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Salafism and Sufism in Egypt: assessing their roles before and during the Arab Spring

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Summary

Introduction

In this work I will talk about Salafism and Sufism in the Egyptian context, precisely during the uprising, publicly dubbed the "Arab Spring", which refers to the series of revolutionary protests that took place in the Middle East in early 2011 and ended approximately in 2013.

My purpose is to investigate and look closely at the roles that these two schools of thoughts played during these turbulent times within the Egyptian society, which shaped the country's political and religious institutional arrangements. I am mostly interested in this specific period, given that it marked the significant resurgence of "political Islamism". Almost every part of the region in general, was under the direct threat of the uprising; political, social and economic embellishments, there was nothing left untouched.

I will begin by defining both Sufism and Salafism in accordance with the basic understanding of both traditions in Islam. I will follow the same understanding as offered by Alexander Knysh for Sufism and by Roel Meijer for Salafism. It is worth mentioning that, while both traditions have their basic comprehension historically rooted in Holy texts and practices, today these understandings have evolved and some of the practices may have become obsolete among some of the adherents of both traditions. This suggests that analysing Sufism and Salafism differs from one context to another; for this reason, any reference made to the Salafi or Sufi thought, will be limited to the context of Egypt unless stated otherwise.

Sufism could be defined as the tradition with the spiritual and ascetical element dimension that was contained in Islam since its very beginning; and it grew firmly during the seventh and ninth centuries CE. [1]

The Sufi path is usually composed of three parts: the first one is the *Shari'a* and every *murid* (disciple, seeker) should embrace it. The spiritual path, *tariqa* (as mentioned below, it also means brotherhood or order), is the second stage; and at the end, is the *haqiqa*, which means the ultimate reality, namely God.[2]

A common metaphor in the religious Sufi tradition is used to explain this three-stage path, and it refers to circumference of the circle, which symbolises the *shari'a*; while, the radius of the circle is the *tariqa*, the path. The centre of the circle is the *haqiqa*. This metaphor is used to understand the essential role of every part of the circle, (and of the *tariqa* itself). Without the circumference the

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[1] Knysh, Alexander. *Islamic Mysticism a Short History*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 301.
[2] Ibid, 301.

radius and the *haqiqa* would not exist. To stress this point, another interesting example is the walnut, where the hard shell is the *shari'a* and the kernel is the *tariqa*, and whereby the kernel could not exist without the hard shell.[3]

Following the spiritual path is not easy. A core point of Sufism is the relationship between the disciple and the *shaykh*. The one that wishes to follow the Sufi path must follow the lead of a *shaykh*, because the acquisition of the highest interior knowledge or the basic learning and practice should be transmitted by this "bound".[4]

The manifestation of Sufism as institutionalized orders began in the 13th century, when the first ascetic communities were formed. As these communities grew, they were called *turuq* (sing. *tariqa* –it is worth noting once again, that the path and the order share the same name, but the meaning differs). Each of these orders or brotherhoods have different ways of devotion, traditions as well as different ways of sustaining themselves.

What is common for all the *turuq* is that their origins could be traced back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad: this lineage is called *silsila,* and it is understood not only as an instrument useful for the orders to show their rightful position in the Islamic orthodoxy, but also to manifest their spiritual heritage.[5]

Sufism as a spiritual path contains different practices that help the believer in reaching the final goal; seclusion (*khalwa*), fasting and renunciation of material goods are common practices in Sufism; however, nowadays these practices do not seem to be in use anymore. In the Egyptian context, the tools that are indicated today are not seclusion or any austerity, but rather, practices such as the aforementioned submission to the spiritual guidance of a *shaykh*, the studying and contemplation of the Qur'an and *hadith* and practicing *dhikr* are more common.[6]

The most important one is the *dhikr*. This practice refers to the recollection or remembrance of God by reciting verses from the Qur'an; *dhikr* is another essential tool to advance in the path of spiritual connection with God.[7]

Other typical Sufi practices in Egypt include the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, known as *al-mawlid* ceremonies. It takes place on the 12th day of the month of *Rabiʿ al-Awwal* and

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[3] Scarabel, Angelo. *Il Sufismo: Storia e Dottrina*. Carocci, 2007, 13.
[4] Ibid, 14.
[5] Knysh, Alexander. "Sufism." In *the New Cambridge History of Islam*, 60–104. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2010, 61.
[6] Hoffman, Valerie J. *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*. University of South Carolina Press, 1995, 164.
[7] Ibid, 165.

people celebrate through expressions of love for the Prophet and his family, and visitations to saintly figures' tombs (*ziyara*).[8]

As I will report in the next chapter, the Sufi orders in Egypt are many. The biggest ones and the most influential are, for instance: the *Rifa'iyya tariqa*, the largest Sufi order in Egypt that in 2011 expressed the will to fund a Sufi political party called *Hizb Sawt al-Hurriyyah* (The Voice of Freedom Party); the *'Azmiyya tariqa*, with an estimate of 1.5 million followers, has announced its intention to create *Tahrir Masr* (The Liberation of Egypt Party);[9] and the *Shadiliyya* order, which had as an exponent the Grand *Shaykh* of Al-Azhar 'Abd al-Ḥalim Maḥmud (1910-1978), and gained prestige and power during Mahmud position at Al-Azhar university.

This introduction tries to explain what the main practices and thoughts of Sufism in Egypt are, and also of other schools of thought of Islam, namely Salafism, which is almost completely the opposite.

Salafism derives from the term *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious forefathers), the first three generations of Muslims who had first-hand experience of the rise of Islam. They are regarded as the perfect example to follow for Muslims in order to have a correct way of life. This way of going back to the pristine and pure Islam means that Salafists want to return to the study of the core of Islam, the Qur'an and the *hadith*.[10] By doing so, they reject *taqlid*, the blind following of the four schools of law (*madhahib*). However, they are open to individual interpretation, *ijtihad* (the effort to arrive at legal rulings on matters not explicitly regulated by the Islamic foundational texts), albeit along strict lines. Muslims had to behave exactly like *al-salaf al-salih* because their deeds and thoughts are found in the sources of Islam.[11]

Two important figures that are recurring in the Salafi doctrine and discourses are Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855) and Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). The first one, Ibn Hanbal is important in the Salafi discourse because his primary and supreme principle was the acceptance of only the Qurʾan and *ḥadith* as the core of Islam, and also only a few scholars could be authorized to interpret the sacred texts. Along with other important theories and theological works, Ibn Hanbal's doctrine forms the core of the Hanbali school of Law, one of the fourth school of law of Sunni Islam.[12] Ibn Taymiyya

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[8] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Mawlid." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed November 11, 2019.

[9] "Contested Sufi Electoral Parties: The Voice of Freedom Party and The Liberation of Egypt Party". Islamopedia Online. Accessed May 1, 2020.

[10] Meijer, Roel. *Global Salafism: Islams New Religious Movement*. London: Hurst, 2009, 3.

[11] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 53.

[12] Holtzman, Livnat. 'Aḥmad B. Ḥanbal'. In Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Accessed May 8, 2020.

is an important figure of the Islamic theology of the 13th century. His ideas were influenced by the works of Ibn Hanbal. Most importantly, many Salafi scholars trace their thoughts in the works of Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, the emphasis of following the pious forefathers, *jihad,* and apostasy (*takfir*).[13]

Salafism appeared strongly with the emergence of Western colonialism in many different areas of the Islamic world, and also during that time calls within the Sufi movement for reform appeared. These reformists movements happened between the 18th and the 20th centuries and the main discourse within them was a return to the core texts of Islam, the creation of more solid institutional organizations, and practicing *jihad* against the colonial power.

The earliest reformist was Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). He was the founder of the pre-modern movement of Wahhabism in the Najd, a region in central Arabia. He declared that Muslims lived in *jahiliyyah*, a perennial state of barbaric ignorance and this was the reason for the political and religious decline since the Golden Age of Islam (800 AD – 1258). Moreover, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab condemned every intermediary between a believer and God, and practices like venerating tombs of saints and astrology and celebrating Prophet Muhammad's birthday. These practices fall under the umbrella term *bid'a* (translated as innovation). Such term is equated in the Salafi context to that of idolatry, *shirk*.

Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) was one of the famous Egyptian reformists, and thought that Muslims should not rely only on the interpretations provided by the intellectuals of the past. Instead, they should use their rationality not to become anachronistic, and be aware of the changing of times.[14] He formed himself at Al-Azhar university where he studied philosophy, logic, and Sufism. In 1895 he was granted the power to administer the university. Four years later, 'Abduh was elected Grand Mufti of Al-Azhar, and withstanding this position he promoted his legal and education reform, until he died in 1905.[15] 'Abduh always remained critical toward Sufism, criticizing what he considered mistakes and superstitions that he found in it.[16]

Rashid Rida, a disciple of 'Abduh, was one of the greatest reformists of the past century. He stressed the interpretation of the fundamental's texts of Islam in order to overcome the challenges that his times were posing to the society, such the end of the Ottoman caliphate and the First World War. He

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[13] Laoust, Henry. 'Ibn Taymiyya'. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, P.J. Bearman (Volumes X, XI, XII), Th. Bianquis (Volumes X, XI, XII), et al. Accessed May 8, 2020.

[14] Gesink, Indira Falk. *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014, 201.

[15] Ibid, 202.

[16] Benzine, Rachid. *I Nuovi Pensatori Dell'Islam*. Napoli: Pisani, 2004, 125.

was clearly against the blind following of the tradition (*taqlid*) and he promoted *ijtihad*.[17] Rida criticized the intellectual stagnation of the *ulama* (scholars), because, for him, they were unable to adopt a modern point of view in order to achieve progress through science and technology. Rida was enormously influential all over the world through his journal *al-Manar* (the Lighthouse) in which he expressed his ideas, Qur'anic interpretations, and political views.[18]

The position of Rashid Rida toward Sufism was extremely negative, he criticized harshly the practices and the ideas behind this school of thought.[19]

An organization that has been enormously influential during the Arab spring (and in the previous century) is the Muslim Brotherhood. This organization was founded by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 and in its early years the organization was an "anti-system" group, focusing against the established political order. Al-Banna believed that corruption, the decaying Egyptian society were a product of the influence of Western culture. He promoted a moral renewal of the society framed by following the example of the Prophet and his companions (*al-salaf al-Salih*). Al-Banna became a promoter of *jihad*, he believed that the use of force to expand Muslim territories and to defend Muslim communities against unbelievers was totally legitimate.[20] A turning point for the organization was the assassination of the Prime Minister Nuqrashi Pasha in 1948, that was committed by one of the members. After two months, precisely on the 12th of February 1948 Hasan al-Banna was assassinated by an agent of the government.[21]

Even if he was never appointed as leader, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) was another influential ideologist that joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 50's.[22] He was imprisoned for twenty-five years because of his plot to assassinate Gamal Nasser and later was sentenced to death in 1965. During his imprisonment he wrote his most influential work, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones); Qutb refined the concepts of *jahiliyyah* and *hakimiyya* initially proposed by the Pakistani Islamist scholars A'la al-Mawdudi (1903-1979) and Abu Hasan al-Nadwi (1941-1999). He applied these concepts directly to analyse the Brotherhood's persecution under Nasser regime. *Jahiliyya* in Qutb modern formulation,

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[17] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 56.

[18] Gesink, Indira Falk. *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014, 205.

[19] Weismann, Itzchak. *"Modernity from Within: Islamic Fundamentalism and Sufism."* Der Islam 86, no. 1 (2011), 142.

[20] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015, 20.

[21] Ibid, 21.

[22] Calvert, John. "The World Is an Undutiful Boy!: Sayyid Qutbs American Experience." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 11, no. 1 (2000): 87–103, 89.

referred to a state of wilful blindness to God's sovereign power.[23] Qutb thought that every system that is based on man-made laws, fell in the category of *jahiliyyah*. Against *jahiliyya* stood one alternative, *hakimiyya* of Allah (the absolute sovereignty of God); with this concept he promoted the imposition of a system framed under the Islamic law, derived from the fundamentals texts of Islam.[24]

Literature review

Sufism and Salafism are two different schools of thought that belong to the Islamic tradition, and in this sense, they came from the same root but they differ on different levels, such as interpretations of holy texts, different practices, and behaviours. (Knysh, 2010).

In Egypt, Sufism is very popular and it has always had a "weight" on the social, religious, and political life of the country; while Salafism started to rise since the beginning of the past century, where different famous intellectuals adhered to this doctrine. Both Sufism and Salafism played a major role in shaping Egypt's political and social environment. (Hoigilt, Nome 2014)

Salafists fiercely condemn different Sufi practices such as the worship of "Saints", praying using a non-canonical method (*dhikr* or "remembrance of God"), or visiting tombstones of pious men. The relationship between Sufi and Salafists in Egypt was never easy, mostly going from reciprocal tolerance to fierce attacks against each other. (Meijer, 2009)

Given this premise about the relationship and the role that both these schools of thought had in Egypt during the last century, Sufism and Salafism interacted with the central power (the government) in different ways. Moreover, the differences that caused discrepancies in the ways of representation were caused by the fact that Sufism reached, since Nasser regime, higher institutional places in the Egyptian society. While Salafism remained anchored in its religious sphere, marginalized by Mubarak's government itself. (Ladjal, Bensaid 2015).

Political participation during Mubarak years was quite hard, mostly impossible for Salafists groups, which were accused of terrorism and proselytism against the government. (Hoigilt, Nome 2014) On the other hand, Sufis were so close with the government to the point of entering the political arena with their own political party. (Briton, 2016)

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[23] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015, 22.

[24] Jansen, J.J.G. 'Sayyid Ḳuṭb'. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, P.J. Bearman (Volumes X, XI, XII), Th. Bianquis (Volumes X, XI, XII), et al. Accessed May 8, 2020.

After Mubarak's resignation there was a shift in the Egyptian political dynamics, the Muslim Brothers rose free without their restrictions (Shamaileh, 2017). Moreover, a new dynamical political force was created, namely Salafists political groups, which were ready to enter the political arena and the Sufis reacted in order to stop the Islamists advance. Parliamentary elections screened and gave a hint of the variegate Egyptian electorate, reserving the highest number of seats to the Muslim Brothers and to Salafists parties.

Moreover, things changed after the 2012 presidential elections. Morsi was elected president and the reactions were many (Wickham, 2015).

The literature used for this work was mostly focused on Sufism or Salafism (or on the Muslim Brothers). In this case, there was a gap regarding the main picture and the complementary role that Sufism and Salafism had since the beginning of the past century. My objective is to create an overview of the role that the Salafists and Sufi had during the Arab spring, starting from what they did previously in the past century. So, the question I would like to raise is: what has changed in the political sphere for Sufis and Salafists in the aftermath of the Arab spring? Looking closely at the shift of political positions that happened during the Arab spring and in its aftermath is possibly the best way to understand the changes that led to the aforementioned shifts of positions. By using the literature found and linking the pieces of the actions that both Salafism and Sufism did in this specific period a uniform picture is emerging.

My work is composed chronologically. It starts from the beginning of the past century and it ends approximately around the beginning of 2013. Sources I found are placed in a chronological order in a way to give a clear outline of the time frame in which events occurred in Egypt.

In the first chapter, I give an overview of the state that Sufism and Salafism had before the Arab spring; the second chapter explains the role that both Sufis and Salafists, as well as the Muslim Brothers, had during the uprising; finally, in the third chapter the results of the presidential elections held in 2012 are reported, and the reactions to the new-born Morsi government are considered, and the reasons about Morsi's ousting from the government are given. Clearly Salafists and Sufis were active during that turbulent period, but they had different ways of expression themselves. The last part of my work is dedicated to the conclusion in which my considerations regarding this topic are mentioned.

CHAPTER 1

Salafism and Sufism before the Arab spring: an overview

After a brief overview of the main features of what Salafism and Sufism in Egypt are, as outlined above, in this chapter my goal is to understand and acknowledge what was the role of these understandings of Islam before the Arab spring. Most importantly, my aim is to deeply analyse and better understand what type of institutions they represented. The categories of institutions, the connection within the society, the political role or the absence of it and the closeness with the State are all points that will be explored in this chapter. A deep analysis of these institutions is essential to properly compare them in order to understand what they were, how they acted and in what way their agendas and goals transformed over the years. Moreover, notable Egyptian members and scholars of both schools of thought will be cited. The "evolution" of both schools of thought is reported here chronologically and divided by three political eras, respectively the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak governments, starting from the beginning of the past century until the days that preceded the revolution.

Firstly, the chapter will start with the description of Al-Azhar and why it is important to understand its different roles and interactions with the government. Then, I will analyse two Salafi trends born in Egypt in the first half of the previous century with a specific focus on their closeness with Al-Azhar university. The religious and political shifts that happened during the 70's during the so called "Islamic awakening" (*Sahwa*) in Egypt, gave to Salafism an incredible boost. Successively, the role of Sufism and its closeness with the government will be studied. Finally, an analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood will be presented, because of its impact in both the Egyptian political and religious landscape both before and after the revolution.

1.1. The university of Al-Azhar:

The Egyptian University of Al-Azhar played and still plays a crucial role in the Egyptian religious landscape. It is located in Cairo, with branches all over the country and beyond; it is one of the most prestigious and oldest universities (founded in the X century) in the world and also one of the most famous religious centres in the Sunni world.

Al-Azhar university has been a prolific ground and arena for both Sufism and Salafism.[25]

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[25] El-Houdaiby, Ibrahim. "The Identity of Al-Azhar and Its Doctrine." Jadaliyya. Accessed June 1, 2020

Gauvain reports that the overall nature and identity of the relationship between Al-Azhar and Salafist groups such as *Ansar al-Sunna* has depended upon the identity and religious doctrine of the main scholars in Al-Azhar at the time. In fact, when reform-minded legal specialists, such as Muhammad Mustafa al-Maraghi (*shaykh* of Al-Azhar 1928–1929, 1935–1945), Abd al-Majid Salim (grand mufti 1928–1945, *shaykh* Al-Azhar 1950–1951) and Muhammad Shaltut (*shaykh* of Al-Azhar 1958–1963), were in charge, there has often been a close and strict connection between the *Azhari* establishment and the Salafists.[26] This was the same with Sufi scholars, as for instance, *shaykh* Abd al-Halim Mahmud (1910-1978), or more recently, with Sayyid Tantawi (1918-2010) and Ali Gooma (b. 1952).[27] Leaders of the Salafi *Ansar al Sunna*, such as al-Fiqqi and his successor Abd al-Razzaq Afifi, had a strong *Azhari* identity. Al-Razzaq Afifi earned his doctorate in Al-Azhar, precisely studying the sources of law (*'usul al-fiqh*). The third leader of the *Ansar al-Sunna*, Abd al-Rahman al-Wakil, who was elected in 1965, was also an *Azhari* graduate.[28]

The year 1961 was for Al-Azhar an important turning point. The Law no.103, promulgated that year by Nasser's government, allowed the regime to interfere with the Al-Azhar agenda, converting the *Azhari* establishment in a state-owned university.

From 1973 to 1976, during Anwar Sadat's government, the grand Imam of Al-Azhar was 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud. He was an active member of the *Shadhili tariqa*, participating in rituals and ceremonies, as well as attending the periodic meetings and conferences of the order's council. His involvement with the *Shadhili* was not political, but the *tariqa* did match his beliefs, his spiritual inclinations, and his social agenda. Mahmud had the objective to institutionalize and legitimize Sufi orders and practices in the public sphere. He tirelessly argued that Sufism as a metaphysical doctrine contained moral and intellectual guidance to modern culture, and practical and logical solutions for the 'illness' of society.[29] In his time, when Sufi practices, doctrine and culture were harshly criticized in religious circles, such as Egypt's *Ansar al-Sunna*, Mahmud firmly claimed that Sufism as a religious doctrine was a valuable tradition, discipline, and intellectual and moral way of life.[30]

Clearly, as the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Mahmud had a privileged position to promulgate Sufi religious views and to express opinions and take stands on political issues.

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[26] Gauvain, Richard. "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802–25, 812.
[27] Ibid, 812.
[28] Ibid, 812.
[29] Moshe Albo, "Al-Azhar Sufism in Post-Revolutionary Egypt", *Journal of Sufi Studies*, no.2 (2012), 224-244, 232.
[30] Ibid, 232.

The period Mahmud spent as Al-Azhar's Grand Imam was full of crucial events, for both Egypt and many other Arab countries: The Six-day War, the openness policy, called *infitah*, political, economic and social reforms, the rise of political Islam and militant extremist groups and the early Egyptian-Israeli peace initiatives.[31]

1.2. The Supreme Council of Sufi Orders:

The Supreme Council of Sufi Orders was established in 1976 in Egypt. It was restructured with the Law No. 118 (as explained below) and the council function regarded the religious, spiritual, social, cultural and national interests of the Sufi orders.

The number of Sufi orders in Egypt that are officially registered by the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders is 77. Nearly six million between *murid* (disciples) and affiliates are present in Egypt, and the *turuq* existence is spread all over the governorates of Egypt. In Cairo alone there are 41 orders; the most famous *turuq* in Egypt are the *Rifai'yyah*, *Shadhiliyya* and the *Naqshbandiyya*; while, other biggest *turuq* are *Rifa'iyya* and the *'Azmiyya.*

The Council consists of 16 members, the most prominent of whom is the *Shaykh* of the Sufi orders, appointed by the President of the Republic. Ten members (they should be *Shaykhs*) are elected by the Council every three years, and the other five members are representative of Al-Azhar University (chosen by the *Shaikh* of Al-Azhar), Minister of Endowments, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Culture and General Secretariat of Local Development. The remaining five appointments are made by the Ministries of Local Development, Culture, Endowments, Interior, and Al-Azhar Grand *Skaykh's*. The headquarters of the Supreme Council for Sufi Orders is located in the Egyptian capital, Cairo.

The Supreme Council for Sufi Orders controls all decisions regarding all the Sufi orders that are recognized. According to the Article 118, the Council performs several tasks, such as:

The supervision of the activity of all Sufi orders or the activity of their members and the approval of the establishment of new Sufi orders; to express an opinion on the legislation related Sufi activities, to authorize activities such as Mawlid or Sufi processions and supervising the Sufi shrines.

Moreover, other important activities are for example the representation of Sufi orders in international Sufi conferences and the organization of local Sufi conferences.

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[31] Yoram Meital, "The Independent Path of Shaykh al-Azhar 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd", *International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 54, (2014), 159-182, 160.

Sufism has deep roots in Egypt, and during its historical development, the *turuq* and their rich socio-cultural and religious fabric have always been considered its most significant foundations. Sufi institutions are seen as a major foundation upon which Egyptian society is built and their role is also very important in shaping the religion and traditions of the Egyptians who adhere to Sufism.[32]

The geographical position is also an important factor to understand the influence of certain *turuq*, as in certain areas holy shrines and graves of famous Sufi masters or saints could be found, creating a strict connection between the physical place and the order that represented by that shrine.[33] Specifically, the *Shadhili tariqa* is considered to be more powerful in Upper Egypt, in the Qena and Aswan provinces. Another *tariqa*, the *Ahmadiyya*, is very prominent in the Tanta province, while the *Rifai'yya tariqa* is popular in Esna, Arment, and Luxor.

The relationship between Sufism and politics goes far back in time, as the institutions that represented Egyptian Sufism always had some connection with the local power or with the state. The relationship in older times was based on mutual exchange of interests. From the 18th century, the presence of Sufism in the political agenda of the government became more subtle and more difficult to perceive.[34] Governments and political elites used the Sufi institution to gain political security, achieve their interests and overcome political opponents. This changed with the rise of the modern nation-state, when Sufism and its institutions shifted toward a status in which the government accepted them as legal.[35]

On the other hand, Salafism evolved through two different stages. During the first stage it was related almost completely to studies and education; this trend's roots could be found in the nineteenth century. The second stage emerged in 1970 during the *Sahwa*, in which new political movements rose. Importantly, during *Sahwa* not only Salafists trends were formed, but Sufism gained more power and recognition in the Egyptian landscape because of different prominent figures, one of them being the aforementioned 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud.

1.3. Before and during Nasser regime (1956-1970):

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[32] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 469.

[33] Ibid, 470.

[34] Ibid, 471.

[35] Ibid, 472.

1.3.1. Salafists environment in Egypt:

Two institutions representing the first Salafist trend are still active in the Egyptian landscape*: al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya li-l-Amilin bi-l-Kitab wa-l-Sunna* (The Lawful Association of the Adherents of the Book and the Sunna) and J*ama'at Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya* (The Society of the Supporters of the Muhammadan Sunna).[36] The former was founded in the last decade of the 19th century and officially registered in 1913. Since its creation, *al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya* distanced itself from politics and focused instead on fighting *bid'a* and following the lifestyle and the teaching of the Prophet and the Pious Forefathers.[37]

The *Jama'at Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya* was created in 1926 by Hamid al-Fiqqi. The story of *Ansar al-Sunna* has its roots in the the *Azhari* (Al-Azhar) establishment. This observation appears relevant when we look at the educational background of the founders of the organization. For many years, it seemed to be led by well-represented members of Egypt's *Azhari* elite. Hamid al-Fiqqi, graduating from Al-Azhar university in 1916, became Imam of the Sharkas mosque (located in Al-Sayeddah, Egypt), being taught by Muhammad Abduh (like Rashid Rida). Under the guidance of al-Fiqqi, the early *Ansar al-Sunna* movement proclaimed itself dedicated to spreading knowledge of *tawhid*, as described in the works of Ibn Taymiyya, and refuted the claims and ideas of the various religious movements that existed within Egyptian society that al-Fiqqi considered heretical, for instance Sufism. The founding committee of the *Ansar al-Sunna*, and the contributors to the group's journal called *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, included some of Egypt's most brilliant *Azhari* scholars of that time.[38] For example, the hadith scholar and jurist Ahmad Shakir (1892-1958) became chief editor of *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* and then *shaykh* Al-Azhar, as well as Muhammad Shaltut (1893-1963), whose works on *jihad* continue to create interest in Salafist circles nowadays. In 1959 some of the most respected *Azhari* scholars attended al-Fiqqi's funeral, such as Abd al-Rahman al-Tag and Hasanain Makhluf. The latter had been elected grand mufti twice, in 1946–1950, and in 1952–1955.[39]

It is worth mentioning that different *Ansar al-Sunna* leaders had close ties with the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi regime. Al-Fiqqi explicated his admiration of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in his own writing. He was invited to teach in the Hijaz for three years. After this experience, al-Fiqqi returned in Egypt and renewed his efforts in *Ansar al-Sunna* by strengthening its leadership structure and

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[36] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 37.

[37] Ibid, 37.

[38] Gauvain, Richard. "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802–25, 811.

[39] Ibid, 811.

reformulating its goals.[40] Most importantly, he was asked by the Saudi mufti, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (1893–1969), to go to the Saudi Kingdom to teach. Afifi travelled in 1951 to Riyadh to teach at the College of Islamic Law.

In 1965, Afifi was appointed as manager of the Higher Institution for Legal and six years later, in 1971, he moved to the general administration in the Institution for Research and Legal Rulings. Eventually, his importance grew and he became deputy manager of the influential Permanent Committee for Research and Legal Rulings. Afifi, in his role as deputy manager in the Committee, worked alongside important Saudi scholars, such as Ibn Baz, who personally chose Afifi to let him promulgate and provide *fatawa* (sing. *fatwa*). Afifi during this period was extremely influential and from his teachings different Saudi's most famous scholars were formed, as for example 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrin (1933-2009) and Salah al-Fawzan (b. 1933).[41]

The influences of the Saudi Kingdom on the early *Ansar al-Sunna* scholars, such as al-Fiqqi and Afifi are important and profound. They certainly owe a debt to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who anticipated their main line of attack by describing Sufis as worshippers of superstitious beliefs (*khurafat*) and accusing them of *shirk* (polytheism).[42] Moreover, al-Fiqqi created a lasting friendly relationship between *Ansar al-Sunna* and the Saudi religious establishment. This relationship could be seen as a strong religious affinity and a mutual exchange of ideas and, for those like Afifi, employment opportunities. Without a doubt, Egyptian scholars have been remunerated handsomely for their contributions to the development of the modern Saudi religious landscape.[43]

It is important to mention that describing *Ansar al-Sunna* scholars as if they were mere products or a creation of the Saudi Wahhabi ideology is misleading. While al-Fiqqi promoted his admiration of the Wahhabi movement, he also pointed that they were "excessively loyal" (*muta'assibun; fanatics*) to the Hanbali school of law.

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[40] Gauvain, Richard. "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802–25, 811.
[40] Ibid, 812.
[41] Ibid, 813.
[42] Gauvain, Richard. "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802–25, 814.
[43] Writers or imams espousing a pro-Wahhabi position would be suitable for lucrative contracts. Often the government of Saudi Arabia would purchase a considerable amount of copies of books by pro-Wahhabi writers; this in order to guarantee these authors a reasonable profit and, also, to create a strong incentive system for publishers to print books oriented to these types of orientations. This trend had its apex during the 1980s and 1990s; in fact, even Muslim scholars who were known for their liberalism and rationalism wrote books defending Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and Wahhabism. They portrayed Wahhabism as the movement that was most capable of confronting the challenges of modernization. Leaving aside the motives for these publications, these writers were handsomely rewarded for their contributions, even if their books were very selective and full of historical inaccuracies. (Fadl, Khaled Abou El. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007, pg. 88.)

The next leader of the *Ansar al-Sunna* following a chronological order, was Abd al-Rahman al-Wakil.[44] According to Gauvain, al-Wakil is almost unknown in Western academic circles, but he was one of the main Salafi figures of the first part of the 20th century in Egypt. He was the *Ansar al-Sunna*'s third leader and editor of the aforementioned periodical *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*. Influential for his passion, tireless activism, fierce attacks on Sufism, and its practices and thoughts, al-Wakil is considered by today's *Ansar al-Sunna* leaders a "*Salafi mutlaq*" (a complete Salafi).[45] Al-Wakil's struggle against Sufism is still considered fundamental by the *Ansar al-Sunna* organization and he is interestingly known within Salafi circles with the title of "Hammer of deviations", as the way in which they continue to honour his legacy proofs. Recently, *Ansar al-Sunna's* hierarchies published a lavishly bound two-volume compilation of his works, *Majmu'at maqalat al-'allama 'Abd al-Rahman al-Wakil* (2010). In this publication more than half of the total number of al-Wakil's articles criticizing Egypt's most famous Sufis and/or dispatching the country's *turuq* can be found.[46]

Since its creation, *Ansar al-Sunna* has tended to join the political arena, and every leader of this organization has stressed the fact that the government must be in total accord with the *shari'a,* as in their opinion this is the only way to solve the problems and crisis of *al-umma al-islamiyya* (Islamic nation). Nevertheless, the movement is more oriented towards theological problems than political ones, as the brief insight about al-Wakil showed.

In conclusion, despite with different developments, both *al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya* and *Ansar al-Sunna* appear to be well rooted in the Egyptian religious landscape.[47]

1.3.2. Sufis and the Nasser regime:

In the 1950s Sufi orders grew in numbers and gained more followers. After the "Free Officers coup" of 1952, the new regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) gained the confidence and support of the Sufi institutions. Nasser and his government used the Sufis to stem Muslims Brotherhood and other organizations. One example of this close relationship is the statement made by the leader of *Rifai'yya tariqa* Muhammad 'Alwan in 1965, declaring boldly that the Sufi *turuq* were in total

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[44] Gauvain, Richard. "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802–25, 812.

[45] Gauvain, Richard. "Egyptian Sufism Under the Hammer: A Preliminary Investigation into the Anti-Sufi Polemics of 'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Wakil (1913–70)." In *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age*, 33–59. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2015, 36.

[46] Ibid, 36.

[47] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 38.

disagreement with the Muslim Brotherhood, because of the Brotherhood's violent methods and actions. [48]

In another statement, the Supreme Council Sufi Orders supported the decision of Nasser to withdraw international forces from Mount Sinai during May 1967, and in June of the same year, after the defeat of the Six-day War, Sufi orders organized a march to show their support to the President; Salafists, on the other hand, strongly expressed their opposition to the government by claiming that this defeat was one of the many weaknesses of the Nasser's political executive.[49] Nasser's policies toward the Egyptian religious establishments culminated in one of the most important acts of his regime in 1961 when, as mentioned above, the Law no.103 was promulgated. From this point onward, the grand Imam of Al-Azhar was appointed by the President himself and the government used Al-Azhar as an instrument to validate its methods of governance, putting the institution into conflict with Islamists to hamper them.[50]

This is a very important period, especially as the tension between Sufi groups, their political opposition and Salafi groups grew stronger because of the government's open acceptance of the Sufis. and all the benefits and recognition consequently gained.

1.3.3. The Muslim Brotherhood under Nasser's pressure:

Following a clash between Brotherhood university students and the police, Nasser dismantled the Brotherhood on 13th of January 1954. The dissolution decree encouraged the "secret apparatus" to reorganize and prepare for what it saw as an inevitable confrontation with the regime.

Nasser saw in the Brotherhood the biggest threat against his power, for different reasons: The Brotherhood had a huge number of followers, and most importantly they were able to show their social and political weight whenever they saw the opportunity to do it.[51]

Moreover, the Brotherhood's secret apparatus in response to the dissolvement of their organization, organized an attack against Nasser himself. In October 1954, eight gunshots were fired by an affiliated of the Brotherhood, Mahmud Abd al-Latif, against Nasser without success. Nasser reaction was brutal; even if the leaders of the Brotherhood condemned the attack, Nasser ordered the destruction

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[48] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 469.

[49] Ibid, 469.

[50] Jadaliyya. "The Identity of Al-Azhar and Its Doctrine." July 10, 2017. Accessed May 20 2020.

[51] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 27.

of the Brotherhood headquarters, and the arrest of the organization's leaders. Thousands of the Brotherhood's leaders were jailed in prisons camps and six of them were hanged.[52] The persecution against the Brotherhood's affiliated stressed the radicalization of the organization's leader.

In this turbulent context, the figure of Sayyid Qutb began to attract followers and consent for his ideologies and thoughts. Qutb was imprisoned for twenty-five years and he wrote mostly of his works from prison. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, Qutb developed two concepts: *jahiliyyah* and *hakimiyya*. In his most famous work called Milestones, Qutb encouraged Muslim youth to unite and form a vanguard (*tali'a*) ready to use *jihad* against the contemporary *jahili* systems and all who supported them.

After Nasser's death in 1970, the Brotherhood regained some freedom.[53]

1.4. Anwar Sadat (1970-1981):

1.4.1. Islamic Revival:

Anwar Sadat (1918-1981) was the successor of Nasser. During his eleven years of government, Sadat surrounded himself with different religious scholars from Al-Azhar university and participated in multiple religious celebrations held for the birth of Prophet Muhammad.

Notably, in the 1970s appeared a new trend in Egypt: an Islamic revival (*Sahwa*) that rapidly spread worldwide. In religious terms, the revival enveloped different schools of philosophical and religious thought, movements to promote personal piety and educational activities with the ambition to reform Muslim religious practices. Many strong social activists were oriented to community-building policies. In political terms, this included movements that were engaged in national politics as parties, some of them with auxiliary paramilitary forces. This led to the increased practices of assassination, bombing, and other assaults as part of a plan to seize political power. Some of these movements were broad-spectrum organizations whose activities covered different ranges, from prayer to politics.

A significant division is the one between those reformist movements and organizations that accepted the political status quo and those that believed it was necessary to overthrow the existing regime. The former believed in the transformation of their society with the increasing effect of educational and

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[52] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015,28.
[53] Ibid, 29.

missionary activities. On the other hand, politically oriented groups believed that the control of the state was key to a truly Islamic society.

Notably, the Islamic revival was also a counter-attack against European and American values such as individualism, materialistic consumerism, religious and moral relativism, and pop culture.[54] These movements were thus motivated also by the fear that Western influences would undermine the authority of religious teachers and rulers and subvert Islamic beliefs and Muslim cultures.

The revivalists (those who supported and promoted *Sahwa*) generally encouraged the teaching of Arabic and the *Qu'ran*, strictness in the observance of Muslim rituals, and condemnation of Sufi practices, traditions and magical beliefs. They looked to the formation of a complete and total Islamic society as the only alternative to nationalism, capitalism, or socialism.[55]

1.4.2. Salafists new trends during *Sahwa*:

Three different geographical places and ideological factors were important for the rise of the aforementioned movements. The most influential one of the three is the non-violent and quietist Salafi movement based in Alexandria during the 1970s called *Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya*. Next, in Cairo, we can see the rise of a similar movement, but more politically oriented, *Al-Salafiyya al-Harakiyya*. The third one was born in southern Egypt and it was more oriented to violence, named *Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*. It is these currents that entered the political arena shortly after the revolution, forming three parties: *al-Nour*, *al-Asala* and *al-Bina' wa-l-Tanmiya* (respectively: the Light, Authenticity, and Building and Development).[56]

Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, considered the most influential of the three, is based in Alexandria. Established in the mid-70s, this organization is specifically focused on education and social activism in order to reduce poverty and ignorance. The structure of *al-Da'wa* is composed around Salafi *shaykhs*, and the most popular one is the notorious hate preacher Yasir al-Burhami. The network of this organization is well-established all around the Egyptian landscape, while its core is in Alexandria. The extension of this organization reached its peak when popular Salafists preachers such as Muhammad Hassan and Muhammad Hussain Ya'qub, alongside with the aforementioned Yasir al-

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[54] Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 823.
[55] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 39.
[56] Ibid, 41.

Burhami, started their own TV channel, called "*al-Rahma*". The impact on Egyptian social life was significant, and this helped the spreading of Salafi preaching all over the country.

Al-Salafiyya al-Harakiyya is based in the surroundings of Cairo and differs from the *al-Da'wa* by being more politically oriented and by strong activism, although their main focus is on education and preaching. The name of the political party that was formed following the creation of the aforementioned group is now *Hizb al-Asala* (Party of Authenticity).[57]

The third Salafi trend born in 1970s in Egypt is characterized by a violent approach to politics. This organization is called *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*. It is the only Salafi group that engaged directly in political activism since its creation and before the 2011 revolution, acting especially against Sufism.[58] The geographical origin of this group lies in Southern Egypt. They were inspired by the thoughts of Sayyid Qutb, whose supporters followed a militant politic based on his doctrine, thoughts and ideological principles.

In 1981 they were pointed as responsible by the government for the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, alongside with *Islamic Jihad* organization, who was the actual perpetrator. Consequently, the leaders of the *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* fled abroad or were arrested.[59]

1.4.3. Sadat closeness with Sufis:

Sadat issued in 1976 the Law no.118 that, as mentioned above, contained a reform of the regulatory framework of the Sufi *turuq* and of the Council of Sufi Orders.[60] It stressed the attachment of the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders to the presidential office, giving more recognition and more power to the institution itself and to its chairman. The Supreme Council of Sufis during this time consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Information, Culture, Local Development, and Endowments, and from Al-Azhar.

The Law no.118 of 1976 also contained a decree that was regulating the celebration of the birth of the Prophet, gatherings and religious remembrance (collective *dhikr*), Sufi marches and many other

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[57] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 43.

[58] Meijer, Roel. Global Salafism: Islams New Religious Movement. London: Hurst, 2009, 193.

[59] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 40.

[60] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 473.

religious celebrations. Notably, all these religious celebrations were attended by high-ranking officers, representatives of the government and the police.[61]

1.4.4. Regained freedom:

As part of his design of the country's broader reorientation, Sadat granted a general amnesty to the Muslim Brotherhood; this amnesty began in 1971 and continued until 1975. In addition, Sadat promoted the returning in Egypt from the exile of Brotherhood's affiliates.[62]

Sadat's political manoeuvres to ensure the Brotherhood a return in the Egyptian social and religious sphere reflected his hope that the organization would pose a threat to the Nasserist left; but Sadat did not grant them any legal status.

With the increasing advance of Islamists groups, and with a more general critique on Sadat's internal economic policies (*infitah*) and international policies, Sadat became more defensive in his political manoeuvres.[63] He publicly castigated the Brotherhood for abusing its newfound freedoms and warned that he would not "tolerate those who try to tamper with the high interests of the State under the guise of religion".[64]

1.5. The Mubarak era (1981-2011):

1.5.1. Salafists under Mubarak:

During the Mubarak regime (from 1981 to 2011), the *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* leaders were arrested in order to put pressure and to weaken one of the biggest Egyptian Salafist organization.

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya succeeded in creating a new party right after the start of the revolution in Egypt; now the party is called *Hizb al-Bina' wa-l-Tanmiya*, and has being active since 2011. Even

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[61] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 474.

[62] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 31.

[63] Shepard, W., "Ideology and Politics in Egypt" in *Introducing Islam*. London, Routledge, 2009, 237.

[64] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 33.

with a history of violent militancy, they are accepted as one of the Salafi groups also by other non-violent Salafi actors.[65]

The *Da'wa al-Salafiyya* was tolerated and accepted during Mubarak's government because the organization was seen as a counterweight to the Muslim Brotherhood. During the revolution, some Salafi leaders spoke out against the protesters and the demonstrations that were happening before Mubarak fall. Many of them entered politics during the 2011 uprising, and today they are very close with *Hizb al-Nour*. For instance, the co-founder of *al-Da'wa*, 'Imad 'Abd al-Ghafur, came back to Egypt after he spent many years in Turkey.[66]

1.5.2. Mubarak interference with Sufis:

Sufi institutions maintained a favourable stand toward the government during Mubarak's governance. The support of the Sufis can be seen as a religious, social and public resource serving the interests of the ruling National Democratic Party (Mubarak's political party). On the other hand, this closeness, prevented Sufis from entering and actively engaging in the political arena; this meant that they could not effectively express their opinion on political issues like 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud did in the past.[67] Furthermore, the Sufis defended the actions of the regime to root out the influence of Islamist parties.[68]

Even if the relationship with Sufi institutions and leaders was surrounded by a co-operative atmosphere, Mubarak governmental pressures and interferences culminated in the appointment of Abdul Hadi al-Qassabi as Supreme Leader (*shaykh al-masha'ikh*) of the Sufi orders. Al-Qassabi was a notable member of the National Democratic Party and a leader of the *Khalwatiyya*.[69] Through this appointment, Mubarak used and manipulated political power to bypass regulatory laws, to which appointment normally would have been held. In normal conditions, the oldest members of the Sufi orders would vote in favour of one *shaykh* between them; who receive more votes is appointed Supreme leader of Supreme Council for Sufi Orders. The government, however, ignored the tradition

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[65] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 41.

[66] Ibid, 41.

[67] Zeghal, Malika. "Religion and Politics in Egypt: The Ulema of Al-Azhar, Radical Islam, and the State (1952–94)." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 3 (1999): 371–99, 378.

[68] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 476.

[69] Ibid, 477.

in order to seize power from prominent Sufi leaders. Mubarak's illegal actions damaged the positive relationship between the Sufi orders and the regime.[70]

The political interference of Mubarak repeated in 2010.

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi (b. 1918) died in 2010. Sayyid Tantawi, who maintained his charge from 1996 to 2010, was not friendly with Salafists movements or ideologies. Notably, Ali Gooma (b. 1952) the Grand Mufti of Egypt who preceded Sayyid Tantawi, is a Sufi. Both him and Tantawi tried to affirm *Azhari* Sufi heritage during their charge.[71]

A week after the death of Sayyid Tantawi, Mubarak appointed Ahmed al-Tayeb (b. 1946).

The appointment of Ahmed al-Tayeb, right after Mubarak decision created various reactions in the Egyptian religious landscape. He was a leader of the *Ahmadiyyah Khalwatiyya* a minor Sufi order in the district of Aswan, in Southern Egypt.[72] Moreover, he was affiliated with Mubarak's National Democratic Party. On the eve of his appointment in March 2010, he initially refused to resign from his position in the party, arguing that this did not conflict with his religious role, but renounced it in April. Al-Tayeb is especially hostile to Salafists, and he has claimed that they are "foreign to Egypt" whereas Sufi practices are Egyptian.[73] This attack could be seen as a direct result of al-Tayeb's Sufi affinities and highlights the struggle between these two groups to claim their "Egyptian authenticity" over the other.

The Salafists for their part claim to protect true Egyptian values, which they present as a particular brand of Islamic principles. Egyptian Salafists try to sacralise secular society as much as possible by basing their dress, grooming and day-to-day behaviour on examples set in those prophetic hadiths that have been verified by the Salafi.[74]

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[70] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 477.

[71] Briton, Jacquelene. "Rethinking the Distinction between Popular and Reform Sufism in Egypt: An Examination of the Mawlid of Muhammad Mitwalli Sha'rawi." In *Practicing Sufism: Sufi Politics and Performance in Africa*, edited by Abdelmajid Hannoum, Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2016, 230.

[72] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 474.

[73] Briton, Jacquelene. "Rethinking the Distinction between Popular and Reform Sufism in Egypt: An Examination of the Mawlid of Muhammad Mitwalli Sha'rawi." In *Practicing Sufism: Sufi Politics and Performance in Africa*, edited by Abdelmajid Hannoum, Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2016, 230.

[74] Ibid, 230.

Furthermore, they argue that their strict adherence to particular daily practices is what identifies them as Egyptian because, they claim, it is that adherence that represents true Islam.[75] The difference between these claims is strong: on one hand, Sufis make their argument based on history and national religious sentiment, while on the other hand Salafists refer to a pan-Islamic vision, based on a singular interpretation of history. Egyptian Sufis and Salafists not only claim to represent Egyptian Islam but both groups also claim that the other has introduced foreign elements into well-established practices and theological assumptions.[76]

1.5.3. The Brotherhood and their strategy during Mubarak regime:

The Mubarak era could be defined as the time in which the Muslim Brotherhood entered in the political arena being legally recognized. From 1981 the Brotherhood expanded its presence in the political strata and in the public life of the Egyptian society.[77]

A shift in the tone of the organization happened during the Mubarak years as the new exponents of the Muslim Brotherhood started to promote democracy to not be excluded from political life while also following their core mission of establishing a society based on *Shari'a*. During the '80s the Brotherhood entered in the parliament, and gained different seats; coalitions were created, such as the "*al-Tahaluf al-Islami*" in 1984 with the Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party. In 1984 the Brotherhood's leader al-Tilsimani explained that the entrance in the political arena of the Muslim Brotherhood served a wider and broader goal, not to seek political power but to be able to spread the Word of God better.[78]

By 1990 the Brotherhood controlled twenty seats in the parliament. The perception of the threat posed by the Muslim brotherhood against the government was reinforced after the Cairo earthquake in 1992. Rapidly, right after the seismic event, camp hospitals were organized, doctors were employed to support the injured, hours before the governmental help. This fact was intolerable for different government officials, and from this moment the Mubarak government tried to put pressure and to stem the Brotherhood in both political and public domains.

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[75] Briton, Jacquelene. "Rethinking the Distinction between Popular and Reform Sufism in Egypt: An Examination of the Mawlid of Muhammad Mitwalli Sha'rawi." In *Practicing Sufism: Sufi Politics and Performance in Africa*, edited by Abdelmajid Hannoum, Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2016, 230.230.

[76] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 38.

[77] Ibid, 38.

[78] Ibid, 39.

During the last decade of the Mubarak era, the Muslim Brothers walked a thin line, seeking to evade a political collision with the government while emphasising its right to a leading role in public life. The trajectory of the Brotherhood's strategy during this period can be compared to the swing of a pendulum, oscillating between moments of self-assertion and moments of self-restraint. Moreover, the Brotherhood's strategy did not trace a linear path toward greater integration into the political system.[79]

To conclude, two main tendencies emerge from the above presented analysis.

The first is the refusal of the government to cooperate or approve the presence of Salafists parties in Egypt, and how Sufism as an institutional and religious force was used to push back and contain the advance of Salafism over the course of last century, with nevertheless some exceptions, like the organization *al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya* being legally accepted during the Mubarak years because of its role as counterweight against the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The second approach, on the other hand, emerges from the way the Muslim Brothers were pressured hardly by Nasser, and how slowly after his death, they gained more freedom and more political power. Still, they had to restrain themselves during Mubarak regime, in order to be accepted legally in the political arena.

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[79] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 39.

CHAPTER 2

The uprising, and the roles and reactions of Salafists, Sufis and Muslim Brothers

In order to understand why the revolution took place, it is necessary to comprehend what led the movements of protests and to be aware of the political, economic, and religious reasons behind it. An additional factor worth analysing is the location of the facts, since, as outlined in the previous chapter, the localization of certain religious organizations is relevant to understand their influence over particular geographical areas and/or during certain events

2.1. The begin of the uprising:

Muhammad Bouazizi was a street vendor from a rural town in Tunisia; after being publicly humiliated by a police officer and being ignored by the local authorities when he subsequently reported the fact, he poured gasoline over his body and immolated himself in a specific location: right outside a governmental building. The frustration and the humiliation of Bouazizi reflected the sentiments of many in North Africa and in the Middle East, and his self-immolation was perceived as a call for action through the whole Arab world.[80]

The protest reached almost every Arab state, but there were different trajectories and paths. In most of the countries where economies are based on oil and gas exportation (such as Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia), the protests have been sporadic and quickly failed. In fact, for instance, the Royal Family of Bahrain suppressed the opposition in order to gain more control of the country and to prevent any kind of revolts against them.[81] At the same time, in Libya the fall of the Qaddafi regime in 2011 created a situation of political fragmentation similar to the political condition that followed the demise of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. In Tunisia, the protests led to the resignation of President Zine Ben Ali, while also spreading in other Arab states, threatening the related political establishment in charge. After President Ben Ali was overthrown, the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his 30-year reign in Egypt came to an end; protesters cheered and hailed the new political era and their freedom in Tahrir Square.[82]

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[80] Ammar Shamaileh, *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 10.

[81] Eberhard Kienle, "Egypt without Mubarak, Tunisia after Bin Ali: Theory, History and the 'Arab Spring,'" *Economy and Society 41*, no. 4 (2012): pp. 532-557, 533.

[82] Ammar Shamaileh, *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 11.

The hallmark of the protests across the Arab world during the Arab Spring in 2011, is the fact that these revolts and protests were driven from below. Moreover, the distinction between the Arab spring and other movements of protests is the intensity and the density of the manifestations, all directed to challenge the political system of that time, and most importantly the authorities that represented it.

On 25 January 2011, thousands of people gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Interestingly, then, in this area is located a famous statue that portrays Saad Zaghul, the famous revolutionary leader that led the 1919 revolution in Egypt. Those who joined in numbers called for *'aish* (bread), *karama* (dignity) and *hurriya* (freedom), and they publicly accused the government and the police forces of practicing brutal methods of repression and unjustified violence against them.[83]

The control of Mubarak and his party over the state was absolute since the date of his election. The president could remove or appoint the Prime Minister and his council of ministers, dissolve the parliament, put vetoes on bills and bypass the legislature, all actions that Mubarak during his political career took. In fact, Mubarak appointed all the governors, mayors, deputy majors, a third of the members of the Consultative Assembly (*Majlis al-Shura*), and ten members of the lower house (a parliamentary organ).[84]

The monopoly of the NPD over local jurisdiction was created by a winner-take-all system, that encouraged widespread corruption and bribing to ignore the wild and unregulated building on agricultural land and the various poor conditions of infrastructures.[85]

Another important fact marking Mubarak's absolute power during his presidential years, was the state of emergency issued right after Sadat's assassination in 1981 and re-established every three years, until it was finally lifted in 2012. The state of emergency gave more power to the Egyptian security apparatus, as the movement of individuals could be restrained, meetings could be forbidden, telephones and communications could be tapped, searches without warrants were made and publications were banned.[86]

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[83] Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi, and Ann M. Lesch, "Concentrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*. Edited by Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), pp. 17-39, 18.

[84] Ibid, 18.

[85] Ibid, 19.

[86] Ibid, 19.

The apex of the government powerplay culminated in 2010 when the NPD obtained 97 percent of the People Assembly seats, leaving the remaining 3 percent to the opposition parties. To respect previous political accords, the Muslim Brothers and the al-Wafd party tried to boycott the elections.[87]

Police and security forces arrested opposition candidates, took down opposition parties' headquarters, and distributed fake-voting cards and pre-filled ballots. Vote-buying deals were made with numerous local NPD supporters. The climate of control and repression during the election of 2010, could be summed up in a quote of Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh: an influential member of the Muslim Brothers said in the aftermath of the elections: "The elections are completely in the hands of the Interior Minister now. He decides who wins and who loses and who can run".[88]

Another element that ignited the uprising against the government was the enormous division between the rich and the poor. It is important to mention that the widespread poor conditions of life were also dominant in the urban areas, and not only related to the rural areas. Two-thirds of people who lived in Greater Cairo lived in buildings and infrastructures not regulated by any type of norm and, most importantly, these areas lacked basic utilities and public services.[89]

The escalation of food prices and the continuous decay of public services and education system was the tipping point for the system to crackdown and to fall under overwhelming disapproval of the citizens for the lacking strategy of the Ministers and for Mubarak.[90]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mubarak came to power the 7th of October 1981, the day after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. Mubarak, after gaining power, reassured the public about the political situation of that time, released political prisoners, and encouraged parliamentary elections when his first mandate would be at the end (a presidential mandate in Egypt lasted six years). Nevertheless, in 1987, when his second term began, he excluded political opposition from the local councils, refused to reform the constitution, and most importantly he tightened the grip of the power of his party, the National Democratic Party (NPD). In 1988, in a public speech he declared "I am in

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[87] Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi, and Ann M. Lesch, "Concentrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*. Edited by Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), pp. 17-39, 19.
[88] Ibid, 20.
[89] Ibid, 31.
[90] Ibid, 32.

charge, and I have the authority to adopt measures…I have all the pieces of the puzzle, while you do not".[91]

Moreover, from the beginning of the 2000s brutality by government agents and the use of torture by police increased exponentially in Egypt. The economic problems, rampant corruption, and human rights abuses victimizing Egypt became characteristic traits of most of the non–Gulf Cooperation Council Arab states at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011.[92]

2.2.Salafists:

Mubarak's government relationships with Salafists groups and organizations were always tense and in the majority of cases these organizations and their representatives avoided to criticize publicly the government's actions; this "silence" was perpetuated in order to avoid repercussion and detention in governmental prisons.[93]

Given that premise of repression and voluntary alienation from pointing out any critics toward the government and, as noted previously, the episodes of torture and exile that different Salafi leaders and individuals went through during Mubarak's regime, one could have expected on the Salafists cleric part to join the revolts and the uprising as a social force. This could have allowed them to invest and promote their ideas against Mubarak and be able to gain a stronger foothold in Egyptian society.[94]

The newspapers sided with the government tried to paint the protests as if they were led by Salafist agitators. Despite the efforts of the pro-government newspapers to give a false representation of the protests, Salafists leaders and clerics were more neutral and hostile toward the protesters, as explained below.[95]

Right after Mubarak's resignation in 2011 that lead the long-standing NDP to an end, Egyptian's most influential religious parties and organizations, such as the Muslim Brothers and Salafists organizations, found themselves in a stand-off. The significant ideological and political differences between these groups were reflected in their response to Egypt's uprising. The Brotherhood at first

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[91]Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi, and Ann M. Lesch, "Concentrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*. Edited by Bahgat Korany, Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), pp. 17-39, 17.

[92] Eberhard Kienle, "Egypt without Mubarak, Tunisia after Bin Ali: Theory, History and the 'Arab Spring,'" *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): pp. 532-557, 534.

[93] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology 12*, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 174.

[94] Ammar Shamaileh, "Islamist Political Mobilization in Egypt, Libya and Siria," in *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 48-60, 50.

[95] Ibid, 50.

hesitated to join the protests, but then supported the uprising and resisted the will to claim its guidance.[96]

Some minor Salafists groups joined the uprising. However, the spokesmen of the *Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah*, the biggest Salafist organization in Egypt, criticized the protests for violating the rules of *Shari'a*. Although reacting differently to the new uprising, both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists confronted the same challenge: they both feared that their influence over the Egyptian society, regarding proselytization and religious authority, would lose attraction. This fear started to spread because "the voices" that promoted the radical change in the society were strong spontaneous secular movements.[97]

As described in the previous chapter, the Brotherhood was excluded for a long time from the Egyptian political scene, and since it was accepted again, it never stated a true political manifesto, in order to clarify their battles to apply *Shari'a* law in Egypt.[98]

In the years that preceded Mubarak's fall, a wide consensus regarding the necessity to specify the principles (rather than the content) of *Shari'a* to be followed. What the Brotherhood failed to point out was its views and ideas regarding international policies and sensitive topics, such as rights of women, rights of religious minorities and their working positions in high offices.[99]

On the other hand, Egyptian Salafist organizations and movements always pressured the institutions and called explicitly for the implementation of *Shari'a*. In the years before the revolts and the uprising against the government, many Egyptians found Salafists' convictions regarding the application of *Shari'a* reassuring, and consequently the Salafist attraction in Egypt heavily rose and is still rising, as reported above.

As noted previously, the nature of Egyptian Salafists is far from being monolithic; many groups and organizations rotate around charismatic *shaykhs* such as Yassir al-Burhani and as Gauvain reports "the tendency for schism is more pronounced within Salafi circles than in any other religious institution in the country."[100]

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[96] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 176.
[97] Ibid, 176.
[98] Ammar Shamaileh, "Islamist Political Mobilization in Egypt, Libya and Siria," in *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 48-60, 53.
[99] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 176.
[100] Ibid, 177.

On a micro-level analysis such divisions are created over the interpretations of different religious passages. On a macro level point of view, instead, the most important groups and organizations have always been critical regarding divisions and disagreements produced by the smallest Salafi groups. Nevertheless, even within *Ansar al-Sunna* itself, numerous divisions can be found. Most of the divisions are produced by political ideas, and in the years preceding the uprising, the majority of Salafists groups inside the *Ansar al-Sunna* sided with the Mubarak regime, and during the revolts and turmoil spoke against those who supported the revolution.[101]

On the other hand, Salafists circle and organization were divided regarding the type of allegiance that they should show to the government.

However, not everyone inside the *Ansar al-Sunna* was on Mubarak's side. In fact, a minority of groups – labelled "Qutbists" because of their loyalty to the famous Muslim Brotherhood scholar, Sayyid Qutb— strongly spoke against the Mubarak's regime.[102]

Even if divisions were detectable, both Salafists and the Brotherhood maintained a unified sense of cohesion and identity during the crisis. This cohesion and unity found its basis in a message enriched by religious discourses about suffering, martyrdom, and oppression happened throughout the years.

In these discourses, the figure of the martyr was the most relevant evocative figure used in the uprising. This figure for the Muslim Brothers was central, lying in the foundational history of the organization. Indeed, as described previously, the Muslim Brotherhood's founder was Hasan al-Banna, who was assassinated. Moreover, other important individuals such as the aforementioned Sayyid Qutb and Zaynab al-Ghazali (a famous Islamist activist, 1917–2005) who spent their life in prisons, have been extremely influential in Egypt because of their written memories during the periods of imprisonment. In the same way, another significant figure, Abd al-Mun'im Mahmud, a Muslim Brother blogger, reported and written his experience during his imprisonment. As stated above, police brutality and the use of torture by the government forces lasted until the final days of the Mubarak government, and Abd al-Mun'im's experience reports exactly those dynamics by witnessing first-hand police methods in prison.[103]

The social activism of the Brotherhood at the basis of people's support for the organization is without a doubt an important factor. In its message, especially during the last years of the Mubarak regime,

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[101] Ammar Shamaileh, "Islamist Political Mobilization in Egypt, Libya and Siria," in *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 48-60, 54.

[102] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 177.

[103] Ibid, 176.

there is a shift of tone. The message used was focused on providing a religious and behavioural path to follow, in which the common man's sufferings would have been put against a corrupted regime that acts carelessly toward the impoverished population. At the centre of the message lies a critical and subtle idea of jihad against the aforementioned regime, by representing the "poor man" who confronts his sufferings everyday challenging a social position, and being called to take action against the government.[104]

Therefore, an explanation should be made regarding its message during the social activism and pious actions and the type of loyalty shown. With just a few exceptions later described, Salafists generally avoided criticizing Mubarak's government in order not to be the target of purges or long-time imprisonment; however, as argued by some scholars, not-criticizing doesn't necessarily mean being in favour or in agreement with the government.[105]

Yet, the Salafists message is far from being subtle regarding *jihad*. As Gauvain says: "any Salafi identity is even more firmly rooted in the language of *jihad* and its attendant discourses (resistance, suffering, and martyrdom) than that of the Brotherhood."[106] This is quite interesting because the language of *jihad* in Egyptian Salafists circles became more abstract and theoretical even when Salafists faced political tensions during the Arab spring.

The language of *jihad* increasingly focused on the dedication to and perfection of ritual performances, on family matters such as wife and husband relationship, and ultimately on the sacrifice of an easy and wealthy life in terms of the *jihad*. Although *jihad* against one's own government is not recommended at all however despotic it might be.[107]

2.2.1. Salafists in the uprising:

For the *Ansar al-Sunna* scholars and *shaykhs*, the suicide of Muhammad Bouazizi and the successive self-immolation of an Egyptian restaurant owner were ignoble acts; following the principles of *Shari'a*, suicide is *haram* (prohibited) and then, in accordance with this principle, the uprising and protests that began after these two events were opposed by the *Ansar al-Sunna*'s leadership.

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[104] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 175.

[105] Ammar Shamaileh, "Islamist Political Mobilization in Egypt, Libya and Siria," in *Trust Terror: Social Capital and the Use of Terrorism as a Tool of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 48-60, 55.

[106] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 178.

[107] Ibid, 176.

Several renown Salafi *shaykhs* from *Ansar al-Sunna* ranks and from other organizations protested and manifested their dissent against the upcoming uprising. Mustafa al- 'Adawi, a legal expert, drafted a list of different reasons why Muslims should not join the protests. For example, according to him, these protests were made "for bread and not for religion", and these revolts were in no way modelled by the principles of the Sunna and the *Shari'a*, and most importantly, this uprising was not all *jihad*, because it was not called by a commander of the Muslim community. Another interesting point on the list is that the basis of this revolt was highly immoral in 'Adawi's view, because of the closeness and *ikhtilat* (mixing) of male and female protestors.[108]

Muhammad Hussain Ya'qub, another popular individual in Salafists circle, claimed that Muslims should have stayed home and praying or going to the mosque, and the best way to address and solve Egypt's problem was silence; he also added that everyone should listen to only his own voice.

The aforementioned Yassir al-Burhani which at different times criticized Mubarak's regime, expressed his opinion over the protests, labelling them as negative.

The repercussion over these comments and opinions were furious, blogs and websites were full of indignation and resentments against Salafi *shaykhs*, accusing them of hypocrisy and cowardice. But Salafist leaders and scholars endured and followed their principles even in such difficult times.[109]

The Qutbists, emphasized and promoted the message that *jihad* should be embraced with weapons. Before the revolts, their concern and critics regarding Mubarak and his government were muted and cautiously not spread in public. Many Salafists *shaykhs* spoke against the revolts and the uprising but there is no doubt that some Qutbists were in favour and in accordance with them.[110] For instance, in Shuba and Imbaba, two different districts of Cairo where most of the population is from a lower and middle working-class, Salafi shaykhs (in this case from Qutbists groups) are claimed to have handed sermons and lectures in mosques where in ordinary times they were not allowed to attend or spoke. They encouraged the youth of these two districts to join and participate actively in the revolts for the good of their families, communities, and for their honour.[111]

Moreover, Qutbist Salafists used as an example one of the most famous Egypt's Salafi *shaykhs*, Muhammad Hassan, who supported the protestors and the revolts. He publicly affirmed to have joined the ranks of the protest with his children outside his home in the suburb of Sixth of October City. In

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[108] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179, 178.
[109] Ibid, 177.
[110] Ibid, 179.
[111] Ibid, 179.

discordance with *Ansar al-Sunna* hierarchy, he said that those who participate to the protest were "the pure people" (*sha'b tahir*) and what they were doing was "mighty work" (*'amal 'azim*), but most importantly that what they were asking and their reasons to protest were in total accordance with the *Shari'a*. Also, Muhammad Hassan spoke against those who opposed them in Midan Tahrir and in other places, where the revolts were taking place. Those who supported Mubarak in his view and speeches were called "blood shedders", "foul", "corrupt" and they committed "the greatest of crimes" by spilling the blood of Muslim believers.[112]

2.2.2. Al-Qaradawi appearance in Cairo:

A remarkable event during the uprising, was the speech that Yusuf al-Qaradawi gave in Cairo. On 18th of February 2011 al-Qaradawi appeared in Tahrir Square. Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one of the most famous figures in contemporary political-Islam, and he and his entourage picked Tahrir Square as a symbolic place, because the majority of the clashes happened there, thus representing the role that the Brotherhood had during the protests and its absolute presence during this period. Al-Qaradawi in his speech addressed directly the army demanding to free and liberate Egyptian people from the oppressive legacy of Mubarak, and to free political prisoners still locked in jail.[113] While not formally a spokesman for the Brotherhood, al-Qaradawi has long-standing ties with the movement.[114]

Al-Qaradawi appeared on Al-Jazeera TV during the early days of the Tunisian crisis, showing sensitivity to the figure of the aforementioned Muhammad Bouazizi. Qaradawi said that in the case of Bouazizi the act of self-immolation should not be condemned because of the circumstances and of

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[112] Richard Gauvain, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Spotlight on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Organizations after the Uprising," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011): pp. 173-179.

[113]. Al-Qaradawi was born in Tanta, Egypt in 1926, and since his childhood he studied intensively the Qu'ran. He entered in the *Azhari* establishment in 1940, and became a prodigious student. After seven years, he was selected to give a speech at the funeral of the *Shaykh* Al-Azhar Muṣṭafa al-Maraghi in Cairo, and he represented the pupils of the *Azhari* institutes. Notably, Qaradawi always criticized the cultural stagnation and stillness of Al-Azhar, in which he saw old fashioned subjects and too much emphasis on dialects instead of a deeper study of the Qu'ran. He also claimed that the lack of study of foreign languages was intolerable. During his youth Qaradawi became a member of the Muslim Brothers. He was greatly influenced by the discourses and rhetoric of Hasan al-Banna. He left Egypt since the 80's of the past century, returning only right after the uprising in Tahrir Square. Qaradawi could be considered a transnational 'alim, and he commented and shared opinions regarding many different topics, such as the hijab ban in France. His view of Sufism is clear, he is in agreement with Sufi believers who pursue a right and clear path of piety and spiritualism, and he is against all the other deviances, such as the divine incarnation (*hulul*) or the *ittihad* (mystical communion with God). In Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob. "Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi," ed. Bettina Gräf, *Australian Religion Studies Review* 25, no. 3 (2013), 35.

[114] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 477.

the reasons why it happened (suicide is not tolerated in Islam and it is considered as a forbidden act).[115]

2.2.3. Salafi political parties:

Abd Al-Minam Shahhat, a prominent Alexandrian Salafi preacher, was one of the first Salafi leading figure to publicly express his intention to found a political party, promoting the idea that quietism should be ended by using the *Shari'a* principle of "public interest" (*maslaha*). According to him, an Islamic state is ideal, but during the absence of it the participation of Salafists in the secular political system was rightful and just, as it could prevent the return of an oppressive government leading to the corruption of society.[116]

The political venture of the Egyptian Salafi establishment became undoubtedly powerful in the late spring of 2011, when the *Hizb al-Nour* was founded.

The *Hizb al-Nour* was supported by the *Hizb al-Bina' wa-l-Tanmiya* that was created by *Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*. During this period, another Salafi party was created, *Hizb al-Asala* (Authencity Party). On 23rd of October, *Hizb al-Nour*, *Hizb al-Asala*, and the *Hizb al-Bina' wa-l-Tanmiya* launched an official parliamentary Salafi alliance (under the name of the "Islamist Alliance").[117]

Hizb al-Nour, the major party of the alliance, promoted freedom of expression and respect for human rights (a campaign to stop violence against women was launched through their website), and, most importantly, the right to elect a trustful and accountable country leader, within a framework based on the *Shari'a*. The party presented also a brief program regarding international policy, condemning the interference of "unfriendly countries" over Egypt (a reference to Israel).[118] The final objective of the program was to centre the focus on Egyptian people's interests and safety and on specific areas of Africa.[119]

2.3. Sufi political presence and reactions during the protests:

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[115] Brown, Jonathan. "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2011, 8.

[116] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 478.

[117] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 50.

[118] "Al-Nour Party Program". Islamopedia Online. Accessed September 2, 2020.

[119] Ibid.

If Salafists and Muslim Brotherhood joined with a little delay the uprising, Sufis initially showed a confused attitude and uncertainty over the protests. They lacked of coordination and of concrete action plans, as a consequence of multiple factors. For instance, the visible and tangible poor political experience of Sufi organizations and orders had an impact, as well as their close relationship with the regime until the last moments of its life, from which Sufis never tried to distance. Consequently, the uprising represented a turning point for Sufis' political positions.[120]

Shaykh 'Abu al-'Aza'im, the leader of the al-'Azmiyya *tariqa*, known for his pro-regime political visions, held a press conference on the 15th of February 2011 , criticizing the regime and making it accountable for Egypt's economic problems and situation of underdevelopment in which the country was stagnating.[121]

This was a crucial turning point: the Sufis took the distances from their previous political positions, and started their own political journey. The beginning of the Sufis' political era also began, as a reaction to the new threat that Salafists and Muslim Brothers posed, both in the political arena and in the social and public sphere.

The *Tijaniyya*, *al-'Azmiyya*, *al-Shabrawiyah*, the *Ambabiyyah* and other thirteen other *turuq*, participated in the foundation of the Egypt Liberation Party.

Another Sufi political party formed in this perios was founded by the leader of the *Rifai'yyah tariqa*, Shaykh Tarik al-Rifai'. The *Rifai'yyah* is one of the largest Sufi *turuq* in Egypt, and at the time it had the power and the finances to sustain the foundation of the Voice of Freedom Party (*Hizb Sawt al-Hurriyyah*).[122]

Mustafa Zayd, the secretary of the Rifai'yyah *tariqa*, with the support of the neo-formed Coalition of the Revolution Youth (*i'tilaf shabab al-thawrah*), founded the Coalition of Egyptian Sufis (*i'tilaf al-Sufiyiin al-Misriyin*). About 10,000 members were recruited by this organization and most of them were Sufi youth. The purpose of the Coalition of Egyptian Sufis was to externalize and to point out the deteriorating conditions of Sufism in Egypt. As Mustafa Zayd said: "Over the last few years, leaders of the Sufi Orders could neither defend the call of Sufism nor repel the onslaught against its shrines throughout the years".[123] Afterwards, Zayd addressed directly Sufi *shaykhs*, asking for

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[120] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85
[121] Ibid, 477.
[122] Ibid, 478.
[123] Ibid, 478.

reforms that regarded the internal apparatus of the Sufi *turuq* and organizations, adding "…if you keep fail to keep Sufism away from any differences, we will organize a large public demonstration in the courtyard of the Mosque of Husain though which we will call for changing the regulatory law of Sufi Orders no.118 of 1976 so as to select the supreme leaders based on the best and most knowledgeable candidate and to prevent succession in Sufi Orders".[124]

It's important here to stress that Sufi political parties were created as a direct response to the changing socio-political strata in Egypt, and that Sufi authorities promoted the creation of these groups because of the rising power and the better organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi parties. As the aforementioned *shaykh* 'Abu al-'Aza'im declared in an interview: "The efforts made by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi groups in politics threaten religious tolerance, and force Sufis to adopt similar course. If the Salafists or the Muslim Brotherhood controls government, they would then abolish the Sufi leadership (*al-Mashyakah al-Sufiyyah*)".[125]

During the first half of 2011, Sufi orders got closer to liberal political parties, because liberals were more open minded and tolerant than others.[126] Coalitions and political strategies were also formed with the liberals. For example, a manifestation was organized by the two parties together with the name of "For the love of Egypt". The event took place on the 12th of August 2011 coordinated by ten liberal political parties and organizations alongside the support of many Sufi *turuq*. This was a direct response to the "Reunion Friday" event, organized by Salafist organizations and by the Muslim Brotherhood two weeks earlier, on the 29th of July 2011.

Nevertheless, the collective force of the Sufi failed to organize themselves with all their meanings and resources, resulting in the failure of the event.[127]

Despite the energy and the interest that initially was shown by the majority of Sufis', a large number of Sufi believers later decided to withdraw from the event. Precisely, twelve *turuq* and The Supreme Council for Sufi Orders itself declared that they would not support the "For the love of Egypt" event. As a consequence, the Sufi presence during the event was modest, with only three *turuq* participating

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[124] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 479.

[125] Ibid, 479.

[126] Ibid, 479.

[127] Ibid, 480.

in the manifestation, giving a well-rounded representation of the confusion and the different ideas permeating the Sufi political establishment in Egypt.[128]

2.3.1. Violence against Sufis:

In the early days of April 2011, a massive protest was held by Sufi believers to express their disdain and shame in light of the recent attacks perpetrated against Sufi holy shrines.

Many were the reactions against those attacks, and different religious leaders (but also Sufi leaders) denounced this type of violence. For instance, Ali Gomma, Grand Mufti of Egypt dedicated his Friday Sermon at Al-Azhar Mosque to accuse who wanted to spread strife and misery.[129] Ahmed al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar also strongly denounced the attacks.

Gaber Qassem, deputy of the Sufi Orders, reported that since the January uprising at least 14 Sufi Shrines had been violated. *Shaykh* Tarik al- Rifai', leader of the *Rifai'yyah tariqa*, said that a large number of Salafists tried to prevent Sufi celebrations and prayers in Al-Haram, and he added that the witnesses filled reports about this event to the local police station.[130]

In April, The Ministry of Religious Endowments organized a meeting in Alexandria inviting prominent Salafists and Sufi leaders in order to sign a memorandum of reconciliation between the two parts, with the aim to obtain a de-escalation of the events between the two schools of thoughts. Salafists defended themselves claiming that they were not involved in any of those attacks and most importantly they did not promote or incite any of those behaviours.[131]

The Muslim Brotherhood also expressed its approval and support regarding this meeting. Gamal Heshmat, a prominent member of the Brotherhood, declared his readiness to intercede and mediate between the two parts, the Sufis and Salafists.

The aforementioned Alexandrian Salafi leader Abd Al-Minam Shahhat told to the press that such criminal acts were not tolerable and not permissible by the Salafi doctrine, that despite opposing the veneration of tombs and shrines, it does not incite believers to destroy them. This statement spread

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[128] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 479.

[129] "Salafi Violence against Sufis". Islamopedia Online. Accessed August 20, 2020.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

fast in all the Egyptian Salafi network and websites and soon attacks and intimidatory acts against Sufi ceased.[132]

2.4. Al-Azhar position over the uprising:

Shaykh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar elected in 2010, called for a general moderation of tones, both to the protestors and the government. When Mubarak signed his resignations, he explicitly asked to the protestors to give up the fights and to go back home, claiming that the protests were "illegitimate in Islam". Al-Tayeb reasoning is typically a common way of behaving in Sunni Islam, where obedience, even to a cruel tyrant, is felt to be better than to fall into *fitna*.[133]

On the other hand, the day before the resignation of Mubarak, s*haykh* Muhammad Jibreel, a famous Egyptian *Shaykh* who studied at Al-Azhar, led the Friday prayer in Tahrir Square.

In contrast with al-Tayeb position, Muhammad Rafi al-Tahtawi, the official spokesperson for Al-Azhar at the time of the Uprising, signed his resignation to join the protesters in Tahrir Square.[134]

Reactions to the uprising came also from inside the Al-Azhar establishment: for example, the "Ulama's Front" (*jabhat al-ulama*), a small group of *Azhari*, verbally attacked the heads of Al-Azhar and the Mufti of Egypt during the protests because they appeared to be very close to the government.

As described, the different positions taken clearly shows that Al-Azhar establishment is an heterogenous institution and it represents a wide variety of political views in the Egyptian political arena.[135]

2.5. The 2011 parliamentary elections:

Parliamentary elections in Egypt were held in November and they lasted until January (precisely from the 28th of November 2011 to the 11th of January 2012). The Islamist Alliance gained 27.8% of the votes and 123 parliamentary seats, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood detained the majority of the votes: 37.7% and 235 seats. The Egypt Liberation Party, including the Voice of Freedom Party, obtained 1.9% of the votes and 4 parliamentary seats.[136]

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[132] "Salafi Violence against Sufis". Islamopedia Online. Accessed August 20, 2020.
[133] Zeghal, Malika. "What Were the Ulama Doing in Tahrir Square? Al-Azhar and the Narrative of Resistance to Oppression". The University of Chicago Divinity School. 2011. Accessed August 25, 2020.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Iskandar, Adel. "Egyptian Elections: Preliminary Results." Jadaliyya, 2012. Accessed September 1, 20

The following phases of the Egyptian political scenes, the presidential elections of 2012 and the Morsi presidency are analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

2012 and the aftermath of the post-uprising

In the last chapter I will report how Sufi and Salafi reacted (alongside with the Muslim Brotherhood) to the uprising that started in January 2011. The two schools of thought reacted in different ways, as made clear by the results of the parliamentary elections that took place from November 2011 to January 2012, in which the "Salafist Alliance" guided by *Hizb al-Nour* obtained the 25% of the votes, as reported above.[137]

In relation to the leftist, secular and revolutionary forces, the Salafists have behaved both in unpredictable and surprising ways. While the Sufi suffered from cohesion problems leading to a lack of unity and of a proper political plan, Sufi establishments were too close, in terms of affiliation, with what was left of Mubarak's government.

Salafi preachers and *shaykhs* condemned most of the protests and the demonstrations, even those who were directed against the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), claiming that protests were leading the society into chaos and anarchy (*fitna*) being thus not tolerable.[138]

On the other hand, the protestors claimed that almost one year after Mubarak's resignations the police and the army brutality never ceased and that the arrests and the unjust trials of dissidents happened daily. Those who joined the protests said that Salafists should be worried about this and not about the protests.[139]

However, some Salafi figures had close connections to the revolutionaries and Tamir Makki, the spokesman of the aforementioned *Hizb al-Asala*, claimed that his party had better relations with them than other Salafi groups and organizations:

"I was a member of the 'We are the Salafis of al-Tahrir' group and the Front of the People's Will, which united people across ideological divides. We have good relations with the [revolutionary] youth, and keep in touch. We have fewer challenges in our relations with them than the *Nour* party and the Muslim Brothers."[140]

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[137] Kienle, Eberhard. "Egypt without Mubarak, Tunisia after Bin Ali: Theory, History and the 'Arab Spring'." Economy and Society 41, no. 4 (2012): 532-57, 536.

[138] Ibid, 537.

[139] Ibid, 537.

[140] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 47.

In general, the Salafi establishment was hostile to those who joined the uprising and the protests but as Tamir Makki and Muhammad Hassan mentioned, the scenario was different, although not changing the overall picture. The opinion against the revolutionaries became even more aggravated: a senior adherent of the local Alexandrian committee of *Hizb al-Nour* declared publicly that the SCAF protected the revolution, and that the tensions about the army and the police against that protesters, happened because of the interference of "groups of people with 'special agendas' who received money from foreign powers".[141]

SCAF lifted the state of emergency in May 2012 as a result of many days of protests in which a huge number of Egyptian people joined. Notably, the *Amn al-Dawla* (Internal Security Police) was disbanded, but the *Al-Amn al-Watani* (National Security) freely recruited agents of the *Amn al-Dawla* that continued to perform their old tasks.[142]

During May 2012, the SCAF declared that the legislation governing the last parliamentary election (2011) was unconstitutional.[143] The motivation behind the SCAF's decision was used twice during the Mubarak's years to strike him down, the main reason being that the electoral law disadvantaged independent candidates. Although the parliament was dissolved, the Muslim Brothers and the Salafist Alliance had the majority of the seats to draft the new permanent constitution.

3.1. Presidential elections:

Later in May 2012, precisely from the 23rd to the 24th, the first round of Egypt's presidential elections took place.

The Muslim Brother candidate was Mohamed Morsi (1951-2019). He was the chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) during the second half of 2011 until 2012. Notably, when the revolts started, he was detained along with other fellow Muslim Brothers inside the Wadi el-Natroun prison; armed gangs attacked the prison and Morsi and other inmates escaped.

The official number of the first round of the presidential elections reported by the official media showed a fragmented electorate; no candidate got close to gaining the absolute majority of votes. Mohamed Morsi gained 24.7% of the votes, followed by Ahmad Shafiq, an ex-air force commander

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[141] Hoigilt, J., and F. Nome. "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–54, 48.
[142] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement.* Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 257.
[143] Ibid, 257.

and the former prime minister serving in Mubarak's government, who took 23.6% of the votes presenting himself with an independent list.[144]

Other candidates following Shafiq were: Hamdeen Sabahi, a secular Nasserist who gained the 20.7% of the votes; Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, (mentioned in the last chapter) a progressive Islamist that since late 2011 broke his relationship with the Muslim Brothers, who gained the 17.4%; and the fifth candidate who took the 11.1% was ʿAmr Musa, a former foreign minister. Notably, the remaining eight candidates got the 1% or less. The electoral system in rule in 2012 led to a two candidates run-off, precisely Morsi and Shafiq.[145]

The days before the run-off, Shafiq presented himself as the leader that would have brought Egypt to normality and stability, dabbing Morsi as the candidate that in case of victory would "take Egypt back to the Dark Ages".[146] In addition, Shafiq proclaimed himself as the bulwark against the Islamist takeover, urging Coptic Christian and the female electorate to support him in order to protect their civil and political rights.[147]

On the other hand, Morsi during his campaign claimed to be "the candidate of the revolution", and he called for unity in order to eradicate what was left of the old regime. The concept of unity and strength was central during Morsi's campaign, as his banners declared, "Our Strength Lies in Our Unity" (*Quwwatuna fi Wihdatuna*).[148]

Morsi's electoral establishment deeply emphasized that in case of victory the Muslim Brothers would not dominate the political arena and they would not establish themselves permanently in the parliament and in the presidential office. During a press conference held on 30th of May, Morsi said that the autocratic presidential era was over and that his presidential team would "include deputies, assistants and advisers encompassing all national forces, including youth, women, Salafists, Copts and patriotic former presidential candidates."[149]

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[144] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 258.
[145] Ibid, 258.
[146] Ibid, 259.
[147] Ibid, 259.
[148] Ibid, 259.
[149] Ibid, 260.

3.1.1. Sufis reluctance and fears:

The Sufi establishment, after the failure of the parliamentary election, regained its political presence during the presidential elections, specifically when the two candidate's run-off was about to begin.

Sufi's choose to put their complete support to Mubarak's remaining last candidate, Ahmad Shafiq, making their hierarchies' political position clear: to negate the support to any Islamist party running for the presidential charge.[150]

Four days before the presidential elections *Shaykh* 'Abu al-'Aza'im, the leader of the al-'Azmiyya *tariqa*, held a speech encouraging his followers to make the right choice for the upcoming elections:

"They and their president are traitors! [The Muslim Brothers and Morsi] …the country's ruling Generals should arrest them all [The SCAF] …you have to choose between bitterness—Shafik—and torture—Morsi …bitterness you taste once, and it's over; torture lives with you forever."[151]

3.1.2. The outcome of the elections:

Morsi won the second round of the presidential elections on the 24th of June with a total of 51.73% of votes, followed by Ahmed Shafiq who gained 48.3%. Morsi won with a narrower margin than his opponent, which meant that almost half of the Egyptian electorate who voted preferred a candidate from a Muslim Brothers party instead of a former member of Mubarak's government.[152]

During the days that followed his appointment as the fifth President of Egypt, he resigned from the presidency of the Freedom and Justice Party.[153]

Morsi consolidated his power since the early days of his government. One of his first political moves was the replacement of the main heads of the SCAF, Field Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi and the Minister of Défense Sami Anan. Furthermore, Morsi replaced other military commanders, and ultimately, he abrogated several decrees that the SCAF emitted in order to obtain more power. The way in which Morsi dispatched the leaders of the SCAF was intended as a signal, to mark a distinction

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[150] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 483.

[151] Deasy, Kristin. "The Sufi's Choice: Egypt's Political Wild Card." *World Affairs* (Washington) 175, no. 3 (2012): 45-52, 48.

[152] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 258.

[153] Ibid, 258.

between the past and the present, as a turning point. It remains still unclear if Morsi acted on his own or if he received pressures from the Brotherhood's leadership figures.[154]

Morsi decided to appoint Mahmud al-Makki as Vice President, but notably his powers remained limited as they were for the previous vice presidents during Mubarak's mandate, while the new Minister of Défense appointed by Morsi was Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi.[155]

3.1.3. Salafists reaction:

The aforementioned Yassir al-Burhami and his followers saw the election of Morsi as a damaging event for the entire Egyptian Salafist establishment. In fact, the monopolization and political hegemony that the Brotherhood could have achieved if Morsi had been elected could have damaged the Salafist religious and social establishment at various levels. Burhani then decided, in agreement with his followers, that they needed to support an Islamist candidate, even if this was politically and religiously distant from the *Hizb al-Nour* ideals. The candidate was the aforementioned Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh.[156]

However, Aboul Fotouh lost during the first round of the presidential elections. The electoral base of the Egyptian Salafist establishment didn't support Aboul Fotouh because of his close relationship with the liberals and their ideas. *Hizb al-Nour* hierarchies faced a new challenge: the presidential run-off between Morsi and Shafiq. As in the case of Aboul Fotouh, the decision was taken and agreed unenthusiastically to support another Islamist candidate, even if the Salafist hierarchies were in discordance with Morsi's and the Muslim Brother's campaign. Hours before the announcement of the results, Yassir al-Burhami even paid a visit to Shafiq, in order to arrange a favourable outcome if he was the winner of the run-off.[157]

3.1.4. A fragile alliance:

The decision to support a Brother's candidate by the *Hizb al-Nour* hierarchies was taken hoping that Morsi would have formed a national united government. But the Salafists, just like other Egyptian political factions, were wrong, and the illusion of a national united government ended soon. *Hizb al-Nour*, the second biggest political party of the time in Egypt, was granted with just three appointments

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[154] Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2015, 269.

[155] Lacroix, Stéphane. "Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis: The Politics of Hizb Al-Nour". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 1, 2016, accessed September 1, 2020.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

in the government. Moreover, two officials of the party, notably Khaled 'Alam al-Din and Bassam al-Zarqa, were chosen to join a purely representative presidential advisory council team, while the *Hizb al-Nour* president Abd al-Ghaffour was appointed as President of Social Dialogue. The appointment of Abd al-Ghaffour was seen as a purely political move, in order to split *Hizb al-Nour* party in two factions, as since November 2011, Yassir al-Burhami and al-Ghafour were divided by a different vision on the future of the party.[158]

Nevertheless, *Hizb al-Nour* adapted to the new political environment and avoided to express its concerns and critics regarding Morsi presidency.

Moreover, there were also moments in which the two factions got closer and showed common ground and interests. This resulted in the Egyptian constitution created by a constitutional assembly formed in June, including about two-thirds of Salafi and Muslim Brothers exponents. Both factions shared the same interest: to reinforce the presence of Islam in the constitution. However, they were strongly opposed by the other factions of the assembly, in particular by liberals and Christians.

This alliance eventually led to a victory, and on December 2012 the changes asked by the Muslim Brothers and the Salafists were approved. The article two of the 1980 Constitution stating: "The principles of *Shari'a* are the main source of legislation" was kept. The article 219, instead, was added, stating: "The principles of *Shari'a* include its general proofs, its fundamental and legal rules, and its recognized sources within the Sunni schools".[159]

However, the fragile balance of power behind Morsi government began to fall in the few months following the election. A roaring economic crisis, the lack of tourism (which is one of the main sources of income for Egypt) and social problems were the main problems that Morsi presidency had to face in the first place.[160] On 22nd of November, Morsi emanated a declaration containing the juridical immunity for the aforementioned constitutional assembly and to himself, as well as a re-trial of officials accused of killing protestors during the January uprising.

Mohamad El-Baradei, an Egyptian law scholar and diplomat, commented Morsi's declaration: "he usurped all state powers and appointed himself Egypt's new pharaoh".[161]

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[158] Lacroix, Stéphane. "Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis: The Politics of Hizb Al-Nour". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 1, 2016, accessed September 1, 2020.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Trager, Eric. *Arab Fall How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days*. Georgetown University Press. 2016, 209.

[161] Michael Birnbaum, "Egypt's President Morsi Takes Sweeping New Powers," The Washington Post (WP Company, November 22, 2012), accessed August 20, 2020.

If initially the call for Morsi's resignation was aired mostly by radical satellite stations such as Al-Faraeen and Al-Dustor, and also by Sufi *shaykhs*, after the 22nd of November declaration the protests moved from the periphery to the centre. Indeed, a huge number of protestors broke in Tahrir Square and outside the presidential palace, followed by an escalation of tones from December to January, and by the early month of 2013, the hostility against Morsi's presidency and the Muslim Brothers reached risky levels.[162]

Many activists called for the Egyptian Army to remove the Brotherhood from power. Mohamed El-Baradei said to the BBC: "If Egypt is on the brink of default, if law and order is absent, [the army has] a national duty to intervene". These words echoed the sentiments and the feelings of the non-Islamists opposition parties that felt in the gasp of the Brotherhood's seize of power.[163]

The military establishment had no will and interests to coup Morsi's presidency, they worried about the international reactions and mostly, they did not want the US aids suspended. In fact, the continuation of the US economic support was bound to the type of government in power: if a military government was to be in power, the economic aids would be suspended automatically.

Morsi understood the potential role that the militaries could have in the case of an overthrown and he tried to build a solid dialogue with them. This happened when, on the 10th of April 2013, the Guardian published a governmental report that was leaked during the 2011 uprising. This report contained detailed information about abuses that the militaries perpetrated against the protestors. Morsi quickly took action to supress the report's spreading and said: "I will not ever allow slanders in any way, shape or form or . . . any means to attack any member of the armed forces…and its great role (the army) in protecting the security and safety of this nation".[164]

Egyptian economy during this period was in a total free fall. By mid-May, Egyptian pound was 6.06 worht, opposed to 7 when Morsi was elected. Energy prices, food costs and electricity shortage became more and more frequent. Protests were organized all over the country, people asked for a new government and a new economic plan. Consequently, the military hierarchies started to look for a solution. Notably, Salafists, specifically *Hizb al-Nour*, who initially refused to criticize Morsi's government, started to protest against it. The leaders of *al-Nour* declared publicly that the Brotherhood appointed too few Salafists, and those who were appointed were not even close to top

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[162] Trager, Eric. *Arab Fall How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days*. Georgetown University Press. 2016, 210.
[163] Ibid, 207.
[164] Ibid, 210.

positions. They also warned Morsi that his clashes with the judiciary system and his absolutist governing style were putting Egypt on the edge of another political and social collapse.[165]

If Salafists listened and saw the signals of an upcoming governmental breakdown, the Muslim Brothers and Morsi instead acted freely, showing no intention to fall down the rising pressure against them.

Morsi appointed seventeen new governors, several of them from the Brotherhood. The opposition claimed that this was another attempt to "Brotherhoodizing" the political environment, and clashes and protests broke in different governorates. Freedom and Justice Party offices (the previous party of Morsi) were burned in Tanta and several governmental offices were attacked. Morsi's most controversial appointment was done in Luxor where Adel al- Khayat, a founding member of *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* was appointed as governor. The organization was berated in Luxor because of the events that happened during the 90's, in which militants of the *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* killed sixty-two people, mostly foreign tourists. Luxor, a location that highly depend on tourism, risked facing restrictions and new bannings. In fact, Adel al-Khayat declared that alcohol and nightclubs would be banned, causing outrage in Luxor, and a huge number of citizens mobilized themselves and prevented al-Khayat to physically entering the governor's office. Eventually, he resigned one week later. The Minister of Tourism Hesham Zaazou also presented his resignation almost immediately, declaring that putting members of the *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* in charge in such economically important places, dealing with enormous amount of money brought in by tourism, was a disastrous act of negligence.[166]

3.2. The end of Morsi's presidency:

On 30th of June 2013, as reported by the media, the highest number of people protesting ever recorded participated in the protest against Morsi, reaching fourteen million people.[167] Security forces refused to suppress the protests, that continued for several days. The following day, the 1st of July, Egyptian Armed Forces issued a 48 hours ultimatum against the government, which was ignored by Morsi, despite the resignation of five of his ministers. On the 3rd of July Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi promulgated a road map for the future of Egypt, and appointed Adly Mansour as Interim President of Egypt.[168]

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[165] Trager, Eric. *Arab Fall How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days*. Georgetown University Press. 2016, 217.
[166] Ibid, 221.
[167] Ibid, 222.
[168] Ibid, 222.

Morsi faced different trials and accusations, espionages, killing of protesters, leaking of official documents and also, he was charged for his role in the prison breaking action during the 2011 uprising.[169]

In these turbulent times, Salafists shifted clearly between different political positions, playing alongside the government, and supporting Islamist choices.[170] Moreover, when they saw that Morsi's government started to crumble, they took their chance and began to be part of the opposition.

On the other hand, Sufi hierarchies, clearly against the Muslim Brothers and Morsi, failed to organize themselves in a proper way to demonstrate their reasons and ideas. For example, Al-Azhar Grand Imam, Ahmed al-Tayeb, expressed his concerns regarding the protests and he warned the army and the protesters to not spill blood or loose themselves into violent acts; while, al-Tayeb did not oppose to Morsi's deposition.

Yet, Sufi movements that did not take any palpable or significant role before Morsi's deposition, joined the protests as a whole community.

Shaykh 'Abu al-'Aza'im and Ibrahim Zahran, the leader of the Sufi Liberation Party, always campaigned against Morsi and the continuous presence of Islamists in the government, but they failed to provide any political alternative to the current situation.[171]

At this point the Brotherhood's political path came to an end. Although Salafists and Sufis acted differently during the whole three years of political and social turmoil, it is important to compare their actions and andalyse the main differences that both schools of thought had during the uprising and the post-uprising.

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[169] Trager, Eric. *Arab Fall How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days*. Georgetown University Press. 2016, 223.

[170] Ladjal, Tarek, and Benaouda Bensaid. "Sufism and Politics in Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 4 (October 2014): 468–85, 485.

[171] Ibid, 485.

Conclusion

Analysing the history and the development of Sufism and Salafism as religious schools of thought in Egypt throughout the years is of crucial importance nowadays, and it has been the main objective of this thesis.

Simultaneously, the Muslim Brotherhood also had a huge impact on the political and social life of Egypt. This influence over the population and its entrance in the political arena created the basis for a longstanding establishment. On the other hand, the relationship of the Muslim Brothers with the Egyptian authorities was always tense, and on different occasions it led to heavy repercussions on the Brotherhoods affiliates, especially on those who were in charge or held different strategic roles.

Since the uprising that took place in 2011, Salafi and Sufi started, although with different timings, to paw their way into the political arena. In fact, the 2011 uprising can be seen as the hallmark of the entrance of the two schools of thought in the political debates and of the formations of their own parties.

Salafism and Sufism shifted from being social and religious forces into advanced political forces. Moreover, Sufism always had a political role in Egypt, as since Nasser's regime they played a strategical role in supporting decisions and governmental policies. The close relationship with the authorities can also be seen in the fact that many Grand *Shaykh* of Al-Azhar were appointed by the government to defend the interests of the political executives in charge. Sadat, also, recognized the Sufis as a religious and political ally, and he reformed the institutional branch of the Sufis, the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders, bringing it even closer to the government.

If Nasser and Sadat used Sufis in order to promote and achieve consensus, Mubarak instead directly intervened in their religious affairs. After the death of the Grand *Shaykh* of Al-Azhar Sayyid al-Tantawi, the president himself appointed Ahmed al-Tayeb, an affiliated of a minor *tariqa* and representative of the National Democratic Party.

The favourable position of the Sufis given by these three important Egyptian presidents could be seen as a way to legitimize themselves and to not fall into political or religious repercussions, such as the ones perpetrated against the Brotherhood and against the Salafists. Moreover, the roles that several Sufi's personalities had (and still have) could represent the ultimate way of protecting the interests of Sufi belief and also a powerful means to "attack" those who are against the Sufis or the government.

In contrast with the Sufi longstanding trust and closeness with the government, Salafists were influential in the first half of the past century in the *Azhari* contests, when several famous Salafi figures had prestigious responsibilities.

While in power, Nasser never opposed Salafists, as he tolerated them because of their political neutrality. During the '50s and '60s, different Egyptian Salafi leaders became influential also in Saudi Arabia, importing several thoughts and ideas in Egypt from their experiences in Saudi Arabia.

An important time for Salafism is the so-called Islamic Revival (*Sahwa*), when new religious and political trends began to rise from the '70s all over the Muslim world, especially in Egypt. Those trends led to the creation of multiple organizations, many of which were peaceful and devoted to Da'wa, while some others had as objective the promotion of violent ideas. Sadat was killed in 1981, and heavy repercussions were taken towards members of violent Salafists organizations.

When Mubarak became president, only certain Salafi organizations were tolerated: the ones that followed a peaceful path.

When the uprising began in January 2011, Muslim Brothers reacted strongly and opposed the violence of the army and police and asked Mubarak to resign. On the contrary, Salafists acted differently, some *Shaykhs* joined the protests, others claimed that the uprising was forbidden and others called for peaceful protests without spilling blood. The closeness of the Sufi establishment to the government was the main reason for the delay that different Sufi *shaykh* had during the uprising to condemn the violence and the protests. A call for moderations was issued by the Grand *Shaykh* of Al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayeb for both the protestors and the government. Moreover, multiple *turuq* distanced themselves from the government, criticizing its corruptions and violent methods.

During this time several orders organized themselves in order to fund their political parties and to pursue their agendas. Also, Salafists seized the opportunity and fund their own political party, creating a powerful network at the basis of their social activities, rooted in the Egyptian social landscape.

This network helped Salafists to create a strong organizational system, from which they started their own political campaign, and in a few months, Salafists became one of the major political forces in Egypt. On the contrary, Sufis lacked of a structural organization and political support amongst each other causing the creation of separated parties, leading some to join other factions, and generating a general wide fragmentation. A significant fact is that important roles were still in the hand of Sufi leaders, even after the uprising and during the Morsi presidency.

The political unpreparedness of Sufi resulted in their failure in the parliamentary elections of 2011, in which Salafists and Muslim Brothers gained a huge number of votes.

Although during Morsi's presidency Sufis did not support the government's decisions and tried to oppose it, no tangible plan was offered as an alternative to Morsi. Instead, Salafists were more cautious and politically lucid also compared to the Muslim Brothers, and when Morsi was deposed in 2013, they were able to maintain their political integrity and to not be part of any juridical persecution.

To conclude, despite the several differences of their religious environment, Salafists were able to mobilize and organize themselves and be part of the Egyptian political arena. Sufis, instead, failed to create a unified cohesion between the main *turuq* in order to achieve political success.

What emerged during the period starting from the 2011 uprising until the end of Morsi presidency is a political scene dominated by the Salafists faction, one that became stronger and gained increasing consensus with the end of the Muslim Brothers. Simultaneously, we can observe how the Sufist faction was in a standstill between important religious and governmental roles and an enormous number of followers all over Egypt.

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