Analytical Review

Violent Extremism and Its Motivating Factors in Tunisia in the 2010s

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Tunis, November 2017
This analytical review of existing literature on the prevention of violent extremism in Tunisia was commissioned by the Office of the Resident Coordinator (BCR) of the United Nations in Tunisia. The document was prepared by consultant Michaël Ayari, who is also a senior analyst for the International Crisis Group in Tunis. The study was conducted using the catalytic fund administered by the UNDP joint program and the Department of Political Affairs. The management and coordination of this study was provided by the United Nations Peace and Development Adviser. The United Nations does not take responsibility for the positions expressed in this text.

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Preface

"Violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts," said former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" presented to the General Assembly on January 15, 2016.

Sadly, violent extremism is today, a global phenomenon. Tens of thousands of people around the world have joined movements that advocate for violent extremism. This phenomenon has also attracted thousands of Tunisians, men and women, from many regions and cities across the country. The consequences of their actions are significant for the victims of their actions, of course, but also for these young people themselves, their families and society in general.

In Tunisia, this form of violence undermines development gains through its impact on economic recovery, social cohesion and security. But this phenomenon also forces us to consider: what vision, values, and paths can be offered to inspire new generations? The root causes of violent extremism intersect with issues that closely affect our young people and their hopes and grievances, such as the deficits of good governance and socio-economic inclusion.

"Prevention," therefore, becomes a necessity and a means to more effectively and sustainably fight against the rise of violent extremism. Prevention can increase the resilience of individuals and communities, and reduce their permeability to messages of hatred. This approach, which advocates long-term societal and institutional changes, requires an expanded partnership across the entire society under the leadership of government actors and with the support of international partners.

In this perspective, the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched his global initiative for the prevention of violent extremism in 2016, which must be adapted to the realities and specificities of each country. It is to this end that the United Nations system in Tunisia has decided to equip itself with a framework for responding to violent extremism focused on prevention. To be consistent, this framework must be based on a shared understanding of the problem, which has motivated the development of the study you have in your hands. Its author, whom I thank, relied on a vast analysis of the existing literature about the phenomenon. Although subjective, this analysis works to explain the dynamics favoring violent extremism in Tunisia of the 2010s.

I hope that this study will be considered as a useful contribution to Tunisia, to accompany a reflection that could interest the professionals, State actors and all stakeholders around issues of prevention of violent extremism.

Diego Zorrilla
Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Tunisia
Synthesis

This analytical review of the literature on violent extremism in Tunisia aims to isolate and prioritize factors that exacerbate vulnerabilities to radicalization to violent extremism in order to help UN agencies better coordinate their efforts and meet national needs of prevention.

The theoretical contribution of this work is to distinguish the factors into those on the social and individual levels, and to define two typical profiles of violent extremists (militants and desperados) for whom these factors play in a differentiated way. It shows that, because existing works have not divided factors by these two levels, there are epistemological difficulties that lead to some confusion in prevention strategies.

This analytical distinction implies that activities to prevent violent extremism must distinguish two levels of intervention. The first must aim to increase the resilience of the State and society to violent extremism. The second must aim to reduce the risk of radicalization at the individual level. The study isolates 33 factors. The study describes them, evaluates their influence at the social and individual level (for the militants and desperados) and presents them in 7 categories: ideological factors, socio-cultural factors, economic and social factors, individual perceptions, religious factors, institutional factors and situational factors.

Finally, it includes a Qualitative Risk Analysis Matrix (Table 1) that visualizes the causal weight of each factor and category of factors in order to prioritize the activities of prevention of violent extremism in Tunisia according to their potential impact at the social level (State and society in general) and the individual level (vulnerable people).
1. Relativizing violent extremism in Tunisia: the importance of prevention

In this review, violent extremism is defined as the activity of individuals and groups who advocate or justify violence for economic, social or political ends and reject the universal values of democracy, rule of law and human rights by spreading a message of religious, cultural and social intolerance.¹

In Tunisia of the 2010s, the main ideological and political form taken by violent extremism is Salafist-jihadism. In fact, the Salafist-jihadists consider that violence is a legitimate means of creating the conditions for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in the Middle East and North Africa governed by the strict application of Islamic law. Nevertheless, violent extremists can move to armed action without knowing the political and ideological ins and outs of their approach.²

Tunisia is not an epicenter for the growth of violent extremism³. Even if the last large-scale attack in Ben Guerdane on March 7, 2016 seems to have demonstrated the opposite⁴, Tunisia is, above all, “a spill-over country,” according to the UNDP definition. It suffers from the entrenchment of Salafist-jihadist groups in neighboring Libya.⁵ Following the attack on the US embassy in Tunis in September 2012, the government tightened its grip on the Salafist-jihadist movement, which had been tolerated

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² Anarchist, Trotskyist groups could be described as violent extremists. But these are a minority in Tunisia. I will not take them into consideration. This analytical review will focus on Salafism-jihadism, knowing that if it eventually loses its appeal in Tunisian society, new ideological and political forms will take over: Shiite jihadism, regionalism-separatism, pan-North Africanism, neo-communism, etc. The extinction of a form of violent extremism does not mean that violent extremism disappears in absolute terms

³ I am referring here to the typical profile “desperados” built as part of this study (see below)


⁵ On 7 March 2016, a group of about 60 jihadists, most of them Tunisians, attempted to storm the military barracks and the national guard post in Ben Guerdane (South-East), 30 kilometers from the Libyan border, in order to seize the city. See Michaël Béchir Ayari, “Seven Ways to Steady a Tunisia under New Attack,” In Pursuit of Peace, (International Crisis Group, March 9, 2016), blog.crisisgroup.org.

⁶ “Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed to Libya and neighboring countries, including off the coast of Libya, of foreign terrorist fighters recruited by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Daesh), Al-Qaida and the persons, groups, companies and entities associated with them or joining their ranks “, S / 2016/627, (National Security Council, 18 July 2016), paragraphs 36 and 37. It should be recalled that the number of people killed during terrorist attacks on Tunisian soil is relatively low, about 170 since the popular uprising of 2010-2011, including about 100 members of the security forces and 59 foreign tourists. The majority of deaths occurred in 2015 during three spectacular attacks
since the departure of Ben Ali in January 2011.\(^7\) Therefore, dealing with violent extremism requires focus on medium and long-term prevention activities,\(^8\) in addition to immediate security responses.\(^9\)

The government of Ali Laarayedh banned its annual congress in May 2013 and, in August 2013, the Ministry of Interior classified the group Ansar Sharia as a terrorist organization. Since then, violent extremist collectives have been clandestine. Their armed elements include about 250 individuals of Algerian, Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian and Egyptian nationalities, dispersed over four mountain ranges in the second northern half of the Tunisian-Algerian border. In addition to these individuals, there are an estimated hundred dormant cells of two to four people each spread throughout the territory; most of these cells are Tunisian, even if several leaders are Algerian nationals.\(^10\) According to the Tunisian Ministry of Interior, 100 terrorist cells were dismantled in 2013, 131 in 2014, 197 in 2015 and 245 in 2016. These numbers do not reflect the development of Salafist-jihadist cells, but rather the increase in the activity of security forces and the proliferation of untargeted arrests.\(^11\)

Moreover, in 2017, the Tunisian Ministry of Interior estimates that there are 3,000 Tunisian citizens in jihadist groups in conflict zones (Libya, Syria, Iraq).\(^12\) The preliminary results of the 1-8 July 2015 official visit of the United Nations Working Group on the use of mercenaries in Tunisia reported that there were 4,000 Tunisian combatants in Syria, between 1,000 and 1,500 in Libya, 200 in Iraq, 60 in Mali and 50 in Yemen. These numbers differ from the estimates officially communicated by the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior Ministry who reported in December 2015 that there were 3,000 Tunisian citizens in Syria, 600 of whom had returned to the country and 800 who were killed in the fighting.\(^13\) Estimates by the US Department and the “The Soufan Group” converge on 6,000 Tunisian nationals in Syria at the end of 2015.\(^14\)

The data produced by the Organization of the Islamic State (OIS) leaked in 2016,\(^15\) and whose authenticity seems proven in several interviews with French returnees conducted by journalist David Thomson\(^16\), reported 559 Tunisians out of 3,244 foreign fighters. Projected to a total of 25,000 estimated by the UN\(^17\) at the height of the power of the OIS, there were an estimated 4,307 Tunisians


\(^8\) The Secretary-General’s plan of action gives priority to preventive measures to fight against violent extremism. Ban Ki Moon, “Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism”, report of the Secretary-General: A / 70 / 674-24, (24 December 2015). These measures are part of the 1st and 4th pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/288: to eliminate the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law in the fight against terrorism.


\(^10\) Members of the security forces, interviews with the author, Tunis, Kasserine, 2015-2016

\(^11\) “Hédi Mejdoub declares: We dismantled 245 terrorist cells in 2016” “(La Presse, April 22, 2017), www.lapresse.tn

\(^12\) Ibid.

\(^13\) E. Z., "Walid Louguini: 3,000 Tunisians in Syria, 600 returned and 800 were killed" (Business News, 25 December 2015), www.businessnews.com.tn


\(^15\) Brian Dodwell, Daniel Militon and Don Rassler, “The Caliphate’s Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State’s Foreign Fighter Paper Trail” (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, April 2016).

\(^16\) David Thomson, telephone interview with author, June 2016.

in OIS alone. Moreover, with only the information of the OIS distributing 3,244 foreign fighters by nationality, Tunisia ranks second (559) behind Saudi Arabia (579) and ahead of Morocco (240) and far behind Algeria in 18th place (39).  

The issue of the returnees from conflict zones is worrying and recalls the return of Afghans to Algeria in the 1980s. However, unlike its neighbor at that time, Tunisia does not have any violent extremist groups that aim at the seizure of central power (like the Islamic Salvation Front - FIS), excepting a non-violent extremist organization, the group-based Hizb-ut-Tahrir party, which was legalized in 2013 and is closely controlled by the police. Between 2011 and 2013, the Salafist-Jihadist organization Ansar Sharia was moving in this direction, but was eradicated in 2014. In the short term, returnees will not be able then to join a mass movement and provide logistical and military support necessary to destabilize the State. The Salafist-jihadist collectives seem to perceive Tunisia in a regional perspective; on the one hand, it is seen as "a weak link" and a base to attack Algeria, and, on the other hand, it is seen as a recruitment pool and a space benefitting from communication facilities, transport networks and exchanges of funds with Europe. These groups aim to weaken the Tunisian State "to prevent it from becoming too strong, but also to prevent the country from falling into chaos."

These groups appear to be engaged in a medium-term strategy aiming to make Tunisian citizens more receptive to their radical point of view. Their objectives twofold. In the initial stages, they aim to recruit Tunisians to join them in the conflict zones (in particular, Iraq, Syria, Libya); in the later stages, they aim to support Tunisians in Tunisia in case of bankruptcy of the States at the regional level, particularly of Algeria.

Several agents of the National Guard say they are surprised by the confidence of Tunisian jihadists, as if, for these jihadists, victory was as certain as a fait accompli. The reasons and motivations that push Tunisians to join this cause is reinforced day after day. Moreover, the jihadist Salafists who systematically use armed violence try to spare Tunisian civilians, considering the country as a recruiting ground where the hearts of the population must be won (98% of the population is Sunni Muslim). Less than 25 civilians have been killed in violent extremist attacks. It is largely the result of collateral damage during clashes between small armed groups and police forces.

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18 Brian Dodwell, Daniel Milton and Don Rassler, "The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail" (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, April 2016)
19 Giordano Segneri, UN Resident Coordinator Office, Tunisia, "Rethinking Functions: A Policy Challenge", FTF Returnees, including legal measures and counter-and-radicalization initiatives experimented in a few countries (draft, September 2015).
21 Michael Béchir Ayari and Fabio Merone, "Ansar Sharia une institutionnalisation à la croisée des chemins (translation : Ansar Sharia Institutionalization at the Crossroads)" in Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel, "Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde Arabe (translation :Uprisings and political recompositions in the Arab world)" (Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2014).
22 Algerian expert in terrorism, interview with the author, Tunis, February 2016
23 The Tunisian territory played the role of a rear base during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). The development of jihadism in Tunisia is thus a question of "national security" for Algeria. Algerian Official, interview with the author, Tunis, February 2017
24 Former jihadist sympathizer, interview with the author, August 2015.
25 Kasserine community activists, members of the National Guard, interviews with the author, November 2016.
26 Many testimonies of Tunisians during the attack on the Bardo museum and the Marhaba hotel in Port el Kantaoui (tourist area of the East Coast) and videos posted on social networks show that the attackers have systematically spared individuals of "Arab-Muslim" appearance. The attacks targeted the "taghout", accomplices of the "taghout" (indicators in the first place, but the notion can be extended to politicians or personalities considered secular or anti-islam and non-Muslim foreigners).
There remains the risk of destabilization by violent extremist groups. The country is economically fragile and highly dependent on tourism. An attack comparable to the two attacks of 2015 targeting foreign tourists would have deleterious socio-economic effects. Increasing the resilience and capacity of the Tunisian State and society to violent extremism is a necessity, even if it takes time. Prevention is not an alternative to security measures, but rather a way of complementing them and reducing the need for them. However, for the time being, the public authorities have resorted mainly to repressive measures at the expense of prevention activities (Box 1).

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27 Giordano Segneri, Resident Coordinator Office, Tunisia, "Jihadi returnees: A policy challenge", summary of selected approaches to deal with FTF returnees, including legal measures and counter-and-radicalization initiatives experimented in a few countries (draft, September 2015).

Box 1: Main responses of the Tunisian State to violent extremism since 2013

- Increase in the budget of the Ministries of Interior and Defense and, in particular, the number of police officers.
- Adoption of a new anti-terrorist law by the Assembly of People's Representatives (Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple, ARP) in July 2015, which notably provides for the creation of a national commission for the fight against terrorism (set up in March 2016).
- Creation of a security center and a judicial center for the fight against terrorism at the end of 2014.
- Attempts to improve coordination between the various security forces (police, national guard).
- Strengthening the capacity and legal framework of military intelligence.
- Strengthening police intelligence (wiretapping services, tailing, control of internet social networks).
- Strengthening of international technical cooperation (improvement of the capacities of the special forces of the army, mixed patrols in the border areas).
- Repeated requests to international partners for new military and police equipment.
- Construction of a barrier system on half of the Tunisian-Libyan border.
- Closed tendering for biometric passports, video surveillance (urban and border).
- Travel restrictions for young single men aged between 18 and 34 (more than 26,000), mainly to Turkey, Libya and Algeria.
- Project to create a Fusion Center or a National Intelligence Agency under the Government Presidency.
- An abortive attempt to organize a national conference on terrorism.
- Three drafted (not implemented) interdepartmental counter-terrorism strategies. The last one is inspired by interdepartmental and ministerial strategies, and signed by the President of the Republic on November 7, 2016; it came into force.
- Close control of Salafist-looking individuals at border crossings in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Closing of places of worship and removal of imams designated by the worshipers (of Salafist Quietist or Jihadist tendency).
- Work to set up a jihadist counter narrative under the direction of the Minister to the Head of the Government in charge of relations with constitutional bodies, civil society and human rights organizations and awareness campaigns against jihadist violence (TV spots in particular).
- Freezing the activities of nearly 200 charity organizations and closure of non-conforming kindergartens (of a Salafist Quietist or Jihadist tendency).
- House arrest of several hundred jihadists returning from Syria, Iraq and Libya.
- Home searches (84,000 in 2016), roundups in poor neighborhoods, annual rotation in pre-trial detention of around 2,000-2,500 suspected terrorists, use of torture.
- Between 1,500 and 2,000 terrorism trials with various convictions.
- Use of curfew.
- Infiltrations of jihadist groups. Neutralization operations of leaders.
- Intensive shelling of the mountains of western Tunisia.
2. The causes of violent extremism: an analytical mosaic

2.1. Quantitative data available

The only quantitative study available on violent extremism in Tunisia is unreliable. The study only provides insight into the socio-demographic characteristics of those individuals charged and sent to trial for terrorism-related activities between 2013 and 2016.\(^\text{29}\) It proposes flat screenings on a sample between 400 and 1,000 individuals, but is not rigorous to provide a solid heuristic basis to build a quantitative risk analysis.

According to this study, violent extremism and Salafist-jihadist violence largely concern young single men (almost 97 percent) under the age of 34.\(^\text{30}\) Most of the analysis confirms this. This specificity is generally found in radical or revolutionary groups (in their objectives, their modes of action or in both).\(^\text{31}\) The sociological profile of people imprisoned between 2013 and 2016 is roughly the same as the individuals imprisoned for terrorism under Ben Ali between 2004 and 2009.\(^\text{32}\) However, there is a smaller number of students.\(^\text{33}\) Salafism-jihadism was very popular in the faculties between the departure of Ben Ali in 2011 and his criminalization in 2013.\(^\text{34}\) Historically, the revolutionary ideas have mainly circulated in universities, thus favoring the militant vocations of the students.\(^\text{35}\)

Out of 400 persons brought before an examining magistrate between 2013 and 2016, 40 percent have a university degree (on a university access rate of about 12 percent for the age group),\(^\text{36}\) 33% have a level of secondary education, 13% have a vocational training diploma, and 4% have a baccalaureate.\(^\text{37}\) However, this remains of little use sociologically, given that the level of the university education is generally low, and unequal in terms of training. There is a marked gap between the quality of schools and universities as well as between the disciplines. The university level reflects neither a particular

\(^{29}\) « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux, Tunis, 2016). (Translation: "Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files" - Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Tunis, 2016).

\(^{30}\) Ibid.


\(^{33}\) « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux, Tunis, 2016) – (translation: "Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files") - (Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights)

\(^{34}\) Students at the Faculty of Manouba, Interviews with the author Tunis, 2012.


\(^{37}\) « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux, Tunis, 2016).
relationship to knowledge nor a better chance of social and professional integration, which can result in a strong feeling of relative frustration (see below).\(^{38}\)

If violent extremists belong to all social circles\(^{39}\), Salafism-jihadism "of good family exists only marginally"; the majority grew up in "the neighborhoods and have retained all the codes."\(^{40}\) Several violent extremists, mainly the activists, come from privileged backgrounds and, in addition, succeed in their studies.\(^{41}\) The emblematic case of Henda Saïda, a young girl killed during an armed clash with the security forces, to whom several propaganda videos of the group Okba Ibn Nafa refer, illustrates that. One of the perpetrators of the attack of the Bardo Museum was the son of a wealthy farmer and his uncles were teachers in secondary education.\(^{42}\)

Information on the geographic origin of Tunisian violent extremists is also limited. According to the above-mentioned study, persons accused of terrorism are overrepresented in the governorate of Tunis and Sidi Bouzid (Central West), respectively 18.78 percent and 14.32 percent out of a sample of 1,000. The residence of the arrested individuals does not reveal any regional or local specificities (governorates or municipalities) other than on the structuring differential of Salafist-jihadist groups, which is also an explanation retained in the more qualitative studies.\(^{43}\) It also reflects the larger activity and presence of security forces in these areas and, therefore, a higher number of recorded cases.\(^{44}\)

The overrepresentation of Tunis is also explained by the demographic weight of this governorate. The analysis says nothing about the social origin (profession of parents), the geographic origin of the extended family (see below) or the peri-urban residence. Many young violent extremists come from spaces that define a shared social condition (area of rural exodus and social segregation). Between 2011 and 2014, the year of its eradication, Ansar Sharia, the main Salafist-jihadi organization, was strongly established in peri-urban areas of the capital, notably Ettadhaman and Douar Hicher as well as in the peripheral belt of Sfax and Kairouan.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{38}\) This concept is a classic in the social sciences. It has been forged as part of a highly detailed comparative study of most contemporary revolutionary movements. Ted Gurr, "Why Men Rebel" (Princeton University Press, 1970). He is very active in the literature on radicalization and the causes of violent extremism; "Preventing violent extremism through promoting inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity", Global meeting, (UNDP, Oslo, 14-16 March 2016), p. 13


\(^{41}\) Abu Essaoud Lahmidi, «Tunis :Les femmes dans les rangs terroristes: chair à plaisir et chair à canon »(translation: "Women in Terrorist Ranks: Flesh for pleasure and Flesh for cannons"), (African Manager, October 25, 2014), http://africanmanager.com . There was also Baya Ben Rejab from Al Ali in Bizerte (north) who had the highest score in the Bachelor of Computer Science in 2012 and who joined the National Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (INSAT).

\(^{42}\) Georges Fahmi & Hamza Meddeb, «Market for Jihad, Radicalization in Tunisia» (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015), p. 8-9

\(^{43}\) Olfa Lamloun and Mohamed Ali Ben Zina, « Les jeunes de Douar Hicher et d’Ettadhamen, une enquête sociologique » (International Alert, Tunis, 2015); Search for Common Ground, "Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities, Opportunities to Enhance Resilience of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia," (2016). This latest study also tries to differentiate between motives for adopting violent extremism at the individual level that differ from one region to another. The most economically dynamic regions would be those where the identity crisis engendered by economic modernization and its procession of attacks on religiosity is most pronounced. This identity crisis would be a more important factor of radicalization in the wealthy governornates. In deprived areas, it would be socio-economic factors. The opposition is quite schematic.

\(^{44}\) « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux, Tunis, 2016), p. 25.

\(^{45}\) It was also present on the North coast at Sejane and Menzel Bourguiba (a resort destination under the French protectorate, populated by many settlers, and whose economic dynamism has been steadily decreasing since the independent), in the North - West (Jendouba) and in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid (Center-West) within small rural settlements like Sidi Ali Ben Aoun. Michael Béchir Ayari and Fabio Merone, « Ansar Charia une institutionnalisation à la
2.2. Dissociating the levels of analysis

Theoretically, the causes of violent extremism include a mix of individual, social, and ideological factors that manifest themselves differently from one context and from one person to another. Most experts apprehend them from an interdisciplinary point of view that amalgamates the levels of social (macro-meso) and individual (micro) analysis, which adds to their complexity. In addition, the institutions that sponsor studies on violent extremism tend to rebuild the causes of this phenomenon from the answers they consider necessary and legitimate a priori in order to curb it. Institutions that prioritize prevention activities will focus more on its structural causes (especially socio-economic), whereas security organizations will emphasize the importance of situational factors, such as the presence of recruitment networks and structured groups disseminating their propaganda.

UNDP, for example, tends to group the levels of individual and social analysis in a single analytical perspective. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) distinguishes between "reasons" (push factors) and "motivations" (pull factors) considers material and symbolic motivations (micro) and virtually wipes out situational factors. The model proposed by the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies insists, conversely, on these last factors, but remains limited to the level of individual analysis (micro, process of radicalization).

To better prioritize the factors that promote violent extremism (i.e. that make it more likely without ever mechanically determining it) and apprehend them in the most objective way possible, it is necessary to separate the levels of social and individual analysis by formulating a working hypothesis for each level. Starting from the individual level enables us to better understand how the social and individual logics that lead to violent extremism are articulated. However, this does not shed light on precisely how the violent extremist develops in a given society, under the influence of social groups and public institutions that this extremist person impacts simultaneously.

In social sciences, the point of view creates the object. Variations in scales of analysis influence the content of the explanatory grids. Individuals taken in isolation are irreducible to the characteristics...
of the society they form and this society is different from the sum of the individuals that compose it. The ontological relationship between psychic structure and social structure is not mechanical. There are many discrepancies between the social properties of an individual and the socio-economic and cultural environment in which he lives, his past experiences and the new situations he faces. These offsets affect in particular the way he builds and rebuilds his social representations.

The analytic distinction between scales of social and individual analysis, the basis of which is epistemological, seems fundamental in the framework of a study oriented towards the search for preventive answers involving different levels of intervention. This distinction makes it possible to leave the theoretical aporia that urges most works on violent extremism to seek an integrated analytical perspective from an interdisciplinary approach (sociology, psychology, social psychology, criminology). These studies attempt in vain to weave links of direct causality between the social and individual logics of radicalization: "why, while the same causes are present, does one individual become a violent extremist while another one escapes from it?" In addition, these studies do not have sufficient empirical data given the extent and range of this theoretical ambition.

Taking into account these limits, this review will not aim to answer what determines and encourages an individual to turn to violent extremism. Instead, it will focus on the factors that make Tunisia permeable to violent extremism and those that diminish the capacity of resilience of the State and society to this phenomenon. This offers the possibility of thinking of global responses to the development of violent extremism. Nevertheless, the drivers and motivators of violent extremist on an individual level will be noted. Indeed, this approach makes it possible to better think of selected interventions targeting vulnerable individuals.

In addition, several studies show that a significant proportion of people who engage in armed violence claimed or supervised by Salafist jihadist groups are not political activists. This is the case of many Tunisian fighters in conflict zones who have gone to war in exchange for remuneration. This is also the case for some perpetrators of attacks in Tunisia and Europe, who reportedly adopted violent extremism in a few days (some experts have tried to report this phenomenon by speaking of "express radicalization" or "Self-radicalization") or who, driven by dynamics similar to those which push an individual to join a criminal group or commit suicide, move to armed action without knowing if the organization sponsors their action. The social-psychological process that leads an individual to turn to violence does not follow a series of pre-established stages. The individual may decide to fight in a jihadist organization in a conflict zone without being previously part of a violent extremist group. A violent extremist can resort to violence without belonging to an organization claiming it (lone wolf) or even joining a group without knowing the objectives (mercenary).

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53 Due to a lack of data on this issue, I will leave aside factors related to political socialization during childhood.
56 « Salah Abdeslam, la radicalisation express d’un petit caïd de Molenbeek » ( translation : "Salah Abdeslam, the speedy radicalization of a small guy from Molenbeek" (RTL, 25 November 2015), http://www.rtl.be
السلفية الجهادية في تونس الواقع والسلاسل. التهميش مدخل لتفكيك ظاهرة الإرهاب (Jihad Salafism in Tunisia: reality and projections, Deprivation as means to dismantle terrorism)
58 “Preventing violent extremism through promoting inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity “, Global meeting, (UNDP, Oslo, 14-16 mars 2016), p. 23.
Besides, many jihadist groups throughout the region and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa are hardly distinguishable from criminal groups. In 2011-2013, in Tunisia, this was the case for some collectives located in deprived peri-urban areas (Dubosville, for example) and close to Ansar Sharia. As for the Okba Ibn Nafa and Jund al Khalifa armed groups positioned in the forested and mountainous areas of the Kasserine region, they seem to be part of a mixed functioning: political and "bandit", given their involvement in smuggling activities. This involvement was confirmed by several inhabitants of the region and members of the armed forces, and implies that the motivations of those who join them cannot be reduced to political alone.59

Therefore, as part of this analytical review, two typical profiles of violent extremists will be distinguished: militants and desperados. Militants belong to a group and are engaged in political activity of which the individual and social logics are a priori comparable with those highlighted by the sociology of political commitment and social movements in other contexts.60 “Desperados” The seem to be more numerous in Tunisia, and are defined as those whose journey cannot be analyzed in terms of activism. They live outside the law, and are "ready for anything", including engaging in violent and desperate enterprises. Both the "mercenary" and "lone wolf" dimensions are integrated in this profile, to which is added the "nihilist" highlighted by political scientists like Olivier Roy.61

Given limited quantitative data, a Quantitative Risk Analysis is not possible for this review. The VERA-2 Risk Assessment to Counter Violent Extremism Initiatives62 is an existing analysis that crosses the causal weight of a factor with the frequency or probability of its occurrence in a large number of observations (the higher the sample, the more relevant the results are). Based on the studies on violent extremism, particularly in Tunisia, as well as my own field analysis, the included Qualitative Risk Analysis Matrix (Table 1) will visualize the influence of each factor and category of factors. Its reading will offer the opportunity to measure the potential impact of the preventive responses to violent extremism in Tunisia at the social level (State and society in general) and individual (vulnerable persons) in order to define the priorities. This matrix can also be used as a basis for a quantitative survey.

The matrix considers 33 factors; one of these factors - the feeling of relative frustration- depends on 9 sub-factors. The 33 factors are divided into seven categories: ideological factors, socio-cultural factors, economic and social factors, individual perceptions, religious factors, institutional factors and situational factors. Each factor receives a score of 1 to 563 to measure its influence to reduce the resilience of the State and society to violent extremism, and to impact the adoption of violent extremism at the individual level.

The assessment is also informed by a review of studies and publications on violent extremism in Tunisia in French, English and Arabic. It also reviews the most recent works of the United Nations agencies as well as the latest academic papers and reports from non-governmental organizations and international bodies, particularly at the regional level. It also includes empirical data built since May

59 Inhabitants of Kasserine Governorate, Interviews with the author, Kasserine, January 2016
60 To my knowledge, no significant empirical study of Salafism-jihadism or violent extremism in a more general way has yet been conducted using this sociological approach
63 1 will be equal to negligible, 2 to marginal, 3 to important, 4 to very important and 5 to fundamental.
2011, collected through various interviews and observations in Tunisia within the framework of the *International Crisis Group*.\(^\text{64}\)

The concepts of sociology of political commitment and the theory of social movements,\(^\text{65}\) used in my PhD in political science on the extreme left and the Islamist movement in Tunisia from 1963 to 2008, are present in a cross-cutting manner.\(^\text{66}\)

I will consider that the militants are of higher social origin than the *desperados* and that the ideological factors better encourage militants than *desperados* to adopt violent extremism. Individual perceptions will naturally be more significant at the individual level than the social level. Thus, factors that operate only at the individual level will not be considered at the social. The individual weight of key factors on the social level will be relativized, given differentiated impacts from one person to another.

When my interpretations diverge from the dominant interpretations, I will take care to specify it. The number of signs dedicated to the explanation of each factor will not be systematically proportional to its influence. It will take into account the place that studies grant to each as well as to its controversial character. As such, I will avoid dwelling on the factors that have a consensus. Finally, as part of this analytical review, I will not be able to describe in detail the theoretical and empirical approach that led me to isolate and describe these factors in this way. I will therefore sometimes use affirmations that I hope will not appear peremptory.

### 3. Factors favoring violent extremism in Tunisia

The assigned social-level score assigned considers the influence of the factor on the permeability of the Tunisian State and society to violent extremism and on the reduction of their resilience to it. The individual-level score considers the influence of the factor on the adoption of violent extremism by a

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\(^{64}\) I conducted several hundred interviews with salafist-jihadists, former Salafist-jihadists, members of the security forces, community leaders, trade unionists, politicians, and researchers throughout the country, and closely observed the situation. development of the Salafist-jihadist movement in Tunisia

\(^{65}\) See Karl-Dieter Opp, « Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements, A multidisciplinary introduction, critique, and synthesis » (Routledge, 2009).

given actor. To understand the scores, 1 is negligible, 2 is marginal, 3 is important, 4 is very important and 5 is fundamental.

### 3.1 Ideological factors

**Circulation of revolutionary ideas, especially in universities**

Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 1 (negligible) and Militants = 2 (marginal)

Historically, revolutionary ideologies and, therefore, in a sense violent extremists, are popular in Tunisia. Jihadist-Salafism is no exception. This can be explained in several ways. In the nineteenth century, the Muslim reform movement as well as pro-caliphate Ottoman pan-Islamism were very dynamic in Tunisia because of the existence of intellectual circles in the major urban centers (notably Tunis) as well as associations grouped around the Zitouna Grand Mosque/University. Many Tunisian activists and intellectuals played a significant political role throughout the Ottoman Empire. The southern part of the country was an ideological crossroads due to the presence of many north-African and Middle Eastern workers in phosphate mines. The city of Ben Guerdane is located half way between the Cairo-Casablanca caravan trade route and the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

The authoritarian regime that emerged after independence in 1956 attempted to reduce the appeal of Arab nationalism and the leftist Movement. These ideologies moved to universities that were less controlled than the rest of society. The latter have become receptive to revolutionary ideals. Muslim Brotherhood-type Islamism in the 1980-1990s and then jihadism in the 2000-2010s have, to a certain extent, taken over from Arab nationalism and leftism.

**Attractiveness for Arab-Islamic causes especially in the south of the country**

Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 1 (negligible) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

Neither Orientals nor Occidentals, many Tunisians suffer from a complex of Orient - not to feel sufficiently oriental. The distanced position of the first President of the Republic, Habib Bourguiba, with regard to Arab nationalism impelled by Egypt's Nasser, in the late 1950s, strengthened this complex. This complex helps to explain, in part, the attraction to Arab-Islamic causes.

Moreover, from the beginning of the 1970s, the regime, which prioritized self-centered economic development to catch up with the West, cultivated the Arab-Islamic fiber and sidelined the previous decade in order to fill the ideological void born from the failure of the so-called "Destourian socialist" experience (agricultural and commercial production units, substitution of imports, etc.)

In order to preserve social peace, he notably tried to channel the protests which questioned his legitimacy, orienting them towards the Middle East. This resulted in a staging of support for Arab-

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67 Zitouna or Az-zaytûna is the oldest Arab and Islamic university. The Grand Mosque of Tunis, which houses the Zitouna establishment, was built in the year 116 AH corresponding to the year 734. It provided until 1958 secondary and higher education. Teachers usually performed the function of Shuyukh. The teaching was reopened between 1987 and 1990, during the first three years of Ben Ali’s presidency, and then stopped. Since May 2012, education has officially resumed.


Islamic causes. There was a flow of Tunisian volunteers (500-1,000) to armed conflicts in the Middle East between 1967 and 1973. This continued with the development of Islamism as a substitute for leftism and Arabism after 1979. If the number of Tunisian fighters in Afghanistan during the 1980s was low,\textsuperscript{70} that to Iraq from 2003 was quite high (1,500-2,000 according to sources).\textsuperscript{71}

The south of the country suffered from a policy of forced sedentarization of the nomads continued after the country's independence in 1956. Under the protectorate (1881-1956), it was a military territory administered by the French army. It also suffered from the near-civil war (between 1,000 and 3,000 deaths) between 1954 and 1959 between Habib Bourguiba and Salah Ben Youssef, two party leaders who supervised the national movement since 1934. Bourguibian emerged victorious from this conflict, but many Youssefists were from the South. Since then, this region has provided a significant number of volunteers in Arabist, Islamist and jihadist causes in the Middle East.

**Rise of racism and Islamophobia in countries of economic immigration, especially European**

*Social = 4 (very important); Individual: Desperados = 5 (fundamental) and Activists = 3 (important)*

As both a cause and a consequence of the European decline in migration and the breakthrough of neo-nationalisms,\textsuperscript{72} the rise in racism and Islamophobia fuels feelings of relative frustration and injustice at the individual level (see below). It is exploited by the Salafist Quietist groups, and the jihadist groups and OIS. They use it as a key argument to convince those discriminated against to fight for the "return to the land of Islam" or departure to the ISIS territories (Syria and Iraq).\textsuperscript{73}

This growing intolerance towards 'otherness' marks the end of the myth of happy migration and decreases the attractiveness of economic emigration to Europe, making departure for a zone of conflict more probable. It reinforces the identity-related wounds of people of Tunisian origin living on European soil, especially those born there, as well as their identification with an internationally persecuted religious group (see below). It tends to exclude them from the "French national community", encouraging them to develop a more rigorous and ostentatious religiosity in order to "reverse the stigma." This has an influence in Tunisia. During summer holidays, Tunisians or Europeans of Tunisian origin who visit their family members in Tunisia share anecdotes that illustrate the discrimination they suffer.

**Individual identification with a religious group persecuted internationally**

*Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 2 (marginal) and Activists = 4 (very important)*

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\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, p. 83


The argument that Muslims are attacked as an international community is an essential part of the Salafi-jihadist speech. Identification of a persecuted group belonging to Islam encourages the adoption of extremism at the individual level. This identification refers, in part, to the anxiety of the disappearance of Muslims as a community, anguish present from the process of building the modern State in the second half of the XIXth Century and fueled by the development of the consumer society since the 1930s (multiplication of signs and objects of secular identification).

### Radical Islamism not tarnished by the civil war as in Algeria

_Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 1 (negligible) and Activists = 2 (marginal)_

Unlike Algeria, Tunisia has not experienced a radical Islamist movement or notable Islamist violence during the 1980s-1990s that would have tarnished the attractiveness of this form of violent extremism at the individual level. During its most "revolutionary" period in the late 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood-oriented Ennahdha was already quite pragmatic at both the political and religious level. This party resembled Algerian Hamas more than the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and its base was less popular than FIS. It was mainly concentrated in the intellectual circles. The working class and the marginalized did not see themselves in Ennahdha, as they did in FIS.

After the departure of Ben Ali, the young people of the peri-urban areas felt represented for the first time by a radical political organization, *Ansar Sharia* which was free of its movements from 2011 to 2013. From August 2013, the repression of this Salafist-jihadist collective did not lead to a civil war as it had in Algeria following the dissolution of the FIS in March 1992. Therefore, the radical Islamist utopia has, in a sense, remained intact.

### Historical political project of unification of the MENA zone

_Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 1 (negligible) and activists = 2 (marginal)_

A diffuse feeling exists in Tunisia that States in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region tend to divide on ethnic, identity and confessional bases. At the regional level, the projects promoted by the political elites since the beginning of the 20th century have always promoted a sense of the unity of the region (national movement, socialism, Arab nationalism, Islamic brotherhood type, jihadism); reality has always gone in the direction of division. Salafism-jihadism is, for the time being,

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74 "Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities," (Search for Common Ground, 2016), p. Members of the Sousse group, who joined an armed group (the Soliman group) and clashed with the police in 2006, raised the issue during their interrogation. Alison Pargeter, "Radicalization in Tunisia, Islamist Radicalization in North Africa", in George Joffre (ed.), "Islamist Radicalization in North Africa, Politics and Process" (Routledge, 2011), p. 91; Young Salafists from a popular district of Tunis, interviews with the author, June 2012
75 "Understanding radicalization,” A review of models and drivers ″, (WANA institute, 2016), p. 21
76 For a psychoanalytic view of the issue, see Fethi Ben Slama’s analysis, mainly " Un furieux Désir de Sacrifice (A Furious Desire for Sacrifice).″ Le surmusulman » (Le Seuil, 2016). On the penetration of "nameless objects" and the survival of "names without objects" in the Tunisia of the 1930s, see Jacques Berque, « Le Maghreb entre Deux Guerres » ("The Maghreb between two wars") (Le Seuil, 1962)
79 Ibid ; Moussa Bourekba, « Countering violent extremism in the MENA region : time to rethink approaches and strategies », Euromesco Policy Brief, no. 6317 (mai 2016), p. 72
the ideological current that best embodies this historical political project of unity. Before losing most of its territories in 2016, OIS used violence and terrorism to build a new State with a modern administration, an implicit social contract, and communal and religious dimensions. This has contributed to its popularity especially among individuals with a certain theological-political culture, and has encouraged some of them to become activists.

3.2. Socio-cultural factors

Desire to live one’s upset individuality

Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

Those Tunisian youth from disadvantaged regions and peri-urban areas do not have the necessary material means to conquer their autonomy. They face challenges in renting an apartment, marriage, and family life. However, they have access to a certain level of education, share individualistic values of consumption, and question the authority of the previous generation, which has more heritage without being better armed than them to understand and face the challenges of the globalized society.

Residing with their parents, these young people are subject to the authority of their father - the head of the family - although they consider this authority obsolete. At the same time, their mothers exert a guilt-inducing social pressure when they fail to conquer a social status commensurate with the school investment they have achieved. This situation generates psychological suffering that can lead to suicide. Sometimes, these young people look for a way to assert some moral authority within the home to escape this situation.

Since they cannot advocate the individualistic values whose legitimacy depends on their ability to achieve them, some try to overthrow parental authority by displaying ostentatious piety supposed to draw its foundations from an ancestral tradition and the original Islam. It is not uncommon for these young people to launch fatwas (religious rules) within the family circle, arguing with their parents on religious grounds and challenging their parents’ reading of Islam. On the individual level, this attitude may encourage the adoption of violent extremism when elements of political language justify it.

Added to this is sexual frustration, fueled by the legal prohibition of concubinage and the difficulties to access sexual partners without financial means, namely possession of a personal vehicle and especially of an apartment. Thus, between 2011 and 2013, many young people from peri-urban areas adopted the Salafist lifestyle and came closer to the jihadist theses and the Ansar Sharia organization.


81 « Comprendre l’Après Daech » (Service canadien du renseignement de sécurité et Interaxions, mai 2017). "Understanding the After Daech"

82 The age of marriage is in constant decline, especially in the lower classes, leading to a kind of Malthusianism of poverty accompanied by significant sexual frustrations; Regional Programmatic Framework for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Arab States (UNDP, 2017), p.23; Michaël Béchir Ayari and Vincent Geisser, “ Renaisances arabes, 7 questions clés sur des révolutions en marche ("Arab renaissance, 7 key questions about revolutions in progress"), (Editions de l’Atelier, 2011), notably chapter 6 "Democratic revolutions, demographic revolutions? " . تطبيق الدولة الإسلامية الأزمة السنية والصراع على . (Organization of the Islamic State, the age crisis and the Struggle about the Global Jihadism)
not because they were seduced by the violent extremism, but because they intended to live a kind of "dolce vita" or Islamist "movida" (multiplication of sexual partners in customary marriages, cannabis consumption, feeling of having reversed the established order by getting involved in the day-to-day management of the district freed from the security forces and accessing the pleasures reserved for the "rich").

At the time of the repression that targeted the organization, some were imprisoned or fled to areas of conflict to escape arrest, thereby adopting or reinforcing their violent extremism, while their initial motivation was to live their upset individuality.

The narrowness of the identity offer further thwarts the emergence of this individuality. The diffusion of consumer and leisure products that define youth subcultures (e.g. hip-hop, skateboarding, rock) especially in peri-urban areas) allows for few identity models, and reinforces the attraction of Quietist or Jihadist Salafism. Jihadist Salafism satisfies a certain hedonistic desire coupled with group solidarity.

The loss of family and community solidarity and the search for substitution links

*Social* = 2 (marginal); *Individual: Desperados* = 2 (marginal) and *Activists* = 2 (marginal)

The literature on violent extremism favors explanations in terms of the disintegration of family and community ties in societies where the State and its major socializing bodies are unable to fill the gap created by the loss of these links. This is the case for most developing countries and even some developed countries that have invested little in social redistribution policies and lack quality public services.

It is a sociological classic dating back to Ferdinand Tönnies (1920s), according to whom the shift from pre-industrial to industrial society destroyed the bonds based on blood, affection, respect and fear of traditional society and replaced them with rational links based on the contract and the interest. When these last links are absent and the first ones disappear, the individual experiences a sort of anxious and frustrating intermediary situation encouraging him to resort to violent revolutionary action. In the 1950s, the emergence of totalitarianism after the First World War was explained by the loss of traditional links or solidarities created by the development of wage labor, urbanization and market penetration. This led to demands that the State embody this lost communal solidarity through national socialization (e.g. school, army, church), and build a new man freed from a bourgeois individualism.

Joining a violent extremist group tends to be explained in a similar way, especially since jihadist collectives and OIS are willing to pose as totalitarian organizations. The loss of these family and community solidarities would push to join as a community of substitution compensating for the this loss of fraternity or camaraderie. On the individual level, joining a Salafist-jihadist collective has

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83 Ferdinand Tönnies, « Communauté et société. Catégories fondamentales de la sociologie pure » (Retz-Centre d’Études et de Promotion de la Lecture, 1977).(“Community and Society. Fundamental categories of pure sociology ”)

84 See: Talcott Parsons’ analyzes: Uta Gerhardt (ed.),“ Talcott Parsons on National Socialism” (De Gruyter, 1993).

then a tendency to be interpreted as the search for a new family,\textsuperscript{86} which makes it possible to reduce the psychological suffering caused by an anomic relation to society.\textsuperscript{87} However, since this factor is too general, its explanatory weight will be reduced.

**The paternal authority deficit within households**

Social = \(X\); Individual: \textit{Desperados} = 2 (marginal) and Activists = 1 (negligible)

The nuclear family is the norm in Tunisia; the loss of the father’s authority in the nuclear is often noted in research.\textsuperscript{88} This variable is an intermediate variable that depends on more decisive factors. Such is the case of a father killed in action, which implies the existence of a deadly conflict in the country. The deficit of a paternal authority may be caused by the blurring of traditional gender landmarks. It can also be linked to generational conflicts engendered by the rapid transformation of societies or by the weak associative pattern and the failure of national socialization bodies, which reflects this lack of authority of the father in the absence of child supervision, etc. For these reasons, the explanatory weight is reduced.

**Fighting stigma and conquering a new identity**

Social = \(X\); Individual: \textit{Desperados} = 4 (very important) and activists = 3 (important)

Joining a violent extremist group, in the case of a clandestine and criminalized group, may be a way of replacing one form of social stigma with another more psychologically bearable one. Similarly, defending a cause with weapons gives the individual a total identity that virtually erases all others, which are generally socially imposed and stigmatizing.

This is the case, for example, of the small delinquent who, by resorting to armed action, is again stigmatized, but for the defense of a common superior principle (jihadist cause).\textsuperscript{89} This is also the case of people rejected for their physical or sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{90} In February 2011, in a village in

\textsuperscript{86} This type of analysis was already used in the 1970s to explain the entry into communist militancy. See Bernard Pudal, “Prendre parti, pour une sociologie historique du PCF” (”Taking sides, for a historical sociology of the PCF” (Presses de Sciences Po, 1989).


\textsuperscript{88} Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities, Opportunities to Enhance Resilience of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia », (Search For Common Ground, 2016), p.12, 19, 22 ; David Thomson, « Les Revenants » (Le Seuil, 2016), p. 218


\textsuperscript{90} Arie W. Kruglanski et al., “The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism”, Advances in Political Psychology 35, Suppl. 1 (2014). Sociological studies have also shown that in some popular neighborhoods in France where homosexuality is strongly stigmatized, some homosexuals voluntarily contracted HIV (barebacking) preferring to be identified as sick rather than homosexual. See Christophe Broqua, F. Lert and Y. Souteyrand (dir.), « Homosexualités au temps du sida. Tensions sociales et identitaires » “Homosexuality in the time of AIDS. Social tensions and identity ” (ANRS, 2003).
western Tunisia, one of the first jihadist militants after Ben Ali was known for his homosexual tendencies.\footnote{Inhabitants of a Northwest Village, interviews with the author, Northwest, 2012}

In a similar perspective, several authors consider violent extremist engagement as a way of alleviating a sort of narcissistic (meaningless) injury,\footnote{Arie W. Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism", Advances in Political Psychology 35, Suppl. 1 (2014), p. 73.} engendered by identity stigmatization and repeated humiliation (especially religion in its community dimension\footnote{Ibid.}, resulting in the fundamental desire to become a hero\footnote{"Understanding radicalization," A review of models and drivers ", (WANA institute, 2016), p. 18; "Preventing Violent Extremism: Libya and the North Africa Region," Summary Record, (UNDP / Government of the Netherlands Round Table Discussion, December 20, 2016), p. 6.} and to reclaim one’s "lost dignity."\footnote{David Thomson, « Les Revenants » (Le Seuil, 2016), p. 190}

**Loss of traditional gender benchmarks**

**Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 2 (marginal) and activists = 2 (marginal)**

The loss of traditional references to gender, more precisely "differentiated perceptions of masculinity and femininity", may "explain in part some psychological reasons for the renewal of extreme ideologies, especially Jihadist-Salafism."\footnote{« Penser le genre dans l’extrémisme violent en Tunisie, Enjeux conceptuels et état des lieux », "Thinking Gender in Violent Extremism in Tunisia, Conceptual Issues and State of Play", Preliminary Documentary Review (UN Women, OXFAM, Samuel Hall, 2017), p. 1} The academic achievement of women, especially in secondary education, their propensity to more readily accept an underpaid job in the agriculture, services or the textile industry, and the more liberal legal framework in Tunisia compared to the rest of the region - especially with regard to childcare, which tends to go systematically to wives in the event of divorce - gives them economic position and domestic strength that allows them to challenge patriarchal relations of dominance within the home. At the same time, they continue to manage the household's money and invest in their children's education as tradition legitimates it, which adds to their potential power.

At the end of an implicit contract between spouses, some women agree to give up the façade of religiosity (in particular a diminution of the presence in the public space through an ostentatious invisibility wearing the full or semi-integral veil), and do all the housework so that the husband does not question the fundamentals of her economic independence). Many men interpret the increase in women's virtual power within the home as a loss of traditional gender roles and therefore of masculinity. This loss puts them in a situation of cognitive dissonance\footnote{The individual tends to reduce the possible dissonance between the various cognitive elements that present themselves to him (those that manifest themselves to his mind). When there is a contradiction between several elements, here between the perception of the traditional role and the reality of the balance of power within the household, the individual can make a work of reduction of the dissonance of which the least expensive psychologically and emotionally consists in avoid perceiving this reality and entering into a series of justifications for the traditional role (this need for justification can thus encourage it to practice a more rigorous religiosity). Leon Festinger, "A theory of cognitive dissonance" (Stanford University Press, 1957); Alfred Schütz, , « Essais sur le monde ordinaire » ("Essays on the Ordinary World") (Éditions du Félin, 2007)} that may encourage them to engage in a more rigorous practice of Islam or even, if a set of conditions are met, adopt a violent extremist point of view. Women can do the same.
Response to the instrumentalization of the feminine cause by the authoritarian State

Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 1 (negligible) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

The presence of women in violent extremism can be understood in part as "an alternative political commitment in response to the State's use of the cause of women." The Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes had institutionalized the feminine cause, assimilating it to the struggle for Western-style modernity. The commitment of jihadist women can be understood, in part, as a rejection of this assimilation between feminine causes and Western modernity. This association denies, indeed, the possibility of emancipation of women within a State and an "authentically Islamic" society.

Women are not peaceful and anti-extremist by nature. Despite the small number of women arrested for terrorism, their role as warriors is praised by some jihadist groups. In its propaganda videos and communiqués, Okba Ibn Nafa group regularly refers to the shooting of Oued Ellil (October 2014) following a house search in which four jihadists militant women lost their lives while shooting at National Guard forces. In addition, a growing number of women are engaged in dormant cell coordination activities. They, of course, conceive their jihadist commitment as a choice.

On the individual level, the push and pull factors are largely the same for women and men. Thus, the gendered variable will not be emphasized, taking into account the response to the instrumentalization of the female cause by the authoritarian State as a specific dimension of women's jihadist engagement.

3.3 Socio-economic factors

Seeking a better social status, opportunities for financial accumulation and a spouse

Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

The departure to conflict zones is often motivated by the desire for a better social status. Physical resistance and military strategic seem a pathway, and is accompanied by greater freedom of choice of spouses or sexual partners. These motivations resemble those that lead to the integration of a delinquent or criminal group. While the literature on violent extremism tends to overstate them, they are more effective for the desperados than for the militants.

101 Members of the security forces, interviews with the author, 2016-2017.
103 “Preventing violent extremism through promoting inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity", Global meeting, (UNDP, Oslo, 14-16 March 2016), p. 23.
Money, which the fighter partly redistributes to his family in the same way as an economic migrant, plays a fundamental role for the desperados. Several residents of working-class neighborhoods claim that recruiters use a financial argument to convince them to go into battle in a conflict zone. Recruiters are paid $3,000 per recruit and "walk in public places, especially in cafes" in search of young Tunisians matching a vulnerable profile: typically, unemployed or semi-unemployed youth with low income. Recruiters focus on the opportunity to "work" in Libya or in the "real State", that is the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. These young people view engagement in an armed group as paid work and not as militant commitment, even though most of them have learned some Salafi-jihadist rhetoric.105

Economic and social marginalization of part of the youth

Social = 4; Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

Young people are a social group that is generally more receptive to violent extremism because of their greater social and economic exclusion (unemployment, extreme poverty, lack of inclusion in public life).106 Violent extremism in Tunisia is a generational phenomenon and concerns "a generation of young people accessing fewer opportunities than the previous generation and experiencing economic marginalization (unemployment) in a society undermined by corruption."107 This was the case with Muslim brotherhood-type Islamism in the 1980s.

In addition, youth is a turning point in the life of an individual during which he or she is more easily influenced and therefore more receptive to antisystem ideologies (biographical and cognitive availability).108 During this period, personal constraints (full-time employment, couple and/or family life) that increase the costs of political commitment are non-existent. Meetings with other individuals are generally more numerous since the size of the sociability network generally increases, especially among students.

In deprived peri-urban areas, public authorities are losing track of a growing number of marginalized young people.109 These latter accumulate activities of petty crime and are wanted by the police; they sometimes destroy their identity papers to become invisible. Since 2011, school dropout rates have

104 Living in a peri-urban area of Greater Tunis, interview with the author, 2014
105 Inhabitants of the working-class neighborhoods of Greater Tunis, interviews with the author, 2013-2014. Small ads were even published in national dailies offering jobs in Libya (engineer, plumbing, construction) without specifying the exact location, in fact in the territories controlled by the OIS in the region of Sirte. Inhabitants of Ben Guerdane and Medenine, interviews with the authors, 2013-2014.
107 « Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities, Opportunities to Enhance Resilience of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia » (Search for Common Ground, 2016), p. 23.
109 Head of the special delegation of Mnihla, police commissioner in Ettadhamen, inhabitants of Ettadhaman, associative activists of Douar Hicher, interviews with the author, Tunis, 2012-2015
been on the rise, especially in peri-urban areas.\textsuperscript{110} The World Bank estimates that 33 percent of young Tunisians between the ages of 15 and 29 are school dropouts without a job or enrolled in vocational training (NEET).\textsuperscript{111} The severity of the school system in secondary schools reinforces this phenomenon. The use of permanent exclusion of pupils as a disciplinary measure is frequent.\textsuperscript{112} This increase in the number of young NEETs increases the number of Desperados available to the armed groups in conflict zones in exchange for remuneration.\textsuperscript{113}

In general, desperados distribute some of the money they earn to their families. Their departure for a zone of conflict plays the role of substitutionary economic emigration.\textsuperscript{114} The more the problems of legal emigration and the risks of illegal emigration towards Western Europe increase, the more the possibility of dying in combat in Syria, in Iraq or Libya becomes secondary as part of a strictly economic\textsuperscript{115} migration project.

**Socio-Regional Discrimination**

Social = 4 (very important); Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 4 (very important)

Regional discrimination reinforces the socio-economic exclusion that most young people live in peri-urban and inland areas.\textsuperscript{116} They include, among other things, reduced access to employment, to the market and to credit and to a more brutal treatment by the security forces.

In fact, a way of morally prioritizing Tunisians according to their aptitude for modernity, taking up part of the colonial discourse, is anchored in mentalities. But most Tunisians do not express it openly, because evoking it is taboo. It presents at the summit, the Sahelians and more widely the people of the East Coast as hard workers and open to otherness. The descendants of the traditional elites (known as “beldis”), civilized and moderate (landed aristocracy, urban commercial bourgeoisie before independence, originating from downtown centers of old urbanization) rub shoulders with them. At the base, there are the descendants of nomads from the interior regions, who were late sedentarized (XIX-XX), turbulent and undisciplined, even seditious.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{110} Farouk Ben Ammar, « Tunisie: L’abandon scolaire, la grande plaie » ("Tunisia: School dropout, the great wound") (Huffpost Tunisia, September 8, 2016), http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com


\textsuperscript{114} "Tunisia: 53% of young people want to leave the country, according to the European Commission" (Webdo, 25 March 2017), http://www.webdo.tn.

\textsuperscript{115} Moussa Bourekba, " Countering violent extremism in the MENA region : time to rethink approaches and strategies “, Euromesco Policy Brief, no. 6317 (May 2016), p. 10.

\textsuperscript{116} Vallentina Colombo, "Multiple layers of marginalization as a paradigm of Tunisian Hotbeds of Jihadism”, in Arturo Varvelli (ed.), “Jihadist Hotbeds, Understanding Local Radicalization Processes” (ISPI, 2016).

During the years 1960-1970, the republican school allowed many citizens, regardless of their socio-regional background, to occupy important positions in the public service. But in the late 1970s, the social lift broke down. Recruitment in the public sector has diminished without sufficient State support to the private sector and to social protection schemes as attractive as in the public service. By pushing many graduates towards an increasingly restrictive public service in terms of job offers, there is increased discrimination in hiring\textsuperscript{118} of these nomadic descendants who were late to be sedentarized (XIX-XX\textsuperscript{TH}).

In 2017, some of these Tunisians, who represent the majority of the population, moved to major urban centers during waves of rural exodus and integrated the middle class. But another class has established itself in deprived peri-urban areas, areas of social segregation, where a large fraction lives in poverty.\textsuperscript{119}

The family name makes it possible to locate the territorial origin of an extended family. This name, place of birth and residence appear on the national identity card. Many Tunisians claim that employers discriminate against these criteria and that security forces respect a kind of tacit hierarchy when they learn about this information.\textsuperscript{120}

As an example, an unemployed graduate declared: "It is always the same thing. The departure of Ben Ali has not changed anything. The family name and place of birth is the first thing employers look at. Many graduates from deprived areas do not find work because they come after Sahelians and members of notable families."\textsuperscript{121}

Given its taboo, this type of discrimination tends to be underestimated in group interviews. While most empirical studies on the causes of violent extremism readily emphasize the lack of socio-economic prospects, the marginalization of the governorates of the interior of the country and the regional inequalities as structural elements of the injustices perceived by many Tunisians\textsuperscript{122}, few evoke these fundamental discriminations.\textsuperscript{123} This social identification of an individual through the geographical and identity origin of one’s extended family is stigmatizing. This affiliation imposed by society is much more significant than one’s place of residence as a factor favoring violent extremism. Local and territorial approaches to prevention of this phenomenon should take this into account.

\textsuperscript{118} Vallentina Colombo, "Multiple layers of marginalization as a paradigm of Tunisian Hotbeds of Jihadism", in Arturo Varvelli (ed.), "Jihadist Hotbeds, Understanding Local Radicalization Processes" (ISPI, 2016), note 18.

\textsuperscript{119} See Mohamed Cherif Ferjani, « Le processus de ségrégation sociale et spatiale dans le Grand Tunis » ("The process of social and spatial segregation in Greater Tunis") (Lyon, 1986

\textsuperscript{120} An extreme left-wing activist in the late 1980s from the Sahel reports "I was arrested during a demonstration organized by an Islamist student union, the police demanded identity cards and kicked all those arrested. I showed mine when they saw that my name was Sahelian, one of them told me discreetly, what are you doing with these people? you are a good person. " Far-left activist, interview with the author, Tunis, September 2016.

\textsuperscript{121} Unemployed graduate, Kasserine, August 2016


\textsuperscript{123} Nevertheless, a Tunisian Association (l’institut maghrébin pour le développement durable -Maghreb Institute for Sustainable Development) based in Douar Hicher, in the area of Tunis where the jihadist organization Ansar Sharia was very structured, recently gathered their testimonials stressing their fundamental character in the commitment of young fighters returning from Syria. The International Republican Institute (IRI) also discusses a series of interviews conducted in Beja in the north-west. See "Understanding the Local Drivers of Violent Extremism in Tunisia" (International Republican Institute, 2017).
Daily Violence in Peri-Urban Areas

Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 5 (fundamental) and Activists = 3 (important)

Lethal violence is relatively rare in Tunisia, but non-lethal violence is widespread, especially among the disadvantaged groups of the population who are the first victims. This is the case of domestic violence, violence at school (student harassment and physical punishment by many teachers), violence in the stadiums - which has been steadily increasing since the second half of the 2000s and has been accelerating since 2015 - and the violence of the police. This exposure to violence increases the chances of an individual adopting it as a legitimate mode of political action.124

Between 2011 and 2013, young people accustomed to everyday violence, including confrontation with the police, respected the instructions of the leaders of Ansar Sharia.125 This Salafist jihadist group who had decided not to use the violence on the Tunisian territory was approved by its social base. It resorted to vigilantism activities, more and more muscular, and resorted to riots on several occasions. These modes of action were more the expression of the violence of these young people had become familiar with than the product of a political strategy.

3.4 Individual Perceptions

Feelings of Relative Frustration

Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 5 (fundamental)

In Tunisia, the feeling of relative frustration is important: being frustrated because one does not have what one thinks one should. This means that the individual does not necessarily live in absolute misery, but is convinced that he or she could obtain a better social condition than the one in which he or she lives. This creates a frustration that can drive him or her to revolt, or at least become politicized.

Relative frustration expresses a high degree of expectation with respect to the State. In Tunisia, its importance is explained by:

- High expectations created by:
  - The republican socializing regime resulting from independence (a similar case in Algeria, but different in Morocco). These expectations disappointed or "betrayed" citizens during the decade 1970-1980 (including the myth of the school as a social lift)126.
  - The popular uprising of 2010-2011 that initiated the so-called "Arab Spring." Young people in peri-urban areas in particular who had clashed with security forces during the

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124 “Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities,” (Search for Common Ground, 2016), p. 21
125 Young people from Douar Hicher, Douar Hicher, June 2013, interviews with the author, group interviews organized by the “Institut maghrébin pour le développement durable” (Maghreb Institute for Sustainable Development), Douar Hicher, May 2017
riots that precipitated the departure of Ben Ali stepped out of their marginalized roles to become the main actors of political change. They have not, however, reached institutional decision-making posts.  

- Poor training and employment match, which created a gap between expectations and the reality of the exercise of the profession and its remuneration.  
- Social-regional discriminations especially in employment, access to the formal economy and credit.  
- Lack of access to basic social services.  
- A high unemployment rate among young people with a higher level of education who have not adapted their perception of the labor market to its reality. They seek a social status and respectability that would have been achieved at a level of qualification equal one generation earlier.  
- A strong investment by many families in the schooling of their children who feel guilty in the event of failure of socio-occupational integration.  
- Economic globalization and the rapid spread of access to the media and new information and communication technologies, which reinforce the expectations in terms of consumption and, therefore, the frustrations inherent in this activity.  
- The summer contact with European residents of Tunisian origin, especially of popular origin, who tend to favor ostentatious consumptions, to symbolically fill the gap that separates them from the privileged categories in their place of residence.  
- Ostentatious consumption of newly rich from smuggling in neglected areas (construction of colorful multi-story houses, purchases of luxury all-terrain cars, in particular).

**Feelings of Humiliation and Injustice**

Social = X; Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 5 (fundamental)

Feeling that one is a victim of injustice is already the product of a "political awareness." Humiliation and injustice are concepts that give rise to physical and psychological sufferings and make them unjustifiable (i.e. the injustices should not have happened - and should not happen anymore). The terms humiliation and injustice have been omnipresent in North African dissenting speeches since the 1980s. Recovering one's lost dignity, rank, or status is usually the political action that ends

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128 Ibid., P. 12; "Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities," (Search for Common Ground, 2016), p. 10.  
129 Discrimination at work is a powerful vector to it  
130 "Regional Programmatic Framework for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Arab States" (UNDP, 2017), p. 22  
134 Thorstein Veblen, « Théorie de la classe de loisir » ("Theory of the leisure class") (Gallimard, 2014)
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humiliation and injustice. This was particularly the case during the Algerian social uprisings of the 1990s and 2000s and the Tunisian uprising of 2010-2011.

The notions of humiliation, injustice and dignity refer to republican ideals and the idea of Islamic law and divine justice. They speak to a reinvented form of clan or tribal honor, and reflect the belief in common superior principles that have been infringed.

On the scale of social analysis, the feelings of humiliation and injustice are motives or justifications, including the feeling of relative frustration; therefore, they will not be taken into account. At the level of individual analysis, however, these feelings are important. The stakeholders who claim to feel humiliation and injustice explain this feeling by the social and regional marginalization and the contempt they suffer, the clientelism that grants favors from which they are excluded, as well as the police brutality that intends to protect this system.

Several French jihadists, mainly of Tunisian origin, use the terms "humiliation" and "dignity" when referring to the reasons for their armed engagement in the Organization of the Islamic State. In their eyes, France is a land of humiliation where Muslims are excluded from political, economic and media power and where the permanent injunction of assimilation in the name of the universalist republican myth is not combined with real prospects for social ascension for everybody. Jihad is a fight "to regain our lost dignity, which they wanted to crush." OIS is a State where "the humiliated of "authentic Islam "would pass from the status of dominated to that of dominant."

Lack of Trust in Public Institutions

Social = 4 (very important); Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 4 (very important)

The lack of trust in public institutions greatly increases the permeability of society to violent extremism. This lack of trust is widespread and affects, according to several surveys, all public institutions except the national army.

The decline in public resources, the importance of clientelist relations as the main relationship between the rulers and the governed have contributed to the dysfunction of public

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137 David Thomson, « Les Revenants » (Le Seuil, 2016), p. 189
138 Ibid, p.190
139 Ibid, p.194
141 "Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion", The World Bank Group, 2014, http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/tunisia/breaking_the_barriers_to_youth_inclusion_eng.pdf, p. 14. This can be explained by the fact that this security body has been shelved from civilian life since independence (and therefore from corruption in the literal sense), its tendency since the 2000s to intervene between the police and the public, to guard public buildings and promote a return to calm during rioting movements, a trend interpreted during the 2010-2011 uprising as protection and support for insurgents.
administrations, which are perceived more from an instrumental point of view ("we must take advantage") than as institutions representing the common property.

The disintegration of traditional solidarities (clan, family) and the penetration of the logic of the market have accentuated this perception. The moral and ethical code offered by Islam plays the role of substitute for public morality. Whoever does not believe in God is considered to be at the mercy of his individual instincts; at the same time, religious belief does not provide enough benchmarks to evolve in the globalized societies of the XX-XXIst century.\footnote{Interviews with jihadist sympathizers and young people from peri-urban areas, 2012-2013; group interviews conducted in Douar Hicher by the Maghreb Institute for Sustainable Development.}

Violent extremist groups claiming authentic Islam play on this fundamental contradiction. They propose to achieve the fusion between the religious, in the moral and ethical sense, and the political while creating a society in which religious belief would be sufficient to achieve its individualistic goals of social promotion and financial accumulation. The waiting horizon of the caliphate and the Islamic State embodies this quest for justice and social well-being that public institutions struggle to offer.\footnote{« Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities, Opportunities to Enhance Resilience of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia » (Search For Common Ground, 2016), p. 30 ; David Thomson, « Les Revenants » (Le Seuil, 2016), p. 38.}

### 3.5 Religious factors

**Instrumentalization and Weakness of the Religious Space under the Authoritarian Rule**

Social = 3 (important); Individual: *Desperados* = 1 (negligible) and Activists = 2 (marginal)

This factor is largely overestimated by some authors.\footnote{Alison Pargeter, « Radicalisation in Tunisia, Islamist Radicalisation in North Africa », dans George Joffré (ed.), « Islamist Radicalisation in North Africa, Politics and Process » (Routledge, 2011), p. 71-95} Under Bourguiba and Ben Ali (1959-2011), the authoritarian regime maintained an ambivalent relationship with regard to religious space. It tried in a way, sometimes contradictory, to marginalize and exploit it. Since 1956, the new independent State abolished the Sharia courts and integrated the *zitounian* education system into the emerging secular university. In 1957, it abolished the *beylicate*, proclaimed the Republic, and Habib Bourguiba became the first president. The new power functionalized or dismissed the agents of the cult, suppressed the Koranic schools and abolished the public and semi-private *habous* that allowed the Sufi brotherhoods organized around the *zawiyas* (Muslim religious buildings) to be self-financed.\footnote{Public and semi-private *habous* are lands whose property is theoretically "inalienable" and placed under the authority of the religious authorities, a right of usufruct is conferred on the exploiters until extinction of the descendants.}

In the 1970s, after the failure of the socialist-inspired developmentalist policy, the State tried to fill the ideological vacuum in which the regime was precipitated. It focused on religious identity, and launched a policy of construction of mosques (especially in high schools), scheduled working hours for public service during Ramadan, integrated religious education as a discipline in the curriculum and introducing religious references in textbooks. It also regulated the consumption of alcohol.

During 1980-1990, authorities legislated in order to promote respect for the fasting of Ramadan.\footnote{Circular of the Ministry of the Interior concerning the closure of consumer establishments during Ramadan (June 1981)} At the same time, they forbid the veil in primary and secondary schools, assimilating it to a sectarian
and denominational clothing with reference to the distinctive signs shown by Islamist militants to thus break with the traditions of the country.\(^{148}\) In the beginning of the 1990s, in parallel with the police repression of which Ennahdha was the victim, the hegemonic party of President Ben Ali started a so-called “dehydration policy” of the sources of Islamist fundamentalism. He delineated mainly textbooks and religious reference journals.\(^{149}\)

Starting from the beginning of the 1980s, the policy of the authoritarian State vis-à-vis the religious space was largely determined by security objectives: to take the wind out of the sails of the Islamist protest incarnated by the Movement of the Islamic tendency (Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique, MTI, which will become “Ennahdha” in 1988), and to contain contestation. In times of tension, the regime tightly controlled the content of the sermons, closed the mosques outside the prayer hours and carried out raids in front of the houses of worship to question the faithful about the activities of possible Islamist militants.\(^{150}\) Later, it loosened his grip on religion. This was particularly the case in the second half of the 2000s, when it became more tolerant of the outward signs of religiosity, allowed the arrival of preachers from the Arabian Gulf\(^{151}\), launched a television and an Islamic radio, and created an Islamic bank.

On the social level, this instrumental relationship with religion and the willingness of the public authorities to monopolize it, alongside the weakened legitimacy of rulers, encouraged the adepts to seek alternative religious discourse.\(^{152}\) In addition, the regime has never allocated significant resources to this official Islam: few resources are allocated to religious institutions, and there is weak training of imams. This has prevented the establishment of a true religious elite capable of providing a credible religious discourse\(^{153}\) that offers a moral and ethical code to overcome the often-immoral character of the institutions.

During the 2000s, the attraction of televised preachers of the satellite channels of the Gulf and their fatwas (religious rules) increased\(^{154}\), as well as those of self-proclaimed preachers. The legitimacy of promoting fatwas extended to the ordinary citizen, who, at the same time, enjoyed only an elementary religious education.\(^{155}\) This has reinforced violent extremism and contributed to the dynamics of re-Islamization (see below).

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\(^{148}\) The hijab issue in Tunisia and the debates in France Larbi Chouikha
\(^{150}\) Ibid, p.150
On the individual level, having a strong religious culture is far from favoring\textsuperscript{156} or disadvantaging\textsuperscript{157} violent extremism. The \textit{desperados} have a weak one,\textsuperscript{158} and the militants of a relatively strong one.\textsuperscript{159} Beyond its precise content (Malikism, Wahhabism, Quietist Salafism, etc.), its mode of acquisition is fundamental. Indeed, this may have been transmitted by the school, which implies that official religious discourse is spreading vigorously in society through public education, which is not the case in Tunisia. It may have been forged in a personal and militant way, transmitted by the family whose sociological characteristics and the course of its members can further encourage the propensity to become a violent extremist: scholars from the traditional elite, very popular areas, activists of the Islamist movement in the years 1970-1980, etc.\textsuperscript{160}

\textbf{Dissemination of Quietist Salafism}

\textit{Social = 2 (marginal); Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 2 (marginal)}

In Tunisia, the attraction to Salafism-Quietism was reinforced after September 11, 2001. Many analysts mentioned its influence on the adoption of violent extremism, in particular, through the satellite channels of the Gulf.\textsuperscript{161} In the confessions collected during police investigations, several Tunisian jihadists arrested between 2013 and 2015 said that the influence of Salafist quietist preachers like Mohamed Hassen, Khaled Errachid and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub was decisive on their commitment.\textsuperscript{162} Still, the explanatory power of this factor will be reduced, knowing that the social and political behavior of the individuals claiming this rigorous Islam changes according to the context; at the individual level, everything depends on the re-appropriation of its language elements.

Quietist Salafism has a doctrinal common core with jihadism and justifies the use of minor jihad (armed action) on the theological level when the powers in place decide it. Recent developments in Libya show that the Quietist Salafist groups (more specifically, claiming the so-called "madkhalist" Movement) are very active on the battlefield on the side of the Khalifa Haftar (West Libyan) forces and, to a lesser extent, the Fayez el Serraj government (particularly in Sirte).

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\textsuperscript{156} "Understanding radicalization, A Litterature review of models and drivers », (WANA institute, 2016), p. 21.
\textsuperscript{158} Several Tunisian lawyers specialized in the defense of the jihadists affirm it. A significant portion of individuals arrested for terrorism-related activities have a basic knowledge of the Muslim religion
\textsuperscript{159} Members of Ansar Sharia, Tunis, 2012-2013, interviews with the author.
\textsuperscript{160} For the Tunisian militants of the extreme left of the years 1960-1970 and Islamists of the 1980s, to have militant parents (father, mother and maternal uncle) encourage the entry in militancy in a revolutionary group. Michaël Ayari, " Le prix de l’engagement politique dans la Tunisie autoritaire, gauchistes et islamistes sous Bourguiba et Ben Ali (1959-2011) » (“The price of political commitment in authoritarian Tunisia, leftists and Islamists under Bourguiba and Ben Ali”) (1959-2011)" (IRMC-Karthala, 2017). I do not have enough information about Salafist-jihadi activists to take this factor into account.
\textsuperscript{162} "Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files " -Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights), Tunis, 2016), p. 55
On the social level, the Quietist Salafism remains an extremism that rejects the universal values of human rights, spreading a message of religious, cultural and social intolerance, promoting in particular the strict separation of gender in the public space, which, in addition, can become violent. As long as nothing impedes the spread of Quietist Salafism, it remains peaceful; if it is prevented from spreading, it can become violent. Between 2011 and 2013, faced with the refusal of some inhabitants of the neighborhoods to conform to the practice of a more rigorous Islam, quietists and jihadists organized joint operations of vigilantism. Similarly, they would resort to the riot when they considered that Islam was a “victim of provocation.”

In Tunisia, between 2011 and 2013, the border was held between quietist Salafism and jihadism. The first ones acted as a political pressure group, collaborating with members of the then-ruling Islamist party Ennahdha. In 2012, for example, they led a fight for the inclusion of Sharia in the constitution. The latter claimed that they opposed any form of armed violence in Tunisia. They regarded the country as a land of preaching in which it was appropriate to root peacefully - although the violence was legitimate in Syria, especially against the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad. There were many meetings between quietists and jihadists, especially in preaching tents, places of worship and kindergartens run by religious associations.

On the scale of individual analysis, there is no direct causal link between adopting Salafism Quietism and Violent Extremism. Salafism Quietism is more accurately a powerful vector of depoliticization and, by extension, de-radicalization, which, however, shares elective affinities with violent extremism, making it more likely, under certain conditions.

It broadcasts categories of extremist thoughts that can be used to form a violent extremist syncretistic point of view at the individual level, especially among the desperados. If it wants itself to be apolitical and non-violent, this is far from the case of some individuals who discover it, especially on the Internet. They are more sensitive to its extremist nature than to its peaceful dimension.

Quietist Salafism, as a rigorously religious and doctrinally crept religious movement, depoliticizes while promoting in particular obedience to the powers in place and the values of bourgeois individualism and offers a strong ethical and moral code. Its theological core with jihadism allows it to dialogue with it in the name of peace. A preacher of this movement can easily find arguments

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163 Quiet and jihadist Salafists, Tunis, Kairouan, 2012-2013, interviews with the author. This was particularly the case in June 2012 during the riots of Abdelia, after the projection of the film Persepolis on a national television channel and extracts from a feature film broadcast on YouTube, Innocence of Muslim.


167 The Salafist quietists preach, in fact, respect for the wali al-amr (the power in place). On the limits of their apolitical character, see https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00372161/document

convincing a jihadist trained on the theological field or one *desperados*, to renounce the use of violence.\footnote{169}

**Repression of the Re-Islamization Dynamic**

Social = 4 (very important); Individual: *Desperados* = 4 (very important) and Activists = 4 (very important)

It is important not to confuse the dynamics of re-Islamization with the diffusion of Quietist Salafism. The first one is a process of accentuation of the religious practice or the visibility religiosity (e.g. wearing beards and *qamis* for men, the veil or *niqab* for women, refusal of tobacco and alcohol)\footnote{170}. The second one is a massification of a rigorous approach of Sunni Islam that tends to merge with Saudi Wahhabism.

Since the early 2000s, many Tunisians adopted a more rigorous religiosity. On an individual level, this religiosity became the means to achieve social advancement goals, self-realization and the quest for a well-being. Forcing oneself to abide by ethical codes by cultivating the fear of God and permanent guilt increases the chances of achieving one's ambitions, success or wealth, in an increasingly aggressive, individualistic and competitive society.\footnote{171}

Tunisia is the only country in North Africa where this process of re-Islamization, which started in the years 1990-2000, is moderate (except in the South).\footnote{172} Since the classification of Ansar Sharia as a terrorist organization in August 2013 and under Ben Ali, most security forces interpret outward signs of religiosity as indicative of an extremist attitude that is potentially political and therefore dangerous for the security of the State, which reduces the visibility of this re-Islamization.\footnote{173}

At the individual level, this lack of police discernment can encourage violent extremism in the sense that it transforms re-Islamization into an act of resistance. Some actors immersed in this dynamic can justify or resort to violence when the authorities upset this process. On the social scale, the jihadist groups profit from it by spreading a speech according to which impious powers prevent true Muslims from practicing their religion.

### 3.6 Institutional factors

**Rise of Corruption**


\footnote{170} Islamization is a dynamic of accentuation of religious practice or the visibility of the signs associated with it. Patrick Haenni, « L’islam de marché » (Le Seuil, 2005), p. 8.

\footnote{171} Patrick Haenni, « L’islam de marché » (Le Seuil, 2005), p. 10-11 ; see, how the veil became Muslim. Let us note that this success or this wealth can be obtained without will and calculation, as a secondary effect of an action undertaken intentionally for another purpose. John Elster, « Le laboureur et ses enfants, deux essais sur les limites de la rationalité » (*“The farmer and his children, two essays on the limits of rationality*”) (Éditions de Minuit, 1986).

\footnote{172} “Root Causes and Drivers of Radicalization to Violent Extremism in Tunisian Communities, Opportunities to Enhance Resilience of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia » (Search for Common Ground, 2016), p. 41.

Social = 4 (very important); Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 4 (very important)

In general, the rise of corruption greatly reduces the resilience of the State and society to violent extremism and increases the risk of violent extremism at the individual level. In Tunisia, corruption is the tip of the iceberg of a historic relationship with the State that could be described as negative. As under the beylicate in the nineteenth century, the relationship with the State is often limited to challenge it through revolt, courting through clientelism so that it offers a public job, maintains the purchasing power, authorizes to penetrate the legal economic market of which access it regulates sparingly or simply allows to carry out a contraband activity. The increase of corruption and its perception means, in this sense, that this relation becomes dysfunctional.

Moreover, in the Tunisian working classes, the rich are considered by definition to be corrupt, since it would be impossible to become rich without being corrupt in an unfair society. Corruption also ties to using relations to obtain privileges, jobs, or accelerated administrative procedures. These corrupt are also perceived promiscuous (sex outside marriage and consumption of alcohol). Thus, a religious connotation comes into the picture: whoever is "afraid of God" is considered "non-corrupt" and therefore just. It was one of the arguments used by voters of the Islamist party Ennahdha during the vote for a National Constituent Assembly in October 2011.

The videos of the armed group Okba Ibn Nafa and the releases of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) systematically refer to corruption. In border areas in particular, the propaganda rhetoric of the jihadist militants strongly emphasizes this aspect, especially the corruption of the security and customs forces, which significantly reduces the inflow of contraband money. This is one of the main resources of these regions, historically deprived from public investment. As noted by a resident of Ben Guerdane on the morning of March 7, 2016, when a group of about 50 armed men claiming to belong to OIS, attempted to take the military barracks and the National Guard station in the city:

"At 4 o’clock in the morning, the jihadists controlled the main arteries of the city. They were doing identity checks. They said we are the Islamic State. What is your profession? Civil servant? How can you help us? Do you know how to use a Kalashnikov, etc. When they were checking a taxi, they said, you got your car through leasing, it’s "riba" (usury), with us there will be no "riba" or surely no corruption."
Disfunction and Brutality of the Security Forces

Social = 5 (fundamental); Individual: Desperados = 4 (very important) and Activists = 4 (very important)

On the social level, the dysfunction of the security forces is a fundamental factor. The weak conflict mediation capacity of the police forces vis-a-vis local populations generates violence that is often followed by the repressive practices. In the absence of mediation, what could be resolved through dialogue turns into conflict. In addition, authorities tend to confuse surveillance and regulation. Once surveillance is undermined, any conflict seems to put the security of the State at stake. Their security obsession thus weakens their capacity for mediation, which generates insecurity.\textsuperscript{181} Citizens do not feel protected. Their security is ranked second to that of the State. This undermines trust in public institutions and makes the population more receptive to violent extremism.

Young people living in peri-urban or deprived areas, identified and discriminated regions, especially descendants of nomads, are the first victims of police brutality. Part of the raids seem to have the function of maintaining social and space segregation. Police try to maintain a State of constant tension with young people from lower-income neighborhoods. It multiplies the controls and the arrests in the spaces of these districts where it can evolve without too many risks in order to both limit the periodic flow of these young people in the shopping centers and in the touristic areas. This practice also discourages the rural exodus.\textsuperscript{182}

Daily rackets of small traders and smugglers and the involvement of certain agents in the underground economic activities of some popular neighborhoods are examples of corruption. This corruption deepens the crisis of trust between the population and the police institution. If the police work with the local population in the intelligence field, their relationship is primarily based on fear and the blackmail capabilities of security agents. The police and the National Guard benefit from repressive and custodial laws (such as the cannabis law), allowing them to recruit indicators (in exchange for collaboration with the police, it does not sanction the committed crime). When the police lose their power of coercion, their collaboration with the local populations diminishes, especially in the peri-urban deprived areas.

On the individual level, the dysfunction and brutality of the security forces play on several levels. Law enforcement represents “the force of order.”\textsuperscript{183} Regardless of the professionalism of the police, some citizens, especially young people from poor peri-urban areas, consider this order deeply unfair.\textsuperscript{184} They claim to have fought against Ben Ali’s police in their neighborhoods during the uprising of December-January 2010-2011, and to have triumphed. In their eyes, the security forces represent the guardians of a social hierarchy of which they hope less and less to climb the ladder. Anti-police rhetoric is therefore a reflection of a strong sense of humiliation, injustice and relative frustration that is not solely attributable to the security forces.

The physical and psychological suffering of the victims of ordinary police brutality (and thus by extension of the social order) creates moral shocks which are a powerful vector of an individual politicization capable of favoring violent extremism. They increase the propensity of the actor to seek

\textsuperscript{182} Former Director of National Security in the 2000s, Geographer, Tunis, 2015.
\textsuperscript{183} See Didier Fassin, « La force de l'ordre, une anthropologie de la police des quartiers » (Le Seuil, 2015). ("The Security Forces, an Anthropology of Neighborhood Police")
elements of ideological discourse allowing him to give a meaning to them and make them unjustifiable. Most activists of radical, revolutionary, violent or non-violent protest groups refer to it when they reconstruct their personal journey, considering this element as determining in their entry into militancy.\textsuperscript{185}

In July 2015, the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) passed a new anti-terror law, criticized by several human rights organizations.\textsuperscript{186} This reinforced the determination of the security forces to fight extremists including those who have not moved into armed action.\textsuperscript{187} While the security measures have prevented many terrorist attacks, they have also reinforced the violent extremist point of view of several elements of the Salafist jihadist movement in Tunisia, leading some towards armed violence.

The low police investigative capacity, uncompetitive salaries and lack of resources encourage members of the security forces to prefer confessions to evidence and to resort to brutality and torture to "save time." The individual who experiences this violence and did not commit it himself is confirmed in his violent extremist point of view. This is the case, in particular, when he considers that the violence that he undergoes is not proportional to the act he has committed, which fuels his feeling of injustice and humiliation.

According to the commander-in-chief of the National Guard, more than 3,500 people were brought before a magistrate for terrorism and 1,800 lawsuits were instituted between 2014 and 2017.\textsuperscript{188} Several lawyers and members of the security forces have reported larger figures. According to them, since the promulgation of the new anti-terror law in August 2015, between 2,000 and 3,000 individuals every year transit for a week by the premises of the police's anti-terrorist investigation services (Gorjani barracks) and of the national guard (barracks of the Aouina). Some are victims of mistreatment, brutality and even torture, even if this practice is far from being systematic.\textsuperscript{189} Following this brutality, they are then released by the examining magistrate. Between 1,000 and 2,000 are regularly detained preemptively for one or two years, more than \(\frac{3}{4}\) of whom are cleared.

Most of those brought before the specialized investigative services, detained preemptively or sentenced by the courts did not commit violent acts. Only a small minority has been condemned for


\textsuperscript{186} It defines the term "terrorism" in a vague and ambiguous manner, like the previous law drafted under Ben Ali. It allows the extension of the period of detention before the first hearing before an investigating judge, from six days up to 15 days for terrorist suspects. It also allows the courts to sit in closed session, and to conceal the identity of witnesses to the accused. See "Law No. 2003-75 of 10 December 2003 on Supporting International Efforts to Combat Terrorism and the Suppression of Money Laundering"; "Organic Law n° 2015-26 of 7 August 2015, on the fight against terrorism and the repression of money laundering"; «Tunisie : Respecter les Droits Humains dans le Cadre de la Lutte Contre le Terrorisme»("Tunisia: Respecting human rights in the fight against terrorism") (Human Rights Watch, 28 April 2016); «Tunisie : Des Failles dans le Nouveau Projet de Loi Antiterroriste»,("Tunisia: flaws in the new anti-terrorism bill"), (Human Rights Watch, July 7, 2015).

\textsuperscript{187} Giordano Segneri, UN Resident Coordinator Office, Tunisia, "A reading of Tunisia's draft counter-terrorism law (No. 2014-9)", April 2015

\textsuperscript{188} "Tunisia-Terrorism: 3517 people have appeared in court over the past three years" (Huffpost Tunisia, 31 January 2017), http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com.

\textsuperscript{189} According to several lawyers, the use of torture has reportedly decreased, notably at the Aouina barracks (National Guard) after the amendment of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CPP) on February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2016, granting the right of the suspects to legal counselling from the beginning of the detention for police investigation. Lawyers, Tunis, September-November 2016, interviews with the author, see « Tunisie: Une avancée marquante pour les droits des personnes détenues» "Tunisia: A breakthrough for the rights of detainees" (Human Rights Watch, February 4, 2016).
deadly action on Tunisian territory. Several hundreds of Tunisians returning from conflict zones were sentenced for 5-8 years imprisonment (5 years for belonging to a terrorist organization plus 2 to 3 years for having undergone military training). However, most of the individuals tried and sentenced since 2011 (between 1,000 and 1,500) “nourished the intention to leave”, “did not denounce their neighbor who left”, have maintained contacts with a member of the family present in a zone of conflict, or engaged in jihadist proselytism. Since the promulgation of the anti-terrorist law of summer 2015, a simple propaganda activity on social networks or the possession of jihadist literature is enough to provide evidence justifying pre-trial detention or conviction.

In addition, there are occasional police raids in surrounding neighborhoods, the place of attacks in 2015 and brutal house searches, traumatic, resulting in detentions as part of an investigation led by the anti-terrorist services, as well as the thousands of people arrested in police stations following various denunciations, telephone tapping (triggered by keywords) or activities considered questionable on social networks by the General Directorate of Technical Services of the Ministry of Interior, and not referred to the specialized investigation services.

Several ordinary citizens, respectful of the order, little politicized, and members of the middle class have been victims of police blunders (arbitrary arrests, brutality, ill-treatment) in the framework of the fight against terrorism. They declare that something has broken and that their relationship with the authorities has not been the same since that experience.

Deficit of Political Representation of Young People in Peri-urban Areas

Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 2 (marginal) and Activists = 4 (very important)

The opposition political parties under Ben Ali, mainly the Congrès pour la République (CPR) and Ennahdha, came to power after the elections for a National Constituent Assembly in October 2011. They could not live up to the expectations of young people of the peri-urban areas who had nevertheless actively contributed to the departure of Ben Ali. Between 2011 and 2013, the Salafist-jihadist Ansar Sharia movement succeeded in representing these young people who recognized themselves in the speech of their leaders, who came, like them, from the same social backgrounds. In particular, they gave to the identity of the neighborhood more than is its due “we are the sons of the neighborhood”, we came from it, unlike “the elite who governs us and does not care about our everyday concerns.”

Inability of the State to Regulate Socially Destructured Spaces

190 Lawyers, Tunis, September-November 2016, interviews with the author.
191 “Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires” ("Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files") (Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Tunis, 2016), p. 145
192 Tunisie: “Nous ne voulons plus avoir peur”, Violations des Droits Humains sous l’État d’Urgence » ("Tunisia: we do not want to be afraid anymore, human rights violations under the state of emergency") - (Amnesty International, February 13, 2017)
193 Residents of Tunis arrested for terrorism-related cases, Interviews with the author, Tunis, 2015-2016
194 Michael Béchir Ayari and Fabio Merone, « Ansar Charia une institutionnalisation à la croisée des chemins » ("Ansar Sharia Institutionalization at the Crossroads") in Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel, « Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde arabe » ("Uprisings and political re-compositions in the Arab world") (Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2014), p. 426
Violent extremist groups establish themselves in spaces that the public authorities struggle to regulate, in both the security and social contexts.\textsuperscript{195} This is generally the case for those who are no longer governed because of deadly conflicts (destruction of infrastructures, disappearance of the local elite, etc.) At the end of the 2000s, the Salafist-jihadist movement has also theorized this strategy of rooting.\textsuperscript{196} In Libya, OIS applied it in the city of Sirte, materially destroyed and ungovernable following the NATO strikes in 2011; in Tunisia, no space has been completely liberated from the central power.\textsuperscript{197}

However, violent extremist groups are able to win the hearts of the populations by acting as substitutes for the State (charitable activities, street cleaning campaigns, etc.) in neighborhoods abandoned by the public authorities. This is the case in peri-urban areas, which are areas of rural exodus and social segregation in which clan and family solidarities have disappeared without social solidarity mechanisms or economic relief. When governments disengage socially from these spaces and attempt to compensate for this disengagement by a stronger security presence, the attraction to violent extremism increases. The inhabitants perceive the public institutions represented essentially by the police as a quasi-occupying force.

This was the case between 2011 and 2013 in several peri-urban areas of Kairouan, Bizerte, Sfax and especially Tunis. Ansar Sharia, like the Jema‘ah al-Islamiyya in Cairo in the 1980s\textsuperscript{198} or the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria of the same decade, has replaced, not only, the public authorities, largely absent for structural (disengagement of the State) and cyclical reasons (consequences of the uprising of 2010-2011 which resulted in the withdrawal of the security forces from the theater of riots).

In addition, these groups palliate to the disintegration of traditional community ties (clan and family solidarities) that make sense in the spaces dominated by the agrarian economy, but are ineffective in peri-urban areas. The State - whatever the effectiveness of its social redistribution mechanisms and the legitimacy of its national socialization bodies (army, school, church) - cannot entirely replace its links unless it becomes totalitarian.\textsuperscript{199} Violent extremist groups succeed in this task, taking advantage of the weakness of civil society organizations independent of the State.\textsuperscript{200} They use religious rules as a moral and ethical base.

When their financial resources are sufficient and they are not forced to resort too frequently to racketeering activities of the local populations to obtain them,\textsuperscript{201} they are able to play a vital role at

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\textsuperscript{197} “Preventing Violent Extremism: Libya and the North Africa Region,” Summary Record, (UNDP / Government of the Netherlands Round Table Discussion, December 20, 2016), p. 5.

\textsuperscript{198} Patrick Haenni, « L’ordre des Caïds: conjurer la dissidence urbaine au Caire » (“The order of the Caids: warding off urban dissent in Cairo”) (CEDEJ / Karthala, 2005).

\textsuperscript{199} See the factor "loss of family and community solidarities and the search for substitution links.”

\textsuperscript{200} This is the case in Douar Hicher, a peri-urban area of the capital where between 2011 and 2013. Despite the presence of dozens of associations, they were perceived as mere relays of the public authorities (they existed elsewhere under the regime of Ben Ali). Ansar Sharia was seen as the only truly independent group. Group interviews of the Maghreb Institute for Sustainable Development, 2017, Ansar Sharia activists in Douar Hicher, interviews with the author, 2012-2013.

\textsuperscript{201} Patrick Haenni, « L’ordre des Caïds : conjurer la dissidence urbaine au Caire » (“The order of the Caids: warding off urban dissent in Cairo”) (CEDEJ / Karthala, 2005).
the social and community level. They play this role through the settlement of family disputes and neighborhood conflicts, the fight against delinquency, and the regulation of the underground economy. This increases the attraction for the ideology they promote.

When a violent extremist group succeeds in fulfilling this function, it offers much more gratification to the individual who joins it than when it is clandestine. To be enrolled in it is less risky and the material and symbolic rewards of activism within it are, as a general rule, more important. Integrating Ansar Sharia between 2011 and 2013 allowed a young person from a peri-urban area to gain social status. Having become a militant, he could play the role of a mediator and a counselor settling neighborhood disputes, enacting aid and fatwas to the neighborhood. He could also receive small allowances from supporters of the organization and open an informal or formal business such as a seller of fruit and vegetables.

The prison Space

Social = 5 (fundamental); Individual: Desperados = 5 (fundamental) and activists = 4 (very important)

Prison reflects the lack of respect given to the most vulnerable sections of the population. The material conditions are inhuman, and conditions are often harsher on those poorest citizens. The harshness of daily life in the prison space reflects the reality of the violence of the social relations in the Tunisian society. Most of the problems facing prison systems in developing countries are pronounced in Tunisia: mistreatment, torture, corruption of staff and security agents, operating in organized gangs, drug consumption, insecurity, inadequate accommodation, overcrowding, lack of human and material resources, presence of violent extremist groups and spread of their ideology, and recruiting networks for conflict zones.

At the level of individual analysis, the prison experience is a kind of particle accelerator of violent extremism. All the contributing factors that are generally found in society are, in a sense, uninhibited. The prison culture borrows from the delinquent culture that permeates the jihadist culture, which in turn innervates the first two. The daily life of many young people in peri-urban areas is similar to that of the prison world. Besides, they form the bulk of the contingent of Tunisian detainees (about 30,000). In many ways, the daily life of a majority of these young people is summed up in a conscious or unconscious preparation of themselves for the violence of this space, where the mistreatment of the prison staff gives way to the brutality of the police.

On the social level, the Tunisian prison space is an incubator of violent extremism and functions as a hiring place. The common law detainee, approaching violent extremism, finds in it a political and

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202 Michael Béchir Ayari and Fabio Merone, « Ansar Charia une institutionnalisation à la croisée des chemins » ("Ansar Sharia Institutionalization at the Crossroads") in Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel, « Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde arabe » ("Uprisings and political re-compositions in the Arab world") (Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2014), p. 426

203 Ibid.

204 Ahmed Othmani, « Sortir de la prison, un combat pour reformer les systèmes carcéraux dans le monde » ("Getting out of prison, a fight to reform prison systems around the world") (La Découverte, 2002).


religious justification as much for his or her delinquent behavior as for his or her feeling of humiliation, injustice and relative frustration. Recruitment networks for conflict zones were particularly structured there between 2011 and 2015.

Individuals detained for terrorism but having only taken the step of jihadist proselytism find the opportunity to get in touch with seasoned militants. In order to survive in this hostile environment, they get closer to the jihadist or “terrorist” political community that justice has decided they belong to. In the prison space, being part of a community is, in fact, a pledge of protection. In addition, jihadist detainees are, in general, more assaulted. They are considered dangerous for the established order, and therefore affected by an aura of resistance that earns them respect by the detainees for common rights.

In addition, nationally or internationally recognized jihadist leaders and activists or perpetrators of deadly violence are grouped in specific wings of the prison. This gives them the opportunity to better structure themselves. As noted by a lawyer specializing in the defense of Salafist jihadists: “In prison, most of the convicts for terrorism are mixed with the detainees for common rights offenders, but since 2015, guards and chamber heads prevent them from talking to them. Large cases are isolated in terrible conditions and are regularly brutalized, tortured, etc. If the torture takes place during the investigation, it takes place mainly in prison, and it is very difficult to limit it.”

Imprisonment can become an initiatory stage of the violent extremist course. It is the space where the brutality of the security forces is expressed freely. The prison is also part of the commonplaces of jihadist culture. The armed group Okba Ibn Nafa regularly addresses the “imprisoned brothers”, promising to come and free them.

### 3.7 Situational factors

**Call for Volunteers for an International Cause (Arab Spring)**

Social = 3 (important); Individual: Desperados = 2 (marginal) and Activists = 4 (very important)

This factor is considered situational and not ideological.

Between 2011 and 2013, Bashar al-Assad’s regime was described in mainstream media as a tyrannical regime. The first reading of the Syrian and Libyan conflicts was the one of a struggle of freedom and democracy against tyranny and dictatorship. As noted by David Thomson, the jihadist groups shared many videos encouraging the coming to save the Syrian people, whom they described as martyred. These videos aroused a “sincere emotion, revived by the inaction of the international community and

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208 This was also the case under Ben Ali when citizens who simply consulted jihadist sites were incarcerated and became jihadist militants in prison. Between 2004 and 2009, nearly 2,000 individuals were imprisoned for various reasons ranging from visiting a jihadist website to a successful or failed attempt to reach armed groups in Afghanistan or Iraq. At the time, a lawyer in charge of this case, noted in 2002, “the majority did not even know what was Salafism, Wahhabism or jihadism! They did not even understand why they were arrested! ”. See, International Crisis Group, “Violence and Salafist Challenge,” Middle East / North Africa Report no. 137 (February 13, 2013), p. 13.

209 Lawyer specialized in the defense of Salafist-jihadists, Tunis, November 2016.

210 See in particular the propaganda video of Okba Ibn Nafa, broadcast on YouTube on December 1, 2016.

an ambiguous foreign policy of France against Syrian rebels. In Tunisia, as in the rest of the region, many local imams pronounced fatwas encouraging the fight against the Bashar al-Assad regime and the protection of Syrian women and children.

**Gathering of Jihadist Militants Released from Prisons or in Exile**

Social = 5 (fundamental); Individual: Desperados = 5 (fundamental) and Activists = 5 (fundamental)

In the night before Ben Ali’s departure on 14 January 2011, Salafist-jihadists escaped from prison. The escapees included Borj Erroumi (Bizerte) and Borj El Amri (Manouba). A few days later, nearly 2,000 Tunisians jailed for terrorism under Ben Ali between 2003 and 2010 were released following the proclamation of a general amnesty; more than half of them had fought in conflict zones. Salafist-jihadist Tunisian refugees in France, Italy, Belgium, Great Britain returned to Tunisia after experiences in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Iraq. In partnership with young Tunisians (especially students and unemployed youngsters from peri-urban areas and deprived areas), they set up brainstorming circles and small discussion groups. The Ansar Sharia organization began to organize itself in May 2011 in order to federate these collectives.

**Organized Recruitment Networks for Conflict Zones and the "let go" Policy**

Social = 5 (fundamental); Individual: Desperados = 5 (fundamental) and Activists = 5 (fundamental)

Between 2011 and 2013, the Tunisian government did not strongly oppose the departure of its nationals, especially to Syria. Several leaks of the parliamentary inquiry commission on “the channels of recruitment” of Tunisians for the benefit of jihadist organizations confirm the rumors that ran in 2011 and 2012. An important part of Tunisian departures to Syria was organized methodically through prison recruitment, organized flights to Turkey, and logistical support from Islamic charities financed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. Criminal networks of clandestine migration also played a role.

**Easy Access to Funding Sources**

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212 David Thomson, "The Revenants" ("the Come-backs") (Le Seuil, 2016), p. 275.
Access to funding sources is a fundamental situational factor. Without funding, violent extremist groups lose their military and logistical capacity as well as most of their attractiveness. In addition, desperados are less motivated by ideology than militants. Recruitment networks for conflict zones also depend on these funds. Access to this funding was relatively easy between 2011 and 2013. Large sums of money passed through charities, and small amounts from Western Europe and Gulf countries were reportedly distributed monthly to Salafist-jihadists via money transfer operators such as MoneyGram.218

Takeover of Places of Worship by Salafist-Jihadist Groups, Multiplication of Preaching Tents and Strong Activism on the Internet

Between 2011 and 2013, nearly 1,000 mosques came under the control of the Salafist-jihadist movement,219 including Ansar Sharia. Such examples include the Ennasr mosque, the Beni Hashem mosque at Douar Hicher, the Errahma mosque at Cité Elkhadra, the Frechich mosque (western Kram district, suburb of Tunis), the mosque El Yasmine at Ariana, and the Ettouba Mosque in Jebel Lahmar. Several people involved in the 2015 attacks preached in those mosques, such as Kamel Zarrouk.220

Most of the people arrested for terrorism between 2013 and 2016 confirm the motivating influence of meetings within the preaching tents.221 The influence of face-to-face meetings is fundamental, especially when these are combined with the use of social networks and the reading of jihadist works.222 The lifting of censorship on the Internet and the total lack of police control on internet users have opened access to these writings and allowed the establishment of violent extremist social networks and discussion forums.

Neighborhood of Libya and Tunisian-Libyan Jihadist Connection

At the time of the war against the Kaddafi regime, nearly 1,000 Tunisians took part in the fight on the side of the loyalists or on the side of the revolutionaries. Several Ben Guerdane nationals supported the Loyalists, and were imprisoned by the revolutionaries and released; they later joined OIS in Libya.223 Others, having fought with the revolutionaries, joined groups supported by Al Qaeda in the

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218 Senior bank executives, interviews with the author, Tunis, 2012.
220 « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux) (“Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files” (Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights), Tunis, 2016, p. 55 and p. 61.
221 Ibid, p. 51 and p. 56.
222 Ibid, p. 56; Jihadist ideology is generally propagated by a combination of these different vectors. “Understanding Radicalization,” A Review of Models and Drivers, [WANA Institute, 2016], p. 19.
223 Accordingly, several Tunisian jihadists from Ben Guerdane who took part in the attempt to control the city on March 7, 2016 had joined troops loyal to Kaddafi in the first half of 2011. Inhabitants of Ben Guerdane, interviews with the author, Tunis, June 2016.
Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Tunisian fighters regularly participated in terrorist attacks in Libya (e.g. the attack on the Benghazi consulate on September 12, 2012, the attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli in January 2015).  

Libya provides a training ground and a sanctuary for armed jihadist groups from neighboring countries, and Tunisia provides a fertile ground for the recruitment of these groups operating in Libya. Several Tunisian jihadists have opened training camps in Libya. Examples include: Derna camp, supervised by two Tunisians (Ahmed Rouissi and Adel Saidi); Misrara; Dar Dhiada in Laajilet; and Sebrata, which was led by two Tunisians, Ahmed Rouissi and Nourredine Chouchane. The perpetrators of the attacks on the Bardo Museum and Port el Kantaoui in 2015 reportedly went to these training camps. Even if these camps were destroyed between 2014 and 2016, Tunisia, especially in the south, could bear the full brunt of the consequences of the deepening of violence in Libya, due to the difficulties of border control between Tunisia and Libya.

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227 « Le terrorisme en Tunisie à travers les dossiers judiciaires » (Centre Tunisien pour les Recherches et les Etudes sur le Terrorisme, Forum pour les droits économiques et sociaux) ("Terrorism in Tunisia through judicial files" (Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, Forum for Economic and Social Rights), Tunis, 2016.)
4. Qualitative Matrix for Assessing the Factors Facilitating Violent Extremism in Tunisia

The qualitative assessment matrix of factors favoring violent extremism (Table 1) provides an overview of the weight of each category of factors. The matrix also relativizes the influence of each factor when taken alone.

From the start, the factors that diminish the resilience of the Tunisian State and Society to violent extremism differ in quality and causal weight from those that push and motivate an individual to become a violent extremist. Institutional factors further increase the permeability of the Tunisian State and Society to violent extremism, more so than situational factors. Situational factors, are however, fundamental at the individual level. This shows that security responses to eliminate situational factors are needed. But it also shows that these responses only reduce the chances of an individual becoming violent extremist without significantly increasing the resilience of the Tunisian State and Society to violent extremism; to strengthen State resilience, institutional reforms strengthening good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law are needed.

On the social level, socio-economic factors play only moderately when they are put into perspective with the other factors, although they seem so important when they are described on the level of their involvement socially (riots) and politically (ideological radicalism). At the individual level, they remain fundamental only for the desperados. The important, but somehow relative weight of ideological and religious factors, are noted at both levels of analysis. As for socio-cultural factors, they are important at the individual level but negligible at the level of social analysis.

Table 1 can be read in different ways according to the prevention activities favored by the UN agencies and the Tunisian government in order to act on the factors and categories of the corresponding factors. For example, if the development of activities aimed at better supervising youth in the socio-cultural level (combat sports, theater, etc.) or strengthening the family pattern is important, the impact of these activities should be considered in their true measure. Impact should be measured for how well interventions discourage certain individuals from becoming violent extremists and not measure for how well they reduce violent extremism as a social, political and ideological phenomenon; this instead requires global institutional reforms.
Table 1: Qualitative Matrix for Evaluating Factors Facilitating Violent Extremism in Tunisia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Detailed Factors</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Factors</td>
<td>Circulation of revolutionary ideas, especially in universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness for Arab-Islamic causes, especially in the south of the country</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise of racism and Islamophobia in countries of economic immigration, especially Europeans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual identification with a religious group persecuted internationally</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radical Islamism not tarnished by the civil war as it was in Algeria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical political project of unification of the MENA zone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57% (17)</td>
<td>37% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Factors</td>
<td>Desire to live one’s upset individuality</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of family and community solidarity and search for substitution links</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deficit of paternal authority in households</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fighting stigma and conquering a new identity</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of traditional gender benchmarks</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response to the instrumentalization of the feminine cause by the authoritarian State</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7% (2)</td>
<td>50% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Factors</td>
<td>Looking for a better social status, opportunities of financial accumulation and a spouse</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic and social marginalization of part of the youth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-regional discrimination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily violence in peri-urban areas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55% (11)</td>
<td>85% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Perceptions</td>
<td>Feelings of relative frustration</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling of humiliation and injustice</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of trust in public institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27% (4)</td>
<td>80% (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Rating by categories of factor in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating per category of factors in %</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Fundamental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0% to 20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% to 40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% to 60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61% to 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81% to 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Reading examples: Institutional factors are fundamental at the social level (84%) and very important at the individual level (72% and 80%); The factor "ease of access to funding sources" (part of the category "situational factors") is fundamental (5) at the social level as well as at the individual level for the Desperados whereas it is only important (3) for the Activists.
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