The Aftermath of a Revolution

Examining the motivations influencing Tunisia's IS Foreign-Fighters

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Abstract: Tunisia's 2011 revolution to an end close to five decades of authoritarian rule, and as of spring 2017, it is the only successful post-Arab spring democracy in the MENA region. However, Tunisia is also the nation with the most individuals leaving to join the Islamic State, both in total numbers and per capita. This thesis explores Tunisia's foreign-fighter question through Della Porta's social movement framework, analysing how the nation's history of state repression, the democratisation and socioeconomic inequalities contributed to the choice of many Tunisian to leave their new democracy for foreign conflicts.

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Research Question

Why has Tunisia, the only successful post Arab-Spring democracy, produced the most IS foreign-fighters (as of Spring 2017)?

Introduction

As of December 2015, the Islamic State had attracted approximately 30,000 foreign-fighters from around the world (Benmelech and Klor 2016, 1). Whilst western media extensively focused on the European nationals who had joined the Islamic State, or IS, the country that has seen the most foreign-fighters join IS is Tunisia. Approximately one fifth of IS's foreign-fighters are Tunisian, numbering around 6,000-7,000 (The Soufan Group 2015). This means that 1 in every 545.5 of the 11 million Tunisians, has left the country in the pursuit of becoming an IS foreign-fighter (Benmelech and Klor 2016, 16, 19; The World Factbook 2017).In comparison, Saudi Arabians, who make up the second largest group of IS fighters, number around 2,500; that is 3,500 fewer than Tunisians (Benmelech and Klor 2016, 16). Furthermore, 2011 witnessed the fall of Tunisia's incumbent president Ben Ali and almost five decades of authoritarian rule (The Editors of Encylopaedia Britannica 2015). The subsequent democratisation of the nation is (generally) viewed as successful. There are debates surrounding the legitimacy of the Tunisian democracy, as this thesis is concerned, the American NGO Freedom House's ranking of Tunisia as free, will be respected as a qualification for Tunisia to be considered a democracy[1]. The democratisation of Tunisia allowed Islamic social movements who had been silenced under the decades of authoritarian imposed secularism, to find a platform of expression (initially) free of surveillance (Murphy

[1] https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia

2002; Packer 2016). Radical and violent radical Islamic social movements[2] used these new political freedoms to share their beliefs, preach freely[3], and revive "old networks" domestically and transnationally (Balboni and Malka 2016; Packer 2016).

Despite Tunisia's democratisation and post-revolutionary religious freedom, the grievances of the 2011 revolution protest cycle have not been completely addressed. The country has an unemployment rate of 15%, the rate of youth unemployment is more than double at 35%, and perhaps most strikingly, the unemployment rate for university graduates is 31.2% (Devarajan et al 2016, 69). In addition to the challenge unemployment has presented the post-revolutionary government, the country has been the target of a number of deadly acts of political violence. The counter-terrorism measures taken in response of these acts of political violence have witnessed the revival of certain pre-revolutionary counter-terrorism policies, including the state-control of religious institutions and reports of torture (Balboni and Malka 2016; Amnesty International 2017).

This parallel emergence of the growth of political violence and democracy in Tunisia poses the question whether democracy, and the freedoms that it embodies, are the cause of this surge in political violence and Tunisia's foreign-fighters? Or, alternatively, whether other underlying socioeconomic factors need to be analysed in combination with the regime change to better understand the growth of Tunisian political violence, especially with regard to foreign-fighters. This thesis examines the question why Tunisia, the only successful post-Arab Spring democracy, has produced the most IS foreign-fighters (as of Spring 2017)?

[2] This thesis employs the term radical social movements when discussing salafists and violent radical social movements when discussing jihadi-salafists. These terms are based on Della Porta's (2013) definitions of social movments.
[3] New platforms for religious education were quickly established and occupied by *Salafists*, as state-control of institutions of religious education ended post-revolution (Balboni and Malka 2016).

The thesis employs Della Porta's framework on political violence, presented in *Clandestine Political Violence* to examine the motivating factors behind Tunisia's current wave of foreign-fighters through a multidimensional approach. Firstly, the existing literature on post-revolutionary Tunisia, transnational activists, democracy's relationship with political violence, and the role socioeconomic inequalities play in transnational activism is examined. Following the literature review, Della Porta's theoretical framework is expanded upon, and the methods of data generation and analysis are presented. Finally, Tunisia's pre-revolutionary relationship with Islam, post-revolutionary political opportunity and mobilising structures, and the persistence of the grievances of the 2011 revolution are discussed in order to examine the nation's current foreign-fighter phenomenon.

Literature Review

The literature on Tunisia's political history and mechanisms of state-control explain to a great extent the different post-revolutionary engagements of the Islamic social movements within Tunisia. Tunisia's authoritarian regimes, under both Bourgiba and later Ben Ali, had a history of repressing opposition, including "grassroots Islamic organisations", and a vehement dedication (with short ruptures) to maintaining the secularism of the Tunisian state (Layachi 2013, 353). Some authors, such as Layachi (2013) (who focuses on the Tunisia) and Roy (2004) (who focuses on the West) identify the "secularization of the public space" as pivotal in explaining the creation of Islamic brotherhoods, particularly by moderate Islamists who sought a means to practise their religion separate from the authoritarian regime's state controlled religious institutions (370). The role of authoritarian secularism in shaping the nation's current wave of political violence is discussed by numerous scholars including Layachi (2013), Willis (2013), Malka (2015), and Balboni and Malka (2015). The historical state-repression of religious activity coupled with the state control of mosques and Islamic

schools led to moderate Islamists practising Islam in brotherhoods, and subsequently the creation of a post-revolutionary religious vacuum within Tunisia. Balboni and Malka (2015) identify the opportunity this religious vacuum provided radical Islamists to spread their messages and preaching post-revolution. Despite the authoritarian state control of religion, radical Islamic ideology managed to enter the Tunisian religious discourse through Tunisians who had been exposed to the Gulf's Salafism after returning from the gulf states in 70's and 80's, as well as the Arabisation policies of education in the 80's which brought teachers from the Mashriq to Tunisia, who often brought "salafi and Islamist ideology" with them too (Malka 2015, 97). These migration patterns brought radical Islamic ideologies to the policed secular state. Furthermore, agreeing with Bonelli's (2015) argument that transnationalism activism is able to reap the benefits of new technology, Malka (2015) highlights the roles "satellite television and later the internet" played a large role in further providing individuals direct access to radical Islamic preaching from abroad (97-98). These factors created a division between moderate Islamic brotherhoods and radical Islamists who could engage with radical preaching and transnational networks on an individual bases assisted by technology. Post-revolutionary Tunisia provided a new opening for religious practice, and the vacuum was quickly filled by radical Islamic preachers and not Islamic moderates who were accustomed their practising within brotherhoods (Layachi 2013). The social and cultural preconditions of the Ben Ali regime resulted in moderate Islamists grasping the new political opportunities the revolution presented and playing a large role in post-revolutionary Tunisian politics, however, (initially) not challenging radical Islamists in their occupation of the post-revolutionary religious vacuum (Willis 2013, 540-541).

Whilst the literature on post-revolutionary Tunisia assists in understanding the domestic context in which radical Islamic social movements grew in popularity, various

(primarily social movement theory) scholars highlight the need to consider the transnational framework of foreign-fighters. Layachi (2013), Willis (2013), Malka (2015), and Balboni and Malka (2015) all highlight the links between violent radical Islamist in Tunisia and transnational radical Islamist networks, as well as the role technological developments have played in allowing transnational activists, such as Salafists organisations, to gain access to a wider audience in the country. However, as Malet (2010) and Tarrow (2010) argue, transnational activism is not a new phenomenon, and neither are foreign-fighters. Therefore it is important to asses Tunisian foreign-fighters in a framework that is not limited to a national and post-revolutionary perspective. Malet (2010) and Della Porta (2013) stress the necessity to look beyond the structure and analyse the agency behind foreign-fighters, as demystifying foreign-fighters as neither a new nor uniquely Islamic phenomenon allows the local roots, motivations, and societal factors that motivate transnational activists, such as Tunisia foreign-fighters, to be taken into consideration (97). Malet (2010) extends the argument by drawing on historical examples of foreign-fighters to illustrate the similarities between the current wave of Islamic foreign-fighters and previous waves, such as during the Spanish civil war. Malet (2010) and Tarrow (2010) argue that the attractiveness of transnational activism lies in the way social movements, such as certain Tunisian radical Islamic groups, "frame their demands in ways that enable them to join with others, and identify common targets" (5). In relation to foreign-fighters, Malet (2010) stresses that recruiters frame "distant civil conflicts as threatening a transnational identity group with which the recruit is closely affiliated", thus making the distant personal, such as the Syrian civil war for a Tunisian student (99-100). Yet, as Bonelli (2015) argues, each transnational activist's commitment to an over-arching transnational cause should not be exaggerated. While a common desire to engage in changing the world is present amongst most transnational activists, yet there is also a vagueness of what and how this change will occur. In relation to Tunisian foreign-fighters, Balboni and Malka's

(2016) discussion of the motivations behind Tunisians leaving to take-up arms abroad includes the economic inequalities and failure of the democratic post-revolutionary economy to fulfil its promises of providing a brighter future for its youth. However, they, Layachi (2013), Willis (2013), and Malka (2015) focus primarily on structure over agency behind transnational activists in Tunisia, focusing on the domestic political structure and post-revolutionary challenges over the framing of foreign conflict by radical Islamic social movements. Understanding Tunisian foreign-fighters through the framework of transnational activists assists in de-essentialising the current wave of foreign-fighters; however, the democratisation and domestic political context should not be disregarded, as Balboni and Malka (2016). Layachi (2013), Willis (2013), and Malka (2015) highlight.

The correlation between the democratisation of Tunisia and the growth of violent radical Islamism within the nation cannot be ignored, however, various scholars argue that it is in democracy's nature to prevent political violence from arising, and therefore the causes of political violence may lie in perceived political, social, and/or economic deprivation. Lia and Skjølberg (2005), Gurr (1988) and Hafez (2013) argue that it is in democracy's nature to allow individuals to voice their dissent, and that therefore, individuals would not desire to engage in political violence. These scholars view democracies to have "greater legitimacy among their populations"; and as result, democracies prevent regime toppling/revolutionary "dissatisfaction" amongst the wider populace (Lia and Skjølberg 2005; 32). Democracy's legitimacy is also discussed by Sambanis (2008), who entitles these preventative factors "demand-side factors", and draws on Crenshaw (1981), Schmid (1992) and Abide (2004) to argue that they in-turn result in "fewer political grievances that support terrorism in democracies" (196). Drawing on Engene's study of *The Patterns of Terrorism in Western Europe, 1950-1995,* Lia and Skjølberg (2005) argue that terrorism is "systematically related

to low measures of freedom and democracy" (32). Hafez (2013) builds on this argument to explain terrorism in the MENA region, and, in a similar vein to Layachi (2013), Willis (2013), Malka (2015), and Balboni and Malka (2015), blames the region's authoritarian regimes for terrorism, as they may have been successful at imprisoning suspected terrorist domestically. However, the export of "radical ideologies" could not be stopped, and "extremism" was not marginalised (149). However, Hafez (2013) argues that democratisation will curtail terrorism on the long-run in the MENA region. In addition to the freedom to voice dissent within a democracy, Gurr (1988) identifies a lack of sympathy for terrorist and political violence within democracies as a deterrent of terrorism within a democracy. However, Gurr's (1971) relative deprivation theory finds that the presences of widespread dissatisfaction amongst a population, particularly in relation to a "perceived discrepancy between [individuals] value expectations and their value capabilities", results in relative deprivation that can foster political violence within a democracy (18). This theory is not without critique, Tilly (1971) argues it is flawed because it cannot be faulted, as political violence can nearly never occur without a sense of relative deprivation, the exception being "impulsive acts of political violence" (417). However, flaws aside, if relative deprivation is taken into account, socioeconomic inequality within a democracy can be identified as a motivation for individuals to engage in political violence, and therefore the correlation between Tunisia's democratisation and political violence may be understood through the frame of socioeconomic inequalities.

Taking socioeconomic inequality into account in answering the foreign-fighter question contributes to understanding one possible agency behind foreign-fighters, however, various scholars argue, generalisations lead to individual motivations of foreign-fighters being overlooked. Malet (2010) argues that a lower socioeconomic background can be a motivating

factor for an individual to engage in transnational political violence, isolating "men who are in their early 20s" "from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds" as the stereotypical foreign fighter strata (113). Bonelli (2015) is in disagreement with the argument that transnational activists come from a particular strata of society, and stresses the variety of backgrounds transnational activists possess. Llussa and Tavares (2008) share Bonelli's opinion and disagree with Malet (2010), favouring Krueger and Maleckova (2003), Berrebi (2003) and Schelling's (1991) arguments that "terrorist acts" are "not associated with "lower education or economic status" (Llussa and Tavares 2008, 238). Krueger and Laitin (2008) extend their argument to highlight that repression influences terrorism to a greater degree than poverty, arguing that "terrorist perpetrators are not necessarily the poor. But those who are repressed politically tend to terrorize the rich" (172). These approaches look beyond structure and take the agency of political violence into account. Sambanis (2008) echoes this belief, and draws on Della Porta (1995) and Tarrow (1998) to argue that the "indiscriminate use of state repression in response to terrorism serves to mobilize the masses including moderates who would not otherwise support the terrorists" (200). Yet, generalising the motivations behind terrorism and support for political violence is dangerous, as Tilly (1971) and Della Porta (2013) note, as understanding the signals/the point terrorists are attempting to make is vital to understanding the goals and results political violent activists are searching for, and what their motivations may be. This point returns to Gurr's argument that it is not necessarily the poor that take-up political violence, but members of society that feel they are being treated unfairly, as they are not able to obtain the economic opportunities they deserve. Therefore, stereo-typing socioeconomic stratum may be counterproductive as it leads to generalisations and does not consider the variety of individual motivations in becoming a foreign-fighter.

The literature on Tunisia's post-revolutionary socio-political developments, transnational activists, democracy's relation to political violence, and the socioeconomic agency of foreign-fighters highlight that the question of foreign-fighters cannot be understood from a unidimensional perspective, as both the structure and the agency of foreign-fighters need to be taken into consideration. The literature on transnational activists' highlights the need to de-essentialise the current Tunisian foreign-fighter wave, and stresses the need to analyse the domestic context and the framing of foreign conflict by social movements. The correlation between the democratisation of the nation and the rise of foreign-fighters highlights the need to consider the motivations of foreign-fighters, including relative deprivation. However, as the literature on the socioeconomic agency of foreign-fighters indicates, it is important not to succumb to simply correlating socioeconomic background and political violence. Whilst there is a variety of literature that focuses on the post-revolutionary political structure in Tunisia, there is a gap in the literature in relation to analysing political violence in Tunisia through a multidimensional approach that allows the transnational characteristics of the current wave of political violence to be understood alongside the domestic socio-political context. The following section will describe the theoretical framework this thesis' multidimensional analysis of the foreign-fighter question.

Theoretical Framework

Della Porta (2013) approaches political violence through a framework that allows multiple factors including democracy, but also repression and perceived socioeconomic inequalities to be considered in the schema of interactions that can lead to political violence. She approaches political violence through a social movement approach, taking into consideration the 'mechanism' and the relational, constructivist and emergent characteristics of political violence (24). Della Porta (2013) defines 'mechanisms' to be "chains of

interactions that filter structural conditions and produce effects", therefore, political violence is not considered to be an isolated occurrence but part of a continuum of interactions (44). Viewing political violence through relational, constructivist and emergent characteristics allows for the "the interactions between various actors, both institutional and non-institutional", "experiential reality" of the actors, and the "casual mechanisms" of the public, group and individual experiences of the actors to be understood (Della Porta 2013, 24). In other words, Della Porta provides a framework through which political violence is analysed by assessing multiple factors, instead of singling out one causal factor. Della Porta (2013) employs the "classical social movement agenda", which allows for the interactions between the "political opportunity structures", "mobilizing structures", "framing" and "repertoires" behind a social movement to understood, and how a social movement's interactions with "their opponents" can make them turn to political violence (33-34). Or in other words, what political, socioeconomic and environmental factors can push a group to embrace political violence, including repressive measures adopted by the state against social movements, or "escalated policing" (Della Porta 2013, 45).

Employing Della Porta's framework to analyse political violence is beneficial in the case of Tunisian foreign-fighters as it allows democracy's influence on the growth of foreign-fighters to be analysed. Additionally, as highlighted above, Della Porta's framework allows for a multiple dimensional understanding of the interactions behind political violence. Therefore, Tunisia's relationship with escalated policing, in particular the authoritarian state's repression of Islam and the post-revolutionary opportunities for repressed groups to express their beliefs publically; as well as mobilizing structures, particularly related to the socioeconomic inequalities of post-revolutionary Tunisia can be assessed in relation to the growth of political violence. This approach allows for political violence in Tunisia to be

analysed through a public level, focusing on the public's perception of the post-revolutionary political changes and radical Islam, on a group level by focusing on the interactions between the government and radical Islamists groups, and on an individual level by focusing on the potential motivating factors influencing Tunisia's foreign-fighters, such as socioeconomic inequalities. By employing this approach, the mechanisms that have instigated the growth of Tunisian foreign-fighters can be better understood, instead of focusing on a single causal-factor. Furthermore, Della Porta's social movements approach allows for the Tunisian foreign-fighter phenomenon to be viewed through what Wiktorowicz (2004) argues is a neutral perspective that prevents essentialising the Islamic element. This approach will be utilised to discuss Tunisia's violent radical Islamists, not as being uniquely Islamic, but as politically violent social activists.

Arguments

In order to understand Tunisia's foreign-fighter phenomenon beyond the question of democracy:

- **a.** The pre-revolutionary relationship of state-repression and Islam, and the post-revolutionary political opportunity structures need to be considered.
- **b.** The post-revolutionary mobilizing structures, and the persistence of socioeconomic inequalities need to be considered.

Operationalisation

For this thesis, state-repression is a key concept that is operationalised through assessing the post-revolutionary freedoms, particularly freedom of religious expression, press freedom, and the freedom of movement, which were pursued by many who had been silenced under the authoritarian regime (Balboni and Malka 2016). Tunisia's democratisation is bound

to its authoritarian past, as the present political violence cannot be understood without reflecting on the nation's historical relationship with authoritarianism and state-repression. The second concept that is related to state-repression, and deserves its own operationalisation is political opportunity structure. The political opportunity structures occur when a political system is vulnerable and new opportunities arise. The operationalisation of this concept is based on Della Porta's framework, which considers dimensions related to the political context including "environmental responses, the reactions of authorities, and the strength and postures of potential allies and opponents", as well as the division and territorial centralisation of power (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978 quoted in Della Porta 2013, 36-38).

The concept of mobilising structures also draws on Della Porta's framework, and is operationalised through considering social movement's physical occupation of religious and educational institutions, popularity in terms of public attendance to speeches, connection to transnational militant networks, and guiding ideology that provides an alternative to the state. These mobilizing structures can be further assessed in relation to the concept of socioeconomic inequalities of the nation, as these are indicative of both the resentment towards the government as well as the appeal of transnational political violence to individuals who feel disadvantaged by their experiential reality (Packer 2016; Gurr 1988). The concept of socioeconomic inequalities in Tunisia is operationalised through the dimensions of income inequality, cost of corruption to the country, the average education level, job opportunities and the unemployment level of both the nation and different age groups, as Malet (2010) stresses that younger adults are more likely to engage in transnational political violence.

Methods of Data Generation and Methods of Data Analysis

This thesis was based on qualitative research that was approached through contextual discourse analysis (Ruiz Ruiz 2009). The understanding of discourse was drawn from Ruiz

Ruiz's (2009) definition that recognizes discourse to be "any practice by which individuals imbue reality with meaning" (2). The data generated for this thesis consisted of a combination of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included semi-structured interviews, based on lose guiding questions, with experts from the fields of counter-terrorism, law, and non-governmental organisations. The interviews were intended to gain a deeper and current perspective on Tunisian foreign-fighters, and to investigate how the current government frames foreign-fighters. The interviews also focused on the consequences new counter-terrorism measures have had on freedoms within the nation, in particular in relation to Islam. After transcription, contextual discourse analysis was employed to analyse the interviews, as it allowed for the analysis to "centre on the enunciation, considering the discourse as a singular act" (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, 3). Additionally, primary sources on Tunisia's economy from leading global databanks, such as the UN and the World Bank on GDP and income inequality were analysed through textual analysis. *"Description"* was employed to translate "these non-textual discourses" to a textual from, so as to focus on "the utterance and consider the discourse as an object of study" (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, 3-4).

The secondary sources included Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International Reports on Tunisia, and other reports such as from the Carnegie Middle East Centre and the Small Arms Survey on Tunisian foreign-fighters. The reports were chosen based on the reputation of the organisations that published them and their relevance to the research question. These sources were used to draw a comparison between pre- and post-revolutionary Tunisia, in order to highlight the changes that have occurred and draw parallels where necessary. Textual analysis was principally employed when analysing the secondary sources. In an attempt to better understand the flow of foreign-fighters out of Tunisia, this thesis used data from the Soufan Group, a leading non-governmental intelligence agency, as a secondary source to identify how many Tunisians have left the country, and what the patterns of

departure have been. Additionally, the Carnegie Centre for Strategic and International Studies' data on the routes taken by Tunisian foreign-fighters and the numbers returning were also analysed. Again these sources were looked at through a textual approach.

Scope and Limits

This thesis contributed to the current literature on Tunisian foreign-fighters by employing Della Porta's social movement framework. This approach was employed in order to advance the understanding of the motivating factors behind the MENA region's foreign-fighters, as well as address the lack of focus on transitional democracies in social movement studies[4]. This thesis was limited by its lack of Arabic sources and the author's inability to travel to Tunisia to conduct interviews. Therefore, it is possible that the findings of this thesis are contradicted by existent Arabic sources. Furthermore, the author was not able to conduct personal interviews with Tunisian foreign-fighters, therefore, this thesis was limited to focusing primarily on the macro and meso levels of Della Porta's (2013) analysis, over the micro-individual level.

The Authoritarian Regime's State-Repression and Islam

The growth and popularity of Islamic social movements in post-revolutionary Tunisia are to a great part explained by the relational characteristics of the authoritarian regime's policies of (almost) continuous state-repression. The authoritarian regime's interactions with Islamic social movements (radical and moderate) consisted (mainly) of acts of repression as Tunisia's first post-Independence president, Bourgiba's secularist political ideology persisted until 2011. The authoritarian regime framed Islamic social movements as oppositional as they expressed concern about the country's "secular drift", and discussed the socio-economic

[4] As highlighted by Della Porta (2013).

inequality that were fostered by the authoritarian regime's embedded corruption (Murphy 2002, 237; Willis 2013, 532). The authoritarian regime[5] responded with state-repression and religious policing in an attempt to curtail the growth of oppositional movements. The sole exceptions to the state's policing of opposition and religion were instances in which the regime believed it could be to its own benefit to allow these social movements to prosper, resulting in a form of state-controlled competitive escalation[6]. The transition of power from Bourgiba to Ben Ali witnessed a brief change, from repression to acceptance, in the interactions between the authoritarian regime and Tunisia's most-prominent Islamic social movement and political party, Ennahda. This was considered an attempt by Ben Ali to cement his political legitimacy and included the release of political prisoners and relatively free elections (Willis 2013, 532). However, in a similar vein to his predecessor, Ben Ali's toleration for political openness and opposition changed once his regime's hegemony was challenged by Ennahda's electoral success in 1989. Ennahda's roots as an Islamic social movement, and the platform it and other Islamic social movements provided repressed individuals to express their socioeconomic grievance, resulted in Ben Ali's regime returning to the previous authoritarian regime's repertoires of action. These actions resulted in the repression and imprisonment of opposition from 1991 onwards (Willis 2013, 533).These acts of state-repression framed Islamic social movements as oppositional, but also resulted in them gaining socio-political legitimacy as they were willing to raise the concerns of the people in public and challenge the authoritarian regime.

[5]Tunisia's authoritarian regime only allowed political parties to compete from 1981 onwards, yet it continued to police their policies and limited their ability to freely compete in politics (Willis 2013, 533).

[6] Two principle examples being Bourgiba's toleration of and alleged support of the growth of grassroots Islamic social movements in universities in the 1970's as a means to challenge the threat of leftists social movements, and Ben Ali's initial toleration of Ennahda[6] in the 1980s (Willis 2013, 532).

Ben Ali's escalated religious policing policies from 1991 onwards, banning "almost all forms of religious expression" are one of the principal causes of the post-revolutionary religious vacuum (Grami 2014, 392-395). During the 1990's, "thousands of political Islamists", including "salafists and jihadi-salfists" were arrested with "little distinction" being made as to their motives (Balboni and Malka 2016). This cycle of escalated policing continued throughout Ben Ali's regime. The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2003 "essentially criminalized" the practice of Islam, and thus framed engaging actively in Islamic practises an act of terrorism (Delegation of Attorneys from National Lawyers Guild (US), Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers (UK) and Maziumder 2011, 132). Ben Ali's repression and imprisonment of Islamists turned prisons into mobilisation structures as they became a space where "jihadi ideologies" could be preached and new members recruited (Colombo 2016, 108)[7]. The regime's escalated policing policies went so far as to indirectly support the activation of militant networks by encouraging certain "jihadi-Salafists" "to leave the country, including to join al Qaeda–linked groups fighting in Iraq, where the government assumed they would likely die on the battlefield and not return" (Balboni and Malka 2016). The continued use of authoritarian policies of state-repression and policing of religion resulted in Tunisian society being limited in its public forms of Islamic practise. As the population was majority Muslim, the state's escalated policing policies caused religious practises to undergo a shift away from the public sphere to private, with individuals engaging in brotherhoods to practise and discuss Islam[8] outside of the state's sphere of control. Individuals outside of brotherhoods did not have the same access to these mobilising structures, and were limited to the state's policed version of the religion, and therefore could not discuss and debate religion freely

[7] Colombo draws on an interview in eights issue of the magazine *Dabiq* with Abu Muqatil al-Tunisi who is quoted stating that new recruiters were found through preaching in Tunisian prisons.
[8] See literature review

without fearing to be labelled a terrorist. Thus, in 2011, when Ben Ali was ousted, the state's control of religious practise was also toppled, giving rise to new political opportunity and mobilising structures. The institutionalisation of the state-control of Islam resulted in a religious vacuum being created post-revolution, with individuals eager to embrace the new freedom of religious expression, and radical Islamic social movement's eager to use this political opportunity to engage with a wider audience and establish mobilising structures (Balboni and Malka 2016).

The Grievances of the Revolution's Protests

The grievances of the 2011 revolution's protest cycle explain in great part the socioeconomic experiential reality of Tunisians under the authoritarian regime, beyond religious oppression, and the emergent character of Tunisia's post-revolutionary political challenges. Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation was illustrative of the widespread sentiment of socioeconomic inequality and political injustice. He was a poor street-vendor who self-immolated in reaction to the corrupt justice system. He became a martyr for the revolution, symbolising the regime's disrespect for justice, and motivating the oppressed to challenge the incumbent political power structure[9]. The revolution was framed to have "defeated a regime that was characterised by corruption, secrecy and authoritarian rule" (OECD 2016, 3). The authoritarian regimes explicit structures of hierarchy and its territorial centralisation were significant causes of the grievances of the 2011 protest cycle. The authoritarian regime's corruption was composed of explicit structures of hierarchy, and interactions between Tunisian citizens and security forces (including the police) were characterized by intimidation and bribery (International Crisis Group 2013, 13). The territorial

[9] Della Porta (2013) identifies that "[e]motionally charged events – such as the deaths of comrades at the hands of the police – also favour radicalization, through processes of identification" (92).

centralisation of political and economic power in the coastal cities[10] further resulted in fostering sentiments of injustice in the country's border regions, which compose a majority of the nation's interior regions. Whilst education was widespread in Tunisia, as it was one of Bourgiba's main undertakings, there continued to be discrepancies between the educational system of the interior and coastal regions (Boughzala and Hamdi 2014, 1; The World Bank 2014, 285). This factor in addition to the interior's "rampant informal economy, high unemployment, corruption and an underdeveloped private sector" were the principal causes that constructed a reality of limited opportunity and socioeconomic repression (Meddeb 2017, 1). As far as job opportunities were concerned in the interior region, "little [had been] done to develop non-agricultural economic activities" and "clientelist networks and security forces controlled the job market, social benefits, and the informal economy through protection from law enforcement" (Boughzala and Hamdi 2014, 1; Meddeb 2017, 4). Whilst the socioeconomic injustices were more severely felt in the interior regions, they were not limited to these areas. The combination of political repression and socioeconomic inequality resulted in the protest cycles of the revolution not only belonging to the religiously repressed or the poor, but as the relative deprivation theory explains, to those who believed they were disadvantaged by the authoritarian regime's corruption and repression and believed they were entitled social, political, and/or economic conditions. The consequences of protesting were severe, even deadly in many cases, however, police killings of protesters reinforced the sentiments of injustice (Legal Scholar 2017). The revolution was not supported solely by Tunisians with democratic leanings; it was supported by the interior and the coastal regions,

[10] Tunisia's economy was largely dependent on coastal tourism, and the rural areas provided a source for "cheap labour" (Meddeb 2017, 2). "Approximately 56% of [Tunisia's] population and 92% of all industrial firms are located within an hour's drive of Tunisia's three largest cities: Tunis, Sfax and Sousse", all close to the coast (Meddeb 2017, 2)

leftist, Islamists, and radical Islamic extremists alike[11] (Delegation of Attorneys from National Lawyers Guild (US) et al 2011, 130). The individual's motivation to protests varied depending on their personal social surroundings, yet, a (temporary) collective identity in opposition to the regime was forged. However, as Della Porta (2013) identifies, "social transformations" "exacerbate political conflicts", especially when new actors, in this case being the post-revolutionary social movements, begin to compete and challenge incumbent actors, the authoritarian regime (36-37).

The Post-Revolutionary Political Opportunity Structure

The post-revolutionary political opportunity structure's initial departure from the authoritarian policies of state-repression explain in a great part how previously clandestine radical Islamic social movements became publically engaged. The authoritarian regime was characterized by its state-repression, and the Tunisians who took part in the revolution desired an end to "the arrest[s], torture, and imprisonment" by the authoritarian regime (Delegation of Attorneys from National Lawyers Guild (US) et al 2011, 132). The first interim government was led by Ennahda, whose own history of political oppression and Islamic ideology had traditionally fostered a voter base that was neither of a particular class nor occupation, principally located in the large cities (Willis 2013, 537). These factors contributed to Ennahda's post-revolutionary popularity and it grasped the opportunity to head Tunisia's interim government. The post-revolutionary government was tasked with the duty of distancing itself and the country's political system from the remnants of the Ben Ali's regime. The right to freedom of speech and religion were enacted, and state-control of religious institutions ended. The results of this "new political openness" was a burst in organisations

[11] In Fabio Merone's interview with a member of Ansar al-Sharia, the individual states that the revolution provided him with an opportunity to express his belief and along with fellow jihadist take part in the revolution. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia_an-interview-with-a-member-of-

representing all spectrums of Tunisian society, "7,000-10,000 organisations", and more than "100 political" parties were registered, illustrative of the "ideological and political kaleidoscope" that was present in the nation (Balboni and Malka 2016). To symbolise the interim government's opposition to the tactics of the authoritarian regime, it enacted a general amnesty law that pardoned political prisoners "imprisoned under Ben Ali", including radical Islamists. The diversity in opinion on Tunisia's future was extended to the legal arena, where opposing pillars of Tunisian society clashed as to what role Islam should play in their new democracy, and to what degree the legal code should be influenced by Sharia law (Grami 2014, 391-392). Despite Tunisia's history of secularism, public interest in radical Islam grew quickly, and these groups were quick to engage in mobilising structures. Many of these radical Islamic leaders had been freed by the interim government's general amnesty law such as the Salafist organisation – Ansar al-Sharia, to establish themselves in the public eye as religious authorities (Balboni and Malka 2016). The "weakness of the state in terms of repressive capacity" and "the resulting power vacuum", in this case religious, explains how radical Islamic social movements were able to establish "safe havens for training and socialization into violence" (Della Porta 2013, 56)

Post-Revolutionary Mobilising Structures

The post-revolutionary religious vacuum and political opportunity structure are some of the key reasons radical Islamic social movements were able to act as mobilising structures promoting transnational political violence. Ennahda led the post-revolutionary interim government. The political party's own repression under the authoritarian regime, and its support base ranging from Sufis to Salafis, provided it with an understanding of the relational characteristics of repression of radical Islamic social movements under the authoritarian regime. This resulted in the party not wanting to follow in the footsteps of the authoritarian

regime, and therefore different Islamic practises and radical Islamic social movements were tolerated (Balboni and Malka 2016). The post-revolutionary political and religious openness allowed Tunisians to engage in discussions with friends and attend mosques without fearing persecution or imprisonment (Member of Ansar al-Sharia). The political and religious freedom espoused by the interim government gave rise to new religious "discourses, new practices", "religious nursery schools, [and] Qu'ranic associations" and an "explosion of religious book sales". As interests in radical Islamic preaching increased, "religious satellite channels" out of "Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait [and] Saudi Arabia" and the internet provided individuals direct access (Grami 2014, 392-393). The most prominent radical Islamic social movements was Ansar al-Sharia. [12]. Ansar al-Sharia utilised the post-revolutionary political opportunity structure to engage in mobilising structures, developing "an avid youth base in working-class and low-income neighbourhoods through grass root outreach, charitable activities, and proselytization campaigns" (Balboni and Malka 2016). The post-revolutionary religious vacuum gave radical Islamic social movements the opportunity to establish and take-over mosques as well, controlling "400 of Tunisia's roughly 5000 mosques", with violent radical Islamic social movements controlling 50 of those 400 (Balboni and Malka). Thus, the post-revolutionary political opportunity structures and the existence of a religious vacuum allowed radical Islamic social movements to create mobilising structures by occupying religious institutions and their grass root outreach.

Framing of Tunisia as the Land of Da'wa

[12] The movement's origins lay with Tunisian foreign-fighters who had been active in Afghanistan and Bosnia, and had engaged in radical Islamic transnational networks, primarily Al-Qaeda. Ansar al-Sharia is a splinter group of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which was set up by a transnational network of Tunisian, Algerian and Libyan extremist (Zelin 2015).

The framing of Tunisia as a land of preaching, or *da'wa,* explains in a great part the activation of foreign-fighter networks. The radical Islamic social movement Ansar al-Sharia framed Tunisia as a land of *da'wa* (Islamic preaching)[13], and did not encourage the activation of militant networks domestically, however, they did encourage the activation of transnational militant networks by promoting engaging jihad on foreign soil, such as in Syria (Balboni and Malka 2016). Initially, post-revolution, the Ennahda party did not take a firm stance on the mobilisation of Tunisian foreign-fighters, and the Minister of Religious Affairs Noureddine Khademi, allegedly "actively endorsed the Syrian jihad before he took office in December 2011, speaking of a duty to "support our Syrian brothers" suffering under the repression of the Assad regime" (Balboni and Malka 2016; Legal Scholar 2017). Furthermore, the post-revolutionary freedom of movement (between 2011-2013) facilitated the departure of foreign-fighters from Tunisia, as Tunisians were able to travel to both Libya and Turkey without visas, and the border regions smuggling routes provided an entrance root via Libya for weapons (Balboni and Malka 2016). This political environment and the continuation of the civil war in Syria and Libya, provided a platform for the radical Islamic social movements to build on their own transnational networks, including links to Al-Qaeda and IS (Balboni and Malka 2016). Simultaneously they encouraged individuals to join the fight against what were framed as illegitimate regimes, particularly Assad's regime, rather than become domestically politically violent.

Shifts in the Political Opportunity Structures

The post-revolutionary government's rejection of Sharia law and the return of radical Islamic social movements to their repertoires of protest in part explains the return of pre-

[13] Abu Iyad, the leader of Ansar al-Sharia, affiliated to Al-Qaeda, in Tunisia repeatedly officially said that Tunisia is the land of *da'wa* and not jihad. The group actively encouraged Tunisians to join the jihad against Assad in Syria (Gartenstein-Ross 2013, 17)

revolutionary counter-terrorism policies. Despite radical Islamic social movements framing Tunisia as a land of *da'wa,* they did not agree with the state's secularist policies. From 2012 onwards, acts of political violence targeting both Tunisians and foreigners brought change to the post-revolutionary political opportunity structure. As Della Porta (2013) identifies, "young democracies tend to fear political protest" and often attempt to counter political protest by returning to authoritarian policies (37). The escalation of Ansar al-Sharia's acts of political violence witnessed Tunisia's young democracy countering these threats by returning to the authoritarian regime's repertoires of state-repression. The corresponding assent of the Nida Tounes party also signalled a reintroduction of the political and socioeconomic outlook of the authoritarian regime, as the political party included individuals who had been in positions of power during the Ben Ali regime (El Kadhi 2017). These changes in Tunisia's post-revolutionary political opportunity structure resulted in the government framing political violence and foreign-fighters as the primary threat to Tunisia's democracy, overshadowing the socioeconomic grievances of the revolution. This political opportunity shift included Ansar al-Sharia being "labelled a terrorist organisation in 2013" and the return of the state-control of Islamic practises[14] (Gartenstein-Ross 2013, 2; Balboni and Malka 2016; Fahmi and Meddeb 2015). The 2015 counter-terrorism law, which resembles the 2003 counter-terrorism act, gave "security forces broad powers to arrest and detain suspects", such as foreign-fighters or individual's suspected of having been or desiring to leave to be foreign-fighters, and was "extraordinarily broad, vague and imprecise" (Balboni and Malka 2016; Legal Scholar 2017). The law "impose[d] arbitrary restrictions on liberty and freedom of movement" and allowed

[14] Firstly in 2014 the post-revolutionary constitution of 2014 "reinforced the government's mandate as the 'guardian of religion'" in an attempt by the state to gain control of mosques which had becomes strongholds of radical Islamic social movements, such as Ansar al-Sharia (Balboni and Malka 2016). In 2015, the Tunisian minister "of religious affairs, Othman Batikh" had set out to "enforce the law" and "put all mosques and imams under the ministry's control", mimicking Ben Ali's religious control model to some extent (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 11).

the state to "detain…suspects arrested for terrorism-related offences for up to 15 days…deny [suspects] access to a lawyer for 48 hours, and interrogate them without the presence of their lawyer" (Amnesty International 2017, 364-365). The Tunisian security forces have also been accused of returning to their pre-revolutionary repertories of action, with reports of "torture and ill-treatment" emerging (Amnesty International 2017, 364-365). The relational characteristics of the interactions between security forces and individuals showed similar patterns to those of the authoritarian regime. Attending the same mosque as a person of interest could render an individual being labelled "potentially extremist", and family members of suspects have been subjected to "repressive measures, including house raids and DNA samples being taken" (Legal Scholar 2017). However, despite the apparent return to authoritarian policies, steps continued to be taken to institutionalise democracy. A number of institutions were created to tackle the grievances of the revolution's protests, such as the Ministry of Governance and the Authority for Good Governance and Fight against Corruption, as well the Transitional Justice and Dignity Commission. However, countering the 'extremists Islamist' threat remained the top priority for the current government and the current state of emergency (OECD 2016; Legal Scholar 2017). The combination of the shift in the political opportunity structure and the escalation of radical Islamic social movements' acts of political violence resulted in the government framing radical Islamic social movements in a similar vein to the authoritarian regime, and employing similar counter-terrorism mechanisms.

Persistence of the Grievances of the Revolution and Foreign-Fighters

The political culture of corruption in Tunisia has strongly contributed to the persistence of the revolution's socioeconomic grievances and perceived economic

deprivation. Politically, an internal battle between the post-revolutionary government and civil servants, as well as the Ministry of Interior emerged (Van Deventer 2017). Tunisia's civil servants, Ministry of Interior and security forces have been accused of adhering to their pre-revolutionary social and cultural practices of repression and corruption (Singleton 2017). The nation's elite, with the exception of the Ben Ali family, has witnessed little direct change, with the country's economy continuing to be ruled by an "oligarchy" (El Kadhi 2017). Corruption has cost the country approximately "two percent of GDP per year, approximately US$1.2 billion per annum" (The World Bank 2014, 10-11). This equated to $110 having been "lost per person per year in the unrecorded transfers of illegal capital" (Global Financial Integrity 2011 quoted in The World Bank 2014, 10-11). The assets of the Ben Ali clan amounted to US$13 billion, equating to "more than one quarter of [the] Tunisian GDP in 2011" (The World Bank 2014, 10-11). While Transparency International's 2016 report on Tunisia argued that progress had been made in terms of the prosecution of corrupt officials, more needs to be done to fully ensure the culpability of corrupt Tunisian officials (Everett 2016). The persistence of Tunisia's oligarchy and political corruption have contributed to limiting the experiential reality of post-revolutionary change, particularly in relation to the persistence of socioeconomic inequality.

The combination of "repression and concessions" exercised by the post-revolutionary Tunisian government, led to a decline in the "intensity" of "mass protest", however, it has provided radical Islamic social movements with the mobilising structures to successfully recruit and engage in clandestine political violence (Della Porta 2013). An example being that 78.4% of the Tunisians questioned across the 24 governates supported the government's state of emergency implemented in 2015 as a response to the increased terrorist threats; furthermore, 72% supported the state-control of mosques, according to the Tunisian

consulting company Emrhod[15]. Another report from Elka Consulting[16], claimed that 47.2% of Tunisians believed terrorism was the nation's largest issue, whilst 15.9% believed unemployment was[17]. Whilst these surveys indicated that the general public believed there was a necessity for the new counter-terrorism measures, and accepted the return of state-control of Islam; the role of the current government in promulgating its framing of the foreign-fighter question should not be ignored in the discussion of "repression and concessions" (Legal Scholar 2017). The current government framed foreign-fighters as a potential threat to post-revolutionary Tunisian society, and oppressed their mobilising structures in place of addressing their grievances (Balboni and Malka 2016; Legal Scholar 2017). Radical Islamic social movements, such as Ansar al-Sharia and more recently Okb ibn Nafaa[18] framed themselves in opposition to the state. They have offered aid to "those in need", and took "advantage of the loosening of security in poor areas by engaging in vigilantism, social mediation, and conflict resolution", thus framing themselves as an alternative to the state (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 5).

These movements provided an alternative experiential reality for individuals whose socioeconomic disgruntlements were not addressed by the post-revolutionary government (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 8). Recent studies exposed that in the rural regions of Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine, "62% of young graduates believed their socioeconomic situation" was worse than that of "their parents". The disgruntlement towards the revolution was felt amongst the youth in the suburbs of Tunis as well, as some "90% estimate that their situation has not

[15] http://archivev2.mosaiquefm.net/fr/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/54853-emrhod-78-4-des-tunisiens-approuvent-la-proclamation-de-l-etat-d-urgence-en-tunisie
[16] https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-priorite-a-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-pour-472-des-tunisiens/263407
[17] Both consultancy groups were quoted by Foreign Policy: http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/18/tunisias-new-anti-terrorism-law-worries-activists-tunisia/
[18] It is a violent radical Islamic social movement that was initially linked to al-Qaeda and now to IS, often operating out of Libya (Balboni and Malka 2016).

changed, and 46% consider it even worse than it was under Ben Ali's regime" (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 9). Part and parcel of this continued to be that the job-market mainly consisted of individuals without a high-school diploma (estimated 85%), whilst for the estimated 140,000 university graduates only 60,000-65,000 "new jobs" were on offer (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 9). This created a situation where "those with university qualifications [were] actually at higher risk of remaining jobless or working in a job that [did] not correspond with their qualifications", a clear example of Gurr's relative deprivation theory (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 9). 33% of Tunisia's 15-29 years olds were neither in education, employment, nor training of any sorts. This lack of activity amongst young Tunisians did not mean that Salafism and becoming a foreign fighter was their first alternative, "however, the perception that they [did] not deserve their low status [fuelled] societal fractures and [invited] violence", and extremist Islamic social movements provided a platform to express this frustration (Fahmi and Meddeb 2015, 10). As relative deprivation theory explains, perceived inequality and injustices, in this case being the continuation of a culture of corruption, can lead to individuals turning to political violence within a democracy. Additionally, Tunisia's border region's history of illicit trade, and post-revolutionary anarchy allowed radical Islamic social movements to circumvent the return of state's escalated policing policies by shifting certain mobilisation structures to Libya and moving underground (Balboni and Malka 2016; Meddeb 2017). IS in itself, the conflict in Syria and the destabilisation of Libya provided individuals with an alternative to their lives in Tunisia and a route to engage in political violence. IS provided "a narrative that allow[ed] rebels without a cause to connect with a cause" (Olivier Roy quoted by Meddeb 2017, 14). Radical Islamic social movements, such as IS, were able to recruit new members through highlighting the socio-economic "injustices" these individuals faced, such as the recent "heightened security clampdowns" in the border regions (International Crisis Group 2013, 6). The conflict abroad was framed as "alternative to the

'illegitimate' national state", thus encouraging individuals seeking an alternative to their experiential realities to become foreign-fighters (Meddeb 2017, 14). The post-revolutionary government's concessions, apparent political freedom coupled with repression, and the lack of socioeconomic change provided radical Islamic social movements with the (initial) political opportunity and mobilising structures to gain a wider audience; and framed becoming a "foreign-fighter" as an alternative to post-revolutionary Tunisia.

Conclusion

This thesis found that answering Tunisia's foreign-fighter question requires looking beyond the democratisation of the nation. The country's history of state-repression and religious policing, as well as the post-revolutionary political opportunity structure need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the mobilising structures employed by radical Islamic social movements and the persistence of socioeconomic inequalities must also be considered, as ignoring these factors would limit understanding of current foreign-fighter phenomenon to the political context. Tunisia's history of political and religious state-repression explains the relational characteristic of the current wave of political violence. The history of state-repression contributed to Islamic social movements gaining legitimacy as opposition to the authoritarian state, and initially occupying the post-revolutionary political and religious institutions. This occurred concurrently to the civil war in Syria, and resulted in the post-revolution political and religious institutions framing Assad as the enemy and encouraging individuals to join the war against the Syrian regime (Balboni and Malka 2016). The post-revolutionary shift in Tunisia's political opportunity structures, coupled with Tunisia being recognised as a land of *da'wa*, enabled radical Islamic social movements to mobilise foreign-fighters through their occupation of religious institutions and growth in popularity (Gartenstein-Ross 2013; Balboni and Malka 2016). Whilst the post-revolutionary freedoms

witnessed a spread of radical Islamic social movements, their disagreement with the post-revolutionary government's course of actions, including its commitment to secularism, led to the activation of militant networks and acts of political violence. These in turn were met with a return to the pre-revolutionary policies of state-repression as a means of countering the threat of political violence. The continuation of the territorial centralisation of political and economic power further fuelled post-revolutionary tensions, especially the border area and interior regions, which were highly reliant on illicit economic activity and smuggling roots, witnessed security-crackdowns. These acts highlighted the emergent characteristics of political violence. Whilst the return to pre-revolutionary relational characteristics of counter-terrorism policies explains the shift of the mobilising structures of radical Islamic social movements from Tunisia to Libya, and the perceived injustice in the treatment of the interior regions; the persistence of the socioeconomic grievances, specifically of Tunisian educated youth, to great part explains the perceived relative deprivation and constructivist characteristics of the foreign-fighter question. Radical Islamic social movements were to a certain extent successful in establishing themselves in areas where the state was framed as having failed to bring socioeconomic change to the population. This framework of perceived injustices facilitated in portraying the conflict in Syria, and Libya, as an "alternative to the 'illegitimate' national state" (Meddeb 2017, 14). The case of Tunisia's post-revolutionary foreign-fighters illustrates that analysing multiple factors, including political opportunity and mobilising structures is required to understand how radical Islamic social movements framed foreign conflict, and what motivated so many Tunisians to become foreign-fighters.

The foreign-fighter question cannot be limited to a discussion of solely the nation's historical repression of Islam, democratisations, the grievances of the 2011 revolution's protest cycle, or post-revolutionary political opportunity and mobilising structures. Both the structure and the agency behind foreign-fighters must be taken into consideration to

understand their motivating factors. Furthermore, drawing on Della Porta's (2013) framework, this thesis did not consider foreign-fighters an isolated phenomenon but analysed the relational, constructivist, and emergent characteristics that contributed to the rise in numbers of Tunisian foreign-fighters. Equally, this thesis has attempted not to essentialise the Islamic component of Tunisia's foreign-fighters, in order to discuss foreign-fighters in a non-religiously specific social movement framework. As Singleton (2017) highlighted, "nobody really knows" why Tunisia in particular has so many foreign-fighters. However, analysing the different political, social and economic factors that contributed to the 2011 revolution, assist in understanding what factors have motivated individuals to become foreign-fighters. "It is unwise to make generalisations about the motivations" of Tunisian foreign-fighters, as "[r]eligion, economic opportunity, and even [the] government's own actions or inactions may influence[d] an individual's choice to travel to Syria and become involved in that conflict" (El Jamali and Vinatier 2015, 3). There is no one reason, or generalisation that can be made on Tunisian foreign-fighters. The individual motivations and socioeconomic of foreign-fighter backgrounds may differ greatly. However, contextualising Tunisia's social, political, and economic realities contribute to gaining an understanding of the motivations of post-revolutionary Tunisian foreign-fighters.

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