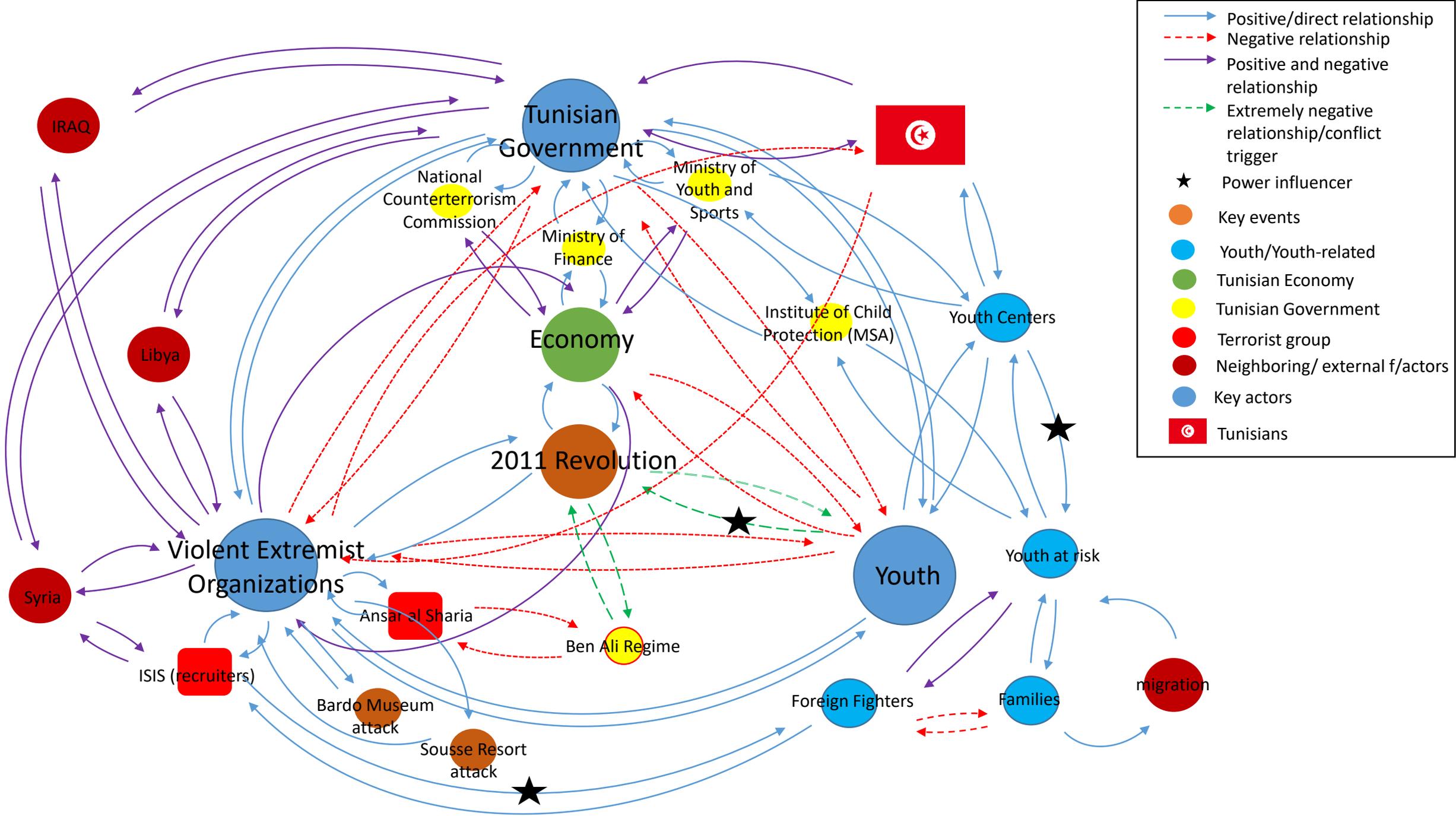




Youth Radicalization in Tunisia after the 2011 Revolution: A Conflict Assessment

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Actors, conflict dynamics, power relationships, and key events

The map starts with the three key actors: youth, the Government of Tunisia, and violent extremist organizations (VEOs). There are direct relationship arrows between these three actors in the map to show how each of these groups' actions are interrelated with respect to youth radicalization. Starting the map explanation with youth, there is a negative relationship between youth and violent extremist organizations. Most recruits are between 15 and 25 years of age, and in governorates such as Manouba and Kasserine, many youth contemplate joining a violent extremist group or migrating to Europe. On this last point, the map also shows migration as a positive existing relationship with youth at risk and families because migration is seen as a positive alternative. Then, the relationship between youth and the Government of Tunisia is negative because the latter is not providing to youth and has left them marginalized and has not fulfilled their basic needs. As a result, youth do not have a positive view of their government as it will be explained below. With respect to the relationship between the Government of Tunisia and VEOs, it is also negative, as violent extremist groups pose a threat to the central government. For example, Ansar al Sharia, after starting with non-lethal attacks after the 2011 Revolution, has conducted terrorist acts, targeting mainly military and government personnel. On this point, the map shows a positive relationship between VEOs and ISIS recruiters and Ansar al Sharia (terrorist groups and secondary actors), as these groups have been responsible for the bloodiest terror attacks in Tunisia, including the Bardo Museum and Sousse resort attacks. These last two events show a positive relationship with VEOs, and hence, with ISIS and Ansar al Sharia on the map.

With respect to other types of relationships between key actors, the map shows that youth have an extremely negative relationship with the 2011 Revolution. This is because the Jasmine Revolution did not live up to its expectations. Youth thought that there would be a radical change in their country and that the economy (which has a direct relationship with the Revolution) would recover and generate employment. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In Kasserine, the unemployment rate is at 65%, so youth smuggle gas from Algeria to Tunisia on donkeys' backs to sell it at a premium. This is also a reason why there is a negative relationship (red dotted lines) between youth and the economy. We can see a star in the line that goes from Youth to the 2011 Revolution. This is because youth were a power influencer in the 2011 Revolution, leading it and ultimately causing the Ben Ali regime to collapse. This is why there is an extremely negative relationship between the Revolution and the Ben Ali regime. In fact, the green dotted line going from "Youth" to the 2011 Revolution is a conflict trigger: youth were so frustrated that they had the power to successfully start the revolution and topple the authoritative Ben Ali regime.

The Government of Tunisia has a direct relationships with other secondary actors such as the National Counterterrorism Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Social Affairs through its Institute of Child Protection. These government institutions are important because they are involved in combating terrorism and the radicalization issue in one way or another. For example, the Ministry of Finance regulates the economy, which has an impact on job creation (or the lack thereof) and on youth frustration. The National Counterterrorism Commission is extremely involved in the fight against terrorism and in finding ways to prevent youth from traveling abroad to fight with ISIS. One of the main issues that the Tunisian government will be facing in the next years is the return of foreign terrorist fighters. UN estimates point to approximately 7,000 Tunisians who traveled to Libya, Iraq, or Syria to fight with ISIS, and who now will be returning home with the collapse of the caliphate. This is where the Ministries of Youth and Sports, and Social Affairs come into play. The Ministry of Youth and Sports runs youth centers in Tunisia that provide youth with after-school services so they stay away from negative behaviors and from becoming easy VEO recruits. As a result, a star is shown in the map in the arrow that goes from Youth Centers to Youth at Risk. Given that these centers provide a positive service to society, they have a positive relationship with Tunisians (Tunisian flag). The Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Counterterrorism Commission have a “positive and negative” relationship with the economy. This is because the relationship is positive when the economy is doing well, but negative when it is not. In other words, if the economy is not performing well, then these institutions cannot do their job. Finally, the people of Tunisia have a positive and negative relationship with their government because they are happy with it when it shows progress in the fight against terrorism, but are disappointed in it when an attack occurs.

External actors play an important role in the issue of youth radicalization in Tunisia. Iraq, Syria, and Libya have a positive and negative relationship with the Government of Tunisia because these are ISIS stronghold countries, while at the same time fight against these groups. Although these countries' governments do not support ISIS, that fact that this terrorist group is present in their territories causes difficulties to the Government of Tunisia, as it does not want its citizens to travel to these countries to join the terrorist organization. This is also why there are purple lines between Violent Extremist Organizations and these three countries in the map.

The map shows a positive relationship between ISIS recruiters and Tunisian foreign fighters. The positive relationship is self-explanatory, as without foreign fighters, ISIS would not have the human resources to fight its war. On the other hand, the relationship between youth at risk and foreign fighters is positive and negative because some of these youth do not want to become foreign fighters, but sometimes do not have an option as they do not have any other opportunities and are very vulnerable to becoming recruited. Families whose children and youth travel to Iraq, Libya, and Syria to fight with ISIS are really affected psychologically and that is why the map shows a negative relationship between foreign fighters and families.