

108479-001 - COUNTERING YOUTH RADICALIZATION IN TUNISIA THROUGH INCLUSION - GENERAL BACKGROUND NOTE

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Background Note

As the only country in the MENA region to have quite successfully taken a democratic path, Tunisia holds much promise. Notwithstanding continuous political and economic challenges, Tunisia succeeded in holding several free and transparent elections and ratified a constitution in 2014 seen by many observers as the most advanced legal text in the region. However, the country still faces a number of challenges most notably violent extremism. Since the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia has been struggling with a high number of terrorist attacks. On the 18th of March 2015, three gunmen attacked a group of tourists at the Bardo National Museum in the capital Tunis. Three months later, a lone gunman attacked a group of British tourists at a beach resort in the city of Sousse. On the 24th of November 2016, a dozen presidential bodyguards were killed on a bus by a suicide bomber in downtown Tunis. All of these deadly attacks were followed by sporadic terrorist attacks especially in the south, near the borders with Libya. In addition, a significant number of foreign fighters joining the Islamic State in Syria, Libya and Iraq were Tunisians. (Watanabe, 2018). According to the data released by The Soufan Group in 2015, Tunisians constituted the single largest group of foreign fighters in Libya and Syria, with around 6000 fighters (Soufan Group, 2015). A number of these fighters have already returned home, some of whom are not even known to the authorities (Watanabe, 2018).

The convergent trends of increasing violent extremism and reinforcing democratization since the fall of Zine al- Abidine Ben Ali is quite a puzzle. Existing scholarship suggests that we should expect to see violent extremism declining while the country moves forward to more consolidated democracy (Macdonald and Waggoner, 2018; Krueger, 2007). Alan Krueger, argues that extremists and terrorists emerge from countries where political and civil liberties are limited (Krueger, 2007: p 74). Puddington brings to light that 90% of terrorist attacks in 2013 took place in either “not free” or “partly free” countries (Puddington, 2015). However, the Tunisian case is quite different. Although Tunisia is classified as a free country by the Freedom House, the number of Tunisians joining radical groups either in Tunisia or foreign groups raises concerns. This background note will address this issue and attempts to answer a few questions: What are the violent extremist groups that Tunisians have already joined, in Tunisia and abroad? What are the root causes of violent extremism? What kind of strategies have the Tunisian government adopted to counter violent extremism?

Violent Extremist Groups:

Existing data shows that there are a number of violent extremist groups operating in Tunisia. In addition to the task of planning and executing terror attacks, these groups also work on recruiting Tunisians for foreign conflicts, more particularly in Libya, Syria and Iraq. Among these groups, ISIS has the most powerful ability to recruit Tunisians for its local and international operations. This is done thanks to ISIS large network, as it cooperates with local groups operating in Tunisia, including Ansar al- Sharia, Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade and Mujahidin of Kairouan.

Ansar al- Sharia

Ansar al- Sharia (AST) is a violent Islamist group that works to implement Sharia Islamic law as the country's prime source of laws. In order to achieve this, Ansar al- Sharia has recourse to proselytizing through religious education and the provision of social services. In order to increase its platform for more violent jihad, the AST sought to enforce strict laws, largely based on the duty to command moral acts, and looks forward to carrying out more jihad by executing violent terror attacks. According to a number of reports, leaders of the AST pledged their allegiance to ISIS in 2014. Since then, the AST has become the largest ISIS affiliate in Tunisia. The number of Tunisians joining ISIS in Libya and Syria was so high that AST lamented that the conflicts in the Middle East have "emptied Tunisia of its young generations". ISIS propaganda has remarkably relied on Tunisians who participated in a significant number of ISIS' terror attacks.

According to some reports, it seems that the cooperation between AST and ISIS started in 2014, when AST deputy "Emir" Kamel Zarrouk joined ISIS in Syria (Long War Journal, 2014). Since then, a strong relationship between ISIS and AST has been established. In 2015, ISIS released a video in which a Tunisian militant, known as Abu Yahia al- Tounessi threatened all Tunisians of war and blood, unless they join ISIS and claim allegiance to its leader Abu Bakr al- Baghdadi (Reuters, 2015). ISIS also released another video in 2015, in which a group of militants called "Tripoli Province" threatened the Tunisian government of further attacks (Counter Extremism Project, 2015). It would be remiss not to mention that AST had previously cooperated with al- Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, along with other extremist groups including the Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq. In 2014, the leader of the AST, Abu Iyad al- Tunisi released a statement to call for unity between all the jihadi groups and set aside any potential ideological disagreements (Long War Journal, 2014).

Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade

Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade is a militant group that claimed responsibility for a large number of attacks against the Tunisian army and security forces. It pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014. Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade is known to the Tunisian authorities as experienced fighters of the Islamist rebellion in northern Mali as well as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Since the fall of Ben Al's regime, Okba Ibn Nafaa has been continuously attacking the Tunisian army and other security forces, especially in the checkpoints near the Libyan and Algerian borders. Several attacks were conducted by Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, including the 2015 attack on Tunisia's Hotel Imperial Marhaba that ended up with around 37 casualties, and the 2014 attack on the Tunisian military forces near the Algerian borders. In September 2014, the Tunisian authorities disclosed Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade's plan to attack the parliament during the 2014 parliamentary elections. The group's leader, known as Lokmane Abou Sakhr, was killed by the Tunisian forces in 2015, after being accused of the attack on Bardo Museum that killed around 21 people including tourists and security forces.

Mujahidin of Kairouan

Mujahidin of Kairouan is a violent extremist group that pledged allegiance to ISIS in May 2015. The group was identified by the authorities when ISIS English magazine Dabiq released an issue on the activities of the group in Tunisia, along with a picture of Kairouan mosque on the cover (Al-Arabia, 2015; Tunisia Live, 2015).

Tunisian Combat Group

The Tunisian Combat Group is classified as a foreign terrorist organization by the US Department of State. The group was founded by Abu Iyad al-Tunisi and other commanders in al-Qaeda in 2000. This group was primarily founded as a bridge to unite Tunisians coming back home from Afghanistan to work against the Tunisian government. Since its establishment, the Tunisian Combat Group claimed responsibility for a number of violent attacks. For instance, the TCG provided foreign passports to al-Qaeda combatants who killed anti-Taliban leader Ahmad Shah Massoud in September 2001 (New York Times, 2001). In April 2001, militants from both the TCG and al-Qaeda were arrested in Rome for planning an attack against the US embassy. This incident impelled many embassies and consulates across Europe to close their doors for two days as a precaution against any potential terrorist attack.

Ansar al-Dine

Ansar al-Dine is an affiliated group with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. It operates mainly in Northern Mali and Southern Algeria. According to the latest data, Tunisians make almost 600 combatants among the group's members.

Causes of radicalization in Tunisia

Although Tunisia is experiencing a relatively successful democratic transition, the process included a sudden rise in the recruitment of new fighters for violent extremist groups, either in Tunisia or abroad. One possible explanation is that the Tunisian revolution created an unexpected mixture of rising social demands and declining institutional capacity. For almost half a century, Tunisians have been deprived of free expression, free political participation and governmental transparency. All the possible channels of political participation have been under the tight control of the state, during both Habib Bourguiba and Ben Ali's regimes. The fall of the authoritarian regime in Tunisia altered the situation as it provided Tunisians with an opportunity to have high but unrealistic hopes for their future. Almost 7 years since the eruption of the 2011 Tunisian revolution, these hopes have not been met yet. The transition has been very slow as it faced a number of challenges most notably the economic challenges. The break between the high demands and the institutional failure gradually led many Tunisians with a feeling of disappointment and frustration. Bearing in mind the high corruption, the rising unemployment and the continuous disagreements among the Tunisian political parties, the feeling of despair among Tunisians has been gradually rising. Such political vacuum offered many violent extremist groups an excellent opportunity to represent themselves as the new alternative for many young Tunisians and to offer them a sense of identity and economic gain. This background note discusses the causes of radicalization in Tunisia and closely examines the reasons which may have encouraged young Tunisians to join violent extremist groups.

The rise of Political Islam and the identity crisis in Tunisia.

The rise of political Islamism in Tunisia dates back to the early 1970's, when Rached Ghannouchi founded Al Jamaa al Islamiya. In 1982, the group became known as Movement de La Tendance Islamique and later as Ennahda Movement. The dynamic nature of the movement, in form and structure, is the corollary of Tunisian post-colonial policies which eradicated all Islamic-based organizations in the name of modernity and anti-terrorism. The presidential change in 1989 did not

bring about any change in the relationship between political Islam and the regime. In contrast, Ben Ali's regime adopted more oppressive measures toward Islamists who, as a result, reacted in a more aggressive and violent manner. The 2011 free and transparent elections, thanks to the Jasmin revolution, revealed a radical change in the Tunisian political scene. With 41% of the total votes, Ennahda movement succeeded in winning 89 seats out of 218. This success is open to different interpretations, most notably Ennahda's ability to shift from a traditional opposition to a new ruling party translates its ability to effectively profit from long decades of oppression and marginalization under Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. However, and unlike the Ennahda party, all other Islamist groups declined the offer of the Tunisian revolution to promote and embrace democracy and thus moderate themselves. These groups refused to participate in the elections and rejected any possibility to engage in the new political landscape of Tunisia. Instead, they chose violence and extremism as means of political expression. The first reaction of these groups was in September 2012, when Salafists groups attacked the US embassy in Tunis. Since then, the relationship between the ruling party, Ennahda Movement, and Salafist groups, particularly Ansar al-Sharia, has dramatically changed due to local and international pressures.

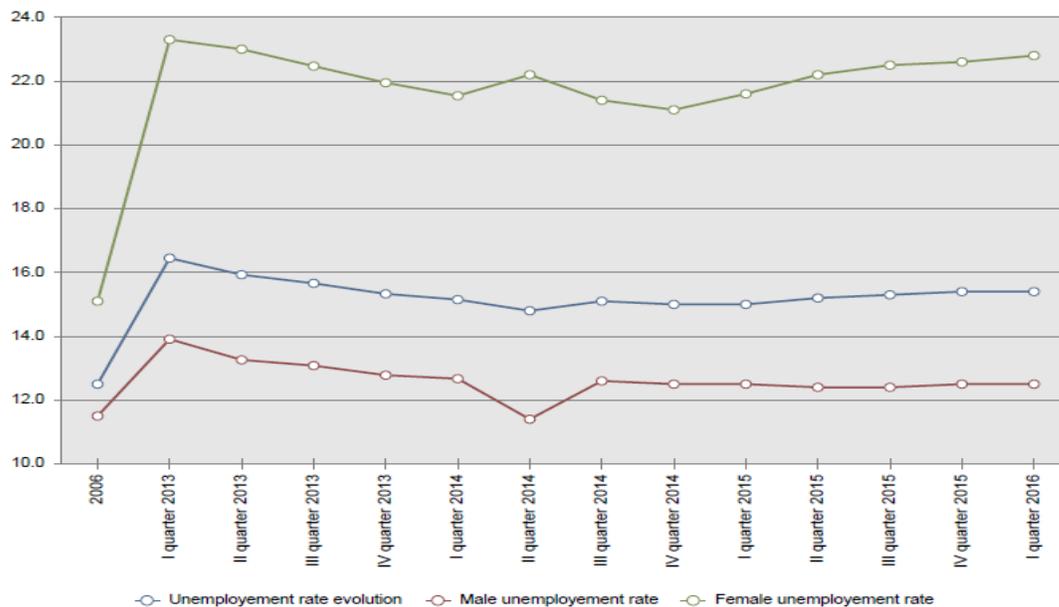
Unemployment

Unemployment has been a challenging issue for almost all governments since 2006. A number of conclusions may be drawn from chart 1.

Feelings of despair and hopelessness are common among a large number of young Tunisians. These young generations find it quite challenging to have a decent life in Tunisia, as opportunities are few. Chart 1 highlights the evolution of unemployment in Tunisia from 2006 to 2016. First, the unemployment rate has never fallen under 12%. This number translates a perpetual failure to provide young Tunisians new economic opportunities that allow them to have a comfortable life and discourage them from any possibility to join violent extremist groups. The existing scholarship on violent extremism shows that the most frequent reasons that impel young people to turn to violent extremism are poor economic conditions and lack of employment opportunities. Most of those who joined extremists groups were no longer capable of living in a state of low self-esteem and a feeling of bitter uselessness. The majority of those joining violent groups are aged between 20 and 35, many of whom are unable to find a source of income due to the lack of opportunities and the rising costs of living in Tunisia, especially after the 2011 revolution.

Chart 1: Evolution of unemployment in Tunisia

Tunisia; Units



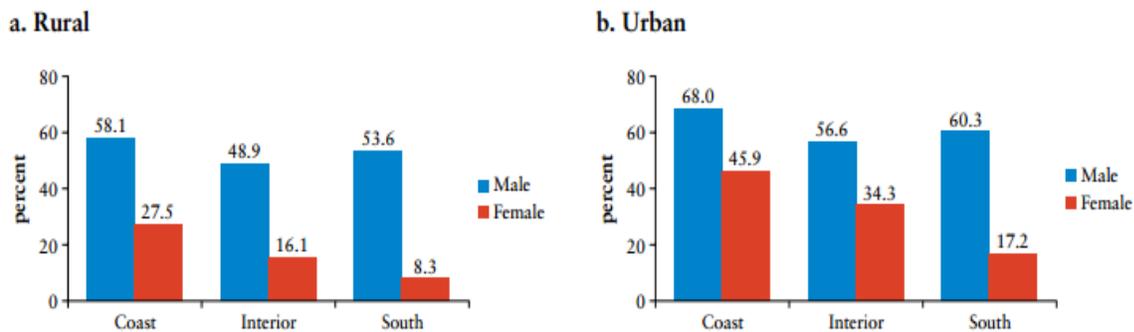
Source: INS Tunisia, June 2016.

Regional disparities

The root of radicalization lies in the socio-economic marginalization of all interior parts of Tunisia. Both Ben Ali and Bourguiba adopted a partial development mechanism, limited to a few areas such as the coast and the north while leaving behind the rest of the country with no clear strategy for future development. The 2014 World Bank report argues that “the uprisings spread between marginalized communities throughout the country in what was coined socioeconomic proximity, rather than geographic proximity” (World Bank Group, 2014: 39). Chart 2 clearly illustrates the huge regional disparities in terms of employment opportunities. In urban areas, while 68% of male young Tunisians in the coast are employed, the rate drops to 56.6% in interior parts of the country. The same plight is applied to rural areas where 27.5% of female young Tunisians are employed on the coast and only 8.3% of the same category are employed in the south. This regional disparity systematically generates “Youth Migration”, a term used in the 2014 World Bank Report to describe the Tunisian Youth long journey looking for a job. However, such migration has rather negative impacts on the social structure by and large. First, it reinforces the rural-urban division.

Rural areas are deprived of the young labor force, which is overfeeding poor suburbs of urban areas. This youth migration may, in some cases, turn into migration to Libya, Syria and Iraq to join ISIS and other violent extremist groups. When deprived of justice and economic opportunities, a large number of young Tunisians join violent extremist groups first to meet their economic needs and second to retaliate against the state that socially and economically excluded them from their own society.

Chart 2: Employment and Regional disparities in Tunisia in 2012.



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

Note: Figure excludes all youth enrolled in education or training programs.

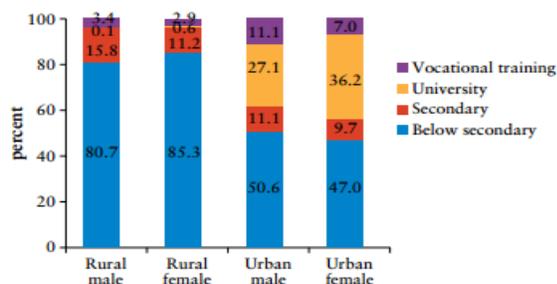
Education

The educational system in Tunisia is subject to a poor quality in form and content. Tunisian schools don't provide valuable programs which target students' life skills that support a smooth and easy transition from the academic environment to a professional context (World Bank group, 2012p, 2013c). This particular issue is addressed by the Ministry of Education through the 2016 National Educational Reform. The Ministry discloses in an official statement that "the poor infrastructure and the lack of cultural and sports activities generated a feeling of resentment and irritation towards schools". The quality of teachers also brings about a negative impact on the educational system. Teachers' recruitment procedure is almost random, as they are directly signed up from college without any prior teaching training (World Bank Group, 2014: 31). Lack of guidance and support is another form of a poor educational system, as students are vulnerable to bad life decisions and wrong career choices. Tunisian schools lack expert academic advisors who have the requisite skills to provide advice and help students choose the right academic path and the suitable career plan. Jean Paul Payet argues that Tunisian schools and even universities are marked by an unsafe educational space (Payet, 2006, 74). He further explains this idea by enumerating the various forms

of violence to which both students and teachers are exposed, such as drugs, cheating, physical violence and lack of discipline. All these elements, directly and indirectly, pave the way for a new generation that has a fragile educational background and even vulnerable to the danger of violent extremism at an early age.

One of the major issues facing education is its adjustment to the labor market. First, the phenomenon of leaving the school early raises issues of serious concern. According to the 2014 World Bank report, the majority of inactive youth in Tunisia hardly succeeds in obtaining a secondary degree. Actually, only one out of five young Tunisians completes secondary education in rural areas, whereas in urban areas 50.6% of males and 47.0% of females fail to obtain any secondary degree as indicated in figure 6. This creates generations of unskilled labor force incapable of meeting the needs of technical and service jobs. Second, the focus on theory reflects one of the many deficiencies the Tunisian educational system suffers (Euromed Resource Centre, 2012). There is no clear orientation in the official curricula towards practicality and functionalism. This idea is further developed by Lahcen Achy, who argues that Tunisian education has become a “double-edged sword” for it raises high expectations for students who remain unemployed for long years (Achy, 2011). Consequently, severe social and psychological impacts are expected. According to the 2014 World Bank report, postgraduate unemployment generates feelings of frustration, irritation and even anger. They end up as dependent individuals and a burden on their families.

Chart 3: Highest Education among Inactive Youth



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

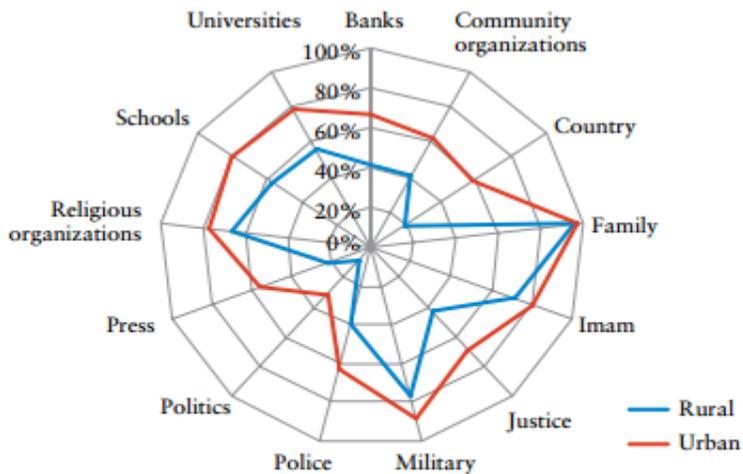
Corruption

Tunisia is marked by a solid ground for “anticompetitive practices” such as corruption. It is true that these practices are not unfamiliar to the Tunisian context, as they have been widespread during Ben Ali’s era. However, they become worth noting if they increasingly coexist with an environment of democratic transition and a setting of transparency and trust. World Bank defines corruption as “the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest. Corruption may include many activities including bribery and embezzlement. Government, or political, corruption occurs when an office-holder or other governmental employee acts in an official capacity for personal gain” (World Bank Group, 2014). This definition suggests that corruption, as it is associated with public activities, may limit governments’ efforts to permanently create employment and investment while feeding the country with more social exclusion and injustice. According to corruption perception index, Tunisia scored 36, which is internationally regarded as highly corrupt with “serious corruption problems” (Transparency International, 2015). Surprisingly, the 2015 score is much higher than 2010 under Ben Ali’s regime with a corruption index of 43 .The revolutionary context in Tunisia created paralyzed governments and weak state policies that are unable to root out corruption and eradicate anticompetitive practices. This has gradually led to unjust economic opportunities and a dramatic increase in social marginalization.

Lack of confidence and political participation

A democratic political system is established by the people and implemented for the people. The governments should use the most appropriate and effective mechanisms which express people demands and needs. These mechanisms are important as they reduce the gap between the governments and citizens and eliminate any potential clash between the ruler and the ruled. Accordingly, a conclusive evaluation of a democratic political system starts with an evaluation of citizens’ readiness to communicate with their government. Such communication takes several forms, including the extent to which citizens have confidence in institutions and the level of political participation.

Chart 4: Trust in Public and Religious Institutions



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.
Note: Figure includes all youth aged 15–29.

Although a strong and legitimate political system in Tunisia was established thanks to the new constitution and the transparent elections, a minimum level of confidence in institutions is not even achieved. According to a survey conducted by World Bank Group and the International Bank for Reconstruction and development, Tunisians don't trust the newly established institutions, as indicated by chart 4. The figure reveals two points. First, there is a considerable high confidence in social and religious institutions such as the religious organizations and the family. Second, a very low trust in political institutions is easily observed. Long decades of dictatorship and marginalization impeded Tunisians, particularly youth, from reconstructing their trust and adjusting themselves in the democratic environment. Accordingly, it may take few more years to observe a certain degree of trust between citizens and institutions, if of courses such democratic opportunity is protected and promoted. Such lack of trust and confidence toward the new political institutions, while having high trust toward religious institutions, may directly or indirectly encourage young Tunisians not to recognize these institutions and join other groups that employ religion as a source of action.

Although Tunisia enjoys a certain degree of democracy, with stable legitimate political institutions that guarantee freedom and liberties, political participation is surprisingly very low. According to the 2014 World Bank Report, only 17% of youth aged between 18 and 25 voted in the 2011

elections. The final report published by ISIE reveals even more surprising statistics. Only 156297 voters registered in the 2014 elections, which means that only 29.16% of possible voters participated in the 2014 elections. These results may have some explanations. First, the lack of enthusiasm undoubtedly contributed to the lack of political participation. Tunisians are no longer interested in politics especially right after Ben Ali ouster. The diminution of the revolutionary spirit and the subsisting lack of confidence in political institutions created a mood of indifference and inactivity. Second, many Tunisians lack awareness of the importance of voting, along with a limited knowledge of politics, led to a poor political participation. The World Bank Group reveals that 15.7% of young Tunisians in rural interior areas have relatively limited knowledge of politics. In the urban area, only 24.2% have an ability to debate in politics.

Poor civic engagement

According to the 2014 World Bank report, there is a significant increase in the number of nongovernmental organizations from 10.000 in 2011 to 15.000 in 2014. These NGO's are mainly welfare organizations targeting several issues such as poverty and exclusion in the interior regions of the country. However, this doesn't translate a high civic engagement in Tunisia. In contrast, many Tunisians are rather inactive and indifferent. Levels of volunteering among youth are very low in a way that public policy toward Youth participation in civil society should be revised (World Bank Group, 2014). This may have several explanations. First, many young Tunisians feel that their voices are not heard. The huge gap between the political elites and young Tunisians is getting wider in a way that mutual understanding has become more difficult. Consequently, these young Tunisians feel that it is a waste of time and effort to engage in such organizations as this won't bring about any change. Second, the low civic participation in Tunisia reflects the underrepresentation of youth in the National Constituent Assembly (World Bank Report, 2014). In fact, 4% of the 2016 members in NCA are under 30, which testifies to the necessity of changing the representative system in a way that guarantees a comprehensive representation of Youth in all political and social institutions.

Recruitment Strategies

In order to recruit new members, operatives or supporters, violent extremist groups use a number of tools and techniques. While some recruitment tools are quite costless, others require substantial funding and investment, including the use of a network of other groups or individuals or the maintenance of some infrastructure. In the Tunisian context, and according to the authorities' reports, recruitment often takes place in religious institutions such as the mosques. Recruitment may also occur online or through particular social contacts as these techniques provide an easy and costless access to lower socio-economic areas and even to prisons. Recruitment in Tunisia may also occur in areas where violent extremist groups already enjoy some territorial control, such as the Tunisian-Algerian borders.

Direct Recruitment

Direct recruitment occurs when a direct personal contact between the recruiter and the individual takes place. Through direct recruitment, recruiters generally select particular geographical areas where it is quite easy to find sympathizers or supporters of a particular violent group. The selection of these new members is not random. It is made according to the group's needs, ranging from militants to professionals such as doctors and engineers. Active recruitment requires substantive funding. The extremist violent group assigns one or a number of individuals to select and recruit new members. In order to effectively fulfil such a task, these individuals need a source of funding to sustain their living expenses and provide the necessary environment for the recruitment. This ranges from setting up meeting places, providing fake documents, booking flights tickets and training. All these expenses and others are generally met by the recruiter. Other forms of funding may come from donations from followers and sympathizers of the extremist group.

Indirect Recruitment

Indirect recruitment takes place when new individuals are recruited through indirect means, such as media campaigns and online communication tools. The use of social media as a tool to recruit new members in the extremist violent groups is common in Tunisia. According to the authorities' reports, these groups heavily rely on social media channels and internet to introduce their ideology, disseminate their propaganda and work on new recruitments. This strategy allows these groups to

spread their ideas at a low cost and identify potential new members who are psychologically and even financially ready to join these groups.

While social media channels are the easiest and the largest windows for indirect recruitment of new individuals, violent extremist groups in Tunisia have largely used traditional strategies including printing leaflets, holding meetings and broadcasting programs targeting young people who are willing to join these groups. One good example of this is the ISIS-monthly magazine, Dabiq, available since 2014 and inspired by Al-Qaeda's magazines. In Tunisia, recruitment using traditional strategies was quite easy especially in 2012 and 2013. Violent extremist groups had an easy access to young Tunisians through leaflets and public meetings. However, since 2014, traditional recruitment has gradually become more complex as tightened security measures have significantly increased. Accordingly, indirect recruitment was limited to online communication tools.

Although access to the internet, including the creation of websites and the use of social media channels such as Facebook and YouTube, is almost free, violent extremist groups, especially ISIS, create high-quality content as it employs a number of media experts and high-tech equipment. In view of the quality of the content and the frequency of distribution, it is clear that these violent groups use a large number of moderators and bloggers who are experts in the field.

Counter Violent Extremism Strategies

Tunisia's armed forces have been engaged in a low-intensity war against violent terrorist groups operating especially in the Tunisia-Algerian borders. The Tunisian military has been continuously launching raids against terrorist cells hiding in Chaambi Mountains in the south of Tunisia. For instance, the Tunisian security forces along with the army launched a raid in February 2014 that ended up with killing seven militants belonging Ansar al-Sharia, including the suspect of Chokri Belaid's murder. Two days later, the Tunisian security forces launched another raid that led to the arrest of four militants, including the suspect of Mohamed Brahmi's murder. In October 2014, the Tunisian forces killed six militants, including one woman, in the Northern suburbs of the capital Tunis. Since 2014, a significant number of Ansar al-Sharia fighters were killed and hundreds were arrested. Such relative success is the corollary of various factors, including practical security reforms implemented by the different governments, new equipment for both the army and security

forces and a public opinion that supported the security forces' operations and openly rejected any form of violence and extremism.

Counter violent extremism strategies have not been limited to military operations. Instead, the Tunisian authorities used an economic approach to counterterrorism, especially in the southern borders with Libya. Since the attacks on the town of Ben Guerden in 2016, the Tunisian governments have continuously strived to increase employment opportunities by creating a free trade zone in Ben Guerden. This free trade zone aims at reducing the illegal economic activities in the borders as well as increasing the economic opportunities for the youth of the region. Along similar lines, the governments also adopted a security approach in the region by increasing the number of security forces in the region to fight terrorism and illegal smuggling.

Since 2016, deradicalization has also been adopted by the Tunisian governments through the use of preventive measures that target extreme violent political and religious ideologies to embrace more moderate views. In 2015, the Ministry of Religious Affairs launched a new campaign targeting the Tunisian youth on social media. "We are Islam" campaign aimed at sensitizing young people of the dramatic consequences of joining violent extremist groups and encouraging them to adopt moderate religious views that help them easily and smoothly integrate within their socio-cultural environment. Accordingly, the Ministry designed a campaign with a diverse content, including a website that records religious conferences and seminars along with government's advertisements on social media and TV channels. The Ministry of Religious Affairs also decided to recruit new Imams and religious instructors in the mosques to spread an anti-violent discourse that discourages youth from joining extremist groups abroad and help them acquire an in-depth knowledge about Islam. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has also contributed to the deradicalization strategy. In fact, in 2017, the ministry allocated around \$1 million to study the roots of radicalization and violent extremism among young Tunisians. The funding was secured thanks to a partnership between a number of research centres in Tunisia and foreign institutions including the U.S Department of State. The deradicalization strategy also involved the young Tunisians who are in prisons. The Tunisian Directorate General of Prisons and Rehabilitation established new centres. The importance of these centres is two-fold: First, they help reintegrate those who are coming back home from Syria and Libya. Second, they help the

Tunisian authorities closely examine these young Tunisians to design new policies that may effectively counter violent extremism.

As far as legislation is concerned, the Tunisian parliament signed and ratified a new anti-terrorist law, published on the 7th of August 2015 in the official journal of the Tunisian Republic. The prime aim of the law was to deal with the Tunisian militants who are coming back home from the hot spots. According to this law, any Tunisian militant who has been involved in a violent extremist group will be arrested and judged. The law was initiated by Habib Essid's government in an attempt to calm fears over the homecoming of thousands of Tunisian jihadists. Nevertheless, the law was harshly criticized by the Tunisian civil society and a number of international non-governmental organizations, as it allows all kinds of abuses in the name of security reforms. In 2017, Amnesty International published a report in which it described the anti-terrorist law as an arbitrary, discriminatory and repressive law that will allow security forces to rely on brutal tactics including torture, restrictions on the travel of suspects and harassment of militants' family members. Mr. Ben Emmerson, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, shared his concerns with regard to prolonged periods of detention and the use of counter-terrorist laws against journalists. He also recommended further efforts to be implemented in order to accelerate the judicial proceedings including providing additional human resources to the Anti-Terrorist Judiciary Pole as well as simplifying the complexities of the Tunisian judiciary system.

End Notes

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