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Still Troubled: Tunisia's Youth During and Since the Revolution of 2011

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Abstract: This paper presents evidence from interviews in 2015–2016 with a nationally representative sample of Tunisia's 15–29 year olds. We focus on the sample's political participation and orientations during the revolution of 2011 and subsequently. We find that just 6.6 percent of those aged 15–24 at the time played any direct part in the 'events of 2011'. Political engagement then and subsequently is shown to have been influenced most strongly by a university education and growing up in a politically engaged family. In 2015–2016, young people were overwhelmingly pro-democracy, supported equal opportunities and status for the sexes, and endorsed values of self-expression, but attached equal importance to economic security and betterment, felt that their country's traditions should be maintained and respected, and were personally religious, though three-quarters wanted religion to be kept out of politics and government. Although Tunisia is the sole Arab Spring country to emerge with a still functioning (in 2017) multi-party democracy, we find that in 2015–2016, the majority of young people did not trust their elected politicians. Our survey findings suggest explanations for the paradox between young Tunisians' overwhelming support for democracy alongside intense disappointment with the outcomes.

Keywords: Arab Spring; politics; Tunisia; youth

1. Introduction

Why revisit the Arab Spring? First, because many questions about these 'events of 2011' remain unanswered, and the passage of time and additional evidence now available enable these questions to be addressed. Second, because the answers have relevance beyond idle curiosity about what happened in 2011. Our own new evidence is from a survey conducted during late 2015 and early 2016 among a nationally representative sample of 2000 15–29 year olds in Tunisia, the country where the wave of uprisings in 2011 began and the sole country where the protests to regime change and to the country's transformation into a multi-party democracy, where governments now change depending on election results. Yet, we found that in 2015–2016, young people's trust in politicians (always low) had declined further. These findings were unexpected. Our evidence indicates possible answers, but these are just hypotheses that need to be explored thoroughly in further research.

1.1. Some Knowns

Some questions about 'the events of 2011' have been answered either by recent history or research evidence gathered at the time or during the intervening years. In 2011, it was plausible to anticipate a North Africa and Middle East repeat of 'the events of 1989' and what followed, though this was

always unlikely because the 2011 protests were in countries with no histories of communism from which to depart and that were already consumer market economies.

We now know that the events of 2011 did not signal the birth and mobilisation of a new political generation in North Africa and the Middle East. We now know that the prominence of young people in the protests owed more to the demography of the countries than the over-representation of the young, and that all age groups were present and all their voices could be heard amid the protests in Tunis and Cairo [1,2]. Surveys have not produced evidence of change over time or differences by age in political orientations that a new political generation would create [3,4]. It appears that the most recent new political generations in North Africa were formed in the 1970s and continue to recruit new cohorts of young people. In the 1970s, these new cohorts became the countries' post-independence generation. The liberators of the countries were in power, and new incoming youth and adult cohorts were dissatisfied with the outcomes [5–7]. Arguably, this dissatisfaction can only have intensified over time, and by 2011, a greatly enlarged new political generation could have swept the region's incumbent political elites aside for ever, but unlike in Eastern Europe in 1989, this has not happened during or since 2011, even in Tunisia.

We already know about the 'condition of young people' throughout the Arab Mediterranean region in 2011. We know about the demographic surge (the swollen size of youth cohorts), the high levels of unemployment, and the even more widespread informal employment. We know about the pressure on housing [8–12]. These conditions have awaited increasingly urbanised and well-educated young people. In some countries, by 2011, university-educated young adults were at greatest risk of unemployment [13,14]. Our new evidence confirms these features of the condition of youth. There have been no changes since 2011, except further deterioration in young people's job prospects in some countries, especially those in which tourism had become a significant business sector (see [15]).

However, we also know that 'conditions' or 'structure' can never be a sufficient explanation of outcomes. Actors' motivations, informed by their own definitions of their situations, always need to be part of an explanation. In the case of the events of 2011, our best evidence is from research that was conducted close to the events. Most of this evidence is from Tunisia and Egypt, and more specifically from Tunis and Cairo, the places where protestors succeeded in toppling incumbent rulers. We know that the protestors were angry, outraged by the repression that they were experiencing, and the manner in which all dissent was being brutally suppressed. They were outraged by the widening inequalities in countries where the regimes' neo-liberal policies had made them darlings of international financial institutions, enriching the rulers and their crony capitalist cadres while impoverishing swaths of their populations, degrading public services, and stripping the people of dignity [16–24]. We know all this, yet important questions remain unanswered. Hence the seemingly never ending attempts (of which this paper is one) to 'frame the debate' about the true significance of the events of 2011 (see [25]).

1.2. Knowledge Gaps

Our fresh evidence can address some previously unanswered questions, namely:

- The socio-demographic profile of the young people who were involved in the protests, and whether they can be treated as a cross-section of their age group;
- Whether they had similar or different political orientations from peers who did not join the protests. Were they speaking and acting for their age group?
- Was there a disconnect between participating in protests in 2011 on the one hand and voting in subsequent elections and involvement in conventional politics on the other?
- How many protestors in 2011 sustained their political activity over the next five years, up to the time of our survey in 2015–2016?

We can set answers to these questions in the context of the overall socio-political orientations of Tunisia's youth in 2015–2016, including their trust in politicians and political institutions, their religiosity, their evaluations of multi-party democracy vis-à-vis alternative political systems, and

whether they were abandoning traditional and security values in favour of rational and self-expression values, which is the global modernising trend identified in successive World Values Surveys [26–30]. Our research also gathered the young people’s opinions about how their country had changed since 2011. First, however, we must describe our research, address our starting questions about the events of 2011, and then progress to the respondents’ circumstances and socio-political orientations in 2015–2016.

1.3. The Investigation

Our evidence is from an interview survey during the winter of 2015–2016 with a nationally representative sample of Tunisia’s 15–29 year olds using a fully structured questionnaire which was available in Arabic, French and English. A representative sample of households from all regions of the country was approached, and all resident 15–29 year olds became the sample. All interviews were conducted by a same-sex interviewer. Interviews were not audio-recorded because the questionnaire was fully structured. Respondents were divided into those living in rural and urban settlements. Age, sex and marital status were recorded together with information on the housing that respondents occupied, and their mothers’ and fathers’ education and occupations. The respondents’ own educational attainments, current positions and prior experiences in the labour market were recorded. We then addressed a series of questions about each respondent’s political actions (if any) during and since 2010–2011 together with their socio-political orientations. Details of these questions will be given as the findings are presented. For some purposes, namely all analyses that involves political actions in 2010–2011, we use results only from respondents aged 20–29 at the time of the survey, thus excluding those who were not yet age 15 in 2010–2011.

We commence below with exactly who took part in the actions that led to the revolution that involved the flight of Tunisia’s President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. We will show that exactly who took part, and their own and other young Tunisians’ subsequent political biographies, may form part, but only a part, of a comprehensive explanation of the widespread dissatisfaction in 2015–2016 with the outcomes of the events of 2011.

2. Youth and the Events of 2011 in Tunisia

The Protestors

Who were the young Tunisian activists who set their president fleeing, and forced the incumbent regime to concede contested elections to an assembly that created a new democratic constitution? Not only this, they set in motion the wave of protests that spread across North Africa and into the Middle-East. We asked whether respondents had taken part in each of a series of ‘actions’ in the period leading to and surrounding the flight of President Ben Ali. These actions were:

- Participating in party political meetings and other activities;
- Making a donation to a party or association;
- Collecting signatures or signing a petition;
- Participating in night watches to protect a neighbourhood;
- Participating, attending, or helping in a demonstration;
- Joining a strike;
- Using forms of violent action for social or political ends;
- Participating in election campaigns;
- Political participation via the internet.

Respondents answered on a six-point scale with a range from every day to never.

As explained above, we restrict our analysis here to members of our sample who were age 20–29 in 2015–2016, that is, those aged 15–24 in 2010–2011. Out of the 1367 20–29 year olds in the sample, just 90 had taken part in any of the above actions in 2010–2011—just 6.6 percent, which was fewer than we had expected. Only 1.5 percent had been cyberactivists, and 2.4 percent had taken part in

a demonstration. The action that had involved most respondents had been night watches (4.4 percent). It seems that it was the actions of a rather small proportion of the age group, and probably an even smaller proportion of the entire Tunisia adult population, that won relatively free elections, sparked the protests that spread across the region that became known as the Arab Spring, and created North Africa's as yet sole democracy.

We also asked whether respondents had taken part in the same list of actions during the last year, 2015–2016, five years on from the revolution. Slightly more (6.7 percent) had been involved in at least one of these activities. What was different about 2010–2011? Our hypotheses are as follows. First, in 2010–2011, most acted at the same time and in the same place, during December 2010 to January 2011 and mainly in Tunis. Second, in 2011, the protestors persisted and refused to disperse in the face of police charges, brutal assaults, arrests, gunfire, and fatalities. Third and crucially, by mid-January, Ben Ali's security forces and colleagues in the regime had decided that the president was expendable and advised him to flee, temporarily and able to return, though this was never to be. If autocrats retain the support of colleagues and their security forces, they can hold on until protestors disperse or fight if a protest movement acquires arms (as in Syria post-2011).

The events of December 2010–January 2011 in Tunis show that it is possible for a small proportion of a population who assemble together to feel, and to appear to others, that they are 'the people'. We will see below that the motivations and orientations of the protestors did indeed represent the aspirations of many more inactive peers, the overwhelming majority of their age group. Some who did not join the crowds contributed to the revolution with sounds, images, and lyrics that conveyed the revolution's mood [31,32]. The activists would have been aware of and sustained by the moral, social, and material support that was given at the time. Those who died, including the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi who self-immolated on 17 December 2010 during a confrontation with a policewoman and whose death on 4 January 2011 sparked the protests that led to Tunisia's revolution, have become revered figures in the country's history.

More males than females were involved in 'the events of 2010–2011' (10.1 percent and 3.3 percent). There was little difference in participation rates between those living in urban and rural areas (6.9 percent and 6.0 percent) or between those from middle class families, measured by mothers' and fathers' education and occupations, and the rest (6.5 percent and 6.6 percent). However, those involved in the events of 2010–2011 were the more likely to have become university graduates by 2015–2016 (8.2 percent versus 5.7 percent), and in 2015–2016, a higher proportion of those in permanent, full-time official jobs had been activists five years previously (10.8 percent) than those in 2010–2011, who were in informal employment (5.3 percent) or unemployed (6.2 percent). The protestors in 2010–2011 were then, and in 2015–2016 were still, on relatively advantaged life course trajectories.

Roughly a half of our respondents who had taken part in the actions in 2010–2011 had not been involved in similar actions in 2015–2016, while 3.5 percent had acted in 2015–2016 but not in 2010–2011. Just 3.1 percent had been activists in both years. They will probably have joined Tunisia's long-term grassroots political activists. Needless to say, there are additional ways in which citizens can become politically engaged. For example, they may join tenants, environmentalist, women's, and other civil society associations. We collected relevant data that show that it tended to be the same individuals who were involved in all the various ways. Here, we concentrate on those who were politically active, narrowly defined, because it was the street protests and related actions in 2010–2011 that led to Tunisia's political revolution. The proportion of the age group that was directly involved in these 'events of 2011' is small, but perhaps not surprisingly small because elected representatives in Western-type democracies are normally drawn from similarly small pools of long-term activists. Other citizens in democracies are not required to participate except in occasional elections.

3. Young Tunisians' Political Activities and Orientations in 2015–2016: Activists and Non-Activists in 2010–2011

We now ask whether the activists in 2010–2011 differed from the rest of their age group not socio-demographically, but in their subsequent political activities and socio-political orientations in 2015–2016. As regards orientations, we find only slight differences, but these consistently portray the activists as the more conservative group. They were the more religious, the less supportive of sex equality, more supportive of traditional and security values, and had more trust in their country's politicians, but they were also the more supportive of self-expression values. The differences in political activities prove much wider. The activists of 2010–2011 had subsequently become far more likely than others in their age group to engage in all types of 'normal' political action, especially joining a political party, and this was even more especially the case among activists who had been reared in politically engaged families. Young people from these families were also more conservative than their peers in all the ways mentioned above.

Table 1 divides the sample into the 90 respondents who were personally and directly involved in the events of 2011 and the rest. The 2011 activists proved more likely than their peers to have taken part subsequently in all the 'normal' political actions. These findings refute previous suggestions (for example by Honwana, 2013 [20]) that the activists in 2011 were rejecting normal politics in favour of alternative ways of doing democracy.

Table 1. Political participation, 20–29 year olds in 2015–2016.

	Participated in the 'Events of 2011' %	Did Not Participate %
Belong to a political party as sympathiser, participant, donor or volunteer	22	4
Using or have used activists political blogs or websites	28	13
Political party to which feel close	29	14
Always or often vote when elections called	37	26
Voted in last election	53	29
Follow political news every day or often	53	36

Respondents who expressed some degree of support for any political party in 2015–2016 were most likely to name either Nidaa Tounes (43.1 percent) or Ennahdha (27.8 percent) the current and former post-2011 government-forming parties. The support of the remaining 29 percent was scattered between a large number of much smaller parties. However, just over 14 percent of the total sample named any favoured party. This is just one indication of the fragility of democracy in post-2011 Tunisia.

Since being an activist in 2011 predicted all forms of subsequent, normal political activity, it will be no surprise that similar socio-demographic variables predicted political activity in both 2011 and subsequently. The answers regarding subsequent political activity are the same irrespective of the measure of political engagement—voting in elections, feeling close to a particular political party, following political news, and all the other indicators in Table 1. Those who were politically engaged in 2015–2016 tended to be male, living in urban rather than rural areas, older rather than younger, with a pronounced leap in activity between late-teens and early-20s, married rather than single, and living independently rather than with their parents. However, there are two eye-catching predictors. The first is various indicators of social class: the classes of families of origin measured by mothers' and fathers' occupations and education (which did not predict involvement in the events of 2011) and especially whether respondents had progressed through university. For example, 64 percent of university graduates compared with 23 percent from the remainder of 25–29-year-old respondents had voted in the last election. Compared with participants in the events of 2010–2011 (where our numbers are much smaller), in subsequent political activity, gender differences are narrower, while differences on all indicators of social class are much wider.

The other eye-catching predictor of all forms of political engagement is whether respondents had been brought-up in politically engaged families. This was measured with a question about whether respondents spoke with their mothers and fathers about national political affairs regularly,

often, sometimes, or never. On our measure, speaking with either the mother or father or both about politics often or regularly, 929 (67 percent of the 20–29 year olds) were from politically engaged families. This was related to respondents having been activists in 2010–2011 (7.6 percent compared with 4.3 percent from politically non-engaged families). Both a politically engaged family background and participation in the 2010–2011 events were independently related to our various measures of post-2011 political activity, including voting regularly in elections and belonging to a political party (see Table 2). The latter was far most common (53 percent) among those who had been activists in 2010–2011 and who were not from politically engaged families. However, there were only 19 such 2010–2011 activists in our sample, of whom 10 were political party members in 2015–2016. Party membership was also more common among those from politically engaged families who had been activists in 2011 (15 percent) than among the other groups in Table 2 (three and four percent).

Table 2. Family political engagement, and young people’s political activity in 2010–2011 and subsequently.

	Percentages Voting Regularly	Member of a Political Party
Politically engaged family Participated in 2011	53%	15%
Politically engaged family Did not participate in 2011	45%	4%
Non-politically engaged family Participated in 2011	37%	53%
Non-politically engaged family Did not participate in 2011	31%	3%

We allowed respondents to describe themselves as ‘members’ of a political party by being sympathisers, participating in party-organised events, donating, or volunteering. Membership of a political party does not have the same meaning across North Africa as in the relatively mature democracies of Western Europe and North America. In North Africa, as in the new democracies of East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, most political parties are top-down creations. They have been formed by caucuses of politicians who then mobilise support rather than built upward. Members of the public can ‘join’ by doing something in addition to voting for the party, like donating, volunteering to undertaking some activity or even just attending meetings. They may thereby become part of one of the pools from which it is possible to be recruited into a ‘political class’ from which candidates are selected for placement on party election lists or appointed to jobs on the recommendation of a senior party member, thereby being co-opted into the political class.

We could very likely strengthen the link between a politically engaged home background and grown-up children’s political participation by tightening our criteria for classifying families as politically engaged. We did not ask whether the respondents’ parents were political party members or held political jobs. Had we done so, links with their children’s political activism and non-activism might well have emerged as even stronger. However, this would have required a much larger sample to yield adequate numbers of activists from politically engaged families in 2011. Between their parents and our respondents coming of age, there had been a revolution in Tunisia’s political system—from autocracy to democracy. Despite this immense change, there was still a powerful tendency for political engagement to be inherited, transmitted inter-generationally through families.

Respondents in our survey were asked to rate three political systems: autocracy (a system led by a strong group that depends neither on parliament nor elections), technocracy (where experts and not a government decide on what is best for the country), and democracy (a regime in which representatives depend on and are accountable to the citizens). Democracy was by far the most popular choice among both activists and non-activists in 2010–2011, though majorities of both also rated technocracy as very good or acceptable (see Table 3). Democracy was clearly their preferred political system. On this, protestors in 2010–2011 spoke for their age group.

Table 3. Views on different political systems, 20–29 year olds.

	Participated in 2011	Non-Participant in 2011
Autocracy	%	%
Very good	10	6
Acceptable	6	4
Bad	21	16
Very bad	63	74
Technocracy		
Very good	30	42
Acceptable	24	32
Bad	24	13
Very bad	21	13
Democracy		
Very good	72	79
Acceptable	16	16
Bad	9	4
Very bad	3	2

Respondents were asked a series of questions measuring their attitudes toward sex equality, government measures to promote sex equality, their religiosity, their support for traditional and security values, self-expression values, and about their levels of trust in 23 groups and institutions. The mean scores on these scales are given in Table 4. Here, the sample is again divided between 2011 activists and non-activists and according to whether or not they were from politically engaged families. There were only 19 respondents from non-engaged families who had been activists in 2011, so findings from this group are best disregarded. Comparisons between those from politically engaged and other families should be confined to the young people who were not activists in 2011. Comparisons between the activists and others should be confined to those from politically engaged families.

Table 4. Political orientations: mean scores, 20–29 year olds.

	Political Family, Participated in 2011	Political Family, Did Not Participate in 2011	Non-Political Family, Participated in 2011	Non-Political Family, Did Not Participate in 2011
Sex equality	2.48	2.27	2.33	2.21
Government promoting sex equality	1.66	1.65	1.66	1.55
Religiosity	2.00	2.11	2.50	2.19
Traditional and security values	2.09	2.28	2.48	2.41
Self-expression values	2.43	2.50	2.76	2.61
Trust	3.56	3.33	4.09	3.87
N =	71	858	19	419

There were 13 statements on sex equality. Examples are: ‘The same upbringing should be given to boys and girls’, and ‘Men and women should have the same job opportunities and receive the same salaries’. Respondents answered by totally agreeing, agreeing, disagreeing, or totally disagreeing. The mean scores in Table 4 are calculated from these answers. The mid-point in the scale is 2.5. Lower scores indicate support for sex equality. The results show slightly more support than opposition to sex equality in all the groups in Table 4. All the means are beneath the mid-point on the scale. Unsurprisingly, females tended to be stronger supporters of sex equality than males. The young activists of 2011 and those from politically engaged families proved somewhat less enthusiastic about sex equality than others in their age group.

The sample was also generally in favour of government promotion of sex equality. They were asked to agree absolutely, to some extent, or not at all with government efforts in the labour market, education, political participation, and family matters. Low scores in Table 4 indicate support for government efforts. All the groups had means of 1.66 or 1.65 (less than the mid-point of 2), except those from politically non-engaged families who were not activists in 2011, who had a mean of 1.55. They were the strongest supporters of government initiatives to promote sex equality.

The sample was asked how important they regarded religion in 15 life domains including dress, appearance, food, place of work, and marriage. Answers were on a five-point scale with a range from 'very important' to 'not important at all'. Low scores in Table 4 indicate high levels of religiosity. Generally, young people were highly religious, and the most religious were from politically engaged families and especially those who were activists in 2011.

Traditional and security values were measured in our survey with three questions that asked respondents about the extent to which statements resembled themselves on a six-point scale with a range from 'greatly resembles me' to 'does not resemble me'. The traditional and security statements were about wanting to be rich; to live in a safe and secure environment and to feel secure; and being a person to whom tradition is important and who follows rules established by religion and society. A mean score was calculated for each respondent. There were four questions measuring self-expression values: being a person who considers it important to think of new ideas; a person who wants to be creative, to have a good time and enjoy themselves; a person who wants to have adventures, take risks and lead an exciting life; and being a person who pays attention to the environment and takes care of nature. As with the traditional/security scale, low scores indicate agreement. Activists in 2010–2011 scored relatively high on traditional/security values and on self-expression values. Those from politically engaged families also scored relatively high on traditional/security values and on self-expression values. Among our young Tunisians, support for traditional/security and self-expression values did not rise and fall conversely. Those scoring relatively high on one set of measurements also tended to score relatively high on the other. According to our evidence, young Tunisians want change. They want to modernise Tunisia, but in a way that does not map neatly onto Western-formulated versions of progress.

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they trusted 22 different groups and institutions on a 10-point scale on which the lowest score indicated no trust while the top score indicated absolute trust. Table 4 gives the mean trust scores, amalgamating all 23 ratings, for each of the four groups that are distinguished. We can see that participants in the events of 2011 were more trusting than non-participants, and those from politically engaged families were more trusting than others. Clearly, the Tunisian revolution was not instigated by young activists who were especially lacking in trust, though all the groups' mean scores are well beneath the mid-point.

4. Young People's Verdicts on Tunisia's Post-2011 Democracy

How did the young Tunisians' assess their country's post-2011 politics? Overall, our respondents clearly felt that there had been some improvements. However, it was equally clear that most felt that more improvement was needed. Table 5 gives the percentages of trust ratings of six or more awarded by the entire sample of 15–29 year olds to each of the groups and institutions about which they were questioned. The only group with a percentage above the mid-point of five is 'the people in general'. Ominously for its democracy, the three lowest scores are awarded to politicians, political parties, and elected officials. At the time of our survey in 2015–2016, Tunisia was a low-trust society, and its politicians, political parties, and parliament attracted less trust than anyone else, except employers.

Respondents were asked about their views on Tunisia's government before and since 2011 (see Table 6). Answers were expressed on a five-point scale with a range from 'very bad' to 'excellent'. The mid-point on this scale is 3, and all the pre-2011 mean scores are beneath this mid-point, meaning that more respondents said 'bad' or 'very bad' than 'good' or 'excellent'. The 'now' scores are consistently higher, except that the economy and the prevention of crime and maintenance of order were rated as worse than pre-2011. On all the other measurements, the situation was rated as better. The young people believed that citizens were more able to feel free to say what they thought, that everyone was able to join a political organisation or movement of their choice, that ordinary citizens were able to influence the government, that corruption was under control, and that judges and tribunals were free from government interference. However, politicians, political parties, and elected officials were still not trusted.

Table 5. Trust scores: percentages scoring 6 or more.

The People in General	64
National media	49
European Union	44
Legal system	41
Elections	40
Education system	40
Foreign media	37
United Nations	35
Religious leaders	34
Administration in general	31
USA	29
Trade associations and unions	27
Government	26
Local administration	26
Arab League	25
Arab Maghreb Union	25
Parliament	21
Employers	18
Elected officials	18
Political parties	16
Politicians	16

Table 6. Views on system of government before and after 2011 (mean scores).

	Before 2011	After 2011
Everyone is free to say what they think.	1.22	3.58
Everyone can enter/join the political organisation/movement of their choice.	1.3	3.66
All ordinary citizens can influence the government.	1.17	2.12
Corruption in the political parties and the state is under control.	1.5	1.68
People can live without fear of being illegally arrested.	1.54	2.08
The prevention of crime and the maintenance of order are a priority.	2.71	1.85
The economy is in good shape and everyone can live decently.	2.74	1.44
Judges and tribunals are free from all government interference.	1.46	1.86

The lowest 'now' scores in Table 6 are for the state of the economy, corruption in political parties, and prevention of crime and the maintenance of order. The economy was regarded as in bad shape pre-2011, and respondents clearly felt that it had worsened since then. These perceptions reflect all official statistics and our findings on the sample's labour market experiences. Tables 7 and 8 divide males and females into three age groups, then give the percentages who occupied different positions inside and outside the workforce. We can see that the percentages in education declined with age from 64 percent to 5 percent among males and from 76 percent to 6 percent among females. By age 25–29, the largest group of males (34 percent) were unemployed, and another 13 percent described themselves as economically inactive. Just 23 percent in total were either employers, self-employed, or in formal (official with a contract) jobs. Among females, the largest group of 25–29 year olds was economically inactive (43 per cent), and another 27 percent described themselves as unemployed. This makes it unsurprising that that when asked to select from a list the most important problem facing Tunisia, the most common choice was 'jobs', which was followed by 'terrorism', then the 'economic situation', and then 'standards of living' (see Table 9).

Table 7. Socio-economic groups by age, males (in percentages).

	15–19%	20–24%	25–29%
Socio-economic groups			
Education	63.7	25.3	4.8
Employer	0.0	1.5	3.0
Self-employed	1.2	4.5	7
Formal job	2.1	4.8	13
Informal job	7.8	15.2	19.4
Apprentice	3.3	3.3	3.6
Family worker	1.2	4.8	2.7
Unemployed	9.6	25	33.6
Inactive	11.1	15.8	12.7

Table 8. Socio-economic groups by age, females (in percentages).

	15–19%	20–24%	25–29%
Socio-economic groups			
Education	75.7	21.0	6.2
Employer	0.0	0.3	1.1
Self-employed	0.0	0.9	1.1
Formal job	1.0	5.2	7.0
Informal job	2.3	9.1	11.3
Apprentice	0.0	2.7	3.0
Family worker	0.0	2.1	1.1
Unemployed	6.3	23.1	26.6
Inactive	14.7	35.6	42.7

Table 9. Percentages saying that the most important problem facing the country was.

Jobs	36.2
Terrorism	17.3
Economic situation	15.7
Standard of living	13.2
Education system	6.7
Morals in society	1.8
Increasing influence of religion on government	1.7
Health system	1.7
Democracy/human rights	1.5
Criminality and drugs	1.2
Housing	1.0
Corruption	0.4

However, our hunch is that Tunisia's politics, as well as the economy, are responsible for young people's disenchantment with the outcomes of the revolution in 2011. Since then, governments have been led first by Ennahdha, a moderate Islamic party that emerged in the late-1960s and existed mainly underground with leaders in exile until 2011, then by Nidaa Tounes, which is a reconstituted version of the party of ex-President Ben Ali that was dissolved in 2011. Only 10 percent of our respondents 'felt close' to either of these parties. Despite the revolution, young people were likely to feel disappointed that so many of the 'same old faces' were still in positions of political power. There were no new parties, led by new politicians, offering to implement new policies.

Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes have each been willing to participate in a government led by the other, but together they deny political power to substantial sections of Tunisia's population who were among, even if under-represented among, the protestors in 2011—mainly the working and lower classes, women, the entire population in the country's south, and radical Islamists. Turnout in elections has been low outside the North-East where Tunis is located and among Tunisians everywhere who are not university educated (see [33–37]). However, the excluded groups' problem is their parties' lack of voter appeal. The Front Populaire Unioniste, a Marxist pan-Arabic party, the main party of the left,

was the choice of only 8.9 percent of our respondents who ‘felt close’ to any party, just 1.3 percent of the total sample. Hizb-ut-Tahrir, an international movement that seeks to restore the caliphate, was the choice of just 1.8 percent of respondents who felt close to any party, a mere 0.3 percent of the sample. No one named Ansar al-Sharia, which is listed as a terrorist organisation by the Tunisia government and the United Nations.

Another contributor to young Tunisians’ political disenchantment may be their own mixtures of attitudes toward their religion (Islam). We have seen that most considered themselves quite religious. When asked about the extent to which they identified with the groups in Table 10, Islamic came top, just ahead of Arab and Tunisian.

Table 10. Identification with different groups (mean scores: 1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree) ‘I am ...’.

	Islamic	1.26
Arab		1.33
Tunisian		1.44
Maghrebi		2.92
Belong to Mediterranean region		3.01
African		3.08
A citizen of the world		3.53
Amazigh		5.82

However, when respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a five-point scale with four statements about religion and politics (see Table 11), despite most regarding themselves as religious, and despite our measurements showing that political activists rated themselves as more religious than other young Tunisians, most of our respondents wanted politics and religion kept separate. They did not want religious leaders influencing government decisions or for people with strong religious beliefs to take on representative posts.

Table 11. Religion and politics (mean scores: 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

Religion Should not Influence People’s Political Decisions	1.64
It would be desirable for the country for more people with strong religious beliefs to take on representational posts or political responsibility	3.29
The religious leaders should have influence over the government’s decisions	3.28
The practice of religion is a private affair that should be separated from socio-economic life	1.68

Young Tunisians, especially those who want change and who are politically active, are highly religious. They reject previous rulers who have been willing to discard or ignore their country’s Islamic history and character. Consumer market research shows that young modern Moslems all over the world treat their faith and modernity as progressing hand-in-hand. They take their religion more seriously than ‘traditionalists’, and the internet is strengthening their engagement with the ummah (the global Islamic community). They see their religion as a prism through which to embrace modernity and vice-versa [38]. In Tunisia, they want to live in a country whose Islamic and Arabic identities have a high profile. Young people want to express their creativity, including their religious beliefs, and to develop new ideas, but all this is to be an expression of their freedom rather than enforced by government. Moreover, they regard economic security as equally important and rate creating more jobs as the country’s top priority.

Young Tunisians are also worried that their country has no answer to terrorism. A minority want an Islamist state, and a minority of these are jihadists. Up to 7000 young Tunisians are estimated to have left to train with IS since 2011, more than from any other country outside Syria and Iraq. It seems a paradox that the most democratic Arab-Islamic country in North Africa and the Middle East has

been a major source of IS recruits. Tunisians train initially in Libya, then may move to Syria or Iraq, but some return home. In March 2015, an attack in Tunis's Bardo museum left 22 dead. Then, in June 2015, there were 38 fatalities during an attack on a beach resort near Sousse. Tunisians now live in a country where government buildings and foreign embassies are guarded by the army and razor wire.

5. Conclusions

Our research has made known much that was formerly unknown about the events of 2011 in Tunisia. We have found that less than seven percent of Tunisians who were aged 15–24 at the time were directly involved in these events. They tended to be males and proved to be on relatively advantaged life trajectories. Subsequently, they have not pioneered alternative ways of practicing democracy but have become over-represented in all normal forms of political activity, especially joining political parties, especially if they were not reared in politically engaged families. They have thereby joined the pools from which recruitment into their country's political class is possible.

We have found that young Tunisians are generally dissatisfied with the outcomes of the events of 2011 despite living in the sole Arab Spring country where those events led to a still functioning multi-party democracy. True, in 2015–2016, young people felt more able to express political views freely and to join a political party of their choice. Tunisia had over 100 registered legal political parties that were contesting elections. However, they still felt that corruption among politicians remained a serious problem. They had little trust in any politicians or political parties. They also felt less secure than formerly, perceiving the new threat of terrorism and greater risk of becoming a victim of crime. Perhaps above all else, they were concerned with the state of Tunisia's economy and the poor labour markets that young people were entering, to which no politicians or parties seemed to offer credible solutions.

It is still not clear, even in Tunisia, whether the events of 2011 were just events, after which the former normality began to be restored, or part of a longer-term change process. Asselburg and Wimmen (2016) [39] argue that the events of 2011 are best conceived as contested and open-ended attempts at transformation. Democracy has not swept across the entire region, yet as they note, there has been change everywhere. There are more active political parties and movements. As Cavatorta (2015) [40] has observed, all the regimes must now contend with pluralism. There may be no entirely new regimes containing no old faces, but there has been change everywhere [41]. Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds (2015) [42] have observed that although all the attempted revolutions in Europe in 1848 failed to establish democracies at that time, they added impetus to pressure for change that eventually led to the spread of democracy throughout the continent. Tunisia may be leading its region along a modernising path, and if so, the young people in our survey would clearly prefer this to be toward a distinctly Arabic and Islamic rather than a Western modernity.

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