce.

This article contributes to the existing literature by filling this gap. It not only situates Fazal Karim within the broader history of religio-political leadership in Pakistan but also highlights his unique contribution as a Sufi-Bareilvi cleric who combined parliamentary politics, religious activism, and organizational leadership. By drawing on both documentary sources and interview-based primary data, this study provides a humanized yet scholarly account that adds to the understanding of pluralist and counter-extremist currents in Pakistan's religio-political landscape.

Participation in *Tahreer-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa* (1977)

Initiated against the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the movement was spearheaded by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), a coalition of nine religious and political parties. At its core, the movement called for the implementation of *Nizam-e-Mustafa*—a system based on the principles of Shariah and Islamic justice. The slogan quickly became a symbol of resistance for masses frustrated by allegations of rigged elections, inflation, and political mismanagement.¹

Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, though still young at the time, actively aligned himself with the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)*, one of the key players in the movement. His participation reflected his deep-rooted commitment to connecting faith with politics and defending Islamic identity in the public sphere. By taking part in protests, gatherings, and mobilization efforts, he earned recognition within the Bareilvi political circles. During the protests of the *Tahreer-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa* in Faisalabad, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim and his elder brother, Sahibzada Qazi Fazal Rasool Haider Rizvi, faced brutal state violence. Both were severely injured while leading a rally, with Sahibzada Haji Fazal Rasool receiving grave head wounds and Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim himself beaten and arrested, reflecting the personal sacrifices their family made for the movement. The movement, though later overshadowed by General Zia-ul-Haq's military takeover, provided Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim with his first political training ground.²

Election 1993 and Parliamentary Role

In the 1993 general elections, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim secured a seat in the Punjab Assembly³, marking his formal entry into parliamentary politics and providing him a platform to advocate for social justice, religious values, and the rights of the marginalized. As a member of the Punjab Assembly in 1993, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim emerged as a strong advocate for the rights of the underprivileged and for transparent governance. He openly questioned the demolition of slums under the Faisalabad Master Plan, warning that such actions would destroy the lives of thousands of poor families. Instead of forced evictions, he demanded that the government provide affordable housing and rehabilitation schemes before initiating urban development projects. In his assembly speeches, Fazal Karim frequently highlighted the

¹ Sumita Kumar, "The Role of Islamic Parties in Pakistani Politics" A Monthly Journal of the IDSIA (Vol. XXV No. 2) ,May 2001

² Mrs. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, Interview by Rabeea Rizvi, Feb 14, 2025.

³ www.ecp.gov.pk

widening gap between rich and poor and insisted that governance should be rooted in fairness and accountability. He pressed for reforms in administrative practices, transparency in government dealings, and social justice in policy-making. At the same time, he drew attention to Punjab's alarming debt burden, criticizing the misuse of public funds and urging financial discipline. His interventions not only reflected his concern for the marginalized but also positioned him as a parliamentarian who sought to combine religious morality with modern principles of good governance. In doing so, he gave voice to those often neglected in policymaking and set a precedent for socially responsible politics in Faisalabad and beyond.⁴

Blasphemy Law and Protection of the Prophet's Honor

During his tenure in the Punjab Assembly, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim emerged as one of the most vocal defenders of the *blasphemy laws*, particularly Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which prescribes capital punishment for derogatory remarks against the Holy Prophet⁵. He argued that this law was essential for safeguarding the religious sentiments of Muslims and for maintaining harmony within society. Recognizing the sensitivity of the issue, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim joined the parliamentary draft committee tasked with preparing a unanimous resolution on the honor of the Prophet. His efforts reflected not only his religious commitment but also his political vision of ensuring that legislation remained aligned with the core values of Islamic identity.⁶

Resistance to Extremism and Talibanisation

Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim consistently positioned himself as a strong opponent of militancy and Talibanisation at a time when many political figures avoided taking an explicit stance. In the Punjab Assembly, he openly criticized the *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* (TNSM) and similar organizations, warning that their distorted interpretation of Islam posed a grave threat to national unity and the pluralist fabric of Pakistani society.⁷

He repeatedly highlighted three major challenges in combating Talibanisation first, the personal threats and intimidation faced by moderate religious voices second, the destruction of Pakistan's cultural and religious heritage, particularly Sufi shrines and third, the inaction of government institutions that failed to curb extremist violence. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim stressed that unless the state took concrete measures, extremist groups would continue to dominate the religious discourse and spread fear across the country. Despite threats to his own life, he fearlessly raised his voice against terrorism, insisting that suicide bombings, sectarian killings, and attacks on shrines had no place in Islam. His parliamentary interventions and public speeches reflected remarkable courage, portraying him as one of the few clerics willing to openly confront Taliban influence. In this role, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim became a symbol of

⁴ "Government documents Punjab Assembly" November 10, 1993, Vol: 4, Issue Number 8. 36

⁵ Ayesha Rafiq, "Section 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code: Controversy and Criticism" Academic Research International. Vol6 (3) May 2015.

⁶ Amnesty International, "Legal Changes: The death penalty made mandatory for defiling the name of the prophet Mohammad" September, 2011.

⁷ Hassan Abbas, "The Black-Turbaned Brigade: The Rise of TNSM in Pakistan" 12 April 2006

resistance, presenting the Barelvi-Sufi tradition as an authentic counter-narrative to radical militancy.

Minister for *Auqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Ushr* (1997–1999)

In the 1997 general elections, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim once again elected, this time gaining greater prominence as he was appointed Minister for *Auqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Ushr*. In this capacity, he undertook a wide range of initiatives aimed at reforming the management of religious endowments, upgrading shrine facilities, and ensuring that *Auqaf* resources used for public welfare rather than mismanagement. One of his foremost contributions was the restoration and renovation of shrines across Punjab, including those of *Mian Mir* in Lahore, *Shah Rukn-e-Alam* in Multan, and *Jamia Masjid Noori*. He considered shrines not only as centers of devotion but also as institutions of social service and identity for the *Barelvi* community. His focus on shrine development was most evident in his supervision of the Data Darbar complex, where he expanded facilities for pilgrims, improved sanitation and housing arrangements, and upgraded the shrine-linked hospital to cater to the needs of the poor.

Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim also launched several educational and welfare projects under the *Auqaf* Department. These included the establishment of a Girls Degree College in Faisalabad and the creation of the Data Ganj Bakhsh Chair at Punjab University, dedicated to promoting Islamic scholarship and Sufi thought. In addition, he took a strict stance on the management of *Auqaf* lands, raising questions in the assembly about allotments and expenditures. By doing so, he underscored the importance of accountability and financial transparency in religious institutions, which had often been neglected by previous administrations. His tenure as Minister thus reflected his broader political philosophy: to merge spiritual legitimacy with practical governance. By investing in shrines, welfare projects, and educational reforms, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim demonstrated that religious institutions could play a constructive role in Pakistan's social and developmental fabric.⁸

Election 2002 and 2008: Continuity of Political Engagement

After serving as Minister for *Auqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Ushr*, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim remained actively engaged in Pakistan's parliamentary politics. In the 2002 general elections, he once again contested and secured a seat, continuing his mission of linking spiritual authority with political activism. Despite the political dominance of General Pervez Musharraf's military backed regime, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim used his position to voice opposition against sectarian groups and militant organizations. He stressed that religious institutions must be utilized for public service rather than exploited by extremists for political ends. In the 2008 general elections, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim was re-elected to the National Assembly, which further consolidated his political stature. During this tenure, his politics increasingly aligned with his religious mission. He raised strong objections to Talibanisation and consistently condemned suicide bombings, sectarian killings, and attacks on shrines. In his speeches, he warned that unless the state acted decisively, extremist groups would erode Pakistan's social fabric. His interventions in parliament highlighted issues of education, urban poverty, and welfare, demonstrating his commitment to serving both his religious community and the wider public. Eventually, his growing disillusionment with mainstream parties, especially the Pakistan Muslim League (N), led him to distance himself from partisan politics. His principled stance against extremism and his insistence on protecting Islamic sanctities reflected that, for him, politics was never merely about holding office but about defending values and ensuring justice. This phase of

⁸ Government documents Punjab Provincial Assembly, October 1997. P 1333

his career also paved the way for his stronger involvement in religious mobilization through the Sunni Ittehad Council, which became his major platform in later years.

Educational Reforms and Jamia Rizvia Mazhar-ul-Islam.

The most enduring religious contribution of Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim is connected to Jamia Rizvia Mazhar-ul-Islam, Faisalabad. This historic seminary founded by *Muhaddis-e-Azam* Pakistan, Maulana Sardar Ahmad, a celebrated Hadith scholar and a leading figure of the Barelvi-Sunni tradition. From its inception, the Jamia became a center of Islamic sciences, producing a large number of *ulema*, *huffaz*, and preachers who spread the message of Islam across Pakistan and abroad. After the passing of Maulana Sardar Ahmad, the responsibility of the seminary was entrusted to his son, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim. Under his leadership, the institution entered a new phase of expansion and reform. Fazal Karim upgraded the Hadith Department, making it one of the most reputed centers of Hadith studies in Pakistan. Alongside traditional religious sciences, he introduced modern subjects such as computer literacy, reflecting his desire to bridge classical Islamic learning with contemporary requirements.⁹

During his tenure, thousands of students enrolled at Jamia Rizvia, many of whom graduated as *ulema* and *huffaz* who went on to serve mosques, madrassas, and religious organizations throughout the country. This network of alumni not only strengthened the Barelvi identity but also helped spread Fazal Karim's message of tolerance and devotion rooted in the Sufi tradition. The Jamia thus became more than just a *madrassa*, it functioned as a movement building institution, producing disciplined and ideologically committed scholars. After Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim's passing, the administration of Jamia Rizvia was taken over by his son, Sahibzada Hussain Raza, who continues to uphold the vision of his father and grandfather. Today, Jamia Rizvia remains one of the leading seminaries in Pakistan, known for its combination of religious orthodoxy, modern awareness, and a steady stream of *ulema* and *huffaz* serving the nation.¹⁰

Sunni Conferences as Platforms of Religious Mobilization

After the political upheaval of the 1970 elections and the controversial policies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Sunni-Barelvi community intensified its struggle for the enforcement of Islamic values. A landmark moment in this struggle came with the *Pakistan Sunni Conference* held in Multan on 16–17 October 1978 at the historic *Qila Kuhna Qasim Bagh* Stadium. Organized under the leadership of Allama Syed Arshad Saeed Kazmi, the conference attended by an extraordinary gathering of nearly five million devotees and over ten thousand *ulema* and *mashayikh* from across the country, making it one of the largest religious congregations in Pakistan's history. The conference was presided over by leading Sunni luminaries such as Allama Shah Ahmad Noorani, Khawaja Qamar-ud-Din Sialvi, Pir Karam Shah Al-Azhari, Allama Abdul Mustafa Al-Azhari, Allama Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, and Allama Syed Ahmad Saeed Kazmi. During the proceedings, Allama Syed Ahmad Saeed Kazmi was appointed Central President of Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat, while the young and dynamic Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim was entrusted with the post of *Nazim-e-Ala*, a recognition of his organizational skills and emerging leadership. A major highlight of the conference was the presentation of the "*Ailamiya*

⁹ Muhammad Rafiq Shahid ul Qadri "Jamia Rizvia Faisalabad" Daily State Express, April 17, 2018., "*Qaid e Millat e Islamia, Safeer e Aman Sahibzada Haji Muhammad Fazal Karim*" Daily Millat Faisalabad, April 14, 2020

¹⁰ Faqir Muhammad, "The Role Of Jamia Rizvia Faisalabad in Contribution of Islamic Teachings" Al Khadim Research Journal of Islamic Culture and Civilization, Vol. II, No. 3, December 2021.

Multan” by Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim in the third session after *Zuhr* prayer. In this declaration, he emphasized that Pakistan had been established in the name of Islam and could only remain stable through the implementation of *Nizam-e-Mustafa*. He condemned the marginalization of *Ahl-e-Sunnat* in government institutions especially in the *Auqaf* Department where, despite 90% of income being derived from Barelvi shrines, most officials were hostile to shrine culture. The declaration demanded that these injustices be rectified and that the rights of *Ahl-e-Sunnat* in mosques, *madaris*, and *Auqaf* endowments be fully recognized.¹¹

In the fourth session, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim delivered a stirring speech, warning against conspiracies to turn Pakistan into a “*Najdi* state” and vowing that the lovers of the Prophet would never allow the ideological foundations of Pakistan to be undermined. His words reflected both deep reverence for the Prophet and a strong political message: unity of *Ahl-e-Sunnat* was essential to resist extremism and safeguard Pakistan’s Islamic identity. The Multan Conference was thus not only a religious gathering but a turning point in the consolidation of Sunni political activism. It gave *Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat* a clear organizational structure, brought Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim to the forefront of Sunni leadership, and reasserted the *Barelvi* role in Pakistan’s religio-political landscape.¹²

Sunni Mobilization and Political Struggles (1986–1994)

The mid-1980s and early 1990s were formative years in shaping the religio-political activism of *Ahl-e-Sunnat*, and Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim played a central role in this transformative phase. In 1986, he joined senior leaders of *Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat* in a historic Karachi-to-Islamabad March for the enforcement of *Nizam-e-Mustafa*. This arduous journey, marked by speeches, *dharnas*, and public gatherings, symbolized the determination of Sunni scholars and their followers to pressurize the state for Islamic governance. The same year, on 6 March 1986, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim led a massive Lahore procession from *Jamia Hizb al-Ahnaf* towards the Governor House. The rally violently attacked by *Islami Jamiat Talaba*, resulting in the martyrdom of Hafiz Muhammad Sadiq, yet the tragedy only strengthened the movement. Within ten days, the historic unification of *Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat* achieved under Allama Syed Ahmad Saeed Kazmi, and Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim appointed as Central *Nazim-e-Ala*, marking his rise as a national leader of the Sunni community. However, after the demise of Allama Kazmi, internal disputes surfaced. In 1987, the organization split into factions, and Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim steered his group towards active politics, formally registering *Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat* as a political entity and later joining the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan* (*Niazi* Group). This shift reflected his growing realization that political engagement was necessary to secure Sunni rights in Pakistan’s state structure.¹³

A fresh attempt at unity emerged on 17 January 1994 with the creation of the Sunni Supreme Council, an eleven-member body led by Justice Pir Muhammad Karam Shah Al-Azhari. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, alongside Hamid Saeed Kazmi and Shah Turab-ul-Haq Qadri, was instrumental in this initiative, which aimed to consolidate Sunni influence and present a collective voice on both theological and political issues. That same year, *Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat* launched the *Ashra-e-Jihad-e-Kashmir* (21–30 November 1994), staging nationwide rallies and conferences to highlight Indian atrocities in Occupied Kashmir. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim addressed large gatherings, linking the Kashmiri cause to the religious and moral duty of

¹¹ Syed Alim, “*Kul Pakistan Sunni Conference*” Anjuman Tajdar-e-haram publications, Karachi

¹² Iqbal Asghar Siddiqui, “*Han meri chashm-e-gunahgar nay bhi daikha*” Daily Afroz, 17 October 1978

¹³ Daily “*Sang-e-Meel*” Multan, 17 October, 1978

Pakistani Muslims. The movement culminated in the launch of the Kashmir Caravan from Data Darbar, Lahore, which traveled through Punjab and concluded with a grand conference in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim's presence in these events underscored his ability to blend religious identity, political activism, and international solidarity into a unified struggle. Through these mobilizations, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim emerged not only as a religious leader but as an organizer, strategist, and politician who transformed Sunni religiosity into a structured political force. His leadership between 1986 and 1994 established the foundations for later movements, particularly the Sunni Ittehad Council, where his vision of a unified Sunni voice against extremism and injustice reached its peak.¹⁴

Formation and Leadership of Sunni Ittehad Council: A Unified Barelvi Voice against Extremism

The late 2000s marked a critical juncture in Pakistan's religious and political landscape. The wave of Talibanisation, suicide bombings, and sectarian militancy had not only undermined national stability but also threatened the centuries-old *Sufi-Barelvi* traditions of tolerance and peace. In response to these challenges, *Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim founded the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) in 2009*, envisioning it as a platform to unite *Barelvi* scholars, *mashayikh*, and activists under one organizational umbrella. The SIC sought to present a coherent Sunni response to extremism while safeguarding the ideological foundations of Pakistan.¹⁵

Under Fazal Karim's charismatic leadership, the SIC quickly emerged as a formidable religious-political force. Its most historic contribution came in *July 2010*, when more than fifty leading scholars of the Council issued a landmark *fatwa* declaring suicide attacks, target killings, and terrorism as *haram* in Islam.¹⁶ This unprecedented religious decree, widely covered by national and international media, positioned the SIC as a moral and religious counterweight to extremist narratives, directly challenging the Taliban and their ideological sympathizers. The Council also spearheaded massive public mobilizations. Movements such as the "*Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah* March" drew hundreds of thousands of devotees into the streets, demonstrating both spiritual fervor and political unity. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim consistently used these platforms to articulate a dual message: uncompromising defense of *Khatm-e-Nabuwwat* and rejection of violent extremism. His fiery speeches against Taliban terrorism, particularly after the tragic Data Darbar bombing of 2010, reflected his courage to speak truth even in the face of direct threats¹⁷. Beyond counter-terrorism, the SIC also sought to influence national politics. It challenged foreign interference in Pakistan, particularly NATO's role in the region, and presented the *Barelvi-Sufi* tradition as a patriotic and peaceful alternative to both militant Islamism and secularist tendencies. Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim's ability to transform centuries-old shrine culture into a mobilized political voice was unparalleled. Through the Sunni Ittehad Council, Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim not only gave organizational structure to Barelvi resistance but also

¹⁴ Imran Hussain Chaudhary, Muhammad Nawaz kharal, Dr. Manzoor Hussain Akhtar. "*Jamat-e-Ahle Sunnat Kay 55 saala safar ki Tareekh saaz kahani*" Monthly *Daleel e Raah*, March 2008, 100.

¹⁵ Lise Fisher, "*Those behind a sign posted in front of their northwest Gainesville church, proclaiming in red letters 'Islam is of the devil,' say it's a way to express their religious beliefs and is a message of 'a great act of love'*", July 14, 2015.

¹⁶ Aarish Ullah Khan, "*Sunni Ittehad Council: The strengths and Limitation of Barelvi Activism against Terrorism*" Institute for Regional studies, 2011.

¹⁷ Dawn, "*Sunni Ittehad Council issue fatwa against terrorism*" February 5, 2013

redefined the role of religious leadership in modern Pakistan. His vision of a peaceful, pluralistic, and united Sunni front remains one of the most significant religio-political legacies of recent decades.¹⁸ After the death of Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, Sahibzada Hamid Raza took on the crucial role of continuing his predecessor's religious and political legacy, serving as the Chairman of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). In this capacity, he ensured the propagation of Islamic teachings, ethical guidance, and unity among Sunni scholars and communities. Politically, he remained active in advocating Islamic values in governance and social issues, mediating religious-political matters, and leading community mobilization for peaceful initiatives. He also oversaw the administration of institutions and projects established by Sahibzada Haji Fazal Karim, preserving organizational continuity and preventing fragmentation. Through public representation in media, interfaith dialogues, and social forums, Sahibzada Hamid Raza upheld a message of moderation, education, and social justice, safeguarding and advancing the mission and principles of his predecessor.¹⁹

¹⁸ Dawn, “*Fatwa issued against suicide bombing, target killings and terrorism*” July 2, 2013.

¹⁹ Dawn. “*Sunni Ittehad Council leader Hamid Raza arrested in ISI office attack case*” 20 May 2023