

Between Sufism and Salafism: The Rise of Salafi Tendencies after the Arab Spring and Its Implications

Abstract

The Arab Spring created a new image of North Africa. Old conflicts were replaced by new ones. The best example of these changes was the renewal of the Sufi – Salafi clash. It can be viewed not only as the result of the reinforcement of fundamentalist tendencies but also, and most of all, as a sudden rise of political Salafism. The Sufi – Salafi conflict has been present for some time in the history of North Africa. However, after the Arab Spring, it became more violent. The earlier war of words, both written and spoken, was transformed into a real one, during which many Sufi *zawiyas* were destroyed. However, the sudden rise of political Salafism also led to a consolidation and an elicitation of Sufis that started building up political alliances in order to protect the rights of their community. The Sufi – Salafi relations in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya will not follow the Sudanese *casus*, where the charismatic personality of Hassan al-Turabi helped in normalizing relations, without a further escalation of conflict. The failing of the political Salafism usually leads to further radicalization of the jihadi Salafism. It is highly possible that in future, especially if political Salafi organizations lose their influence, we will witness more acts against the Sufis and their places of worship.

Introduction

The Arab Spring changed an image of North Africa drawing new lines and forming new alliances. One of the most interesting examples of those changes was the renewed of clash of the two ideologies: Sufi and Salafi. The main reason for this is not only the reinforcement of fundamentalist tendencies but also, and in particular, the sudden rise of political Salafism. The unexpected electoral success of Salafi political parties created favorable conditions and encouraged Salafis to implement their views and start the fight for forming an ideal Islamic state.

As is widely known, the Sufi – Salafi conflict was present earlier in the history of North Africa. We may even say that it had its roots in the XIX-th century dispute that came into force with the birth of the so called reformist movement led by Muhammad Abduh from Tanta (1849–1905), Rashid Rida (1865–1935) and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897).¹ These preachers were concerned that Sufism

* PhD, independent scholar, e-mail: annak.zajac@uj.edu.pl.

¹ John L. Esposito, 'Salafi', *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford Islamic Studies Online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2072> (accessed 27.02.2013); Stephen Schwartz, *The Other Islam*, New York, 2008, p. 134.

promotes regression, not rational exegesis. The views mentioned above were promoted by many media sources, but most of all by the *Al-Manar* – the Salafi newspaper launch by Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abduh in Cairo.²

From the early beginning, the Sufi-Salafi conflict had two levels: namely religious and political. The first one is rooted in the very strict interpretation of the *shari'a* by Salafists. It condemns the Sufi practices such as recitations (“remembrance” of God *al-dhikr*), celebration of the birthdays of Sufi saints (considered as *bid'ah* – innovation by Salafis), the poetry in praise of Prophet of Islam (*anasheed*), intercession (*tawassul*) the act of supplicating to Allah through a prophet, the intercessionary powers of the Prophet Muhammad (*wasilah*) considered as a polytheism (*shirk*) by some of the Salafi scholars, and lastly the intercessionary powers of the Sufi saints (*ziyarah*).³

On the political ground Salafi scholars criticized the corruption and libertinism of Sufis, accusing them of conformism and seeking to gain political status in the Ottoman Empire. During most of the nineteenth century reformers argued that Sufism was responsible for keeping Islam in a backward state through the support of the disintegrating Ottoman order.⁴

As we may also suppose the Sufis too did not remain silent in this dispute. For example Yusuf al-Nabahani (1849–1932) from the Qadiriya order called Jamal al-Din al-Afghani an apostate, Muhammad Abduh a devil and Rashid Rida a perpetrator of evil.⁵

Sufis and Salafis vs North African regimes

After a short description of the history and the main essence of this dispute, we should now turn our attention to the activity of the Sufis and Salafis shortly before and during the Arab Spring. Before the Arab Spring the Sufis held different views regarding North African regimes. The Sufis in Egypt were engaged in Mubarak's policies and thanks to the support given to the National Democratic Party they

The nineteenth century modernists called themselves Salafis (the term referred to companions and successors of the prophet). However, it should be stressed that some modern Salafis oppose early *salafiyya* movement and views presented by Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani are described as deviant.

² Richard Martin, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, USA: Thompson Gale, Vol. 2, 2004, p. 597.

³ A. Knysch, ‘Contextualizing the Salafi–Sufi Conflict (From the Northern Caucasus to Hadramawt)’, *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 43, Issue 4, 2007, p. 504; Mogamat Adams, *A Salafi Critique of the Sufi Concept of Wilāya (Sainthood) an Annotated Translation, with Critical Introduction of Muhammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī’s Qaṭr al-walī ʿalā ḥadīth al-walī (The Later Clarification on the Tradition of the Walī)*, dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the M. Phil Degree (Arabic) to the University of the Western Cape, November 2006; Q. Wiktorowicz, ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006, p. 209.

⁴ Schwartz, *The Other Islam...*, p. 134.

⁵ A. Ghazal, ‘Sufism, Ijtihad and Modernity: Yusuf al-Nabhani in the Age of Abd al-Hamid II’, *Archivum Ottomanicum*, Vol. 19, 2001, pp. 264–269.

gained many benefits, such as ownership of land and shares in the national chemical industry. They strengthened their influence on Al-Azhar and in the religious leadership. It is worth mentioning that the current Shaykh of Al-Azhar (rector of the school), Ahmad al-Tayyeb, is a hereditary Sufi *shaykh* from Upper Egypt.⁶ Recently he expressed his support for the formation of a world Sufi league. The current Grand Mufti of Egypt and senior Al-Azhar scholar Ali Gomaa is also a highly respected Sufi master.⁷

In Libya things went the opposite way. Before the era of Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, Libya might be seen as a very important center and focal point of *Tariqa al-Sanussiya*.⁸ This Sufi order was highly politicized and played a very important role in the fight against the colonial powers in North Africa. Some scholars are even concerned that thanks to its actions the unification of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan was possible. The last and the only king of Libya – Muhammad Idris bin Muhammad al-Mahdi as-Senussi was also a prominent Sufi sheikh. After the *coup d'état* in 1969 Sufi practices became banned because of the links with the previous ruler and successor of the king – Hassan al-Rida al-Senussi, who was put under house arrest.⁹ The situation changed shortly before the Arab Spring, when Qaddafi was supporting Sufism, probably in order to undermine the growing Salafi / Muslim Brotherhood influence. He was even hosting pro-Sufi conferences. The last one took place shortly before the revolution started, in February 2011.¹⁰

Sufism has always played an important role in the formation of Tunisia's religious and cultural identity. The orders that are most influential in that country are *Al-Qadiriyya*, *Al-Tijaniyya*, *Al-Shadhilyyya*, *Al-Madaniyya*, and *Al-Shabiyya*. During the rules of the Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia the Sufis did not play any significant role. They were neither for, nor against the regime. Sufi *zawiyas* were focused on spiritual development and did not become embroiled in politics. It is also worth mentioning that the Sufi shrines and mausoleums in Tunisia were officially supported through government funding.¹¹

⁶ 'Risks to Al-Azhar?', <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/3403/32/Risks-to-Al-Azhar-.aspx> (accessed 10.10.2013).

⁷ J. Brown, 'Salafis and Sufis in Egypt', *The Carnegie Papers. Middle East*, December 2011; A. Maged, 'Salafis vs Sufis', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, November 3–9, 2011, Issue No. 1071, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1071/eg4.htm> (accessed 1.03.2013).

⁸ Y. Bennaji, Gh. Shams-ur-Rehman, 'Neo-Sufism: A Case Study of the Sanusiyah Order of North Africa and Sahara', *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, 2011, pp. 51–77; Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, 1949, repr. 1963.

⁹ 'Gaddafi and the Libyan Crown Prince', <http://www.libyanconstitutionalunion.net/Gu2ndApril1992.htm> (accessed 01.03.2013).

¹⁰ T.R. Furnish, 'Sufis v. Salafis: Winning Friends and Interdicting Enemies in Islamic Africa', *RIMA Policy Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2013.

¹¹ 'Tunisia's National Memory of Sufism: From Its Origins to the Present Destruction of Ancient Shrines', <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/03/21/tunisiyas-national-memory-of-sufism-from-its-origins-to-the-present-destruction-of-ancient-shrines/#sthash.50FP3EpT.dpuf> (accessed 1.11.2013).

The Salafis in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt were quite inactive before the Arab Spring. The biggest Salafi organization in Egypt, *Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah*¹² (founded in 1926), remained apolitical and preferred to focus attention on neutral causes that referred only to the religion and that which might be seen as typical components of the Salafi program. As a result of these policies, the organization was able to operate outside of regime oppression.¹³ In fact, *Ansar al-Sunna* was officially licensed by the state in the pre-revolutionary era and promoted a view that strongly rejected the use of armed action against the government.¹⁴

From the 1970s we may observe a characteristic regional distribution of the active Salafi centers in Egypt. It is notable that the formation of the activist Salafi movement played an important role in such cities or areas of cities like Alexandria (where the group under the name *Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya*¹⁵, later known as Salafi School was formed¹⁶) and the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo.¹⁷

The Salafi trend in Libya has its beginnings in the 1960s. And as in other countries, since its foundation it revealed many different outlooks and perspectives. Non-jihadi Salafism was divided into two sub-trends: status-quo/apolitical/scholarly Salafism and political/reformist Salafism. Despite links with Saudi theologians, status-quo Salafism was able to continue to exist in public under the Qaddafi rule. It did not undermine the legitimacy the regime and even sanctioned it.¹⁸

In Ben Ali's Tunisia the Salafis were forced to leave the country and during his era no influential Salafi organizations were formed. The only organization that had limited influence in the country was the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI – fr. *Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique*, now *Ennahda*). All significant Salafi preachers were forced to leave the country. The Tunisian government tolerated only a limited number of “scripturalist” Salafis¹⁹ that presented an apolitical religious attitude. During many years in exile Salafi scholars from Tunisia benefited from the many Saudi organizations

¹² S. Lacroix, ‘Sheikhs and Politicians. Inside the New Egyptian Salafism’, *Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing*, June 2012, p. 1.

¹³ Salah el-Din Hassan, *Kharitat al-taiyarat al-salafiyya fi Misr* [A Map of the Salafi Movement in Egypt], Part I, 2011, <http://www.nokhbah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=9288> (accessed 1.11.2013).

¹⁴ D.A. Boehmer, J.P. Murphy, ‘The Politicization of the Egyptian Salafiyya. Principled Participation and Islamist Competition in the Post-Mubarak Era’, *IMES Capstone Paper Series*, May 2012; ‘Salafi Groups in Egypt’, *Islamopedia Online*, <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/egypt/Salafists/Salafi-groups-egypt> (accessed 1.10.2013).

¹⁵ Lacroix, ‘Sheikhs...’, p. 3.

One of the founders of this group was Yasir Burhami – now one of the most prominent figures in the Egyptian Salafi movement and vice-president of *Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya*.

¹⁶ The main tools used by this group were: an educational institution known as the Furqan Institute, a magazine called *Sawt al-Da'wa*, and a social service network.

¹⁷ In this area shortly after the revolution the first Salafi party – Al-Fadila was formed.

¹⁸ O. Ashour, ‘Libyan Islamists Unpacked. Rise, Transformation and Future’, *Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing*, May 2012, p. 3.

¹⁹ ‘Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge’, *Middle East/North Africa Report*, No. 137, February 13, 2013, p. 11.

and were able to get in touch with scholars promoting a violent, anti-imperial version of Salafism in West European mosques.²⁰

Sufis and Salafis during the revolutions

In most instances both groups were inactive during the Arab Spring. Only once symbols that might be associated with Sufism were used in Libya – in Cyrenaica posters of king Idris (a leader of Senusiyya Sufi order) were used during demonstrations.²¹

In Egypt Ahmad Al-Tayyeb – a Sufi sheikh, who also holds the position of sheikh of Al-Azhar when the protests started, called for “a need to end the demonstrations and curb the bloodshed”.²²

Some of the Salafi sheikhs went even further openly condemning the movements that were intending to topple Middle Eastern regimes. They considered the protests as an impermissible act of “rebellion” against the Islamic state promoting a view that all power comes from god.²³ This view was even propagated by the Salafis in Alexandria that for many years had been pressured by the state security services. Shortly before the revolution, in December 2010, a Salafi preacher Lutfi Amir issued a *fatwa* condemning Muhammad al-Baradei’s criticisms of Husni Mubarak and accusing him of “inciting civil insurrection against the Mubarak regime”.²⁴ Sheikh Yasser Burhami, one of the most prominent Salafi preachers, pronounced on the Arabic Salaf Voice website a *fatwa* affirming the illegal nature of the demonstrations.²⁵ The Salafis in Damanhour in Delta painted the slogan “No rebellion against the ruler” all over the town. Another Egyptian Salafi scholar Mustafa Al-‘Adawi spoke on Egyptian state television on February the 4th as the protests raged, and called on those in Tahrir Square to return home so that Muslim blood would not be spilt. Those who died in a fight with other Muslims would not, he stated, die as martyrs.²⁶ *Ansar al-Sunna* issued a *fatwa* on February the 10th, 2011 addressing the permissibility of participation in the demonstrations against Mubarak. The *fatwa* stated: “Going

²⁰ S.M. Torelli, F. Merone, F. Cavatorta, ‘Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratization’, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/salafism-tunisia-challenges-and-opportunities-democratization> (accessed 10.01.2013).

²¹ ‘Libya’s Monarchist Flag: A Symbol of Anti-Gathafi Protest’, <http://www.middle-eastonline.com/english/?id=44543> (accessed 12.02.2013); ‘The Sufi Foundation of Libya’s Revolution’, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-schwartz/sufis-in-the-libyan-revolution_b_933611.html (accessed 22.02.2013).

²² ‘Risks to Al-Azhar...’.

²³ Salafists base their views on a *fatwa* issued by the mediaeval Islamic thinker Ibn Taymiyya, which says that 70 years of iniquitous rule are better than one day without rule. They are concerned that a bad Sunni ruler is still better than *fitna* (chaos) – compare: George Moyser (ed.), *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*, London–New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 109.

²⁴ Brown, ‘Salafis...’, p. 5.

²⁵ H. Tammam, P. Haenni, ‘Islam in the Insurrection?’, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, March 3–9, 2011, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1037/sc70.htm> (accessed 01.02.2013).

²⁶ Brown, ‘Salafis...’, p. 6.

against a Muslim ruler who rules by the *Shari'a* of Allah, performed prayers among the Muslims, and did not show outright infidelity (...) *Ahl Al-Sunna* rules that this is not permissible, even if he transgresses and creates injustice".²⁷

As was the case with the aforementioned Egyptian Salafis, the Libyan sheikhs representing the so called "status quo Salafism" were initially against the Libyan revolution. Between February and August 2011, some were used for pro-Qaddafi propaganda, issuing statements on television and radio that sought to grant the regime religious legitimacy, whilst delegitimizing the revolutionaries.²⁸

Sufis and Salafis after the Arab Spring

After the Arab Spring the Sufi-Salafi conflict became more violent. The previous war of words, both written and spoken, was transformed in the real one, during which many Sufi *zawiyas* were destroyed. The main reason for these changes was the reinforcement of the so called Salafi – jihadi groups. They have been present and very active in all analyzed countries.

In Tunisia we can find many examples of groups inspired by Salafi-jihadi ideology.²⁹ This movement was greatly supported by ex-prisoners who were released after Ben Ali had left the country³⁰ and many jihadi and scripturalist Salafis that returned from exile in Western Europe.

The *spiritus movens* of the biggest Salafi-jihadi organization is Sayf Allah bin Hussayn (known also as Abu Ijjadh al-Tunsi), former leader of the Tunisian Combat Group in Afghanistan, that had been responsible for the assassination of Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. He founded *Ansar al-Sharia* in Tunisia.³¹ The activity of this organization and many other smaller groups that share the same ideology led to an unprecedented number of acts against Sufi places of worship. At least 38 such places have been vandalized since Ben Ali was ousted. Among them are: Sidi El Kacem, Sidi Assila in Bardo, Sidi El Mouhareb in Monastir, Sidi Yacoub in Tataouine,

²⁷ 'Salafi Groups in Egypt', <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/egypt/Salafists/Salafi-groups-egypt?page=223> (accessed 1.11.2013).

²⁸ Ashour, 'Libyan...', p. 3.

²⁹ S. Bouzidi, 'Le salafisme d'aujourd'hui', <http://www.tunisiensdumonde.com/.../qui-sont-les-salafi>. <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2972/tunisian-salafists> (accessed 12.02.2013).

³⁰ According to a senior officer in the *Brigade d'intervention spéciale*, "1,200 Salafis, including 300 who fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, left prison" – based on Crisis Group interview, senior special intervention brigades officer, Tunis, August 2012, published in: 'Tunisia: Violence ...', p. 14.

³¹ 'Who Are Tunisia Salafis?', *The Middle East Chanel, Foreign Policy*, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/09/28/who_are_tunisia_s_salafis (accessed 10.02.2013); 'Don't Push Them Underground', *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563307> (accessed 3.03.2013); 'Planting the Seeds of Tunisia's Ansar al Sharia', http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/09/27/planting_the_seeds_of_tunisas_ansar_al_sharia (accessed 10.01.2013); 'Tunisia's Student Salafis', http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/06/tunisas_student_salafis (accessed 10.01.2013); A.Y. Zelin, V. Sakthivel, 'Tunisia Designates Ansar al-Sharia', <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/tunisia-designates-ansar-al-sharia> (accessed 1.10.2013).

Sufi Mausoleum in Kairouan, Sidi Abdallah El-Ghrivi, Sidi Abdelkader El-Jilani in Menzel Bouzelfa, Saida Aicha Manoubia in Manouba, Sidi Ali Ben Salem in El Hamma, Sidi Mohamad El Gouth in Douz, Sidi Ali Hachani in Menzel Abderrahmane, Sidi Abdelaziz El Mahdi in La Marsa, Sidi Bou Said El Beji in Sidi Abou Said, Sidi Ouerfelli in Akouda.³² The Salafis also caused disturbances at a Sufi festival that was taking place in Qairouan.³³

Most of the Salafi organizations in Libya are apolitical and might be seen as a so called “jihadi” Salafi.³⁴ The most active is *Katibat Ansar al-Sharia* in Benghazi, which was probably responsible for an attack on an American Consulate that occurred in that city in 2012. It was led by Muhammad al-Zahawi. This organization imitated the Muslim Brotherhood’s social program – where its members were involved in different activities, like preparing food for the poor, helping in hospitals and keeping order in the cities.³⁵

Another highly active Salafi group is *Ansar al-Sharia* in Derna, headed by Abu Sufiyan bin Qumu (ex Guantanamo prisoner).³⁶ Following the latest developments, members of this group abandoned their Derna headquarters and left town.³⁷

Salafis from *Ansar al-Sharia* in Benghazi and other smaller groups inspired by Salafi ideology were responsible for a number of attacks against Sufi mosques and tombs in Benghazi, Misrate and Zliten.³⁸ They bulldozed the Sha’ab mosque (and more than 50 Sufi tombs that it contained) in the center of Tripoli. In Zliten they wrecked the shrine of Sidi Abd Al-Salam Al-Asmar using bulldozers, explosives and jackhammers.³⁹ They also attacked the Sidi Al-Lafi mausoleum

³² ‘Salafist Arsonists Target Tunisian Heritage Sites’, <http://www.SalafistArsonistsTargetTunisianHeritageSites-Al-MonitorthePulseoftheMiddleEast.htm> (accessed 10.10.2013); ‘Tunisia Sufi Shrine Attacks Continue’, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2013/01/29/newsbrief-02 (accessed 1.02.2013); ‘Tunisian Salafists Destroy More Sufi Shrines’, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2013/02/04/newsbrief-02 (accessed 5.02.2013).

³³ ‘Tunisia Salafists Halt Iranian Concert at Sufi Festival’, *The Daily Star*, August 17, 2012, p. 16.

³⁴ Salafi jihadi faction supports the use of violence.

³⁵ A.Y. Zelin, ‘Know Your Ansar al-Sharia’, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/know-your-ansar-al-sharia> (accessed 10.12.2013).

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ ‘Derna Expels Ansar al-Sharia’, http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/newsbriefs/general/2013/12/04/newsbrief-01 (accessed 02.01.2014).

³⁸ ‘Freed from Gaddafi, Libyan Sufis Face Violent Islamists’, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/us-libya-sufis-idUSTRE8101LA20120201> (accessed 14.02.2013); ‘Libya Officials Seem Helpless as Sufi Shrines Are Vandalized’, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/world/africa/in-libya-extremists-vandalize-sufi-shrines-with-impunity.html?_r=0 (accessed 15.02.2013); ‘Extremists Demolish Libya’s Shrines Using Bulldozers, Explosives’, <http://observers.france24.com/content/20120829-extremists-demolish-libya-shrines-using-bulldozers-explosives-libya-mausoleum-zliten-tripoli-video-salafists> (accessed 1.03.2013).

³⁹ ‘Lahzha tafjeer dharieh wa masjid al-shaikh Abd al-Salam Al-Asmar’, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnlRVKVuo7M&feature=player_embedded (accessed 1.10.2013).

near Benghazi. In Tripoli not only did they vandalize mausoleums, but they also turned *zawiya* into a Salafi mosque. The last example was very symptomatic and showed a new tendency in Salafi actions. The Salafis were seemingly trying to remodel the face of the Islam in North Africa by promoting its “pure” version. This apparent interception of the mosques could be considered as one of the tools in their strategy.

In Egypt jihadi Salafis are represented by *al-Taliyah al-Salafiyah al-Mujahediyah Ansar al-Sharia* (founded by Ahmad Ashoush in November 2012), *Ansar al-Sharia* (operating in Sinai Peninsula, founded in 2013), *Tawhid wa al-Jihad* and *Takfir wa al-Hijra*.⁴⁰ The aforementioned above groups emerged when many Islamists were released from Egyptian prisons after Mubarak was ousted. The “figurehead” of these organizations is one Muhammad al-Zawahiri, a brother of Al-Qaida leader Ayman. The main goal of these groups was implementing *shari'a* and fighting polytheism. Consequently, at least 20 Sufi sanctuaries have been torched and pillaged in Egypt,⁴¹ especially in Alexandria, which is home for at least 36 Sufi groups, where the Salafis have committed profanities against a number of places of worship. Amongst them was the tomb of Mursi Abu Abbas, who had been a student and follower of sheikh Abu al-Hassan al-Shadhili – founder of a famous *tariqa*.⁴² Sufi shrines were also attacked in the region governed by al-Qalyubiya.

After the Arab Spring we can not only observe a rise of jihadi Salafism, but also a deeper integration of Salafis into the political process. A new phenomenon has been the formation of Salafi political parties. On an unprecedented scale it took place in Egypt. The Salafis based near Cairo created the first Egyptian Salafi political party called *al-Fadila*.⁴³ A few months later the *al-Nour* Party was established by *al-Da'wa-al-Salafiyya*⁴⁴ to fight in the upcoming parliamentary election. A third Salafi

⁴⁰ ‘The Jihadist Threat in Egypt’s Sinai’, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/jihad-threat-egypt-sinai.html#> (accessed 1.12.2013); A.Y. Zelin, ‘Jihadists on the Nile: The Return of Old Players’, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/jihadists-on-the-nile-the-return-of-old-players> (accessed 1.10.2013); ‘Ansar al Sharia Egypt releases founding statement’, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/11/defending_al_qaeda.php (accessed 1.10.2013).

⁴¹ ‘Sufi Sheikh Warns of Sectarian War with Salafis’, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, April 5, 2011, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/sufi-sheikh-warns-sectarian-war-salafis> (accessed 1.02.2013); ‘Egyptian Extremism Sees Salafis Attacking Sufi Mosques’, *The Guardian*, April 11, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/apr/11/salafis-attack-sufi-mosques> (accessed 1.02.2013).

⁴² Victor Danner, ‘The Shadhiliyyah and North African Sufism’, in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, Seyyed Hosseyn Nasr (ed.), London: SCM Press, 1997, pp. 28, 29.

⁴³ ‘Al-Fadila Party’, <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/egypt/muslim-political-parties/al-fadila-party> (accessed 1.11.2013).

⁴⁴ ‘Al-Nour Party’, <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/egypt/muslim-political-parties/al-nour-party> (accessed 01.11.2013); ‘The Rise and Fall of the Salafi al-Nour Party in Egypt’, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15113/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-salafi-al-nour-party-in-en> (accessed 20.11.2013).

party was created in July, 2011 when *al-Fadila* party president Adel Abd al-Maqsoud Afify left the party and founded, the *al-Asala* Party,⁴⁵ which had the backing of the Activist Salafis of Cairo.⁴⁶ Not long after this, another political organization, the Building and Development Party (*Hizb al-Bin'a wa al-Tanmiyya*) was formed by *Gama'a al-Islamiyya*.⁴⁷ During the parliamentary election (held from 28th of November 2011 to 11th of January 2012) *Al-Nour* obtained 111 seats, *al-Bina wa al-Tanmiya* 13 seats and *Hizb al-Asala* three seats.⁴⁸

In Tunisia Salafi political parties were unable to compete in the election to the Constituent Assembly held on 23 October 2011 because none of them were recognized as eligible. *Hizb Jabhat al-Islah al-Islamiyya al-Tunisiyya* (fr. *Front de la réforme*) was created in 2012. The Ennahda-led transition government granted it official legal status in May 2012.⁴⁹ This party, whose leader Muhammad al-Khawjah was a former professor at the University of Tunis, is very active in public. *Jabhat al-Islah* was involved with a variety of demonstrations and protests. Amongst them were those against the broadcast of the animated film *Persepolis*.⁵⁰

Another political Salafi organization in Tunisia – *Hizb al-Tahrir* is a part of a wider pan-Islamic movement.⁵¹ It is led by Ridha Belhaj. The party was finally officially recognized on 17th of July 2012 following pressure exerted on the Ennahda government.⁵² The party does not recognize the principles of the nation-state and democracy and wants to re-establish a world based on Caliphate order.⁵³

The third, relatively small Salafi party on Tunisia's political scene is *Hizb al-Rahma*⁵⁴, led by the former Ennahda militant, Sheikh Said Al-Jaziri. The party was legalized on 30th of July 2012. Its program focuses on social services.

⁴⁵ 'Al-Asala (Authenticity Party)', <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/al-asala-authenticity-party> (accessed 1.04.2013).

⁴⁶ Boehmer, Murphy, 'The Politicization...', p. 31.

⁴⁷ 'Al-Banna' wa al-Tanmiyya (Building and Development Party)', <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/al-banna%E2%80%99-wa-al-tanmiyya-building-and-development-party> (accessed 1.04.2013).

⁴⁸ Lacroix, 'Sheikhs...', p. 1.

⁴⁹ 'Tunisia Licenses First Islamists Salafi Party': <http://www.reuter.com/article/2012/05/11> (accessed 20.02.2013); S.M. Torelli, F. Merone, F. Cavatorta, 'Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratization', <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/salafism-tunisia-challenges-and-opportunities-democratization> (accessed 10.01.2013).

⁵⁰ A. Zelin, 'Who Is Jabhat al-Islah?', <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/18/who-is-jabhat-al-islam/cuxr> (accessed 1.10.2013); D. Goodman, 'Tunisian Islamists Riot over Animated Film about Iran', http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/10/tunisian-islamists-riot-over-animated-film-about-iran/?_r=0 (accessed 1.03.2013).

⁵¹ This party has a pan-Islamic character and is banned in several countries.

⁵² 'Tunisia Legalizes Second Hardline Islamist Group Hizb Al-Tahrir', <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/48066/World/Region/Tunisia-legalises-second-hardline-Islamist-group-H.aspx> (accessed 1.11.2013).

⁵³ 'Hizb ut-Tahrir', <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/> (assessed 1.10.2013).

⁵⁴ 'Tunisia...', p. 21.

Another political group is *Hizb al-Rafah al-Tunisiyya* (fr. *Parti tunisien de la prospérité*) based in Sfax and controlled by Mohamed Feki.⁵⁵ The party was granted official legal status in September 2012.

The Salafi trend in Libya, despite being larger in size than the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and the *Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah bi-Libya*, suffers from a lack of leadership and organization.⁵⁶ Those Salafi political parties that currently exist: *Al-Watan* and *Umma al-Wasat* did not gain much support during the 2012 election in Libya (*Umma al-Wasat* secured only one seat and *Al-Watan* none).⁵⁷ That is why we may conclude that the absence of political representation in Libya led to a strengthening of the militant Salafi trend, which tries to secure its position by use of direct violence.

However, the sudden rise of the political Salafism led to a consolidation and re-emergence of Sufis that started building up political alliances in order to protect the rights of their community. It was easier for them to establish such alliances because – in contrast to Salafi – Sufi organizations were always more hierarchical and centralized.⁵⁸ For example in Egypt the Sufis had and still have links with Al-Azhar. Since the time of Mubarak they have been also united under quasi-umbrella organizations such as the *Al-Majlis Al-A' la li' l-Turuq Al-Sufiyya* and *Jabhat Al-Islah Al-Sufi*. The latter organization soon came into alliance with liberals, revolutionary youth groups⁵⁹ and a Shia Muslim minority.⁶⁰ They also participated in the launch of the first Sufi political party, the Egyptian Liberation Party (*Tahrir al-Misri*).⁶¹

In Tunisia Sufis are united in the Union of Sufi Brotherhoods. This organization has denounced in the strongest terms the attacks against the Sufi mausoleums,

⁵⁵ *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne – Annonces légales, réglementaires et judiciaires*, No. 111, November 3, 2012; 'Hizb Al-Rahma lors de sa première rencontre avec la presse: la Tunisie a besoin d'un gouvernement qui tienne ses promesses', *Attounissia*, July 31, 2012, http://www.attounissia.com.tn/details_article.php?t=41&a=65352 (accessed 1.12.2013).

⁵⁶ Ashour, 'Libyan...', p. 3.

⁵⁷ 'The Wrath of Libya's Salafis', <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2012/09/12/wrath-of-libya-s-salafis/dtdn> (accessed 1.10.2013).

⁵⁸ Danner, 'The Shadhiliyyah...', pp. 28, 29; Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah*, Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1988.

⁵⁹ 'Aided by New Alliance, Sufis Plan Election Strategy', <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/aided-new-alliance-sufis-plan-election-strategy#sthash.7FnqMBFv.dpuf> (accessed 27.02.2013).

⁶⁰ 'Egyptian Extremism Sees Salafis Attacking Sufi Mosques', <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/apr/11/salafis-attack-sufi-mosques> (accessed 1.04.2013).

⁶¹ Brown, 'Salafis...', p. 12; 'Hizb al-Tahrir al-Masry', <http://www.hizbaltahriralmasry.org/>; [http://www.face book.com/Hizb alTahriralMisry](http://www.facebook.com/HizbAlTahriralMisry) (accessed 27.02.2013).

The party has the support of a number of prominent Sufi leaders from different orders (e.g. Mohamed Ala'a al-Din Abu al-Azayem of the Azamiyya). Despite Sufi orientation Egyptian Liberation Party in its political program stresses that it was erected for all Egyptians in order to fight for equal citizenship, human rights, pluralism, and fundamental freedoms.

accusing Wahabis of perpetrating the aggression, and insisted several times on the need to protect these sites. Thanks to some good organization they were able to mobilize the international community (e.g. UNESCO) in order to protect the cultural heritage sites that were being torched by the Salafis.⁶² Unlike in Egypt, the Sufis in Tunisia did not form a political party.

In Libya there is also a lack of Sufi political representation. However local communities (not just the Sufis) are trying to rebuild the Sufi shrines destroyed by the Salafis, and consider them as an important component of social and cultural heritage.⁶³

Conclusion

The analysis of the different aspects of both groups allows us to form the conclusion that thanks to a hierarchical structure with a long tradition and new forms of political consolidation, Sufism will preserve its role in North Africa. Salafism, which seemingly lacks charismatic leadership and dispersion will remain strong only in certain territories, especially in poor areas which for many years have been more conservative, e.g. South Tunisia, parts of Cyrenaica in Libya and Northern Egypt.

The latest developments in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya will also affect Salafi movement and could also weaken its influence on the political scene. The failings of the political Salafism usually lead to a further radicalization of the jihadi Salafism. Thus, it is highly possible that Salafis will continue to employ a policy of confrontation by exerting direct force against Sufis and their places of worship.

Contrary to the Salafis, the Sufis seem to be more flexible in forming political alliances (for example with minorities), which should give them an advantage and strengthen their influence on the post Arab Spring governments.

It is also worth mentioning that almost all North African countries share a long history of Sufi metaphysics. There is a significant number of people who regularly visit Sufi shrines and consider Sufism as an important part of their cultural heritage. It is unlikely that they could be influenced by Salafi ideology and support any acts that are against the Sufis.

Finally, the Sufi – Salafi relations in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya will not follow the Sudanese *casus*, where the charismatic personality of Hassan al-Turabi helped in normalizing relations, without any further escalation of the conflict.⁶⁴ It seems very likely that in the future we will witness more acts against the Sufis and their shrines.

⁶² ‘Tunisia to Secure Sufi Shrines’, http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/01/30/feature-01 (accessed 1.02.2013).

⁶³ ‘Libyans Try to Rebuild Community after Holy Sufi Site Destroyed’, <http://observers.france24.com/content/20130401-libyans-rebuild-explosion-sufi-mausoleum> (accessed 01.10.2013).

⁶⁴ Rüdiger Seesemann, ‘Between Sufism and Islamism: The Tijaniyya and Islamist Rule in the Sudan’, *Sufism and Politics. The Power of Spirituality*, Paul L. Heck (ed.), Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007, pp. 23–58.

