Aitemad Muhanna-Matar

The limit-experience and self-deradicalisation: the example of radical Salafi youth

Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)

The Limit-Experience and Self-Deradicalisation: The Example of Radical Salafi Youth

in Tunisia

Abstract

This article gives an example of self-deradicalisation from Tunisia. It addresses the potential of radicalized individuals to de-radicalize themselves from within the Salafi doctrine with no external interventions, while the state's religious rehabilitation approaches to tackling radicalism not only fail but are counter-productive. Deradicalisation could, of course, involve a more comprehensive rejection of Salafi ideology. This article suggests that an effective type of deradicalisation is, more likely to make the desired change possible, is one in which there is a gradual modification of some attitudes and behaviours without abandoning the whole underpinning Salafi ideology. Referring to the personal narratives of 28 individual Tunisian Salafis, the article identifies phases of radicalization and deradicalisation as the individual voluntarily moves from embracing radical ideology to a more critical understanding and practice reflecting on personal and interpersonal experiences of being radicalized. The research shows that the process of self-deradicalisation is reflective of Salafi youth experience of engagement with radicalism and is more likely to happen in societies that allow political expression and individual freedom that invoke individuals' critical thinking.

Introduction

Despite the vast amount of multidisciplinary literature investigating strategies of deradicalising

Muslim youth who adopt a Jihadi Salafi doctrine, including sympathisers and perpetrators of

violent actions, there is still little evidence built upon empirical examination of the actual

experiences of radical Salafis, or Jihadis, and at what limit of experience of radicalism they

would have the potential to deradicalise (Paul 2012, Schmid 2013, Aroun 2015). There is also

very little literature on deradicalisation that relies on ethnographic engagement with radical

Salafis or Jihadis who are not captured by security forces or targeted by state deradicalisation

programs (Stump and Dixit 2013, Feddes and Galucci 2015). Most literature on

deradicalisation focuses on assessing the effectiveness of state-led rehabilitation programs, the

targets of which are mostly detainees with accusations of sympathising with, or engagement

in, terrorism (Tore and Horgan 2008, Seifert 2010, Nesser 2010, Venhaus 2010, Schmid 2013,

Sukabdi 2015). Regardless of sufficient evidence that ideology, or religion of Islam, is not the

most important factor in radicalisation (Tore and Horgan 2008, Kundnani 2015), most government interventions aimed at deradicalisation are underpinned on a generalized assumption that Muslim radicals are basically driven by their extremist ideology that legitimizes violence. Thus the state has to fulfil its moral responsibility for rehabilitating, or correcting, the ethical constitution of its citizens' identity by tackling extremist Islamic ideological beliefs and behaviours and changing them to be compatible with the state's moral principles (Aggarwal 2013, Clubb 2015, Elshimi 2015).

The religious rehabilitation approach to deradicalisation used in most Western and non-Western countries is problematic and has not proven effective. It aims to correct the mind-set of radicals through replacing their absolutist Salafi/Jihadi ideology with an absolutist secular liberal ideology. It also has not succeeded to specify the particular experienced moments, events or encounters during the process of radicalisation that may induce individuals to rethink their radical identity, or particular aspects of it, and shift from a certain attitudinal, behavioural and relational disposition to another. Shifting from one disposition to another is arguably not comprehensive, linear, and is most probably not entrenched. It is part of a process of 'problematisation', through which, according to Michel Foucault, a person asks him/herself 'how and why certain things (behavior, phenomena, processes) became a problem' (Foucault 2001, 171).

In this article I attempt to challenge the state-led religious rehabilitation approach to deradicalisation by exploring a new model of deradicalisation from within the Salafi/Jihadi doctrine. This research aims to examine the particular experience of Salafis in Tunisia and how their engagement with Salafism and Jihadism may contribute to changing their preferences, priorities, attitudes and practices of Salafism and to deradicalising themselves. The research purposively targets individual Salafis who shifted from being radical – belonging to, or supporting, Jihadi-Salafi groups - to pragmatic or reformist – adopting a reformist

interpretation of Salafism that denounces violence and supports political engagement. The research analysis and findings are drawn from an ethnographic engagement with a group of 28 Salafi youth who have voluntarily gone through an experience of both radicalisation and deradicalisation without being a target of state-led religious rehabilitation programs. However, the findings of this research cannot be generalized as representative of all Salafis in Tunisia and worldwide.

The article begins with a historical contextualisation of radicalisation in the form of Salafism in Tunisia, providing a background about the historical context that contributes to shaping a radical identity and also to triggering self-radicalisation. Next, it will discuss the analytical framing of self-deradicalisation by applying Foucault's concepts of 'critique' and 'limit-experience'. This is followed by a description of the research methodology and its ethical consideration. Finally, the article will discuss and analyse the process of radicalisation and deradicalisation, as it is narrated by research participants.

The Historical Context of Radicalisation in a form of Salafism in Tunisia

Salafism in Tunisia, like in other countries, is not static. It is changing, whether through the transformation of ideas or through intellectual, political, and social practices (Abu-Rumman 2014). Salafism is broadly defined as an intellectual current in Sunni Islam which calls for a return to the political and moral practice of the first Muslims, in particular the "righteous ancestors" known as "*al-Salaf al-Salih*", more specifically the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (Kepel 2005, Meijer 2009). However, the application of this ideology throughout the world varies due to the different socio-economic, political and cultural contexts within which Salafis work, and due to differences in individuals' particular experience of engagement with Salafism and the different preferences it creates (Wiktorowicz 2005, Hegghammer 2009).

Tunisia has been home to a growing radicalisation through the rise of the Salafi-Jihadi movement since the fall of former president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in January, 2011.

Although Salafism in Tunisia has historically been influenced by the broader doctrinal definition of Salafi ideology linked to Wahhabism,[1] the Saudi version of Salafism, its specific definition is linked to the history of the Islamist movement in Tunisia. For example, Tunisian Salafis comprise religiously ultra-conservative individuals, who split from the Movement of Islamic Tendency (MIT), present-day Ennahda, in 1980s, and have positioned themselves to the right of Ennahda, in terms of their social and political agenda (Marks 2012). Both the MIT and the Salafis were repressed and exiled by the Ben-Ali regime in the 1990s and 2000s and thus were largely isolated from social, political and religious activism in Tunisia (Mabrouk 2012, Marks 2012, Merone and Cavatorta 2012, Wolf 2013a, Layachi 2013). The 2011 Tunisian Uprising and subsequent departure of the oppressive Ben-Ali regime provided an opportunity for Islamists in general to re-emerge and become visible and increasingly popular in Tunisia's socio-political scene. Salafis in particular thrived due to the government's offer of amnesty to Salafi leaders from prisons and the return of Salafi Sheikhs from exile shortly after the fall of the Ben-Ali regime.[2] Those Salafi leaders spread in many Tunisian mosques to promulgate their thoughts and they succeeded to attract a large number of young Tunisians, particularly in the first two years after the Uprising (ICG 2013).

Salafis in Tunisia are broadly divided into two major currents (Merone and Cavatorta 2012, Marks 2012). The first, *"Salafiyya elmiyya"*, scripturalist Salafis, rejects the use of violence and focuses on preaching a pure version of Islam. Even within this subset, however, differences exist. Most scripturalist Salafis are apolitical, but recently some leaders, particularly older ones, have realized that remaining outside formal politics would lead to further isolation and hardened their path to meet their ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic state. Therefore they rethought their politics and decided to get engaged in formal politics (ICG 2013, Merone and Cavatorta 2012). The second major group of Tunisian Salafis is Jihadi-Salafis, represented by Ansar al-Sharia (AS)[3] (Merone2013, Haj Salem 2014), which was

established in April 2011. It was banned by the Tunisian government in August 2013 because it was accused of undertaking violent attacks, such as that on the US embassy in Tunis in September 2012, and several other domestic attacks against Tunisians (ICG 2013). Jihadis in Tunisia reject political participation and consider it *kufr* (blasphemy). Instead, they believe that Muslims in Tunisia have a religious obligation to engage in Jihad in order to build their Caliphate, or Islamic state (ibid 2013).

Despite the heterogeneous composition of Tunisia's Salafi movement, Salafis are still broadly perceived by secular liberal elites as a homogeneous group, and a major threat to Tunisia due to their ideology that legitimizes the use of violence (Cavatorta 2015). Tunisian secular elites' fear of Salafis is linked to the contemporary history of Tunisia since national independence in 1956. Habib Bourguiba, the first Tunisian president, pursued a secular modernist and socialist model of governing, in which religion was pushed out of politics and considered primarily a private affair. He closed many mosques, prohibited the wearing of the veil in public institutions, and undermined the power and authority of *ulama* (religious scholars) to have a say in politics (Moore 1988). Zine El Abidine Ben-Ali, who ruled Tunisia between 1987 and 2011, followed the same ideological and political path as his predecessor. He controlled all society institutions, including the mosques, banning the hijab in public and state institutions, and repressed and exiled most Islamist leaders in the name of modernisation of Tunisian society (Charrad 2007).

After the Tunisian Uprising and the establishment of a government coalition led by the Ennahda moderate Islamist party, which was victorious in the parliamentary election of 2011, secular liberal and neoliberal opposition parties, civil society organisations and the General Labour Union (UGTT) in Tunisia fought together against the Ennahda-led government, accusing it as supportive of Salafis. These organisations played an important role to force the Ennahda-led government coalition (Troika) to resign by calling for several public protests in

5

late 2013.[4] In January 2014, a technocratic new government was established, through which the politics of fear associated with the "national security state" model has become the dominant political discourse in Tunisia. The new government went back to the 2003 anti-terror law used by Ben-Ali and developed it further to restrict the freedom of Salafis, including violent and non-violent groups. It led to the imprisonment of thousands of individuals (1500 in the year 2014 alone) alleged to be involved in terrorism. These arrests appear to point in the direction of a continued policy of criminalizing individuals and communities and of using exceptional measures against violent and non-violent Salafis. This is in addition to the decision taken by the government in early 2014 to suspend, without due process, 157 non-governmental religious associations as well as several mosques for alleged links to terrorism (Mullin 2014, Jamaoui 2015).

The secular Nidaa Tunis, "Call of Tunisia", party[5]- led government that took power after winning elections held in October, 2014 has intensified security operations against Salafi groups. More than 880 suspected militants have been arrested since the government took office in February, 2015. In July, 2015, the Tunisian Parliament approved a new anti-terror bill allowing authorities to detain terror suspects for up to 15 days without access to a lawyer.[6] This has been associated with launching a program of religious rehabilitation aiming to ideologically reform and rehabilitate suspects arrested in terrorism-related cases. This program is managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, that had a control over almost all mosques in Tunisia by late 2015. The Ministry appointed authorised clerics and imams to be responsible for religious rehabilitation. This includes a provision of recorded sermons and religious seminars for the program's website and a regular supervision of classes and sermons in mosques (Reidy 2015, Petre 2015), which implies that Tunisian individuals have no right to think of their religious identity and its codes of conduct outside the control of religious authority.

In such a tense and hostile political atmosphere against Salafis, I conducted my field research in the period April, 2014 to March, 2015. According to my field research observation, Salafis have gradually become hidden from the public space, including those who used to be involved in charity and civil society organisations. Some of those whom I managed to interview during their activism with charity and *da'wa* (propagation) organisations in early 2014 were not available during my field research visits of August and December the same year. Some of their organisations were closed, or suspended, following the government's anti-terror policies, and some others stopped their work in community organisations, fearing being continually interrogated and chased by security forces. *da'wa* activities through charity organisations and mosques have almost been eliminated. Salafis have become reluctant to meet journalists or researchers, and when they do so they are very careful of what they say, and as in the case of those I interviewed, they refused to define themselves as Salafis in the first interview.

Analytical Framework: State-Led Religious Rehabilitation Approach to Deradicalisation vis-à-vis Self-Deradicalisation

Deradicalisation research has given a great emphasis to assessing the effectiveness of a state-led religious rehabilitation approach to deradicalisation through authorised Islamic clerics and scholars (Gunaratna 2009, Seifert 2010, Wanger 2010, Gunaratna, Jerard and Rubin 2011, Aggarwal 2013, Rom 2013, Sukabdi 2015, Jarvis & Lister 2015, Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly and Jarvis 2015). This approach aims, as stated by Gunaranta (2009), to 'unlock the mind of a detainee or an inmate', based on the assumption that Islamic clerics have 'the understanding, knowledge and authority to correct the Islamic misconceptions a terrorist believes to be true' (150). This approach to deradicalisation draws upon a generalised assumption that all Muslim youth are radicalised by unauthorised extremist Sheikhs and their version of Islam that locks their mind to think correctly of their religion. Thus, their minds need to be unlocked by Islamic clerics who are authorised by governments to correct youth's understanding of Islam.

This dynamic of religious rehabilitation portrays radical youth as docile and unknowing subjects, who are incapable of thinking and acting rationally. Is this not contradictory with the evidence that in many cases youth radicalisation is a rational act referring to a well-defined political goal (Mamdani 2005, Gunning and Jackson 2011, Aggarwal 2013), and with the fact that radical Muslims, violent and non-violent, are not cognitively and socially vulnerable and that a large number of them are well educated (Abbas 2007)? State-led rehabilitation programs also do not recognise the capacity of radical youth to reconcile their multiple identities (Bartlett and Miller 2012), or to be critical of the different identities they have experienced. Rather, they operate as a mode of governing, through which all individuals rely on one machinery of thought and practice, including their understanding of religion, in a way that does not threaten the status quo (Lindekilde 2012, Aggarwal 2013, Elshimi 2015, Clubb 2015). Therefore, measures of deradicalisation through religious rehabilitation focus mainly on demolishing 'the poisonous extremist Islamist ideology'[7] that has awoken young Muslims to revolt against the political establishment. Such an approach to deradicalisation discounts any need to modify the political establishment by responding to the actual socio-economic, political and cultural grievances of radical Muslims. This is one important reason why the top-down religious rehabilitation approach, with its restriction on Muslims' freedom of expression, particularly in Western countries (Paul 2012, Samti 2015, Dunne and Williamson 2014, Lindekilde 2012), has been counterproductive (Thomas 2012).

This research challenges the state-led religious rehabilitation programs that attempt 'to instil discipline and self-governance to render subjects obedience to the state' (Aggarwal 2013, 272), and provides empirical evidence of self-deradicalisation that is critical of both state and Jihadi machinery of thoughts and practices. Self-deradicalisation in this research relies basically on individuals' capacity to be critical of their radical Islamic identity and to deradicalise themselves without necessarily following a government's authorised version of

Islam that is compliant with the state value system, or without abandoning their Islamic identity. The model of self-deradicalisation employed in the analysis is drawn from Michel Foucault's theory of critique and experience. Self-deradicalisation can be defined as a certain way of rejecting to be fully governed by dogmatic practices in the name of absolutist ideology, whether it is religious or non-religious (Foucault 1997). It is through individuals' experience of engagement with an absolutist ideology and interaction with the structure of power it establishes that radical people may have the chance to question the effects of their radical identity and the particular discourse of truth it holds on the existing system of power, and question the effect of power on discourses of truth (ibid, 47).

Questioning the experienced relationship between identity, truth discourses and power - which Foucault calls "critique" - urges the person to move beyond the limits this experience imposes and start thinking and acting differently. Critique is associated with experience and does not have a limit. It is a continuous and accumulative process of repetitive practice of specific beliefs; an assessment of the effects and consequences of these beliefs and their practices on real life; and as a result a development of alternative modes of thought and practices that makes the desired change possible (Lemke 2011).

Self-deradicalisation, as a critique of self in relation to others, does not mean complete destruction and denial of the radical identity and its normative categories. Rather, it is, according to Foucault's later pragmatic thought, 'an experimental critique of self that seeks to expose normative categories, to put them to the test', and to spell out 'alternative forms of rights and different modes of subjectivity beyond the dominant ones' (ibid, 40). Critique of radical identity does not necessarily occur entirely outside of dominant discourses, but 'through and around' them (Reynolds 2004, 953).

Yet self-deradicalisation is not a linear process that leads to determined progressive outcomes. Rather, it is a strategy that moves back and forth, depending on the changing context

and the dominant discourses and the space of freedom individuals attain to experiment with their alternative modes of thought and practice, and to validate, or invalidate, their attempts to make positive change within the existing dynamics of power. For Foucault, freedom is an essential condition that enables individuals to anticipate the plurality of values through extra-discursive experience and to reconcile conflicting truth statements, while at the same time recognizing their own beliefs (Foucault 1997, 298). Otherwise, individuals would remain a hostage to a singular absolutist truth, or ideology, and the fixed identity it establishes, whether it is religious or non-religious.

Within this understanding, self-deradicaisation happens with different accelerations and contingent outcomes due to the particularity, as well as the intensity of experience a person goes through that may jeopardize a person's life, his/her social and political continuity, or/and his faith in meeting his desired change. This is what Foucault calls a 'limit-experience'. Limit-experience is when a person through his/her discursive practice of a particular identity reaches "a certain point in life that is as close as possible to the 'inlivable', which can't be lived through". Thus questioning or problematizing a radical identity does not occur without a person generating 'the maximum of experience intensity and the maximum of impossibility to go on with the identity it establishes' (Foucault 2000, 241–242).

The concept of 'limit-experience' is arguably applicable to understand and analyse both youth radicalisation and deradicalisation. In the case of Tunisia and elsewhere, many Muslim youth are spiritually and cognitively affected by radical Salafi ideology as a revolutionary opportunity because they reached a limit of experience with the oppressive governing regime and the identity it establishes, that they are no longer able to hold (Ellner 2005, Merone 2013). Some of them also get deradicalised by experimenting with radical identity to a certain limit that threatens their continuity and realising that it can no longer meet their desire for change. In the two cases, the level of radicalisation and deradicalisation varies, according to what

particular aspects of the experienced identity (particular meanings, behaviours and relations) prove eligible or ineligible to create change at individual and societal levels.

For example, referring to the deradicalisation literature, deradicalisation may include denouncement of violence as a tactical act undertaken as a response to state coercive actions or other incentives, but not as an ideological or political deligitimisation of violence (Silke 2011); delegitimising violence without relinquishing radical attitudes, which is defined as disengagement by Tore and Horgan (2008); deradicalising attitudes and behaviours based on moderate Islamic interpretation to meet political ends (Ashour 2009); or comprehensively relinquishing religion and adopting an opposing ideology or living life with no particular religious and political orientation and affiliation (Muhanna-Matar and Winter 2017). On the other hand, self-deradicalisation due to 'limit-experience' may also lead to recidivism, or reengagement with violence, when for example deradicalised people are not recognised and their freedom to express their new non-violent religious views is further oppressed by the governmental regime (Dunne and Williamson 2014).

Research Methodology

Research Sample

In this research, I attempted to avoid homogenising and generalising the portrayal of Salafis within the Tunisian context. Therefore, I give more attention to Salafis who do not fit with the stereotype that is promoted in mainstream media, which portrays most Tunisian Salafis as extremists, who come from marginalised socio-economic groups and areas (Torelli, Merone and Cavatorta 2012, Haj Salem 2014). In this research, I selected only Salafis who came from a middle class background and had a high level of education and stable employment in order to isolate their experiences of de/radicalisation, rather than those of socially marginalised youth, who are mostly classified as Jihadi-Salafis. I managed to conduct in-depth interviews with 28 Salafis from the age group of 22-32 years old (18 men and 10 women) divided equally

between two sites: Tunis, the capital, and Sfax, an economically better off industrial city located on the south-east coast of Tunisia. The two cities are selected to represent different geographical locations and socio-economic statuses.

Based on my understanding of the security constraints that Salafis in Tunisia encountered from security forces during the period of my field research (April, 2014 – March, 2015), I developed an effective strategy that created a considerable level of trust with Salafi organisations and individuals and allowed me to reach a good number of research participants and to create an ethnographic engagement with them.

First, from the early days of my field research, I worked through a mediator. In my case as a female Arab researcher speaking the same language and sharing a similar culture with my research participants, my mediator had to be a woman who was well known and trusted by the community and different Salafi groups and charity organisations (reformist and Jihadi Salafi groups) in order for my communication with research participants to be socially and culturally accepted. My mediator was a middle aged professional woman and a member of the Ennahda party, with whom I had worked in a previous research project. She has strong personal and social networks with Salafi leaders and activists both in Tunis and Sfax. I lived in her house for several months during my field research visits to Tunisia and joined her social day-to-day activities, including making visits to homes and offices of some Salafi leaders and activists and attending some of the religious classes and sermons organised by Salafi male and female preachers. Having her as my mediator created trust between me and some leaders of Salafi charity organisations, who facilitated my contact with a good number of Salafis who used to be affiliated to, or sympathisers, of Ansar Al-Sharia (AS). Second, in order to ensure reaching the appropriate research participants - in terms of age, socio-economic backgrounds and their experience of shifting from radical to reformist Salafi attitudes and behaviours - I used a snowball sampling technique, i.e. relying on the first group of research participants I

interviewed to generate additional research participants (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Futing 2004). Third, I built strong links with several Salafi charity organisations in Tunis and Sfax and joined their public activities, such as several demonstrations they organised against the government's decision to suspend the organisations, through which I managed to recruit more research participants.

Research Method and Ethical Considerations

This research relies on the method of personal narrative to study how humans experience themselves and the world around them (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). The study of personal narratives of Salafis is useful because it explores 'acts of meaning' that describe a 'lived time', where a person selects events and stories that are relevant to the significant meanings he/she believes in (Bruner 2004, 692). The personal narrative interviews conducted in this research were unstructured in order to allow for free flow of information. I only focused on one general question that did not entail any prior assumptions, specific meanings, judgments, or labelling: 'why and how have you become Salafi and what changes happened throughout your experience of becoming Salafi?' Through informal conversation with research participants, I was concerned about listening to the sequence of events that happened and their reactions to these events by asking sub-questions such as: when and why did such an event happen in relation to previous events mentioned, and what were the interviewees' emotional and cognitive reactions to such event/s. The reason for that is to ensure that events and stories told mediate subsequent experiences, and create possibilities for attitudinal and behavioural change (Holland and Leander 2004). Focusing on the sequence of events and their interpretation allowed me to isolate the moment, or the limit of experience, at which interviewees altered their course from Jihadism/radicalism to deradicalisation.

Each research participant was interviewed two to three times within a period of 12 months. The period of each interview lasted from 90 minutes to two hours. Each interview

transcript was reviewed before the second interview, and gaps in information and analysis were discussed again to compile a comprehensive narrative of each individual's experience. All interviews were recorded after the research participants provided verbal consent to do so. Before recording started, all research participants were informed that their names, or any identifiable information such as location, would stay anonymous and their personal information would remain confidential. Thus, all names included in this research are not the real names. With the good level of trust created with my research participants, I managed to interview some of them in their homes or workplaces and at public events and observe some of their social encounters. The spacing of the interviews between two to three months allowed me to analyse the ongoing process of their deradicalisation and changing ideological beliefs and behaviours. Each time, the interviewees related new knowledge and experiences.

The Process of Radicalisation and Deradicalisation: Ethnographic Analysis

The narratives of both male and female participants showed that they have undergone four interlinked phases of shifting from one disposition to another within the Salafi doctrine, with some differences in the intensity of events and engagement in religious and political debates due to the position each interviewee held within the Salafi groups and the different level of Islamic knowledge each acquired. However, it is not anticipated that the level of deradicalisation revealed in this research has reached an end point, or will stay fixed. Arguably deradicalisation, like radicalisation, is a process of discursive practices of certain ideas, behaviours and relations that may create progressive and regressive change due to the satisfactory or unsatisfactory effects these practices generate.

Phase one: Radicalized by Rejecting the Imposed Identity of the Old Regime

All interviewees embraced the radical Salafi ideology as a means of rejecting aspects of Western modernity and secularity imposed by the former authoritarian regime. Fifteen out of the 18 male research participants were radicalised before the Tunisian Uprising, mostly when

they were teenagers, as opposed to only four out of the 10 women who were radicalised before the Uprising. However, women who got engaged with Salafism shortly after the Uprising also referred to their experience with the oppressive Ben-Ali regime as one of the main driving factors that lured them to the moral cause of Salafi doctrine. The interviewees' narratives confirm that they were all subjugated directly or indirectly through their family members by the authoritarian secular state led by Ben-Ali. Their subjugation took different forms, including prohibition of their family members from practising their faith by praying, wearing the hijab or participating in Islamic social groups, and/or being imprisoned and tortured. Salma, a 22 years old woman, said: *I still remember when Ben-Ali's police forced and humiliated women in my neighbourhood to remove their veil in the street. Shall we stay silent against the police humiliating our religion?*

At this phase, the embrace of Salafism was a means of resistance against the regime's repression of traditional Islamic practices, which is described by the interviewees as a degradation of their human dignity. The historical consciousness of humiliation and violence practised against fellow Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya and Palestine by Western and colonial secular forces had also angered the interviewees and spurred them towards Salafi ideology. Most interviewees frequently said that Ben-Ali, who oppressed Muslims in Tunisia, was a strategic ally to those who killed Muslims elsewhere, pointing to Western forces, particularly those of the U.S.A. This consciousness was strengthened by the available Salafi knowledge that had been circulated in media in the late 1990s and 2000s and stimulated them to get involved in Salafi groups when they were in their teens and early twenties.

Most interviewees expressed their excitement at being introduced to Salafism, including Jihadism, that would rescue them from degradation and social immorality practised by the old regime, which was supported by the international system of power. They all affirmed that the process of becoming a Salafi began with a desire to reclaim what Tunisians had been

15

prohibited to be under the rule of Ben Ali and his corrupt regime. One of the male interviewees said: *I like the word Salafi because it refers me to the ideal and authentic model of Muslim Umma that I have never experienced before.* Another male Salafi said*: we hold the name 'Salafi' to express our anger at the deviant and corrupted behaviours that we see everywhere around us.* Sara, a female journalist in her mid-20s, said: *Through my journalist work, I discovered that being a Salafi is not only to worship, but to fight against corruption and to change people's attitudes.* Ziad, a 30 year old engineer who manages a construction business with a good source of income and who experienced torture from the Ben-Ali police, said: *It was the police brutality that motivates me to search more about Salafism and to find out why Ben-Ali feared Islamists.* Hassan is in his early 30s. He is an Information Technology engineer and a lecturer in a university. Hassan saw his sister beaten in front of him by Ben-Ali's police when he was a teenager, and he was unable to do anything about this. That event enflamed his anger and emotionally lured him to the Salafi ideology that called for the destruction of the Ben-Ali anti-Muslim secular regime. Hassan committed himself to Salafi groups in 1999, and he used to believe that people's lives would not change unless sharia governs all aspects of their life.

According to the narrative of most interviewees, they confirmed that their knowledge of Salafism during the Ben-Ali regime was limited. It was not an easy task to generate knowledge about Salafism before the Tunisian Uprising due to the strict government censorship of the religious books sold in Tunisia. One interviewee said that he used to save his pocket money to buy these books without any of his family knowing. A female interviewee said that she used to get these books through her female friend's brother, and returned them to him when she finished reading them, in order that they could be given to someone else. Interviewees who became Salafis before the Uprising confirmed that the main motive that lured them to Salafi ideology was not primarily their religious knowledge. Rather, it was their anger

at the Ben-Ali regime's brutality against Tunisian Muslims and their rejection to follow the particular model of secular identity that Ben-Ali imposed on them.

Salafi youth were first influenced by the religious discourse presented in Islamic TV channels such as *Al-Resalah* (the message), *Iqraa* (read/recite) and *Al-Nas* (the people) (Abualrob 2013). They were also affected by several charismatic Saudi and Egyptian preachers whose lectures were broadcast regularly on the religious TV channels, particularly the Egyptian activist and television preacher, Amr Khaled. As stated by most research participants both in Tunis and Sfax, religious preachers and friends were the most influential people who lured them to the Salafi ideology, while a few were influenced by their fathers or family members who were imprisoned during the Ben-Ali era.

In answer to the question of 'what was the first thing that made you attracted to the radical Salafi ideology and through whom?' Lobna, a 24 year-old female teacher in a kindergarten, said:

> My uncle used to alert me not to listen to radical Salafi because they are dangerous. That made me more excited to know why those people are dangerous. They definitely have strong values that deserve to be listened to. With no knowledge in Islam, I listened to some Salafi friends in the university, who did not harm anyone and were very peaceful and largely involved in charity to help poor people. They affected me not only with their convincing arguments, but also with their strengths and human sensitivity.

At this phase, Salafi youth, from the perspective of Foucault's theory of human subject or identity, had gone through an early phase of self-investigation, or problematisation of their identity imposed on them by the Ben-Ali regime, reflecting on their direct and indirect experience of subjugation by the regime. The outcome of this phase was that they decided what position they wanted to take. They rejected instead of legitimizing the existing identity imposed on them by the dictator and his dominant discourses (Foucault 1994), but had not yet actualised, or materialised, the new desired Salafi identity.

Phase Two: Actualisation of Radical Salafi Identity

At the early phase of converting to the Salafi doctrine, all the interviewees were attracted to the radical version of Salafism, including Jihadism, and excited by the idea of radical transformation of the self and of a society becoming only ruled by sharia. Most of them invested in the religious freedom shortly after the Uprising to practice the aesthetic of being different. They felt the need to destroy their prior identity imposed on them by dictators to create a new one governed exclusively by the radical Salafi moral codes of conduct, as the ideal model of identity (Valerie 2012, 133). As a result, these youth changed their appearances and daily practices: men grew beards, dressed and prayed differently, stopped smoking and playing cards in cafes, limited their social relations to committed Muslims, and avoided people who did not practise Islam. Women also changed their appearances and behaviours: dressed in *niqab* (face cover) and segregated themselves from men in public, and some thought to quit their education and their jobs. Ahlam, a 25 year old female school teacher, commented about her early few months of belonging to AS, saying: *At that time I was so excited. I wanted to be an ideal Salafi that crazily made me thinking of quitting my college education*. Other female interviewees passionately told their stories of wearing *niqab*. Ghada, a 22 year old female university student, said: *if niqab is not obligatory in Salafi Islam, it is fine. I love it because it makes me imitating the wives of the prophet.*

In the first two years after the 2011 overthrow of the Ben Ali regime, young Salafis had the freedom to speak about their Salafi beliefs publicly. They worked through social media, charity organisations, and in mosques to mobilise people through their authentic understanding of Islam. They became intensively engaged in *da'wa* activities, eager to transfer their religious beliefs to the public. As expressed by several interviewees, they were passionate about the new style of life and its introduction in their daily practice, in addition to the power they were wielding in their local communities. They felt a sense of belonging, in addition to satisfaction

from acting to please God by supporting people in need, and by exercising their freedom of expression.

Fadi is a 28 year old employee in a financial company. He described himself when he was intensely involved in Salafi activism in the first year after the Uprising enjoying the actualisation of his Salafi identity:

> I was a Salafi before the Uprising but I was not able to speak it out. Our life was empty during Ben-Ali. The first year after the Uprising was the first time I did things that I believe in. We, Salafis, have a common cause, cooperate with each other to transfer the words of God and help our own people to have a better life.

Salah, an IT engineer aged 27 years old, said:

> I was one of those Salafi youth who were thirsted to freedom. After the Uprising, we gathered together freely away from Ben-Ali surveillance. We practised our religion freely and helped our people. Ordinary people, old and young, listened to us and respected us. Young boys started to wake up very early to go for *al fajr* (morning) pray in mosques with their friends and relatives. We were all motivated to attend religious lessons to know more about Salafism.

At this phase, Salafi youth were still in the spiritual phase of shaping their new identity, or as Foucault describes it, a 'spiritual experience of truth', exemplified in a new stylization, or fashioning of self, arguably aiming to assure to themselves that this was actually who they were. Their narratives of this phase do not show that they were 'fundamentally capable of truth'. They all affirmed that they needed to accomplish several actions on themselves 'to become capable of knowing' (Foucault 2000, 184), i.e. to read more about Salafism and practise it in their daily life. At this phase, the interviewees were arguably not concerned about the rules to construct true religious beliefs and practices, but to achieve inner satisfaction between the new ethical identity, exemplified in the absolute rightness of a Salafi being exclusively ruled by sharia in all aspects of life, and the kind of person this identity establishes (Franek 2006).

Phase Three: Experimenting With Radical Salafi Identity

The freedom that radical Salafis attained after the Uprising did not last for long. Salafis in the aforementioned phases assumed that their freedom of expression and conduct would operate separately from the government, particularly reflecting on their experience in the first year of the Tunisian government led by the Islamist party, Ennahda (2011-2012). The latter offered a space of freedom for Salafi groups, including AS, to practise their non-violent activism and to establish their *da'wa* and charity organizations (Merone and Cavatorta 2012). Most of the interviewees affirmed that they supported AS at the earlier phase of its establishment (April 2011) due to their historical knowledge of the group as nonviolent and largely involved in charity and *da'wa* work. For the interviewees, AS members, similar to other Salafis, originally intended to transfer the word of God, or sharia, in Tunisian society and provide social services to people in need.

For the interviewees, it is the state and its security apparatuses that are blamed for AS's shift to violence since they divided Salafis to inflame violence and to bring the old regime back into power. The interviewees commented that the secular forces within and outside the government have achieved what they want – some Salafis got involved in violence that gave a legitimate cause for the return of the old regime to power with the pretext of national security. As a result, the Nidaa Tounes won the 2014 parliamentary elections against the Ennahda Islamist party, and its leader, Beji Caid Essebsi, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs under Ben-Ali's regime, became the president of Tunisia following the presidential election of December 2014.

A lawyer in his early thirties, who had experienced the brutality of the Ben-Ali anti-terror policies, commented on the victory of Caid Essebsi saying:

> Essebsi government will not be different from Ben-Ali's regime. All Salafis, regardless of their varying political agendas, will rely on one machine, the state's policing system and its anti-terror policies. Those who disagree with the state are treated as enemies of modernity and civilization, and therefore have to be defeated by force, whether they are violent or non-violent.

Responding to brutal anti-terror policies imposed by the government, and particularly escalated from early 2014, as it is noted by the interviewees, a large group of young Salafis became more radicalized and joined Jihadi groups outside Tunisia. In contrast to this group, the interviewees have started to reassess their radical Salafi identity and its politics and develop a pragmatic alternative of thought and behaviours aiming to preserve their Salafi identity from being completely dissolved by the police state. Hassan, who was mentioned above, invested in the freedom of religious expression attained by the Tunisian Uprising and got actively involved in religious and political debates and observed the changing context of political power. During the field research, he was an active member in different Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Islamic organisations networks. Through this experience of engagement, Hassan realised that the Salafi identity that he believes in will be easily demolished if Salafis continue with their isolationist approach. He said:

> Through my experience with Salafi groups before and after the Uprising, I realised that we (Salafis) will be defeated if we do not create alliances with political parties that believe in social justice and human rights. The implementation of sharia can be left for a later stage.'

Hassan applied his pragmatic views of Salafism by actively getting involved in the presidential election campaign of Al-Marzouki in December 2014. Al-Marzouqi represents a middle-left ideology and a political agenda against the candidate of the old regime. Hassan said: *'Having a non-Islamic president who is committed with the principles of social justice and human rights is less dangerous than having a corrupted Muslim president'*. Hassan has gradually deradicalised his Salafi views to protect his desired Salafi identity from being defeated by the changing context of power. Yet, it is uncertain whether Hassan's tactical view of postponing the goal of implementing sharia will remain fixed, or might also be changed due to changing socio-political circumstances.

Mona, a 23 year old female member of one of the reformist Salafi parties, commented on why she shifted from AS to a reformist Salafi party:

> In the beginning, I was so passionate with the idea of imposing sharia in Tunisian society and dreaming of building an Islamic state. I thought that is the only way to clean up the society from deviance. I worked with several Salafi charity organisations for three years and I discovered that although all Salafis call for authentic Islam and for sharia to be our only reference, in practice, none is ideal. Thus I prefer to work with those who focus on issues on the ground and keen to make change to people's life rather than making it harder.

Salem is a 29 year old working for a human rights organisation that is responsible for defending detainees who were suspected of terrorism. He was a sympathiser of AS in the first two years after the Uprising. Through his engagement with human rights organisations and debating human rights issues with non-Salafi lawyers, who work on the same mission, he gradually rethought Salafism. He said:

> Although we, Salafis, don't support all the conventions of the international laws, considering those that are not consistent with our religion, we believe that many other conventions are applicable within an Islamic state.

These narratives show that the reconstitution of radical Salafi identity is experimental. A new mode of Salafi identity is constituted through problematizing, or questioning, the old one and its potential to make the desired change (Foucault 1988). According to Foucault, problematisation of radical identity is not to claim a "valid" solution to ethical and political problems of such an identity. Rather, it is a realization that the radical identity is 'in crisis' and 'therefore stands in need of critique' (Foucault 2001, 47). Such realisation is an essential condition that led the interviewees to transform themselves.

Phase Four: the Limit Experience of Radicalism and the Choice to Self-Deradicialise

Deradicalisation in the case of the interviewees is not purely an individualistic task taken in isolation from their connections with other radical Salafis and from the changing social and political context. It is an outcome of the combination of all: state repression and personal and interpersonal experiences among and between Salafis (Ashour 2009). The narratives of the interviewees show that the continuity and discontinuity of radical identity are dependent on the capacity of individuals to capture the particular experienced aspects of identity that do not only

undermine possibilities of change, but generate danger to self and others, as will be illustrated below.

Hamed is a university graduate aged 32 years old. He owns a business with a middle income. In the first two years after the Tunisian Uprising, Hamed was the imam of a Jihadi mosque for six months and he participated in several demonstrations organized by AS. His six-month-long experience as imam afforded Hamed the opportunity to communicate with Jihadi youth and to find out the danger of their understanding of Jihadism that may justify the use of violence against other Muslims.

He said:

> It is only through my connections with Jihadi youth I discovered the danger of this ideology. Young Jihadists do not search for the truth and they take what they heard from their sheikhs for granted. They were so stubborn with their mistaken understanding of Jihad and don't want to listen to anyone. Sadly, by their irrational act they give an evil image to all Salafis.

Hamed spent a few months trying to change the attitudes of Jihadi youth with regard to the use of violence, investing in his position as an imam, as well as his deep knowledge of Islam. He confirmed that he did not fear the police state and its anti-terror policies because he had similar experiences during the Ben-Ali regime. Rather, he fears the consequences of the Jihadi discourse on the continuity of non-Jihadi Salafi groups to work with and for their society. Unfortunately, Hamed's attempts to change young Jihadis' attitudes failed. The reasons for failure according to Hamed's analysis are twofold: first, *'young Jihadis with no proper knowledge in Islam did not have the courage and will to say no to their dogmatic Sheikhs'*; second, *'young Jihadis have other material motivations than knowing the truth of Islam'*. Instead, Hamed was accused by them of betraying the Salafi doctrine, and as a result they may justify violence against him. Hamed realized that his experience with a Jihadi group reached its 'maximum intensity' that made him feel 'no longer himself' (Foucault 1994, 241). Thus, he detached himself from the Jihadi groups and focused on better understanding of the Salafi

doctrine to find out the truth and to develop an appropriate framework for its application in the particular context of Tunisia.

Summarising his experience with Salafism and Jihadism, Hamed commented in a way that can be interpreted as anti-Salafism, although he confirms that he still adopts the Salafi doctrine and identity:

> We cannot approach people in 2014 with the same logic of the seventh century. This is impossible. Quran text and Sunna were able to solve the problems of that time. We also have to understand the text to solve our current time's problems. We have to understand that the game of power is more complex than what the Jihadi youth imagine. The short sighted understanding of Salafism has helped the old regime to come back with the same power and impose the same anti-terror policies used in the past. See, you can't see any Jihadi in the streets. They are all hidden because of the return of the policing state. They even have become more radicalized as a large number of them travelled to Libya and Syria to join *da'esh* (ISIS).

He adds:

> We, Salafis, need to learn from our previous experience how to manoeuvre with the policing system in order to keep our continuity. Otherwise we will be lost. This does not mean to abandon our doctrine, but to ensure that we practise it in a way that brings positive effects, rather than creating more destruction.

Ziad, mentioned above, has been acting as a preacher and activist for 10 years. He had radical thoughts until a year after the Tunisian Uprising, believing that Jihad is a religious duty to impose sharia. He became fully occupied with *da'wa* activities after the Uprising, which allowed him to open dialogues with different groups of Salafis and non-Salafis following his slogan: *listen to us and don't listen about us.* During the first two years after the Tunisian Uprising, when Salafi *da'wa* activities in Tunisia were widely expanded, Ziad enjoyed his role as a preacher and gradually developed a tolerant approach towards secular groups, whom he used to call non-believers. He said*: 'Seculars do not have to fear us, as long as each group has* a space of *freedom to mobilise for its ideology without coercion… let's leave people decide what beliefs and values they chose'*. Ziad's story is consistent with Foucault's concept of the 'game of truth', which in the context of Tunisia requires political and ideological dialogue

between the holders of conflicting discourses, with 'as little domination as possible' (Foucault 1997, 298).

In response to the harsh anti-terror policies adopted by the state and the security restrictions imposed on all Salafis to practice *da'wa*, Ziad started to feel that his desired identity as a Salafi preacher is threatened within the changing context of power. That induced him to search for alternative ways to maintain his preaching activities, without necessarily clashing with security forces. He first reformed the contents of his sermons so as not to include any incitements. He also changed his political attitudes and supported engagement with formal politics. However, he stated that his reformist Salafi identity is conditioned with what results this reformism would bring to him and to the Tunisian society. He said:

> My reformist Salafi approach is still experimental, but I am ready to create alternatives if my reformist approach is not recognised. If doors for *da'wa* are closed, I am ready to find another pathway to go on spreading the message of Islam, which is the meaning of my existence.

In the last interview with Ziad in December 2014, he developed a new strategy to make the change he desires possible, saying:

> I chose to get enrolled in a high diploma course in sharia, which is under the surveillance of the government. It aims to graduate a number of moderate imams and preachers to officially work in the mosques…if this is what the government wants to suppress our voice that is fine, I will go for it if it helps me to go on with *da'wa* activities. But, what to do if the police keeps chasing us (preachers)!

With women, interpersonal limit-experiences among female Salafis appeared to be the main motives for their deradicalisation. Fatima, 25 years old, was arrested by the police with a conviction of supporting Jihadis in October 2014. She spent 5 days in detention. The police forced her to remove her *niqab* by putting pressure on her family. She removed it in order to satisfy her family and to avoid being chased by the police again. However, as she noted, that was not the main reason that urged her to disengage with Jihadis. During her imprisonment and after her release, Fatima did not receive any support from any of her Salafi fellows (men and women). She was shocked and started to question the trustworthiness of Jihadis and the

potentiality of their discourse to create an ideal Muslim. As a result, she distanced herself from all Jihadi Salafi groups. Yet it is hard to predict if distancing herself from Jihadi groups would create a new opportunity for her to have new friends who urge her to further deradicalize, or to re-engage with Jihadi groups.

A last example is Leila, a female lawyer in her early thirties. She had identified herself as a Jihadi for five years. She spent all these years struggling to idealize her Jihadi-Salafi identity – became fully veiled including her face; stopped her work as a lawyer; abandoned any contact with men; and mobilized youth for the holy Jihad. Leila, who comes from a wealthy liberal Tunisian family, sacrificed her previous luxurious style of life and married a poor Jihadi man coming from a marginalized social background. A few months after marriage, she started to face serious problems with her husband and she was unable to endure the harsh socio-economic consequences of embracing the Jihadi ideology and its dogmatic social rules that she had never experienced before with her family. After five years of painful experience of being a Jihadi-Salafi, and a wife of a socially and economically undependable Jihadi, Leila realised that *'this is not who I am'*. Being beaten by her husband was the moment that pushed Leila to ask for a divorce and to detach herself completely from Jihadi groups. Yet, she did not abandon Salafism as a whole but reconstrued it in a way that satisfied her desires and interests in life. As she said in her last interview:

> Now, I admire both the secular liberal and spiritual Salafi worlds. From the first one, I learn discipline, techniques of communication, and modern style of life that generates individual success and happiness; while through religion I enjoy spirituality that protects me from falling into corruption or deviance. This is the Salafi image of world that I would like to live.

The narratives of the Salafi men and women show that they do not validate the righteousness or falseness of their radical Salafi, or Jihadi, identity until they experiment with it in their social and political environment and examine its effect in changing their life for the better. Through the practice of radical Salafism and its inter-relational dynamics, the interviewees assess the

effect and consequences of their radical attitudes, behaviours and social relations, and find a way to reconcile conflicting truth statements, identities and social behaviours, aiming to protect their desired Salafi identity from being dissolved by the state anti-terror policies; the irrational violent Jihadi practices; and from lack of interpersonal trustworthiness and interdependence between Salafi fellows. In most cases, it is the 'limit-experience' of radicalism that according to Foucault (2000, 241) '…has the function of wrenching the subject from itself' and stimulates searching for an alternative identity, or subjectivity.

Conclusion

The narratives of the deradicalised research participants show that there is a high possibility for more radicals to self-deradicalise by reflecting on their particular experience of engagement with radicalism without necessarily abandoning the whole Salafi ideology. Does this suggest that we need to wait until Muslim youth get engaged in violence and realise by their experience the ineligibility of their radical identity? The answer is definitely no. It is that state-led rehabilitation programs should understate their focus on a top-down ideological rehabilitation approach that is reliant on authorised Islamic clerics, and give more emphasis to understanding the 'limit-experience' of radicalisation and deradicalisation. The latter includes an understanding and analysis of the particular limit-experience of those who self-deradicalise, or for instance the Jihadi returnees, and investing in those people's knowledge and experience to deradicalise others.

The example of self-deradicalisation, as it is revealed in this research, significantly contributes to developing the existing strategies of deradicalisation by investing in the actual experiences of deradicalised youth to make deradicalisation programs more responsive, as well as reflexive to the internal dynamics of radicalisation and deradicalisation within the Salafi-Jihadi groups. Arguably, valuing the agency of the self-

deradicalised youth and encouraging them to become more involved in politics and activism

is an effective long-term strategy of deradicalisation from within. Those who have

experienced radical Salafism are more capable of understanding the motivations and

experiences of radical Salafis than those who have not. They can also aid the

deradicalisation process by revealing conflicting ideas within the radical strand without

attacking the Salafi ideology as a whole. Deradicalised Salafis need to feel free to express

their ideas and be protected by the state, however, for them to communicate their

experiences with other Salafis.

The current Tunisian state's assumption, similar to that of the old one, that Salafis are

deradicalised only through the use of force or fear of it is mistaken. As demonstrated by the

interviewees in this research, signs of deradicalisation started shortly after the Uprising, when

Salafis were to some extent freely engaged in *da'wa* activities and with opposing ideologies,

and less subjugated by the state, at least compared to the Ben Ali era. This experience of

engagement allowed radical Salafis to be exposed to new ideas and the machinery of the state

and to learn how to manoeuvre with it. Engagement with ideologies challenging their own led

them to rethink their discourse and strategies to gain supporters, preferring those activities that

are less likely to lead to further government crackdown by working within the existing system,

and more likely to gain socio-political recognition.

Fear of government crackdown, then, did not grant Salafis freedom to experiment with

alternative means of political engagement. On the contrary, repression of radical Salafis drove

them further underground, making them increasingly isolated from conflicting ideas that lead

to deradicalisation. As Foucault noted, freedom is a precondition for self problematisation by

which the human subject is in encounter with the different dominant discourses and the

relations of power they imply, and has an opportunity to reflect on, and to learn from, the

outcome of actions and experiences undertaken (Foucault 1994). Yet, this encounter may not

lead to a complete rejection of the old value system and the identity it establishes. Rather it operates based on, and within, it (Franek 2006).

With the return to the former regime's use of severe anti-terror policies, deradicalised Salafis face a major challenge to their ideology and to their ability to function as recognized actors. As is asserted by most interviewees, they have been treated by the state's policing system the same way as radical Salafis, thereby impinging on their ability to express their alternative Salafi way of thinking and acting. This gives legitimacy for radical Salafis to accuse them of betrayal of the Salafi doctrine by obeying the laws of the secular state, and in some respects, permits violence against them. In this situation, deradicalised Salafis have three options: they may go back to radicalism, as has happened in Egypt, where members of the moderate Muslim Brotherhood and non-violent Salafi groups have been pushed into the arms of extremist Jihadi groups (Dunne and Williamson 2014); isolate themselves from the public domain to escape the policing system; or be co-opted by the state and its religious authority. Either way, deradicalised Salafis would be denied their right to express their ideas and to potentially contribute to deradicalisation.

It is also the responsibility of the state to fulfil its obligations towards the rights and freedoms of its citizens, even if the value system of deradicalised Salafis remains incompatible with the principle of secular state sovereignty and its universal liberal values (Foucault 1994). Encouraging deradicalised Salafis to achieve positive effects and to gain recognition in Tunisia is a technique that helps Salafis to affect others, and potentially deradicalize them, through their discourse, and be affected by others' discourses, thereby encouraging coexistence of multiple identities and a pluralistic political society.

Acknowledgment

References

Abbas, T. 2007. *Islamic political radicalism: a European perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Abdel-Latif, O. 2009. "Trends in Salafism". In *Islamist Radicalisation: The Challenge for Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, edited by E. Michael, K. Kausch, and R. Youngs, 69-86. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies.

Abualrob, M. 2013. "Preaching Arab Satellite Television Channels: The Power of Salafi Discourse in forming Public Opinion", a PhD theses, the University of Vienna, http://othes.univie.ac.at/28834/1/2013-03-25_0867604.pdf. Accessed Feb. 25, 2016.

Abu Rumman, M. 2014, "I Am A Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Jordan & Iraq, 1-264

Aggarwal, N. K. 2013. "Mental Discipline, Punishment and Recidivism: Reading Foucault Against De-Radicalisation Programmes in the War on Terror", *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6 (2), 262-278

Aroun, K. 2015. *A Decade Lost: Rethinking Radicalisation and Extremism*. London: ClystOne

Ashour, O. 2009, *The Deradicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. New York and London: Routledge

Baker-Beall, C., Heath-Kelly, C. and Jarvis, L. 2015. *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge Critical Terrorism Studies

Bartlett, J., and Miller, C. 2012. "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and on-Violent Radicalisation." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (1): 1–21.

Bruner J. 2004. 'Life as Narrative.' *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 71(3): 691-710.

Cavatorta F. 2015. "The Rise and Fall of Uncivil Society? Salafism in Tunisia After the Fall of Ben Ali." Middle East Institute, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/rise-and-fall-uncivil-society-Salafism-tunisia-after-fall-ben-ali-0. Accessed April 12, 2016.

Charrad, M. 2007. *The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. California: University Press, 2001.

Christmann, K. 2012. "Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism." The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf . Accessed 17 Nov. 2015

Clubb, G. 2015. "De-Radicalisation, Disengagement and the Attitudes-Behavior Debate". In *Terrorism and Political Violence, edited by* Kennedy, C et al. London: Sage.

Connelly F. M. and Clandinin D. J. 1990. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." *Educational Researcher*, 19 (5): 2-14.

Dunne, M. and Williamson, S. 2014. "Egypt, Counterterrorism, and the Politics of Alienation." Carnegie Publication, http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/08/20/egypt-counterterrorism-and-politics-of-alienation. Accessed December 23, 2015.

Elshimi, M. 2015. De-Radicalisation Interventions as Technologies of the Self: A Foucauldian Analysis, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 8(1):110-129.

Ellner S. 2005. "Revolutionary and Non-Revolutionary Paths of Radical Populism of the Chavista Movement in Venezuela." *Science and Society* 69: 160–90.

Feddes R. A. and Gallucci M. 2015. "A Literature Review on Methodology used in Evaluating Effects of Preventive and De-radicalisation Intervention." *Journal of Deradicalisation, Winter 2015/2016, No.5*

Foucault, M. 1994. The Ethics of concern for Self as a practice of Freedom. In *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by P.Rabinow, 284-290. New York: The New Press.

_____ 1997, "What is Critique?" In *The Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvere Lotringe and translated by L. Hochroth and C. Porter, 41-82. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

_____ 1988. "Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault." In *Technologies of the Self*, edited by L. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. Hutton, 16–49. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

_____ 2000. Interview with Michel Foucault, in *Power,* edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley and others, 241-273. New York: The New Press.

_____ 2001, *Fearless Speech* [1983], edited by Joseph P. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), pp. 183

Franek, J. 2006. "Philosophical Parrhesia as Aesthetics of Existence", *Continental Philosophy Review*, 39(2): 113-134.

Gunaratna, R. 2009. "The Battlefield of the Mind: Rehabilitating Muslim Terrorists." *UNISCI Discussion Papers, N° 21 (Octubre/October 2009)*. Accessed December 2, 2016. http://www.ucm.es/info/unisci/revistas/UNISCI%20DP%2021%20-%20ROHAN.pdf.

Gunaratna, R., Jerard, J. and Rubin, L. 2011. *Terrorist Rehabilitation and Counter-Radicalisation: New approaches to counter-terrorism*. London & New York: Routledge

Gunning, J. and R. Jackson. 2011. "What's So 'Religious' about 'Religious Terrorism'?" *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4(3): 369–388

Haj-Salem, M. 2014. *Jihadist Salafism: Reality and Prospects. Tunis:* The Tunisian National Institute of Strategic Studies (Arabic)

Heath-Kelly, C. 2013."Counterterrorism and the Counterfactual: Producing the'Radicalisation' Discourse and the UK Prevent Strategy." *British Journal of Politics and International Relatio*ns, 15 (3): 394–415

Hegghammer, T. 2009. "Jihadi-Salafis Or Uprisingaries?". In *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement,* edited by Meijer, R. 244-266. New York: Colombia University Press

_____2013. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting", *American Political Science Review* 107 (1): 1-15.

Holland, D. and Leander, K. 2004. "Ethnographic Studies of Positioning and Subjectivity: An Introduction." *Ethos,* 32 (2): 127-139.

Horgan, J. and Braddock, K. 2010, "Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-Radicalisation Programs." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22:267–291

Horgan, J. and *Altier*, M.B. 2010. "The Future of Terrorist Deradicalisation Programs", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 13: 1-12;

International Crisis Group (ICG). 2013. "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge", http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/North%20Africa/Tunisia/137-tunisia-violence-and-the-salafi-challenge.pdf. Accessed in 17 April 2015.

Jamaoui, A. 2015. The Dangers of Tunisia's Anti-Terrorism Law, Fair Observer, http://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/the-dangers-of-tunisias-anti-terrorism-law-12852/. Accessed 2/12/2016

Jarvis, L. & Lister, M. 2015. *Critical Perspectives on Counter- Terrorism*. New York: Routledge

Kepel, G. 2005. *The Roots of Radial I slam.* London: Saqi Books

Kundnani, A. 2015. *A Decade Lost: Rethinking Radicalization and Extremism*. London: Claystone.

Layachi, A. 2013. "Islam and Politics in North Africa." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, edited by Esposito, J. L. and Emad El-Din S. 352-379. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lemke T. 2011. "Critique and Experience in Foucault." *Theory, Culture and Society*, 28(4): 26-48

Lewis-Beck S. Michael, B. A. and Futing L. T. 2004. *Snowball Sampling*. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods

Lindekilde, L. 2012. "Neo-Liberal Governing of 'Radicals': Danish Radicalisation Prevention Policies and Potential Iatrogenic Effects." International Journal of Conflict and Violence 6 (1): 109–125.

Mabrouk, M. 2012. "Tunisia: The Radicalisation of Religious Policy," in *Islamist Radicalisation in North Africa: Politics and Process*, edited by George Joffé. New York: Routledge

Marks, M. 2012. 'Who are Tunisia's Salafis', *Foreign Policy,* September, http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/28/who-are-tunisias-Salafis/

_____2013. "Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current." *Mediterranean Politics,* 18(1):104-111.

Mamdani, M. 2005. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Doubleday.

Masschelein, J., 2006. "Experience and the limit of Governmentality." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*: Incorporating ACCESS, 38(4): 573.

Meijer, R. 2009. *Global Salafism: Islam's new Religious Movement*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Merone, F. and Cavatorta, F. 2012. "Salafis mouvance and sheikh-ism in the Tunisian democratic transition", *S*eries paper, no.7, Dublin City University, http://doras.dcu.ie/17570/1/1207.pdf

Merone, F. 2013. "Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with A member of Ansar Al-Sharia", *Jadaliyya (*11 April), http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/Salafism-in-tunisia_an-interview-with-a-member-of-

Moore, C. M. 1988. "Tunisia and Bourguibisme: twenty years of crisis." *Third World Quarterly*, 10: 176–90.

Muhanna-Matar, A. & Winter, D. Forthcoming 1st quarter 2017. "Radicalisation and Deradicalisation as Constructive Choices: Explorations of the Construing of Salafists", in *Personal Construct Psychology at 60: Papers from the 21st. International Congress*, edited by David Winter, Peter Cummins, Harry Procter and Nick reed. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Mullin, C. & Roubah, B. 2014. "Requiem for Tunisia's Revolution?". Jadaliyya (22 Dec 2014), http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20334/requiem-for-tunisia%E2%80%99s-revolution. Accessed 25/11/2016

Nesser, P. 2010. "Joining Jihadi terrorist cells in Europe: Exploring motivational aspects of recruitment and radicalisation." In *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe*, edited by Magnus Ranstorp, 108-109. London: Routledge.

Paul, T. 2012. *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism Failing to Prevent*. New York, Delhi, London and Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing

Petre, C. 2015. How Tunisia's Moderate Imams are Seeking to Reclaim Islam from Extremists. Al-Monitor, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/tunisia-mosques-efforts-reclaim-islam-jihadis-radicalism.html#ixzz4TOfYiXFP. Accessed 2/12/2016.

Reidy, E. 2015. "Tunisia cracks down on Radicalisation." Al Monitor, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/tunisia-government-counter-extremism-anti-terrorist-bill.html. Accessed 5/12/2016

Reynolds, M. J. 2004. "Pragmatic Humanism" in Foucault's Later Work." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique,* 37(4): 951–977

Rom, A. S. 2013. "Extremist" Rehabilitation: A Fundamental Misunderstanding? Divergent Micro and Macro-level Narratives Regarding Motivations of Former Guantanamo Bay "Extremists" Participating in the Saudi Arabian De-Radicalisation and Rehabilitation Program. *Brussels Journal of International Studies*, 10: 144-186.

Samti, F. 2015. "Tunisia's New Anti-Terrorism Law Worries Activists." *Foreign Policy,* http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/18/tunisias-new-anti-terrorism-law-worries-activists-tunisia/

Schmid, P. A. 2013. "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review", Research Brief, International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) – Hague, http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf. Accessed November 12, 2015

Seifert, K. 2010. "Can Jihadis be Rehabilitated: Radical Islam." *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring: 21-30.

Silke, A. 2011. "Disengagement or Deradicalisation? A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists", CTC Sentinel, 4,1, https://www.academia.edu/13121783/Disengagement_or_Deradicalisation_A_Look_at_Prison_Programs_for_Jailed_Terrorists. Accessed in 21 May 2015

Stump L. J. and Dixit P. 2013. *Critical Terrorism Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods*. New York: Routledge

Sukabdi, Z. 2015. "Terrorism In Indonesia: A Review on Rehabilitation and Deradicalisation." *Journal of Terrorism Research,* 6(2): 36-56, https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/7160/Sukabdi_2015_JTR_Rehabilitation.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y . Accessed March 6, 2016.

Thomas, P. 2012. *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism Failing to Prevent.* New York, Delhi, London and Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing;

Tore, B. and Horgan, J. 2008. *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement.* New York: Routledge.

Torelli, M.S., Merone, F. and Cavatorta, F. 2012. "Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratisation." *Middle East Policy*, XiX (4): 140-154

Valerie N. A. 2012. *Constructing the Self: Thinking with Paul and Michel Foucault.* Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck,

Venhaus, C.J.M. 2010. "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda, USIP Special Report 236." Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1-20, http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR236Venhaus.pdf. Accessed January 6, 2016.

Wanger, R. 2010. **"**Rehabilitation and Deradicalisation: Saudi Arabia's Counterterrorism Successes and Failures." *Peace and Conflict Monitor*, Special Report, University of Peace, http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id_article=735 . Accessed January 6, 2016.

Wiktorowicz, Q. 2005. *Radical Islam Rising. Islamic Extremism in the West*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
Wolf, A. 2013a. "An Islamist 'renaissance'? Religion and politics in post-Uprisingary Tunisia." *The Journal of North African Studies,* 18(4): 560-573.

Notes

---

[1] *Wahabism* is named after an 18th century Arabian theologian Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab belonging to the Ruling Al-Saud family. He called for the "purification" of Islam by returning to the Islam of the Prophet Mohammed and the three successive generations of followers. See more details in Abu-Rumman, "I AM A SALAFI", p. 60

[2] Two weeks after the fall of Ben-Ali, the government released all imprisoned under the 2003 anti-terrorism law. According to an officials statement, 1,200 Salafis, including 300 who fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, left prison". At the same time, many scripturalist and Jihadi Salafi Sheikhs, mostly imams at mosques in Europe, returned to Tunisia. See more in International Crisis Group (ICG), *Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge*, p14.

[3] Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST), founded in late April, 2011, was banned in August, 2012 because it was accused as responsible for all the violent actions that happened in Tunisia. See details in Haj-Salem, Jihadist Salafism: Reality and Prospects (2014).

[4] See Carlotta Gall, **"**Islamist Party in Tunisia to Step Down", *New York Times (*SEPT. 28, 2013), available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/world/africa/islamist-party-in-tunisia-to-step-down.html accessed 28/11/2016

[5] Nidaa Tounis party was founded in April 2012 as a competing party against Ennahda in response to the institutional chaos and insecurity created after the Tunisian Uprising and during the rule of the Islamist Ennahda party. Its most influential members are those who belonged to Ben Ali's regime. See more details in Anne Wolf, "Power Shift in Tunisia: Electoral Success of Secular Parties Might Deepen Polarization", SWP Comments (54), German Institute for International and Security Affairs (December 2014).2014), http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2014C54_wolf.pdf

[6] See Al-Jazeera, "Tunisia passes anti-terror laws after deadly attack", (25 Jul 2015), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/tunisia-passes-anti-terror-laws-deadly-attacks-isil-150725001430938.html

[7] Task Force on Extremism, Tackling Extremism in UK: Report from the Prime Minister's (David Cameron's) Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism. London: HM Government, p.3.