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## **One big #lie**

*From the Arab Spring to the Islamic State.*

*Post Arab Spring institutional failures causes frustration, leading up to expressions of aggression,  
wherefore the Islamic State provides space to utter it.*

Master thesis

by

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## ABSTRACT

The year 2010 marks the beginning of a series of protests and uprisings in North Africa, which sparked a revolution that Western media would soon refer to as “The Arab Spring Uprisings”. The protests are mostly conducted by the youth of the MENA region who are discontent with the government. This generation realizes that due to unemployment, high inflation, poverty, human rights abuses and corruption they are caught in a vacuum, with no bright future with progress and evolution of their country and blame this on the Arab dictators. Tunisia and Morocco both experienced the Arab Spring differently in terms of violence by the state, but in both countries the protests are effective and big changes are promised. In Tunisia the Ben Ali Presidency is overthrown, while in Morocco King Mohammed VI remains king. Also, in both countries the desired democracy is established and democratic elections take place. However, the circumstances do not really change the civil lives. Unemployment remains a problem, police violence still occurs, the freedom and human rights are still violated and the rule of law does not change the situation in favour of the community.

The frustrated youth seeks new ways to clear the void in their lives. In the same time period, the Islamic State is upcoming and recruits these frustrated youngsters. Especially Tunisian youngsters are susceptible for the promises of the Islamic State, as they are promised a future, with money, women and weapons. The official count of Tunisian foreign fighters is 6.000, while Morocco remains at the bottom of the list of foreign fighters, supplying officially 1.200 foreign fighters. The question is why there is such a big difference in number of supplied foreign fighters between these two countries. Trying to find an answer to this question this thesis inquires if the Arab Spring is the underlying cause. Therefore, this thesis’ research question is *How have the results of the Arab Spring caused the extreme flow of frustrated Tunisian youth to the Islamic State, while a similar country as Morocco remains at the bottom of the list of Islamic State’s foreign fighters?* The frustration-aggression theory of John Dollard and Robert E. Miller and colleagues is applied to explain the incentive of young Tunisians and Moroccans to go the Islamic State.

By analysing the contemporary situation in Tunisia and Morocco in terms of unemployment, state repression and the influence of Saudi Arabia, this thesis concludes that the Arab Spring is the driver for the frustration amongst the youth, leading up to expression of aggression, wherefore the Islamic State provides space to utter it. Tunisia’s institutional failure created by the Arab Spring drives Tunisian youngsters frustrated and they are now either planning new uprisings, or are leaving for the Islamic State. The government is still dealing with the collapse of the institutions, therefore is not able to handle the frustrated youth. Morocco is not left in institutional chaos and can now focus on the terrorist threat, with a strong security system. It can brace the country against the Islamic State. According to this thesis, this is what makes the difference between the foreign fighters’ amount of Tunisia and Morocco.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Islamic State currently receives a lot of attention. Although the organization already existed since the late-2000s, it became better known by Western people in June 2014. This was the month in which the Islamic State initiated a series of attacks on Iraq. Mosul, Iraq's second biggest city was captured and the Islamic State was moving towards the capital of Iraq, Baghdad. Also Raqqa (in the North of Syria) and Tikrit (located 140 kilometres northwest of Baghdad, Iraq) were in the hands of the jihadist militant group. The militant movement's momentum continued by taking over more cities and carry out the immoral atrocities. The capturing of the cities is the basis upon which the Islamic State is build. Therefore, at the end of the month of June, when having captured a lot of territories, the Islamic State proclaims themselves as a caliphate. The world reacts with an international intervention by a U.S.-led coalition (Khatib, 2015, p.3-4). In the beginning of the summer of 2014, President Barack Obama is asked by the Iraqi government to deploy forces to fight the Islamic State, and many air strikes were launched on Iraq and Syria (Glenn, 2016). Other Western countries join the U.S.-led intervention. Due to the large intervention size more attention is given to the Islamic State and therefore this topic is well known nowadays.

The Islamic State claims that they will defend the oppressed Muslims, all over the world, with the goal of a resurrected Islamic caliphate. Although the idea roams in the Western world that they are under attack, the Islamic State is reasoning the other way around. They claim that the West has declared war on them, on the Islam, and Muslim brothers should unite to fight this apocalyptic war (Boureka, 2015, p.3). The call of the Islamic State is what creates the enormous flow of foreign fighters to the Middle East. This thesis will focus on the foreign fighters originating from Tunisia and Morocco.

An article in *The Washington Times* informs us that a secretive U.S.-supportive Fusion Center on counterterrorism is keeping at least 1.000 Tunisians under surveillance as they are suspected of having ties and/or are devoted to the Islamic State (Guy Taylor, 2016). But the 1.000 suspects are not the only Tunisians linked to the Islamic State. Tunisia, a relatively small country in the North of Africa, is at the top of the list of foreign fighters, accounting for more than 6.000 foreign fighters. This list is based on data from 2014 and 2015 and in the last two/three years the Islamic State has recruited more and more fighters, thus there are probably even more than 6.000 Tunisians fighting for the Islamic State. There is a serious question of why? Why does this country bring forth so many fighters? Tunisian officials, analysts and citizens refer to this problem and point out that the country is on a knife's edge, trying to avoid falling back in the old patterns and traditions of the authoritarian history, all the while establishing a post-dictatorship secure state that is capable of dealing with the quest of foreign fighters.

The problem of foreign fighters becomes even more relevant when looking at Morocco, a country that is socio-economically similar to Tunisia, but certainly not the same in numbers of foreign fighters.

Morocco accounts for officially 1.200 foreign fighters. How can we explain the high amount of foreign fighters from Tunisia? Deriving from this question this thesis is based on the following research question *How have the results of the Arab Spring caused the extreme flow of frustrated Tunisian youth to the Islamic State, while a similar country as Morocco remains at the bottom of the list of Islamic State's foreign fighters?* To find an answer to this question I will start by explaining the concept of the foreign fighters. Secondly, the motives to join the Islamic State will be discussed. As there are many individual motives that drive people to join, this thesis will inquiry if the frustration-aggression theory can explain the choice of youngsters to go the Islamic State. Hereafter, I will give a brief overview of the history of Tunisia and of Morocco since their independence from France. By using historical comparative analysis both countries can be compared to establish the fact that the countries' history look alike. After that, I will compare these two countries with each other, to find out if these countries are actually similar in socio-economic and political terms. If that can be established, it provides a reliable platform to inquire the presence of the frustration-aggression theory in the enormous Tunisian foreign fighters flow. This chapter will also dive deeper into the attractiveness of the Islamic State to find an answer to why it can be attractive for some to become part of the extremist organization. The third chapter will be the analysis and will provide a critical view on the results of the Arab Spring, and how these results drives the frustrated Tunisian youth towards the Islamic State. In conclusion, the answer will be given to the question why there is a huge difference in the amount of foreign fighters originating from Tunisia and Morocco.

## 1. THE FOREIGN FIGHTERS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Foreign fighters joining the Islamic State can be understood as a global phenomenon, as they are flowing from places all over the earth to the Middle East. Although the majority of the foreign fighters come from Middle Eastern and Arabic countries, Western countries as the United States, Australia, and members of the European Union can also be accounted for a large part of the foreign fighters (Benmelech & Klor, 2016, p.1). When arrived at their destination, radicalization plays a central role in the engagement with the Islamic State. Some of the soldiers are already radicalized upon arrival and for others the radicalization takes place at the ISIS territories. However, the Islamic State is losing territory and a new kind of strategy is set in motion. As the main goal of the Islamic State is the destruction of non-believers by spreading fear and attacks, the group is not tied to only the Middle East. Therefore, the foreign fighters fall out to other countries than Iraq and the Levant. This is interesting as the fallout of foreign fighters is a contemporary topic in the International Relations, and is also becoming more and more popular in the news. This trend is not unexpected, as the returning fighters bring insecurity and a threat to their next destinations. For example, the Paris attacks in November 2015 were committed by Abdelhamid Abaaoud. He was a former foreign fighter from Belgium and was based in Syria, where he radicalized and returned home to conduct the attacks that

would kill 130 people. Therefore, this concept of foreign fighters should be cast light on, as the world is experiencing a more insecure future with attacks of ISIS' (foreign) fighters.

However, the concept of foreign fighters is not something new nor uniquely connected with the Islam. Throughout the whole modern history foreign fighters were recruited and people travelled to conflict areas, to answer the calls for help (Malet, 2010, p.106). As David Malet explains in his article '*Why Foreign Fighters?*' the recruitment(strategy) of the insurgency groups and the adjoined histories of the foreign fighters. What becomes clear is that the concept of foreign fighters has developed over time, including in theories and policies. Nowadays, the term is widely employed in the media, but three decades ago it was never used and still there is a lack of a term to fully cover the concept. Although other jargon-laden terms do exist, such as transnational insurgents, the term foreign fighter generates the best understanding of the concept (Malet, 2010, p.107).

As stated, three decades ago media reports did not include the term foreign fighters. The first mentioning of a foreign soldier was in March 1988 in an article of *The Times of London* with the headline "*Khost Outpost Falls to Mujahidin Led by Foreign Fighters*". This was a story on a mujahidin of Afghanistan which was "aided by Saudi, Egyptian and Pakistani fighters" against forces of the pro-Soviet government (Malet, 2010, p.107). In the following years, subsequent uses of "foreign fighters" appear in the media for example on the Europeans training the Croatian separatists' forces against the government of Yugoslavia, or the 200 foreign fighters from Afghanistan in Kashmir, a region of the Indian subcontinent. Interesting to note is that the concept became adopted in the media more frequently as the years came by. But throughout history it represented in all cases the same type of fighter, irrespectively conflict, origins of the fighter or location.

#### A. Motives to join the Islamic State

Now we know what the concept of foreign fighters contains, it is still important to understand what their motives are to join the Islamic State. Because while the recruitment strategy can be very convincing, not all people fall prey to the Islamic State. There is an incentive that is exploited by the Islamic State when they target the potential fighters.

A lot of research has been conducted on this topic. However, not all authors agree with each other, as some authors believe that there is a relationship between instability and terrorism, and others do not. In many cases authors share the believe that when a country is instable, a fertile ground for terrorism is provided. For example, Akbar Ganji explains in his article '*Confronting Terrorism and Instability in the Middle East*' that countries as the United States pursue their own interests during interventions and leave a Middle East that has been turned into an area with almost-failed, or totally failed states, where instability and, as a result of that, terrorism will linger on in the following years (Ganji, 2014). That the general assumption that poverty and poor distribution of resources breeds terrorism is also acknowledged by James Piazza. Especially since the events on 9/11 the idea prevails

that poverty was the foundation for terrorism (2006, p.159). This becomes clear when looking at the speeches of former United States President George W. Bush. He states that “*the only way to defeat terrorisms as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows.*” (Bush as described in the Washington Post, 2001). And “*We will challenge the poverty, hopelessness, lack of education and failed governments that too often allow conditions that terrorists can seize and try to turn to their advantage.*” (Bush during International Conference on Financing for Development, 2002).

One of the latest thorough researches on incentives to join the Islamic State by Efraim Benmelech & Esteban Klor reject many of these widespread beliefs about foreign fighters. They spark the debate with results of the relationships between the foreigners’ homelands and the factors that leads to travel to Syria (2016, p.1). The empirical literature in the aftermath of 9/11 found results that there is a negative correlation between economic prosperity and terrorist behaviour, as economic conditions decrease, political unrest increase (Benmelech & Klor, 2016, p.2). Although this seems plausible, the study of Benmelech & Klor rejects all these findings. The first claim they make is that poor economic conditions are not an incentive to join ISIS. In fact, they find in their results that the higher the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in a country, the higher the number of foreign fighters it produces. They describe the foreign fighters of the Islamic State as a new type of fighter, coming from a new type of country. The three characteristics of this country are that it is economic prosperous, and linguistically as well as ethnically homogenous. This incorporates the richer countries with unipolar populations. They substantiate this argument with the concept of ideology and assimilation, as it is difficult for Muslim immigrants to assimilate with the host country. This isolation can in turn lead to radicalization and travelling to Iraq and Syria. The point the researchers do illustrate is that the countries with a high percentage of Muslims in the population and a high rate of poverty, countries as Pakistan (37), Sudan (36) and India (42), are at the bottom of the ranking list of IS foreign fighters. The countries at the top of the list are Tunisia with officially 6.000 and non-officially 7.000 foreign fighters. Saudi Arabia comes second, officially accounting for 2.500 fighters. Both countries have relatively steady economies.

The research claims that the countries with a homogenous population, a relatively small Muslim population, in combination with low income inequality, highly developed political institutions and high levels of economic development, have a higher rate of foreign fighters (Benmelech & Klor, 2016). Other research indicates that low levels of political rights or political oppression contributes to joining the Islamic State. For example, the Sunni population did not feel comfortable with the Shia-majority in Iraq and felt intimidation by the Shiite government. This political oppression is manifest in one of the stories of an extreme jihadist from Iraq. Ahmad Chukri believed he was part of a politically excluded group. As an explanation why he joined the Islamic State, he stated that “*He convinced us; he said come and see what will become of you marginalized Sunnis, and his words won over our emotions*” (Quantum, 2015, p.17).

## B. The frustration-aggression theory

In the previous part, the recruitment of foreign fighters of the Islamic State and multiple motives are discussed. To contribute to the multiple motives that are present, this chapter contains a framework from the social sciences to understand why people are drawn to terrorism. The frustration-aggression hypothesis provides a useful insight for the further analysis in this thesis. This hypothesis is put forward by John Dollard, Neal E. Miller and colleagues (1939) and, in short, implies that aggression is the result of a person's frustrations when its efforts to attain a goal are blocked. This hypothesis is based on the theories of Freud and the explanation of catharsis. Freud believed that aggression was innate, just as the drivers for survival and food. According to Freud, the only way to release aggression is to engage in an emotional catharsis that will set free the aggression. Dollard & Miller (1939) build on by proposing that frustration is the result of the blocking of a goal by some external factors, and if a person experiences frustration it fuels the aggression. Building on Dollard and Miller's main assumptions, Berkowitz (1989) complemented the frustration-aggression hypothesis by stating that frustration does not always lead to aggression. The situation will only end up in aggression if certain cues, like weapons, are present. However, if the aggression releases, there are two catharsises: sublimation and displacement. The first is common and acceptable, as it implies releasing aggression in physical activity. The latter is more problematic as displacement is the directing of aggression outwards, when something or someone suffers from the catharsis (Dollard et al., 1939). As the latter is more relevant for this thesis, from now on, the displacement theory is meant when speaking of the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

Although the field of social sciences in contemporary social problems receives nowadays more attention, the link between this theory and terrorism is not often explored yet. The importance of the social sciences should not be underestimated, as it plays a key role in the understanding of why people express their emotions by acting in certain ways and how the society should respond to it.

The scholars on the frustration-aggression theory show how frustration leads to aggression, and it only seems a logical assumption that terrorism can be a form of the catharsis of aggression, as aggression, in which form of by whomever, is a central component in terrorism (Maile, Walters, Ramirez, & Antonius, 2010). When looking at the concept of terrorism, there are numerous definitions that have emerged throughout history. But central in all definitions is aggression, the intent to do harm by violence or the threat of it by individuals or groups against members of a negative reference group. For example, the Terrorism Act 2000 of the United Kingdom's Parliament (2000) characterizes terrorism as an act which:

*“...involves serious violence against a person... serious damage to property... endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action... creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public.”*



Also the Security Council of the United Nations describes terrorism with words as criminal acts against civilians, intentionally committed to cause death and injuries, to provoke a state of terror (UNSC Resolution 1566, 2004, as described by Maile et al., 2010). Berkowitz argues that at the basis of this behaviour, there is an individual that suffers from a troublesome past and/or present. This drives the aggression, which than can be triggered by certain cues, like the presence of weapons, or a political situation (Hamden, 2006, p.1). However, terrorism researchers also point out that the outcome of harming another is often secondary to the religious-, ideologically-, politically- or socially-motivated primary goal of changing the current situation. This indicates that the internal conflicts of a person are the direct incentive for aggression, accommodated by presence of means to outter the aggressive behaviour.

### C. Hypothesis

Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, responsible for the killings in Nice in 2016. Anis Amri, a refugee applying for German asylum in April 2016, and the prime suspect for the Berlin Christmas market killings in 2016. The four suspected terrorists who yelled ‘Allahu Akbar’ and killed two young women, arrested by the Marseille police in October 2017. What have these suspects and perpetrators in common? They are all from Tunisia.

This thesis has the purpose to reveal why Tunisians account for the biggest part of the foreign fighters of the Islamic State, while a similar country as Morocco does not. Deriving from the existing literature on the Islamic State, on the Arab Spring and the frustration-aggression theory I will argue that there is a possible relationship between the Arab Spring and the generation of an international wave of extremist violence committed by Tunisians. This relationship is based on the assumption that the Arab Spring has rather turned out as a failure in Tunisia, as opposed to the results outlined in the media. Although Morocco also experienced the effects of the Arab Spring, other circumstances developed in the country. Where the Moroccan youth did not massively turn to the Islamic State, the Arab Spring failure did create frustration among the young Tunisians, leading up to expressions of aggression, wherefore the Islamic State provides space to utter it. Or, as Heba Saleh (2016) wrote in *The Financial Times*:

*“The risk for Tunisia’s fragile democracy is not only that the discontent periodically flares up into rioting — deepening instability and delaying economic recovery. Some fear it could also drive more young Tunisians into the arms of extremist groups like ISIS.”*

## 2. FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE ARAB SPRING AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

The results of Benmelech and Klor's research are a step forward in the empirical literature on foreign fighters, thus contains relevancy to find successful policy in the fight against the Islamic State. However, there is a gap in their research, namely Tunisia. Benmelech and Klor argue that the flow of foreign fighters is not driven by economic nor political conditions, but the motives are founded in ideology and the size of the country's Muslim population. Indicating that when in a homogenous non-Muslim population, the Muslims' difficulty to assimilate triggers the incentives to join the Islamic State. They state that "in fact, many foreign fighters originate from countries with high levels of economic development, low income inequality, and highly developed political institutions." (Benmelech & Klor, 2016, p.2). However, this does not apply to the case of Tunisia. First of all, Tunisia is for 99% a Muslim country, it lived through a chaotic period with uprisings and it had in 2010 a GINI Index of 35,81. This Index indicates the income inequality, measuring income distribution, on a scale of 0 (perfect) to 100 (worst). Tunisia ranks average on the world map (World Bank Group, 2010). The situation in Tunisia is even more deviant if it is compared with Morocco, a similar country as Tunisia on the socio-economic and political levels. While Tunisia supplies the Islamic State with over 6.000 foreign fighters, Morocco's official count remains around 1.200 (Benmelech and Klor, 2016, p.18). The reason for this difference is the central question in this thesis. To find an answer, it is necessary to understand the history of both countries. Therefore, a short overview since the independence from France of both Tunisia and Morocco is given, starting with Tunisia's struggle for independence.

Tunisia has known many controllers in its history, but in the years after World War II Tunisia devoted itself to the struggle for independence. A central name in this struggle is that of Secretary-general Habib Bourguiba, founder of the Neo-Destour party that spearheaded the Tunisian movement for independence against the French protectorate. After introducing his case to the United Nations for international support in 1952 and creating turmoil which ended for him in prison time (1952 – 1954), he negotiated agreements and obtained a certain level of independence from France in 1955. Bourguiba returned to Tunisia and set up a Neo-Destour government. However, he strived for full independence and continued the negotiations with France. During this time France is also occupied with other settlements with former colonies as Algeria and Morocco. The latter achieves independence in 1955. Tunisia is helped by this Moroccan independence acceptance of France and Bourguiba becomes the prime minister of the new Tunisia in March 1956. A year later he proclaimed the Republic on 25 July 1957, also becoming the president (HistoryWorld.net).

Habib Bourguiba proved to be skilful in maintaining his relations with Western countries, while having a respected role in the Arab League. During his presidency he kept a non-doctrinaire socialism policy, and focussed on growing a state with moderate state control. Democracy was not part of his policy, as he attained power by bringing independence by his Neo-Destour party, keeping it

a one-party state. However, he established women rights and repressed Islamic fundamentalism, unmatched by any other Arab country. Although he was appointed as president for life, at the end of his presidency he was unreliable and irregular in his conduct of affairs. As a result of this, his prime minister, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali removed him from his power and took his place on 7 December 1987. In the Ben Ali period, the people of Tunisia get to know democracy. But the oppositions of Ben Ali have no chance, as he gets re-elected with 99,0% of the votes in 1989 and 99,9% in 1994. Even in a multi-party system he won a third and a fourth time.

Under the presidency of Ben Ali, Tunisia is delivered stability and economic prosperity. Data from the World Bank shows that in the years 1965 until the end of Bourguiba’s presidency in 1987 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita slowly advances, from approximately 218 US dollar to almost 1260,5 US dollar in 22 years. The GDP per capita is often used as a measurement of the average living standards of a country’s citizen. The GDP is also an indicator of the total income that is generated by the country’s economic activity.

Table 1; GDP per capita. Source: The World Bank.

<b>GDP PER CAPITA</b>	<b>TUNISIA (US\$)</b>	<b>MOROCCO (US\$)</b>
<b>1960</b>		164,8
<b>1970</b>	284,4	246,1
<b>1980</b>	1373,1	1077,2
<b>1990</b>	1492,9	1202,7
<b>2000</b>	2213,9	1332,4
<b>2010</b>	4140,2	2834,2
<b>2016</b>	3688,7	2832,4

However, a more steel curve can be observed at the start of the Ben Ali era. The GDP per capita more than tripled during his presidency, as by the end of his era, the GDP per capita was 4.256,9 US dollar (World Bank Group). Despite this impressive growth, Tunisia suffered from high unemployment rates during the Ben Ali presidency. Data by the World Bank Group indicates that Tunisia had an unemployment rate of 14,4% among the total workforce in 1991 (see table 2). This percentage decreased a bit in the following years, although its rate always was above the 10%. In 2005 Tunisia had an unemployment rate of 12,9% of which 27,7% were people between 15 – 24 years old. This percentage got higher in the following years to the end of Ben Ali’s presidency to a total of 18,3% among the total workforce, of which 42,6% consisted of the youth ages (CIA World Factbook, 2015).

Table 2; Total estimated Unemployment youth ages. Source: The World Bank

UNEMPLOYMENT	TUNISIA (%)	MOROCCO (%)
<b>1991</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	15,4	17,3
<b>2005</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	12,9	11,0
<b>YOUTH AGES (15-24)</b>	27,7	15,7
<b>2009</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	13,3	9,1
<b>YOUTH AGES (15-24)</b>	30,4	18,1
<b>2011</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	18,3	8,9
<b>YOUTH AGES (15-24)</b>	42,6	18,0
<b>2016</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	14,9	10,8
<b>YOUTH AGEA (15-24)</b>	35,9	21,4

This high unemployment rate of Tunisia has had big consequences, not only for the Presidency of Ben Ali but also for the country's stability and future. In December 2010 there is an outbreak of protests over the unemployment and the political restrictions, which have a nationwide effect. A report of the Freedom House, which measures the freedom, the civil liberties and the political rights of every country in the world, declares Tunisia as a not free country since their measures in 1999 until 2011. In a freedom rating in 2009 Tunisia scores a 6, in which 1 is the best score and 7 is the worst possible outcome. A 7 has been given on the political rights, which suggests that the situation on political freedom cannot be worse than that (Freedom House, 2009). The Freedom House explain their decision to give Tunisia a 7 by pointing out the clashing of security forces of the government with the protestors during the uprisings for democracy. However, Ben Ali showed no intentions to make Tunisia a democracy. Many protestors were put in jail, faced beatings and were tortured.

Table 3; Freedom rating. Source: The Freedom House.

<b>FREEDOM RATING (1 = BEST, 7 = WORST)</b>	<b>TUNISIA</b>	<b>MOROCCO</b>
<b>1975</b>		
<b>CIVIL LIBERTIES</b>	5	5
<b>POLITICAL RIGHTS</b>	6 not free	5 partly free
<b>1990</b>		
<b>CIVIL LIBERTIES</b>	4	4
<b>POLITICAL RIGHTS</b>	5 partly free	4 partly free
<b>2001</b>		
<b>FREEDOM RATING</b>	5,5	4,5
<b>CIVIL LIBERTIES</b>	5	4
<b>POLITICAL RIGHTS</b>	6 not free	5 partly free
<b>2009</b>		
<b>FREEDOM RATING</b>	6	4,5
<b>CIVIL LIBERTIES</b>	5	4
<b>POLITICAL RIGHTS</b>	7 not free	5 partly free
<b>2017</b>		
<b>FREEDOM RATING</b>	2	4,5
<b>CIVIL LIBERTIES</b>	1	4
<b>POLITICAL RIGHTS</b>	3 free	5 partly free

Former president Ben Ali had a power position in which he could easily defeat challengers. For example, by appointing the prime minister and the cabinet himself, Ben Ali's party dominated the parliament. This made that opposition parties were weak and had no significant role in the public policy. Ben Ali secured his power by removing the constitutional three-term limit for the presidency, allowing him to win the elections of 2004 again. Although the opposition boycotted him and made widespread claims of fraud, Ben Ali started his fourth-term presidency and even a fifth-term presidency in 2009. However, during this last period of the Ben Ali era, the protests evolved. Especially when websites with criticism on the government or websites promoting democracy were blocked, when journalists spoke critically of the Ben Ali family received prison sentences, or when academia could not openly discuss nor criticize government policy topics. In the second half of 2008, a rise of prison sentences for protestors found place and even people were exiled from Tunisia.

The year 2011 marks the end of Ben Ali and the start of the revolution in Tunisia. The revolution called to end the high levels of unemployment, the lack of political freedom and corruption. In one of Ben Ali's speeches he promised a better future, as can be interpreted from the following quote from a speech on December 28, 2010.

*We do not spare efforts to avoid these conditions through suitable specific treatment, pursue our employment policy and programs, take care of the poor and impoverished families, and activate regional development through investment programs that involved all the country's regions, [...] our constant eagerness to guarantee all the requirements of balanced and equal growth between regions and to divide its fruits equally on the different categories. (Maalej, 2014)*

However, the assurance of Ben Ali of a better future did not result in turning down the turmoil and the Arab Spring made Tunisia a worldwide known crisis region.

The independence of Morocco in 1956 happened a couple of weeks before Tunisia became an independent state. Just as Tunisia, Morocco was part of the French protectorate in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since World War II Morocco's quest for independence grew stronger and together with the U.S. support, Mohammed Ben Youssef, the Sultan of Morocco, distanced himself from the French protectorate and supported the Independence Party. Despite the support from the U.S., the French colonists dethroned him and exiled him to Madagascar. His successor, Ben Arafa, was a devoted nationalist and the situation in Morocco changed quickly when he led the Moroccan National Front. Next to the internal pressure, the global influence in the conflict created an escalation in Morocco, leading to the La Celle-St-Cloud agreements, the official independence of Morocco on 2 March 1956 and last but not least the comeback of the exiled Sultan renamed as King Mohammed V (Freedom House, 2011). King Mohammed V proclaimed to turn Morocco in a constitutional monarchy, which means that the monarch rules in accordance with a constitution, thus there is no absolute sovereign that holds all the power. Although declaring his intentions to the people, the government elections did not take place before 1960, whilst he appointed himself the role as prime minister and his son as his deputy beforehand. Crown prince Hassan is his father successor after he dies in 1961. The King Hassan II era is marked by state violence against democracy activists, there is little regard for human rights or space for political opponents, earning itself the term of the Years of Lead.

An important feature in the Years of Lead beginning in the 1960s throughout the 1980s, is the country's big changes in the curve on GDP per capita. From 1960 to 1970 there was a GDP per capita change of 164.8 US\$ to 246.1 US\$. This was of none significance in contrast to the next decade, where the GDP per capita in 1980 more than tripled, as the GDP had risen to 1077.2 US\$. The change is partly due to Morocco taking the control of Western Sahara in the 1970s. This country was once a colony of Spain, but due to international pressure to decolonize, Spain strikes a deal with Morocco and an illegally transfer of the territory takes place. A report of the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) points out that Morocco economically benefitted from this expansion, because of the large phosphate reserves in the Western Sahara they can export (WSRW, 2014, p.6). This controversial income accounts even nowadays for a large part the export revenues of Morocco. As can be seen in table 1 the GDP per capita did not significantly change until 2000. But just as in Tunisia, though Tunisia having a double as high GDP as Morocco, the GDP per capita doubled. Taken into account the unemployment being the half of the percentage in 1991 (see table 2), the economic conditions were prosperous, as indicated by these data.

Unlike the economic progress in these years, the social circumstances did not progress to acceptable levels. For example, the before mentioned situation in the Western Sahara changed the economy of the country, but also created high levels of abuses. An article in the *New York Times*

brings up the atrocities in the 1970s by King Hassan II, as in 2005 a couple of graves with bodies of 50 political prisoners who died at secret detention camps were found. These victims were separatists from the Western Sahara and were arrested and tortured by security agents of the King. There are no official accounts of the numbers of victims of the secret internment camps, but an official Moroccan human rights group said it was up to 600 (New York Times, 2005). This number does not even touch upon the other victims of forced disappearances, the political dissents or of other human rights abuses. All in all, the level of freedom was, as described by the Freedom House, that Morocco was partly free (see table 3). Interesting to see is that after the reign of King Hassan II in 1999, the freedom situation did not improve. The level of freedom for political rights even dropped a point from 4 to 5 between 1990 and 2001. This is contradictory to the new king's promotion of civic freedom, by inaugurating a commission to compensate victims of the political repressions (which received almost 6000 cases to investigate) and by battling corruption by the firing of employees who mismanaged public funds. These examples are just a small portion of the gap between the government rhetoric and the practice on the streets. The deportation of foreign broadcasters and journalists, the banning of newspapers covering the situation in Western Sahara and the arresting and beating of protesters for human rights indicates that the reality was quite different than the government's claimed intentions. The Freedom House presents the situation yearly and, although the idea existed that after the Years of Lead the situation improved, in the reality the social problems remained the same.

#### A. Revolution through a hashtag; the Arab Spring

Both countries have followed different paths towards their future. When looking at Tunisia's history, the youth discontent can already be detected. During the period of Ben Ali's regime, the president did not live up to his promises of democracy, political freedom and civil liberties. Interesting is that there was no intervention from Western countries. They did not intervene or criticize the circumstances in Tunisia. This was because the U.S. and Europe were focussed on maintaining a good relationship with Ben Ali. Tunisia has always been seen as a moderate Muslim ally, which comes in convenient in the war against Islamic extremism. Therefore, they did not put diplomatic pressure on the President. Even though democracy is of high importance for Western countries, as we have learnt from our history since World War II (plenty of American interventions to bring democracy to fight communism for example), the fight against Islamic extremism, already present at that time, had bigger priority than the possible lack of political freedom (Freedom House, 2011).

From this derives the fact that also the U.S. and Europe are partly responsible for the youth unrest. The history of the country led to the frustration which demonstrated itself in 2010. The year 2010 marks the beginning of a series of protests and uprisings in northern Africa, which sparked a revolution that Western media would soon refer to as "The Arab Spring Uprisings". The infectiousness of the Arab Spring revolutions emanated from the youth who realized that, due to aging

Arab dictatorships, unemployment, inflation, and corruption, their generation was caught in a conservative stadium, with no future for progress and evolution of their country. The direct reason for the uprisings was when Mohammed Bouazizi setting himself afire in front of the governor's office on 17 December 2010. Bouazizi's incentive to commit this act was the confiscation of his merchandise by the authorities. Every time he tried to press a case, a security officer beat him. Eventually, he bought a can of gasoline and lit himself when the governor refused to see and talk to him. Due to the enormous reach and fast spread of social media, the world soon knew what had happened in Tunisia as the pictures of Mohammed Bouazizi were shared at every social medium (Ajami, 2011, p.2; Howard & Hussain, 2011, p.36). The hashtag #bouazizi became trending and went from a local scope to a national one and eventually it became internationally known, leading to the revolution in Tunisia.

What mainly exacerbated the problem and created ground for conflict was the previously mentioned high unemployment rate, as well as political oppression, the lack of freedom and abundance of human rights. Protestors expressed their socio-cultural frustration by using strategic, non-violent tactics through widespread, decentralized grass roots movements and fought for access to quality education, jobs, and freedom of expression.

#### i. The youth question

The straining, oppressive conditions the young generation in the Arab Spring were under made it clear that this was, and still is, a movement aiming for an equal, opportunistic lifestyle. The patriarchal system in the Arab World makes the younger generation feel submissive and less valued to the older generation. However, the potential of youth as agents of change is showed by the recent uprisings. The youths' personal experience with injustice encouraged them to engage in activism (or even extremism). Social benefits, financial stability, and basic freedoms were the differences that the Arab youth saw with other regions. As a consequence, this made the youth realize their circumstances were unnecessary and avoidable. France discusses how this new generation is fueled by a media revolution (France, 2007, p.119). This generation is seen as the driving force behind social change, for the youths are able to adapt and integrate new technologies into their lives easier than others. They overthrow traditional hierarchies of knowledge and power. Abu Dhabi Gallup in *Egypt: The Arithmetic of Revolution* (2011) states: "Unemployment and poverty alone did not lead to the overthrow of Egypt's government. It was the perceived difference between what should be and what was". The realization of social injustice and that suffering is not inevitable acted as a catalyst for youth participation in the movements. Ragui Assaad argues that the youth had created tensions with those who are unable to turn their education into productive jobs. "These young people," he states, "frustrated with the lack of jobs, have been at the forefront of anti-government protests" (Hoffman and Jamal, 2012 p.169).

Another reason for the youth's involvement in the uprisings can be explained through Erikson's theory. Erikson also discusses the youth's craving for locomotion, not just in the physical, adrenaline pumping racing around type way, but in an emotional way too (Erikson, 1968, p.244). The locomotion



crave relates to the youth participation in the Arab Spring movement, for it is about youth wanting to like an essential part of the future; thus their involvement in riots and campaigns for major ideological forces is related to a feeling of identity loss, which feeling a part of a movement can dissipate. These feelings, as well as the high unemployment rate, along with a major disparity between the rich and the poor and the disproportionate amount of control those in power had, had pushed the current generation to revolt.

## ii. A struggle for democracy in Tunisia and Morocco

On December 17, 2010 unrest broke out in Tunisia, where in the last days of 2010, protests happened, people committed suicide publicly or people were assaulted and killed by police violence. With every day that did go by, the revolution spread from region to region, from country to country. Social media played a central role in the spread of the revolution, for example the use of twitter and the hashtag. Another example is the interfering of the cyber activist group “Anonymous” by striking government websites, putting servers down out of solidarity with the rebel youth (Al Jazeera, 2012, p.2). On January 13, when the International Federation for Human Rights counted 66 deaths since the beginning of the revolution (the government’s toll stands at that time at 23) the Tunisian president Ben Ali announced that he does not seek re-election in 2014. The next day he even assured new legislative elections within the next six months, but this attempt to quiet down the mass failed and he fled the country finding a host in Saudi Arabia. When time progressed, the situation in Tunisia deteriorated by the rise of violent gangs, causing the country to fall into chaos. Even the new coalition government that was set up in the first days after Ben Ali was not fully accepted, making the Tunisians to protest again.

Unlike the situation in Tunisia, Morocco has had a calmer revolution. The Arab Spring has had a completely different impact on the Moroccan society. In contrast to its neighbouring countries, the people did not openly want to remove King Mohammed VI from his power nor abolish the monarchy (Sater, 2011). Although the Moroccans protested, it did not turn into a chaotic and violent revolution. They demanded a critical constitutional reform. During their protests, the government’s reaction was present, however without even a fraction of the violence that its counterparts used. In addition to this fact, only one person died due to police interference as is stated in formal reports, making it a relatively nonviolent uprising (Sater, 2011). This approach has been effective, as King Mohammed VI made up a new constitution, written by representatives of civilians, religious organizations, and the private sector. From this new constitution derived more equality between men and women (Hirst, 2011). Joel D. Hirst also states that the civil liberties were improved due to this revision (2011). However, other sources indicate that this did not happen. The Freedom House publishes yearly reports on the freedom of civil liberties, and since the constitution change in 2011, the civil liberties remained a 4 on a scale of 1 to 7, as it has been since 1990 (see table 3). This can be explained by the fact that despite the constitutional reforms, the protests persisted and thus the police

violence also. Secondly, the government grew increasingly intolerant of social and religious diversities in the country, for example arresting the opponents to a law enforcing the Ramadan fast. Next to this intolerance, the authorities broke up labour protest actions to fight for basic rights for child labourers (The Freedom House, 2012). The last case that contributed to a 4 on civil liberties was the situation in the Western Sahara. As long as the circumstances are not improved, as long as the frequent reports of abuses are not lowered, Morocco will probably not receive a better score.

Looking back at the first days of the Arab Spring, Tunisia was able to overthrow a government, that had been settled for years, without intentions to give space to political opponents and maintaining the corrupt regime they had uphold for so long. By overthrowing the long-standing dictator Ben Ali, the Tunisians created a new path for themselves. The interim-government gave Ennahda the task of leading the country's democratisation processes. This Islamic democratic political party already existed since 1981, but was banned by President Ben Ali. He jailed the activists and exiled many Ennahdha members. Interesting to note is that in the first free election in Tunisia's history, the Ennahdha party won 37,04% of the votes, making it by far the strongest party to lead Tunisia on its way to democratisation.

Although this new path did not run smoothly, the chaos in neighbouring countries urged the Tunisian society to find a way to work together for the sake of the country's stability (Culbertson, 2016). As a result of this cooperation between the diverse citizens of Tunisia, there has been a major improvement in the norms and laws of the constitution. Women were now viewed as equal to men, and Tunisia had achieved the status of having one of the most progressive laws related to women rights in the Middle East. Next to this change, the new leadership of Ennahdha decided to leave out the word 'sharia' from the constitution, as Tunisia became a civil state. This meant, as Article 2 states, a civil state based on citizenship, the will of the people and the supremacy of the law, keeping religion separated from the state. The third important change was the prevention of a returning dictatorship, by implementing rules in the constitution for the presidencies regarding limits on power and on elections and instating independent bodies to counter corruption and human rights abuses. This constitutional reform also took place in Morocco, although in a significantly different way. With a calmer and more gradual way the Moroccan regime had been reformed instead of overthrown. As a consequence, a vacuum was created which was not filled up by gangs or Islam fanatics, nor created chaos. This did happen in Tunisia where the institutions changed completely and nothing was intact anymore. Nevertheless, both countries had a constitutional change to better the civil lives, to bring more democracy into the country. Therefore, it is understandable that reports states that Tunisia and Morocco are in theory the Arab Spring successes.

## B. The Islamic State and its recruitment strategy

The Islamic State is currently a hot topic to discuss. Everyday more people are concerned of the issues in the Middle-East. However, it is not a rarity, as the whole world is affected by the actions of the Islamic State. Although in the past the Western world has interfered in the Middle East, unsolicited according to some, nowadays the democratic Western world is being attacked. Therefore, the Islamic State has become part of the present-day conversations.

The Islamic State has more than one name. It is also known as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham or Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), just the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh. The last one, Daesh is the Arabic acronym for al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wal-Sham (DAIISH), which in fact means the same as ISIL. This term is regarded by the Islamic State as offensive and punishment is given to the ones using it. As a result, this term is becoming increasingly used by the Western world (Bloemhof, 2015). Although there are different names, the group is all the same. This group is seen as a terrorist organization, with the goal of becoming an extremist Islamic fundamental state. This state would be a caliphate, that means that it is an Islamic State based on the implementation of the sharia law. What makes this group unique is their brutal ways of implementing their ideology and rivalry against anyone who is not with them. Their way of acting started a new jihadist era, an era in which ISIS was able to gain many successes and scared the West numerous times by committing attacks in the Western world (Kurdi, 2016, p.2). It is interesting to see that the Islamic State gained a large amount of popularity and many successes in a short time of approximately 11 years. So what makes this group so attractive for many youngsters to become a foreign fighter of the Islamic State? To answer this question, I will explain a part of ISIS' recruitment strategy.

Part of the recruitment strategy is the targeting of individuals or outside groups, which are expected to identify with the insurgents. The targets have a relation to the insurgency and are therefore highly influential to become potential recruits. This can be done by highlighting the same origins of the group, or the shared identity as a result of the same norms and values or the religion. What follows is the call for help by announcing that the common group is under existential threat, and the joining of the insurgency group is needed for the group's survival (Malet, 2010, p.100). The Islamic State does this, mainly by the means of social media. It is even claimed by Michael Steinbach, executive assistant director for FBI's National Security Branch that there has never been a group as successful as the Islamic State at recruiting people by its messages (Grubbs, 2016). By using social media as Facebook and Twitter, ISIS can reach out at any time, to anyone, from anywhere, which basically means that there are no boundaries to be overcome to be able to approach someone. Another strategies of the Islamic State is the peer-to-peer recruitment. Due to peer pressure, the pressure of friends to pack your belongings and actually travel to ISIS territories, ISIS can admit many foreign fighters. For the peers there is also a benefit, as Elzbieta Karska a chair member of a United Nations group focussing on Islamic extremist foreign fighters, claims that the jihadis are paid for every recruit they bring in, with

prizes leading up to \$10,000. The prize they receive is depended on the usability of the recruit (Batchelor, 2015).

As above mentioned, the call of the common group and the financial benefits are two factors that describe the attractiveness of the Islamic State. But there is more, for example the adventures lifestyle one can have once joined. The communicators of the Islamic State, as Bourekba states, recreate popular and violent videogames as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Call of Duty* linking it to the Islamic State to tempt the youngsters in search of adrenaline (Bourkba, 2015, p.4). Also by showing weapons and violence in videos, the Islamic State shows people you may kill to become a hero in the apocalyptic war. Another mean of the Islamic State is an online magazine called *Dabiq*, published in multiple languages, showing the day-to-day lives of the soldiers, the attacks and explaining why one should devote oneself to the Islamic State. For the people who are not drawn to the barbaric practices, the Islamic State uses another approach: putting ISIS soldiers in a positive light. For example, an ISIS teacher, a soldier who helps the community or photographing a soldier with a kitten, to show that it is not just a terrorist organization (Dabiq, 2016, p.9). Also the promise of women and love attracts people to join the Islamic State. In most Islamic countries men do not “have access” to women as it is forbidden to have sex if they are not married. As marriage is a costly expenditure, and given the high levels of unemployment amongst the youngsters, it can be tempting to join the Islamic State. This marriage crisis is what ISIS uses to lure men to them, next to the promises of a salary and the abovementioned promises (Bloom, 2015).

ISIS broke radically with what all the jihadist organizations have done in the past. As they have created an actual geographical setting, a territory with growing borders, a military able to reign over millions of people, an executive power by al-Baghdadi, a promise with no compromises nor negotiations with the enemy and a place where the sharia law rules. All these factors created some sort of trust that ISIS had a viable future, and when devoting oneself to it, it had also a brighter future than ever before (Bourekba, 2015, p.3). Next to this, ISIS claims to be an open organization in which everyone is welcome if they devote themselves to the project of the caliphate.

Although the international community reacted with disgust towards the acts of ISIS and many counterattacks occurred, the momentum of the group did at first not slow down. Part of this can be explained by looking at the joining and cooperation of other Jihadist terrorist groups and the (financial) support of allies (Lister, 2014, p.12). Another important factor is the concept of foreign fighters, as discussed in Chapter 1 and which is one of the main topics of this thesis.

#### i. Allies

It is known that ISIS faces huge and mighty opponents, with impressive means used to defeat them. Although, it is not all clear-cut in this war, as ISIS opponents consists or many groups, with own interests and different allies and enemies. This makes the conflict confusing, creating internal conflict, of which ISIS profits by building up a momentum.

Because besides the groups opposing to the self-proclaimed Islamic State, there comes also support from allies of ISIS. This support is granted by financial as well as military means. Nonetheless, when investigating their financial support system, it becomes clear that the group is very much self-supportive. One of the Islamic State's main financial supports comes from Iraqi and Syrian oil refineries on ISIS territories. These sources of income are resulting in a strengthening of the financial status, but in turn, it also makes the group vulnerable as it is difficult to protect them from becoming target for airstrikes. For that reason, ISIS needs also other forms of income. For example, a tax system that is imposed on the civilians living in ISIS territories. It is even so that the Christians and other religious minority, who are not willing to convert and did not flee the countries, need to pay *Jizyah*, an addition to the regular taxes. By obliging people to pay taxes, ISIS gains over \$100 million a year (Kurdi, 2016, p.7; Laub & Masters, 2016, p.3). Next to other forms of incomes this makes it the richest terrorist organization of the world. Another factor in the support system, by military means, is militants allied to the organization. For example, Libyan militants who beheaded 21 Egyptian Christians in ISIS' name, while filming it and they showed it online on 15 and 16 February 2015. The affiliates consist also of individual or small groups that execute attacks on behalf of ISIS. This is wished upon by the organization, as seen in the call of ISIS' spokesman al Adnani in September 2014. He calls for attacks in the countries involved in the coalition to bring down ISIS, such as France and the United States.

Despite the territorial losses it encounters nowadays, the organization still survives and the question arises how they do that? Is it for example, possible that the accusations that many Gulf states support the terrorist group are true? As previously stated, it is not as easy to define it as clear as that. For example, when looking at the case of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic State, the complexity can be demonstrated.

#### ii. State-sponsored terrorism: the ambiguity of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic State

State-sponsored terrorism contains already the explanation in its definition. A state can be accused of state-sponsored terrorism as the state itself is a benefactor, financially, materially, or militarily, to a terrorist organization. The United States has suspected that the Saudi Arabian government has ties with ISIS and funds this organization. However, this is a very grey area and no certainty that the suspicions are indeed true. In this thesis I will set forth what is argued about in the literature, leaving out fixed conclusions.

The case of Saudi Arabia has not been investigated many times. However, there are some developments that require further analysis. For example, the leaked emails of Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party's nominee for President of the United States in the 2016 election, during the Presidential elections in 2016. In one of her emails, she addressed the concern of the Saudis backing up the Islamic State. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Hillary Clinton send a strategy plan to a counsellor of President Barack Obama, Mr. Podesta. In this eight-point plan, Ms Clinton outlined a proposal on how

to deal with the Islamic State (Clinton & Podesta, 2014 as described on Wikileaks, 2016). Besides claiming to “*make use of intelligence resources and Special Operations troops in an aggressive manner*” to maintain the engagement with the Peshmerga and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and stressing to “*carry on until they [ISIS] are driven back suffering a tangible defeat* (Clinton & Podesta, 2014 as described on Wikileaks, 2016).”, Hillary Clinton focused on the U.S. intelligence services and their importance in pressuring U.S. allies to stick with their side, as the following text from the email in question will expose.

*While this military/para-military operation is moving forward, we need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region. The Qataris and Saudis will be put in a position of balancing policy between their on-going competition to dominate the Sunni world and the consequences of serious U.S. pressure. (Email conversation between Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, 17 August 2014, as found on Wikileaks, 2016.)*

From this email derives the fact that there is a questionable relationship between Saudi Arabia and ISIS. The email from the former US secretary of state acknowledges the support for the Islamic State by certain people in Saudi Arabia. Although the Saudi kingdom rejected these accusations of direct support, there are also claims that Saudi Arabia failed to prevent the private donations towards the organization. Furthermore, 2500 Saudis are fighting for the terrorist group and which makes it the highest supplier of foreign fighters of the Gulf states (Barrett, Berger, Ghosh, Schoenfeld, el Shawesh, Skinner, Sim, & Soufan, 2015 p.9).

Another dilemma in which Saudi Arabia finds itself in, is the Islamic doctrine, Wahhabism, that prevails in the kingdom. The founder of Wahhabism, Abdel Wahhab, had the idea that the Muslim society should return to the pure Islam. At the foundation lays the belief that the period in the first half of 600, when the Prophet Muhammad stayed in Medina, is the mirror of the ideal Muslim society. For Wahhabis, the Koran is the guideline for life and a society should live by direct interpretation of it. This sort of extreme orthodoxy enforces public attendance at prayers and it forbids the smoking of tobacco or shaving. Next to that, it bans any prayers to saints and prohibits the use of gravestones when burying the dead, as sentiments over dead loved ones distracted people from their dedication to God. These are a few rules of living by the ethos of 18<sup>th</sup> century Wahhabism and one can imagine that nowadays there is a Saudi ambiguity present. Especially if the founder al-Wahhab allows the killing of people who do not conform to his view, even if these people are Muslims, which matches the goal of ISIS to purify the world from non-believers. However, it is necessary to point out that Saudi Arabia does not maintain the death penalty as al-Wahhab once did, as otherbelievers can visit the country without being punished, as long as it is without the purpose of converting others (gov.uk, 2017).

Nonetheless, the law requires that all citizens should be Muslim and there is a law that states that atheism is reason for beheading, stoning or a firing squad (Withnall, 2014).

This ambiguity of Saudi Arabia places them in the position of questionable partner of the West. In turn, the Saudi government swears by all that is holy that they do not give support to this terrorist organization. They stressed that they also fear the actions of ISIS and that the terrorist group has threatened the kingdom. They highlighted the multiple mosque bombings in 2015, where more than 50 people were killed and over 120 people were injured. To strengthen their words, they started airstrikes on Syria against ISIS and they announced in 2015 an Islamic anti-terrorism coalition with countries from the Arab world, Africa and Asia. However, Iraq and Syria are absent in this coalition which questions the effectiveness of this counter-terrorism group (BBC.com, 2015).

Although Saudi Arabia officially condemns and fights ISIS, Saudi Arabia gives legitimacy to the extremist ideology that ISIS preaches. The country is responsible for a lot of human suffering, which is frequently ignored. Kamel Daoud points this out in his article on the Black and White Daesh, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State. *“The former slits throats, kills, stones, cuts off hands, destroys humanity’s common heritage and despises archaeology, women and non-Muslims. The latter is better dressed and neater but does the same things. The Islamic State; Saudi Arabia”* (Daoud, 2015). In conclusion, this thesis will not ignore the role and power Saudi Arabia has and noticing the plausibility of the events, this Wahhabism kingdom is considered as an indirect actor in ISIS’ support system.

### 3. THE UNHEARD TRUTH: AN ANALYSIS

The new broad-minded, progressive constitutions in Tunisia and Morocco are used by the Western world to prove that the Arab Spring ended in a success for the citizens. However, though Tunisia is seen as one of the biggest success story and the desired democracy is established, it also is the highest supplier of foreign fighters to the Islamic State. This is contradictory. In this part I will analyse if the outcomes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Morocco are really as stated and if this can help to understand why the Tunisian youngster join the Islamic State.

In general, the Arab Spring is seen as a story about individual heroes and bad guys, about martyrs and brute dictators. Rather, it is much bigger than usually portrayed: it was about the *enormous failure of the institutions*. Countries once considered stable, were suddenly not anymore. The revolutionaries in Tunisia came together and their purpose was to bring down the dictators Ben Ali. Although they reached their goal, there were no long term solutions as what to do when the government was overthrown? This failure of political organizations, focusing only on changing the status quo by mainly using social media is now the main problem for Tunisia as there is no structured plan for the future, which affects the current situation.

However, one outcome of the revolution cannot be denied. The democratization levels in Tunisia and Morocco have risen since the Arab Spring. In 2016 the democracy ranking organization labelled Tunisia even as the second best improved country of 2015 (Global Democracy Ranking, 2016). On the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index of 2016 it got the 69<sup>th</sup> place of the 167 countries on the list, while Morocco scored a lot lower ending at the 105<sup>th</sup> place (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016, p.10). Although Morocco did not score very high on the list, their position in 2012 was 115, which thus shows an increase in the last 4 years. Next to this, Morocco ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the MENA region, behind Israel, Tunisia, Lebanon. This all reveals some improvements and effects of the Arab Spring, and can therefore be, in theory, considered as success outcomes. However, there is still no answer on the question why Tunisia supplies so many foreign fighters while Morocco does not.

Going back to situation in Tunisia in 2011, when Ben Ali was overthrown there was a political gap to be filled, but this was not one that would be easy to fill in. It is no secret that Ben Ali's administration was drenched with corruption as WikiLeaks revealed that more than half of Tunisia's elites were family to Ben Ali through his children, wife's, siblings and brothers- and sisters in law. Also the repressive regime with its restricted free expression and space for political opponents were incentives for the revolutionaries to speak up against this administration. Yet, behind this dictatorship, Tunisia has a long history of relatively well organized and healthy institutions, it had Arab world's best educational system and the largest middle class (Anderson, 2011, p.3). The power vacuum left by Ben Ali's departure created the problem that there were not many people with experience left that were not loyalists of Ben Ali. In October the same year, the parliamentary elections take place that are won by Ennahdha Islamist party without an outright majority. Since this event, the situation deteriorated. The government imposed an overnight curfew after riots by Islamists against an art exhibition. Salafi Islamic extremists have clashes with the government's security forces and other parties protest after the constitution now stated women as complementary to men, while the former constitution referred to women as fully equal to men. Interesting is that in 2014 the new prime-ministers forms a cabinet with several technocrats to govern. In the years that follows since 2011, political protests continue, the Islamist Ennahdha party is overtaken by the Nida Tunis after parliamentary elections in December 2014, where Ben Ali loyalists also gain seats in parliament. These multiple political adjustments did not create order in the chaos, and the increasing attacks of the Islamic State since 2015 did also not contribute to create order in the chaos.

The Moroccan situation after the Arab Spring did not know the challenges of instating a whole new institution. The king remained on his throne, although he increased the power of the parliament and the prime minister. Also the Justice and Development Party (PJD) gained a historic victory in 2011 and cooperated with the King on combatting corruption, albeit with little results. There have been changes in the country, but at a very slow incremental pace. The government tried to find ways for



improvement, but they did this with minor reforms that could be reversed if they were ineffective (Looney, 2015). What is important in the Moroccan system is that the king has never been openly blamed for any problem in the country. This makes Morocco an exception. In the protests that happened since the Arab Spring, blame is given to the authorities, to the state, to the police, but never to the king. This stems from the monarchy's religious legitimacy, the belief that the king is descended from the prophet Muhammad. For this reason, people remain loyal to him, which keeps the system stable.

#### A. Unemployment and poverty

After the Ben Ali era, the Tunisian institutions were failed to uphold, resulting in more chaos than before the Arab Spring. This because the country remained a high level of unemployment amongst the young Tunisians. More than one third of the unemployed were Tunisians between the age of 15 – 24 (see table 2). These people belong to the category that are suitable for work, or seeking employment. One of the explanations why people in this age group were unemployed could relate to the tertiary education, i.e. the education after high school. However, when looking at the percentages of Tunisians in tertiary education it could not be the main justification for the high levels of unemployment, as it is only 34,61% of Tunisians enrolled in education after high school, which leaves more than 65% of the youngsters able to work. So why are young Tunisians unemployed? The Tunisian employment minister, Zied Ladhari, regarded the unemployment crisis as a structural problem which does not have a quick solution. Part of the problem is the mismatch between the education system and the supply and demand of the job market. This explains why one-third of the 650.000 unemployed Tunisians are graduates. Next to this mismatch are the domestic responsibilities that hold women back at home, for childcare and care for relatives. As a result of this, the total unemployment of women (21.08%) is a lot higher than that of men (12.47%). The unemployed are impatient, which make them restless, or as Wajdi Khadraoui, one of the organisers of a sit-in with hundreds of other unemployed people, states

*“Each one of us is a time bomb. There will only be confidence in our rulers if they find a radical solution to this problem and find jobs for a quarter or a third of the unemployed. How can we say the country's transition has been successful if youth are unemployed?”*

When looking at the unemployment levels in Morocco, the country followed almost the same path as Tunisia did. An increase of 1,7% in the total unemployment since the situation before the Arab Spring, and also an increase of 3,3% in the unemployment of the youth ages. The difference that is present is that Morocco's overall percentages were a lot lower than those of Tunisia. For example, more than one third of the unemployed Tunisians are youngsters, while that percentage of Morocco is one fifth. This data shows that relatively more young people have no job in Tunisia than in Morocco. A reason for

this can be that Morocco has had the biggest significant reforms on traditional active labour market policies. The Moroccan Kingdom has started employment subsidies, expanded the labour capacities by creating more jobs, and it has promised the youth to have a voice in the governance and economy of the country by adopting constitutional reforms. After the Arab Spring the youth were supported into entrepreneurship and public sector jobs. Another policy project was the reducing of energy subsidies, that gave room for investment in better social protection and public investment growth (Mazarei & Mirzoev, 2015, p.56). These projects may have, in the end, protected Morocco from the consequences of high unemployment.

“It is like you are pushing them into the lap of ISIS”, Said Ferjani, a leader of Nahda, said about the circumstances in Tunisia (Saleh, 2016). From these inside quotes derives the fact that continuous unemployment, the corresponding discontent and lack of trust are highly possible to be one of the incentives to join ISIS. Also poverty pushes people to seek better prospects. As these unemployed, uneducated youngsters are in general not rich, their search for money can end up in joining the ISIS, as the Islamic State can fulfil their wishes. A taxi driver from Ettadhamen states that the residents do not have a future. “They say, ‘I’m dying anyway, so why not go with these people and make some money?’” (Taylor, 2016).

#### B. State repression and anti-terrorism policy

A second problem caused by the chaos of the Arab Spring is the failure to uphold the institutions. An example are the overcrowding Tunisian prisons. In February 2015 France24, an international news network, addressed the problem of the Tunisian prisons, reporting that some prisons are at 150 percent of their capacity. Almost one third of the inmates are convicted for marijuana use. Law 52 of Tunisia allows authorities to take random urine tests, and if tested positive, the person in question automatically gets a one-year prison sentence. In itself a petty crime, but making the prison problem troublesome. In 2016 the country had the fourth largest prison population of the Arab world, by reaching the 53,500 inmates, which was double the size of the prison population in 2015. Not only the use of marijuana in the country accounts for this large size of the prison population. Also the state of Emergency law created after an ISIS bus bombing in November 2015, is resulting in the high numbers. This Emergency law gives authorities the power to send people to prison, without any charges, for preventive detention. There are restrictions that set the maximum duration for preventive detention on a 48 hours-period, with a possibility of extending it to a maximum of 15 days in terrorism cases. However, Human Rights Watch questions if the authorities adhere to these rules (Mohie-Eldin, 2017). Given the multiple terrorism-related attacks in Tunisia, as the Bardo National Museum attack, the 2015 Sousse Attacks and the Tunis bus bombing, together with the institutional chaos, one can imagine that the Emergency law is frequently used and the prisons are therefore full.

Next to this prison problem are the many times reported practices of torture. The conditions in the prisons are, to say the least, poor. There is not enough space for sleeping, there are not enough sanitary facilities and a lack of natural light and space to live increased the spread of diseases in the prisons. This all creates inhumane circumstances as stated in a UN report (Mohie-Eldin, 2017). As a consequence of the lack primary human basic needs as facilities for sleep and hygiene, the violence in the prison increases, as well between inmates as by prison guards.

In sum, the post-Ben Ali prospects of a newly elected administration abiding to democracy, freedom and the rule of law, are crushed. State repression, human rights abuses, police violence and torture were to be consigned to history, but all continued even after the Arab Spring.

Post-Arab Spring Morocco maintained a growth-oriented approach, combining the best of the Western and Islamic economic principles. Next to this, the government had a non-theocratic policy which discourages extremism and radicalization. The new constitution committed the government to more civil liberties and assurances of human rights improvements. This made Morocco a potential country to weather the storm and be able to protect its country from the Islamic State. Also, by the reformations the Arab Spring succeeded at least temporarily in Morocco, as it gave people the idea that change was coming, which soothed the crisis. This all sounds positive and shows that Morocco is the winner of the Arab Spring, as economist Robert Looney states (2015). But looking closer at the country, it is still only partly free according to the reports of the Freedom House (2016). The civil liberties have still not improved as was promised. In fact, the situation on freedom, civil liberties and political rights remained the same as it was in 2001 (see table 3).

Although the country's situation did not change much compared to the pre-Arab Spring situation, Morocco remains at the lower part of Benmelech and Klor's list of foreign fighters (2016). The country is very successful in fighting terrorism. For example, a law was added that stated that people who are preparing potential terrorist activities, such as travelling to the ISIS territories or planning attacks on national soil, will be put in jail. Also the opening of an imam school is a successful attempt to counter radicalization. By educating the country's own imams, they keep extremism in control and teach Muslims a more moderate form of the Islam (Avni, 2015). Another instrument is the Moroccan FBI, the Bureau Central d'Investigation Judiciaire (BCJI), which already uncovered 40 Islamic terrorist cells and have arrested almost 600 people since 2015 (De Koning, 2017). De Koning also affirms the vigilance of the kingdom. On one side is this harming the individual privacy, as people cannot openly criticize or discuss Morocco's red lines such as speaking disgrace of the King, the monarchy or the Islam nor openly criticize Morocco's claim on the Western Sahara. People can go to jail for that, regardless of the laws of free expression. On the other side, people see it as a necessity in the fight against terrorism. "Everybody in Morocco is aware that you are being watched. If they have to do that to stop terrorists, we're okay with that, we have nothing to hide." (De Koning, 2017). Although the situation in Morocco did not really improve the civil lives,

these steps against terrorism makes Morocco the school example of fighting the threat of the Islamic State.

### C. The Islamic State: the place where frustration meets aggression

What these previously mentioned examples show is that the long term outcomes of the Arab Spring are not as splendid and successful as described in the media. However, it is not that scholars absolutely did not pay attention to this fact. Recent studies did come up with a mix of socioeconomic marginalization, political exclusion and new conservatism. Despite the new persuasive insights, the problem remains that these investigations are mostly speculative, as the empirical data of the lives of foreign fighters is lacking. This problem is addressed by Geoffrey Macdonald and Luke Waggoner who conducted interviews with friends and families of 13 foreign fighters to find out why so many Tunisians are joining the Islamic State. In short they say that the terrorists do not have a uniform profile, but share some characteristics: bored, disillusioned with government and often unemployed. Their findings provide ground for this thesis, as it argues that the discontent with the state and unemployment (the two main points that would be improved after the uprisings), are the drivers for young people to go to the conflict area (Macdonald & Waggoner, 2017). Next to these three characteristics, this thesis outlines another factor, namely frustration. Although the problem of lacking empirical data that previous studies encounter, the already existing investigations such as interviews and profiles of ISIS terrorist are used to analyse how frustration led them to the IS.

The broken promises of improvement for the whole country of the new democratic government constructed the frustration that roams Tunisia. One way of frustration catharsis is to start a protest (again), which is what happens now in El Kamour, Tunisia. A group representatives of a new generation, that grew up in relative freedom (see table 3) face a future of long-term poverty, police violence and unemployment. As a protest act they shut down the main oil pipeline at El Kamour, which resulted in clashes with the National Guard. The latter party tried to burn down the protesters' camp and the protesters in turn lit the police station and a post of the National Guard. Here, again an example of how the government used violence to turn down a protest. This is one example of how people deal with the situation in Tunisia. But the frustrated people can also choose another way to release their frustration: by aggressive behaviour. The Islamic State, that promotes aggression, is for many youngsters the perfect place to go to. This is also what Berkowitz argued, that the situation will end up in aggression now weapons, money, women and promises of a better future are present.

Not only Tunisia knows frustrated people, drawn to the aggression. Also Morocco knows protests in the current society. These protests very much resemble the beginning of the Arab Spring by the death of Mohammed Bouazizi. In October 2016 in Morocco's Rif region, a fishmonger named Mouhcine Fikri was crushed to death by a truck, on which he jumped to get his confiscated goods back. This

ignited the recent protests over the economic deprivation and humiliation of the Berbers in this neglected region. As a reaction to this, the King rounded up members of the protest movement and journalists. Trying to soothe the the uprising the security forces were set to work without many limits (The New York Times, 2017). What is interesting is that also this time the community does not want to overthrow the monarchy or even for King Mohammed VI to step down. All they want is acknowledgement of their economic and social sufferings, that the monarchy invests more in the creation of jobs and facilities as hospitals and universities, and that the authorities respect the laws.

It is understandable that the Moroccans are frustrated, but how they handle their frustration differs from the Tunisian youngsters. Moroccans do not massively turn to the Islamic State. Also, the Moroccan government is meeting the community's demands with a promise of opening of a cancer treatment centre unit and more civil service jobs, which created credits for the government (The New York Times, 2017). Up until today, the oncology unit is still not present and many protesters are still in jail. How this will work out, if the frustration will lead to aggressive behaviours and a rising amount of ISIS foreign fighters, will the future point out.

#### D. Saudi influence(?)

This part of the analysis is the most speculative part of this thesis. This has to do with the fact that there is no proven relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic State. However, such an idea that there is a relationship does not rise within a total void. First of all, the earlier mentioned emails of Hillary Clinton that certain people from Saudi Arabia support the Islamic State and the U.S. should put pressure on Saudi Arabia to remain on side against the Islamic State. There is also another way for the Saudi's to side with ISIS and that is to promote the Islamic State's doctrine and to encourage people to join the organization. Exactly this point is what this part will describe; the Saudi influence which can be a push for the youngsters to join the Islamic State.

Kristina Kausch (2013) wrote a report on foreign funding in Tunisia and stresses the impact of Gulf States as Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Tunisia. Foreign funding is, as Kausch states, suspected of a mean to influence the politics of the receiving country. Next to this, the interviewees in the research of Kausch stated that Islamist/Salafist associations brought prominent preachers from the Gulf states to preach a radical discourse to Tunisian locals at an attempt of ideological influence (Kausch, 2013, p.17). These instances promote their Wahhabi/Salafi ideology, plus the converted people will be financially and ideologically backed (Kausch, 2013, p.11). According to Mark Durie (2013), a theology scholar, Saudi leaders are using their financial resources for promotion and funding of worldwide Salafists. Important to note is that during the reign of Ben Ali, the Salafist groups were repressed. After Ennahdha's political victory Salafists have enjoyed their freedom, resulting in a growing Tunisian Salafi community. As a consequence of the tolerance there has been an increase in the radicalization numbers, as expression of Salafist ideas and their political agenda could go freely

across the country (Moniquet, 2013, p.20). However, there should be a distinction made between the 'scientific' Salafists that promote the strict and pure Islam but reject the use of violence, and the Salafist Jihadi groups that promote the terrorist actions and are drawn to the Islamic State. The Islamic State comes into play in this analysis as this organization's ideology is based on Salafi Jihadism and Wahhabism. ISIS provides space to live up to that ideology, as the Salafi Jihadists cannot practice it in the secular politics in current Tunisia (Badie, 2017, p.122).

Although the relationship between Tunisia's foreign fighters, Saudi's influence and the Islamic State remains highly speculative, there are components that make it worthy to discuss it. Saudi Arabia reigns by Wahhabism, it promotes Wahhabism all around the world and encourages people to live by its principles. The Saudi foreign meddling in Tunisia cannot be denied and the use of soft power by sending preacher to Tunisian countryside, makes it more plausible of the Saudi influence on the Tunisian foreign fighters.

In Morocco the situation is really different in terms of Salafism. Whereas the Tunisian government gave freedom of space for the Salafists, Morocco's kingdom fought against Salafi Islam. The incentive for the kingdom to openly fight Salafism were the triple suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. The King declared war on the ideology that infiltrated the country and radicalized young people. This also meant the purge of mosques. However, these mosques were often paid and thus influenced by Saudi Arabia's Wahhabist elements. Saudi Arabia has always been an ally to Morocco and remained one, even after the actions of the King. Even now Saudi Arabia is a benefactor of Moroccan mosques, but only Morocco decides the strategy on how these mosques are run and what role the Islam plays in the civil lives (Braude, 2016). So, there is a Saudi influence on Morocco, but no literature exists that claims that Saudi Arabia influences the Moroccan youth to join the Islamic State.

Moroccan authorities are worried about the Salafi jihadist in its country, and that these people can easily reach out via social media to people all over the world. Because of these worries, Morocco undertook action. They did this for example, with a state program that gave rise to imam schools, resulting in 100.000 imams being sent to the country's mosques to preach the moderate Islam, as previously described (Avni, 2015; De Koning, 2017). By undertaking these steps, Morocco has sovereignty over its own religious institutions and contributes to the long-term goal of banning Salafi jihadist from the country (Braude, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The first conclusion that can be made is that the problems that brought down Ben Ali have not been fixed, with a lot of unintended consequences. The biggest consequence being the enormous amount of foreign fighters leaving to fight for the Islamic State. Another consequence is the ongoing unrest and discontent in Tunisia. At this very moment, there are plans being made for a new revolution by the

unemployed Tunisians. The first revolution did bring change in theory, but a new one should bring change in practice. One of the protesters claims that they are here to the end, and that here is no going back (Gall, 2017).

The contemporary situation shows the actual long term outcome of the Arab Spring: institutional failure and political unrest in Tunisia, while Morocco retained the same king and did not have to free itself from the institutional chaos. The high hopes of democratisation turned out to be a pipe castle. One way to deal with this disappointment is in the way that happened recently in El Kamour, Tunisia, where new protests are happening. Another way is what this thesis tried to prove, that the failure of the Arab Spring drove the youth in the lap of the Islamic State. This characterizes the outcome for Tunisia, while at the same time, Morocco only provides a fifth of the amount of Tunisians foreign fighters. Morocco is up till now a completely different story when looking at their relationship with the Islamic State. In theory the situation in Tunisia and Morocco should be the same, as they were similar countries, but in practice it situation is different. When looking at the statistics, both countries still have a high amount of unemployed youngsters. Both countries experience state repression and violence. Both countries have frustrated youth that want to change the status quo. Both countries have Saudi influence. However, there is little to none existing literature that proves that Saudi Arabia is directly pressing youth to the Islamic State in Morocco, but at the same time there are voices that say that Saudi Arabia's associations are influencing Tunisian youngsters to leave for the Islamic State. Apart from the Saudi ambiguity both countries are in theory, potential targets for the Islamic State and have many potential foreign fighters. What makes the difference can be addressed to Morocco's anti-terrorism policy, which suppresses this Salafi/Wahhabism ideology. The examples of Morocco's anti-terrorism policy show that this country can be an example for its neighbours how to deal with the Islamic State threat.

Thus the answer to the research question "How have the results of the Arab Spring caused the extreme flow of frustrated Tunisian youth to the Islamic State, while a similar country as Morocco remains at the bottom of the list of Islamic State's foreign fighters?" lies within the institutions of both countries. Tunisia is still occupied with dealing with the weak institutions. The institutional failure that is created by the Arab Spring in Tunisia creates even more chaos than before the Arab Spring, making the Tunisian youngsters frustrated and are now either planning new uprisings, or are leaving to find a better future at the Islamic State. The Arab Spring did not change the monarchy in Morocco, as King Hassan VI remained the king, and the gradual reformation of the constitution soothed the unrest in the country for the moment. Therefore, Morocco can now focus on the terrorist threat, by monitoring potential foreign fighters and arresting them. To my opinion, this is what makes the difference in amount of foreign fighters of Tunisia and Morocco. Tunisia is still dealing with the collapse of the institutions and can therefore not handle the frustrated Tunisians, nor control in- and external

influences. Morocco has a strong security system and can go build further on the already existing foundations, with laws that incorporate the community.

Although the sources are scarce and a lot of different theories circulate amongst the scholars, if the Arab Spring has taught the world anything, it is that many seemingly stable regimes maintain their balance, until they do not longer. Before it is too late, action should be taken. Creating work projects and investment in the country, foreign as well as local, should be applauded for. And foremost, what is predominately stressed by this thesis: listen to all the people of the society, because frustrated people can cause big revolutions... After all, they are what makes a country stand or fall.



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