

**From Democracy to Stability: European Union Democracy Promotion
in Tunisia 1995-2007**

Submitted by Brieg Tomos Powel, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Middle East Politics, July 2008.

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Abstract

Very little scholarship has been published on politics in Tunisia in the last two decades, resulting in scant coverage of the country's political relations with the European Union (EU). Likewise, few studies of the EU's democracy promotion and Mediterranean policies have provided any in-depth analysis of Tunisia. Meanwhile, much has been made by scholars of role played by democracy promotion in the EU's foreign policy, particularly focusing on understandings of the Union as a 'normative power' or as an advocate of the 'democratic peace theory'. By assessing EU democracy promotion in Tunisia, this thesis argues that democracy promotion has become a predominantly functional part of this foreign policy; its principal role being a means of realising the Union's principal objectives of achieving security and stability for Europeans. By analysing the discourse of actors involved with the EU's democracy promotion, the thesis traces a shift in EU policy from a more normative position in the mid-1990s to a more realist and securitised one since the turn of the twenty-first century.

Tunisia has evolved over the last two centuries as a state strongly committed to European-influenced socio-economic reforms, but reforms which have led to little political contestability and few changes in government. However, as the EU forged a new approach to its Mediterranean neighbours, it established the promotion of democracy in its neighbours as an integral part of its foreign and security policies. Democracy was to be promoted in Tunisia within multilateral and holistic policy frameworks, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and by a range of methods that encourage reform of many levels of the region's societies. Yet it appears that these reforms are failing to deliver the political reforms they once promised. Furthermore, democracy is gradually slipping off the EU's agenda, and its policy objectives converge with those of the Tunisian government as security concerns come to dominate its policy discourses. In the Tunisian context at least, democracy is a purely utilitarian device used to achieve security. When that security already exists, democracy loses its utility, and fades from its once prominent place in the EU policy in Tunisia.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
AMU	Arab-Maghreb Union
AP	Action Plan
ATFD	Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates
CEEC	Central and Eastern European country
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CGTT	Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens
CNLT	Conseil National pour les Libertés en Tunisie
CRLDHT	Comité pour le Respect des Libertés et des Droits de l'Homme en Tunisie
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EEC	European Economic Community
EIDH	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut (Algeria)
FLN	Front de Libération National (Algeria)
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior
FSN	Fonds de Solidarité Nationale
GMP	Global Mediterranean Policy
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialisation

ITES	Institut Tunisien des Études Stratégiques
LADH	Ligue Arabe des Droits d’Hommes
LTDH	Ligue Tunisienne des Droits d’Hommes
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative (US)
MDS	Mouvement des Démocrates Sociales
MTI	Mouvement de Tendance Islamique
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPP	Purchasing-Power-Parity
PSD	Parti Socialiste Destourien
PSL	Parti Social-Libéral
PUP	Parti d’Unité Populaire
RCD	Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique
RDA	Rassemblement Democratique Africaine
RSP	Regional Strategy Paper
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDU	Union Démocratique Unioniste
UGTT	Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens
UK	United Kingdom
UM	Union for the Mediterranean
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFT	Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne
WWHR	Women for Women’s Human Rights

1 Introduction

Statement of the problem

This study assesses the impact and progress of European Union (EU) democracy promotion policy in Tunisia since 1995. To this end, the study asks three key questions. Firstly, why does the EU feel the need to promote democracy in Tunisia? The fact that democracy is being promoted is in itself based on certain assumptions. One of these is that democracy in Tunisia needs promoting, either as it is somehow problematic, or indeed is non-existent. Additionally, it suggests that the EU has, for some reason, decided to promote democracy. This question therefore seeks to understand the context of that decision. The second key question is two-fold: how is democracy being promoted in Tunisia, and how effective are these methods? This considers the compatibility of the methods with the desired outcomes. The final question asks what wider issues – Tunisian or European in origin – may be affecting the development of democracy in Tunisia.

These questions do not exist independently of a historical context. For some time, Tunisia has featured prominently in European Mediterranean policy. The subject of intense European imperial rivalry in the nineteenth century, it was effectively ruled from Paris as a French colony for 75 years. Following independence, it was one of the first states to sign an Association Agreement with the European Community (EC) in the 1970s. The end of the Cold War in the late-1980s brought the question of democratisation to the international limelight. Indeed, arguably as a result of the ending of the superpower rivalry of the Cold War era, the early 1990s saw a ‘wave’ of democratisation processes in numerous societies across the globe.¹ Later, and with the EC having become the EU, it was also one of the signatories of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration which established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP or the ‘Barcelona Process’). Significantly, the emphasis on ‘partnership’ was important in the Mediterranean. The EU respected its partners’ right to develop their own political, economic and socio-cultural practices.² Also central to many of the Union’s policies at this time is a commitment to the principles of liberty, democracy, a respect for human rights, and a respect for the rule of law enshrined within the EU’s founding Treaty of European Union. These values constitute

¹ For the ‘wave’ thesis, see Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

² *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/bd.htm>; last accessed 15 May 2008.

the Union's very identity, an identity it seeks to assert in the world through its new foreign policies.³ It is believed that these values serve as a bulwark against instability and crisis; a position clearly illustrated in the Barcelona Declaration itself.⁴ In sum, the EU effectively claims that it seeks to export its own values to the wider world as a means of ensuring stability, security, and peace.

As part of the EMP's framework, Tunisia became the first of the Mediterranean partner states to sign a new generation 'Association Agreement' (AA) with the Union,⁵ also in 1995, and which came into force in 1998. This committed Tunisia and the Union to a programme of political, economic, and sociological reform through partnership. From an EU perspective, the EMP brought its Mediterranean policy into line with other areas of its external relations, and indeed, inherited much from earlier policies regarding Eastern Europe.⁶ When the Union revised its strategy towards its Mediterranean and eastern European neighbours with its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP or 'Neighbourhood Policy') in 2003, Tunisia once more figured prominently, being amongst the first states to commit to an 'Action Plan' (AP) with the EU which pledged to reinforce earlier commitments to political reform through cooperation between the parties.⁷

Yet over a decade since the Barcelona Declaration was signed, little has apparently happened on the democracy development front. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the persistence of many of the same regimes in most of the southern partner states which signed the original declaration. President Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali remains at the helm in Tunisia for example, as does President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Syria, Morocco, and Jordan meanwhile have seen changes in their heads of state during this period, yet these changes have been hereditary rather than democratic. Indeed, common throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is the relative weakness – or lack of – democratic governments.⁸ The region has become a haven for 'façade', 'hybrid', or 'pseudo' democracies wherein a plethora of formal democratic practices and institutions have been established to mask continued authoritarianism.⁹ Freedom House, which has

³ European Union, *Treaty on European Union*, 2003.

⁴ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁵ European Union and the Republic of Tunisia, *Association Agreement*, 30 March 1998. Available at: <http://europa.eu/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/1998/l_097/l_09719980330en00020174.pdf>; accessed 18 October 2004.

⁶ Richard Youngs, 'The European Union and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A New or Disingenuous Strategy?', in Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs (eds.), *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: The Case for North Africa*, London: Frank Cass, 2002, pp. 40-62, p. 40.

⁷ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *EU/Tunisia Action Plan*, 2004. Available at: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/march/tradoc_127990.pdf>; accessed 28 January 2005.

⁸ See for example Adrian Karatnycky, 'The 2001 Freedom House Survey: Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap,' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002, pp. 98-112.

⁹ For façade democracy, see Beverly Milton-Edwards, 'Façade Democracy and Jordan', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1993, pp. 191-203; Larbi Sadiki, 'Bin Ali's Tunisia: Democracy by Non-democratic Means', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2002a, pp. 57-78;

tracked democratic development throughout the world for some decades, classifies *all* Arab states as partially- or not-free.¹⁰ Tunisia is fairly typical of these states, scoring low on figures related to the freedom and fairness of elections, on civic engagement and civic monitoring, and on press freedoms.¹¹ The EU itself recognises that ‘progress on political aspects such as freedom of expression or association has been very slow’.¹² Therefore, despite clear commitments to the promotion of democracy in the Mediterranean and in Tunisia specifically, little has apparently changed.

Significance of the study

Tunisia provides an ideal case-study for an analysis of the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion. Not only is Tunisia part of the wider MENA region, a region noted for its apparent resistance to democratisation processes,¹³ but, being one of the first states to sign an AA with the Union in 1995, it also possesses one of the longest-established relationships of any Arab state with the EU. Thus, Tunisia offers over a decade of experience of association with the EU, an association which has placed the promotion of democracy at its heart. Despite this association (and notwithstanding Tunisia’s official title as a ‘republic’) Tunisia’s long tradition of uncontested rule continues. There have been only two presidents since Tunisia’s independence in 1956, and the second of whom, Bin Ali, seems as secure as ever in his post. Perhaps surprisingly, Bin Ali’s government was arguably the most enthusiastic of all Mediterranean partner states regarding the inclusion of democracy and human rights components in the Barcelona Declaration.¹⁴ Moreover, his party, the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique* (RCD) continues

and Larbi Sadiki, ‘Political Liberalization in Bin Ali’s Tunisia: Façade Democracy’, *Democratization*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2002b, pp. 122-141. For hybrid democracy see Larry Diamond, ‘Thinking About Hybrid Regimes’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2002, pp. 21-35. Finally, for pseudo-democracy, see Frédéric Volpi, ‘Pseudo-Democracy in the Muslim World’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 2004, pp. 1061-1078.

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/press_release/fiw07_charts.pdf>; accessed 2 February 2007. Tunisia, classified as ‘not-free’, receives particularly low scores in all ‘political rights’ sub-categories and regarding associational and organisational rights.

¹¹ Stephen J. King, ‘Tunisia’, *Freedom House Country Report*, 2007, p. 3. Available at: <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7290-8.pdf>>; accessed 2 August 2007.

¹² European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Tunisia: Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and National Indicative Programme 2007-2010*, 2007, p. 2. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_csp_nip_tunisia_summary_en.pdf>; accessed 12 November 2007.

¹³ Ghassan Salamé, ‘Introduction: Where are the Democrats?’ in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *Democracy Without Democrats: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 1-20, p. 1.

¹⁴ Adrián Mac Liman, *Iniciativa Euromediterránea de la Unión Europea : La Respuesta de los Países Terceros Mediterráneos*, CIDOB Dossier 3, Barcelona: Centre d’Informació i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona, p. 20. Cited in Richard Gillespie, ‘A Political Agenda for Region-Building? The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Democracy Promotion in North Africa’, in Emanuel Adler, Federica Bicchì, Beverly Crawford, and Raffaella A. Del Sarto (eds.), *The Convergence of Civilizations: Constructing a Mediterranean Region*, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006, pp. 83-108, p. 87.

to dominate Tunisia's two houses of parliament. Therefore, at first glance at least, the case of Tunisia suggests either that EU policy is not as effective as it could be, or that greater analysis is required to understand the longevity of Bin Ali's regime.

Unfortunately however, little recent English-language analysis of Tunisia's political system exists. Book-length volumes addressing Tunisian politics published in the last decade include Kenneth Perkins' *A History of Modern Tunisia*,¹⁵ Stephen J. King's *Liberation against Democracy: The Local Politics of Economic Reform in Tunisia*,¹⁶ and Emma Murphy's *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: From Bourguiba to Ben Ali*.¹⁷ These however do not concern themselves with the issue of government as such. Rather, and as their titles suggest, Perkins' volume provides an overview of the country's history, whilst the other two volumes deal specifically with Tunisia's political economy. French-language volumes offer more to the analyst, including recent works by Béatrice Hibou,¹⁸ and Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser.¹⁹ These provide comprehensive analyses of the Tunisian political system, drawing from extensive primary and secondary research. Nevertheless, all existing English and French studies fail to address Tunisia's association with the EU and its implications on the country's political system.

Concerns over the nature of government in the region have also been linked to fears of a growth in Islamist extremist violence in the Maghreb. Incidents in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have drawn international attention and pledges of support for the region's governments from abroad.²⁰ Thus, a regional security dimension has been added to the analysis of the region's politics. This scholarship is often linked to work addressing European attempts at region-building based on conceptualisations of 'security communities'.²¹ Once more however, little of this analysis addresses the specific case of Tunisia. Hence, a growing body of work on security and politics in the Mediterranean is developing without a study on the role played by Tunisia in these efforts.

Finally, a note on the time-period addressed in this study. The study was completed during a very public attempt by newly-elected French President Nicolas Sarkozy to re-invigorate

¹⁵ Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

¹⁶ Stephen J. King, *Liberalization Against Democracy: The local Politics of Economic Reform in Tunisia*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

¹⁷ Emma C. Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: from Bourguiba to Bin Ali*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.

¹⁸ Béatrice Hibou, *La Force de l'Obeissance: Économie Politique de la Répression en Tunisie*, Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2006.

¹⁹ Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser, *Le Syndrome Autoritaire: Politique en Tunisie de Bourguiba à Bin Ali*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003.

²⁰ See for example 'Rumsfeld fosters ties with Tunisia', *Washington Post*, 12 February 2006, p. 26. Available at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/11/AR2006021101325.html>>; accessed 13 February 2006); 'Sarkozy seeks closer relationship with Algeria', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2007. Available at: <<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/07/10/news/france.php>>; accessed 13 July 2007.

²¹ See for example the various contributions in Adler *et al.*, 2006.

relations between the EU and the Mediterranean states. Sarkozy's has proposed a 'Union for the Mediterranean' (UM), with the new body launched in July 2008. The UM is intended to offer far greater interaction and cooperation between both shores of the Mediterranean than that currently experienced within the EMP and ENP frameworks, although its launch was met with some scepticism.²² Whilst the conclusions of this study might well be of relevance to future studies of Sarkozy's initiative, the study own analysis does not extend to include coverage of the MU initiative. This, combined with a practical need for a cut-off point to the study, led the author to select 2007 as the final year which is addressed in this thesis.

In sum therefore, this study provides the first analysis of Tunisia's political relations with the EU. In so doing it also provides a case study of the effectiveness of the EU's democratisation policy in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the thesis develops the limited pool of literature on Tunisian politics, and offers the first comprehensive analysis of the role of external actors in political reform in the country. The research for the work took place during a period of increasing security concerns in the Mediterranean and Europe alike, and coincides with a growing body of work which considers the effect of this securitisation on politics. Finally, with Bin Ali turning 71 in September 2007, and the Tunisian rumour mill suggesting that his health may be waning,²³ the question of succession in Tunisia will need to be resolved in the near future. Thus, this thesis outlines the state of Tunisian politics at the onset of what may be a period of transition for Tunisian politics.

Literature review

This study assesses the effect of an EU policy to instigate political change in Tunisia. Through its analysis of EU Mediterranean policy the work may be considered as part of a specific body of literature associated with this policy area which has flourished in recent years. Indeed, journals such as *Mediterranean Politics* and *Democratization*, along with a number of book-length volumes are notable for their coverage EU policy and of political reform in the Mediterranean since the launch of the EMP in 1995. Yet it is to the range of titles with specific focus on Tunisian politics that this study seeks to make its most significant contribution.

²² See for example 'Will Sarkozy's Mediterranean union [sic] be more than a big photo op?', *International Herald Tribune*, 14 July 2008. Available at: <<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/07/14/europe/france.php>>; accessed 20 January 2009.

²³ Author's interviews with EU member state diplomats, Tunis, July 2005, and March and April 2006.

The literature consulted for this study can be divided between two principal groups: English- and French-language literature on Tunisia, and literature addressing the EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean. The study benefited from a proliferation of titles on the Mediterranean and the EU since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995. Notable titles include the *Convergence of Civilisations: Constructing a Mediterranean Region* collection, edited by Emanuel Adler, Federica Bicchì, Beverly Crawford and Rafaela Del Sarto,²⁴ Federica Bicchì's *European Foreign Policy Making toward the Mediterranean*,²⁵ Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs' edited collection *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: The Case for North Africa*,²⁶ and Ricardo Gomez's *Negotiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*.²⁷ All of these works provide valuable coverage of the build-up to and motivations for the development of the EMP. Gomez's volume in particular offers a detailed analysis of the emergence of the EMP from the early days of the EU's precursor, the European Economic Community (EEC), to the turn of the twenty-first century. He particularly highlights the growing debt of the non-EEC states, instances of political unrest stemming from these economic problems, and resulting concerns for the security implications of these issues to the EU as key motivating factors for policy action.²⁸ Further coverage of this literature is found in later chapters of this thesis.

In keeping with the aims of this study to develop the body of literature on Tunisian politics, this section provides an overview of existing work in this field. As the previous section suggests, the amount of literature specifically focused on Tunisia is remarkably scarce. Even fewer of these works address the issues of politics and political reform in the country. Government censorship of the Tunisian publishing industry has forced most commentators to seek publishers in France or elsewhere in Europe. Consequently, the academic works which are available on Tunisian politics are published either in English or French. This section's primary goal, therefore, is the scrutiny of existing studies of Tunisian politics in these two European languages.

English publications on Tunisia

Tunisia is notable amongst Arab states for the scarcity of literature addressing political developments over the last two decades, and particularly so in terms of English-language coverage. Much of the most recent English language books have concerned the state's political economy rather than providing a focused study of its politics. From recent book-

²⁴ Adler *et al.*, 2006.

²⁵ Federica Bicchì, *European Foreign Policy Making toward the Mediterranean*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

²⁶ Gillespie and Youngs, 2002.

²⁷ Ricardo Gomez, *Negotiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Strategic Action in EU Foreign Policy?*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-62.

length studies on the region's states, only I. William Zartman's edited work *Tunisia: The Political Economy of Reform*, Emma C. Murphy's *Economic and Political Reform in Tunisia*, and Stephen J. King's *Liberalization Against Democracy* consider Tunisia in particular.²⁹ Therefore, the perceived adherence to a handful of titles in some of the sections concerning political development in Tunisia (particularly in the pre-independence period) is due simply to the limited number of sources available.

Published in 2003, King's book is the most recent of the three, but actually draws on fieldwork conducted in the early 1990s. Its principal focus is on the effects of economic liberalisation on the rural community of Tebourba in northern Tunisia. The first two chapters provide a good overview of the impact of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) programmes in both Tunisia and the Arab world as a whole. However, the remaining chapters limit their analysis to the effects of economic liberalisation on the political structures of the rural community in a specific part of Tebourba. Thus, the work fails to engage with the meta-narrative of Tunisian politics since independence, with very little on the background of the current ruling class who derive from the business communities of the Tunisian Sahel. Murphy's work on the other hand provides the state-level analysis lacking in King's volume. She takes independence from the French in 1956 as the departure point for her work, and outlines the power relations within Tunisian political society over the succeeding forty years or so. Indeed, this work perhaps offers the best analysis of the consolidation of Bin Ali's presidency and the challenges that faced Tunisia in the 1990s. However, once more, the study is primarily grounded in the field of political economy, with the core of the work tracing the most recent (until 1999) of the government's numerous 'Development Plans' and their impact. Thus part of the volume concentrates solely on economic policy, providing little coverage or conceptual engagement with the ideological forces shaping the country's development.

Largely due to the diversity of its contributors' expertise, Zartman's collection is more rewarding as a state-level work of political analysis. The volume draws on the experience of a number of scholars to provide a collection of chapters on the politics, economy, and political society of Tunisia. Contributions by Elbaki Hermassi and Abdelkader Zghal in particular address the emerging clash between the government and the Islamists, thereby providing a good framework to understand the treatment of Tunisian Islamists in the 1990s.³⁰ However, the volume was written during the early period of Bin Ali's reign, and

²⁹ I. William Zartman (ed.), *Tunisia: The Political Economy of Reform*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1991; Murphy, 1999; King, 2003.

³⁰ Elbaki Hermassi, 'The Islamicist Movement and November 7', in Zartman (ed.), 1991, pp. 193-204, and Abdelkader Zghal, 'The New Strategy of the Movement of the Islamic Way: Manipulation or Expression of Political Culture?', in Zartman (ed.), 1991, pp. 205-217.

somewhat reflects the optimism of the period before the reality of Bin Ali's style of rule became apparent in the early 1990s. The problems and successes of the 1990s such as the civil war in Algeria, the AA with the EU, and the steady improvement in living standards and the economy are not covered.

Hermassi contributes a volume of his own (*Leadership and National Development in North Africa*) which addresses regional political development. Published in 1972, like Zartman's book, it predates the Bin Ali period (and therefore both the EMP and the ENP), limiting its analysis to the pre- and post-independence eras. Nevertheless, the author, who later served as a cabinet minister in Bin Ali's government, provides a first-hand socio-historical analysis of the crucial period of transition from the colonial period in both Tunisia and the wider Maghreb. A more thorough historical analysis of the last two centuries or so of Tunisian history is provided in Kenneth J. Perkins' *A History of Modern Tunisia*.³¹ This volume is also the most recent of all to be published in English on the country, and includes critical coverage of the late-1990s and the entrenchment of Bin Ali's technocratic regime. As a work of modern history however the volume does not engage with conceptual political issues, shying away from policy issues and EU involvement almost entirely.

Further analysis of the Islamists is provided in *The Politicisation of Islam: Essays on Democratic Governance* by Mohammed Elihachmi Hamdi.³² Despite the slightly misleading title, this volume is entirely focused on the Tunisian Islamist movement. Hamdi draws on extensive contacts with Tunisian Islamists to provide a study of the *Nahda* movement, with good coverage of the origins of the movement, and its confrontations with the government. Coverage of the debates within the movement over secularism, the state, and modern Islamic notions of identity place the movement in a wider international context. Whilst not providing an analysis of Tunisian politics *per se*, through its analysis of political Islam in Tunisia this volume traces the ideological and popular evolution of a political movement which became the focus of political debate both in Tunisia and in Europe during the 1990s.

More limited in scope and less balanced in its analysis is Lise Garon's *Dangerous Alliances: Civil Society, the Media and Democratic Transition in North Africa*.³³ As the title suggests, the focus of the analysis is the state of the media in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Despite its content being regional in focus, the author's greater experience in

³¹ Elbaki Hermassi, *Leadership and National Development in North Africa: A Comparative Study*, Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972; Perkins, 2004.

³² Mohammed Elihachmi Hamdi, *The Politicisation of Islam: Essays on Democratic Governance*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998.

³³ Lise Garon, *Dangerous Alliances: Civil Society, the Media and Democratic Transition in North Africa*, London: Zed Books, 2003.

Tunisia leads to greater focus on this country than on its neighbours. The final analysis evokes the dark shadows of life projected on the walls of Plato's cave. Garon claims that the media in Tunisia (both domestic and foreign) is limited to reporting merely 'shadows' of the political reality. Its journalistic style provides scathing criticism of Bin Ali's control over the media, of the human rights situation, and regarding the authorities' treatment of Islamists. Yet whilst providing the only coverage available of some of the Tunisian dissident networks in both Tunisia and Europe, the book suggests little reason other than manipulation, violent repression, and censorship to suggest Bin Ali's persistence in government.

Broader political or historical volumes on the Middle East or Arab world often include Tunisia as one amongst many states, yet this is not always guaranteed. Some eminent historical texts neglect Tunisia (and in some cases the entire Maghreb) almost entirely from their analysis.³⁴ General politics texts on the region at least consider Tunisia, albeit in a relatively less-intensive capacity than that afforded to some of the 'sexier' states. Beverly Milton-Edwards' textbook on Middle East politics, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, is a case in point. Its thematic approach is supported by case-studies of a number of Middle Eastern states except for Tunisia.³⁵ The frequently updated *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa* provides a useful introduction to the domestic sphere in a chapter-long section on Tunisia. The chapter in the current (fifth) edition is written by John P. Entelis.³⁶ The contents pages of the second edition of Roger Owen's *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* mentions all Arab states *except* Tunisia, Mauritania and Yemen.³⁷ The third edition of this book redresses the balance somewhat by removing a number of the case-specific passages in the previous edition. Both editions however include Tunisia alongside its neighbours in their final thematic analysis.³⁸ Over a decade after its publication however, Nazih N. Ayubi's *Over-stating the Arab State* remains one the most comprehensive analyses of the region's politics. Whilst naturally not including recent developments such as the 'War on Terror' and the greater role of the EU, its regional analysis also offers

³⁴ See for example M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923*, Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1987; Efarim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999; Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, London: Penguin, 2003, Second edition.

³⁵ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, Second edition.

³⁶ John P. Entelis, 'Republic of Tunisia' in David E. Long, Bernard Reich, and Mark Gasiorowski (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 2007, Fifth Edition, pp. 516-548.

³⁷ Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, London: Routledge, 2000, Second Edition.

³⁸ Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, London: Routledge, 2004, Third Edition.

much on the nature of government in Tunisia. Ayubi includes different states within a thematic approach, and Tunisia is given considerable coverage in chapters on democracy, decolonisation, and the nature of authority in the Middle East. Regrettably, this volume too predates the Barcelona Process.

Of article-length studies considered in the thesis, only Larbi Sadiki and Murphy's work provide Tunisia-only studies.³⁹ None of these however consider Tunisia in the context of its political relationship with Europe. Murphy's most recent piece is once more in the field of political economy, as it considers the economic liberalisation programme of the 1990s. Specifically, it argues that the success of this programme is making it increasingly difficult for the Tunisian government to restrict political liberalisation in the name of economic progress. Sadiki's work follows three different lines of enquiry. The first point he makes suggests that whilst a series of political reforms under Bin Ali 'electoralised' and 'parliamentarised' the country's political system, freedom of expression and political exclusion continued. Therefore, Sadiki rejects the idea that the reforms actually democratised Tunisia.⁴⁰ Sadiki's second argument is that democracy must not only be procedural, but also inclusive. The various elections and reforms staged under Bin Ali's rule have appeared good on paper, but have in reality been exclusive and uncompetitive, with the Islamists in particular being left out of political life.⁴¹ Finally, Sadiki argues that whilst public commitments to democracy are common in Tunisia's post-independence history, they have always played second-fiddle to the greater government emphasis on unity in the face of adversity. In Tunisian government discourse however, adversity is ever-present either in the form of national consolidation, economic uncertainty, or Islamist extremism. Thus, democracy is always pushed aside to allow the regime to combat these challenges.⁴²

Other paper-length studies have tended to include Tunisia in a regional (and particularly Maghrebi) context. Of these however, three are worthy of mention here due to their exploration of the potential of Tunisia's Islamists as opposition to the government. Francesco Cavatorta considers how larger geopolitical issues and the national interest of potential democracy promoters have stifled democratic reform in the Maghreb. In Tunisia's case, Cavatorta links an exaggeration of a regional Islamist threat to the country's stability to the limiting of (particularly) European efforts to promote democracy.

³⁹ Emma C. Murphy, 'The Tunisian *Mise à Niveau* Programme and the Political Economy of Reform', *New Political Economy*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2006, pp. 519-540; Sadiki, 2002a; Sadiki, 2002b; Larbi Sadiki, 'The Search for Citizenship in Bin Ali's Tunisia: Democracy versus Unity', *Political Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2002c, pp. 497-513.

⁴⁰ Sadiki, 2002a.

⁴¹ Sadiki, 2002b.

⁴² Sadiki, 2002c.

The level of analysis here however is regional, and thus does not address in any great detail policies or circumstances unique to Tunisia.⁴³ Michael Willis, meanwhile, argues that despite declarations by North African governments (including Tunisia) to challenge political radicalism by changing their constitutions, the reality of these moves has been the strengthening of regime positions whilst not diffusing radicalism at all. In fact, the alterations to the constitutions have increased radicalisation by continuing to exclude the powerful Islamist movements.⁴⁴

The last of the three articles here is Christopher Alexander's study of the relationship between worker and Islamist movements in Algeria and Tunisia. This is of particular interest as Alexander traces the strong links between the Tunisian trades unions and the Islamists, arguing that the Islamists learnt from observing the methods and mistakes of the trades unions in opposing the government. The Islamists later not only employed this knowledge to mobilise potential supporters, but also tailored their message to one which may appeal to a wider and perhaps less religious audience.⁴⁵ In sum, these articles all contribute to an understanding of aspects of the internal dynamics of Tunisian politics, but do not place this in the wider context of EU-Tunisia association.

Finally, one title which should be avoided at all costs is Georgie Anne Geyer's *Tunisia: A Journey through a Country that Works*.⁴⁶ The author – an American journalist – obtained personal access to Bin Ali himself, and the President is permitted a channel to voice his hopes and ambitions for the state. Due to this access, the volume may be useful as a primary source. However, its unashamedly sycophantic and one-sided account of Bin Ali's rule provides little more than a propaganda vessel for government policy. Unsurprisingly perhaps, it is the only text mentioned in this section which is commonly available in Tunisian bookshops and tourist kiosks.

The lack of English-language publications on Tunisia makes initial research difficult, especially when compared to the relative wealth of material published on neighbouring Algeria or other parts of the Arab world. Even in recent literature on EU policy in the Mediterranean, Tunisia is little-covered, and case studies tend to focus on Israel and Palestine, on Egypt, and on Morocco. In addition, (and with the exception of Sadiki's work) recent scholarship has largely been in the field of political economy, and tends to ignore the ideological forces currently shaping Tunisian politics. Lastly, and most

⁴³ Francesco Cavatorta, 'Geopolitical Challenges to the Success of Democracy in North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco', *Democratization*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2001, pp. 175-194.

⁴⁴ Michael Willis, 'Containing Radicalism through the Political Process in North Africa', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2006, pp. 137-150.

⁴⁵ Christopher Alexander, 'Opportunities, Organisations and Ideas: Islamists and Workers in Tunisia and Algeria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2000, pp. 465-490.

⁴⁶ Georgie Anne Geyer, *Tunisia: A Journey through a Country that Works*, London: Stacey International, 2003.

importantly in the context of this thesis, no publication has yet scrutinised the relationship between Tunisia and the EU.

French publications on Tunisia

French-language sources offer further scope to the analyst, albeit from a very critical perspective. Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser's *Le Syndrome Autoritaire* ('The Authoritarian Syndrome') for example offer a comprehensive study of the foundation of authority in Tunisia.⁴⁷ Arguing that Tunisian leaders follow trends such as personalisation of political relations which are supposedly common to the Arab world; the work also highlights how professional elites have been instrumental in maintaining the regime's power base. This is also one of the few volumes to outline the historic and potential role of the universities in opposing the regime, albeit in a chapter that highlights how this space has become one of the most obedient of all in its treatment of the regime. A further chapter on Tunisian Islamists outlines their distinctiveness from other Islamist movements in the region through their public denial of the use of violent methods. Once more however, other than the Islamists, there is little consideration of Tunisian foreign policy or the foreign policy of other actors *vis-à-vis* Tunisia. In short, this is a more comprehensive analysis of political power in Tunisia than any of the English sources, but one which also limits its coverage to domestic politics alone.

Following in the political economy footsteps of some of the English titles is Béatrice Hibou's *La Force de l'Obéissance* ('The Force of Obedience').⁴⁸ This is the most recent of book-length studies to be considered, and concentrates its analysis on the economic liberalisation programmes of the last decade or so, which, perhaps coincidentally, have occurred during the period of partnership with the EU. Hibou's thesis argues that such reforms, combined with tight police control and various manipulations, have actually strengthened the regime's hold over the population, creating a state of mutual dependency between state and citizens. In terms of EU policy in the country, there is some critical coverage of EU funding of human rights and civil society organisations (CSOs),⁴⁹ but little consideration of how or whether EU economic cooperation may lead to political liberalisation.

Two other recent books are yet more critical in their analysis. The first, written by two French journalists, is *Notre Ami Ben Ali* ('Our Friend Bin Ali') by Nicolas Beau and Jean-Pierre Tuquoi.⁵⁰ It presents a scathing attack on the common portrayal in France of the

⁴⁷ Camau and Geisser, 2003.

⁴⁸ Hibou, 2006.

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 120-125.

⁵⁰ Nicolas Beau and Jean-Pierre Tuquoi, *Notre Ami Ben Ali: L'Envers du « Miracle Tunisien »*, Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2002.

‘Tunisian miracle’ and French government support of Bin Ali’s regime. The analysis is primarily a journalistic *exposé* designed to challenge official discourses of progress, and thus serves as a useful counter-discourse to these. Thus, the book deliberately does not seek to provide an objective standpoint but rather to redress a presumed imbalance in coverage. The volume contains particular coverage of the EMP – albeit predominantly economic in nature – criticising its economic programme for supporting larger businesses rather than the economy as a whole.⁵¹

Equally critical is *L’Europe et ses Despotes* (‘Europe and its Despots’) by two Tunisian democracy campaigners Omar Mestiri and Sihem Bensedrine.⁵² Whilst also including other Mediterranean partner states in their analysis, the focus remains on Tunisia. However, rather than questioning the methods of the Arab rulers themselves, this volume’s criticism is levelled directly at the EU for believing claims by the Arab governments that their states are subject to a terrorist onslaught by Islamist extremists. This, they argue, limits the possibility for democratisation in Tunisia and the region by allowing the governments to take extraordinary methods to maintain stability. Again however, the emphasis is on criticism rather than constructive analysis, and the style journalistic rather than academic. Moreover, whilst having interviewed a number of Tunisian dissidents and Tunisian or European journalists, the authors fail to interview officials from either Tunisia or the EU. Whilst their status as democracy campaigners might make interviews with Tunisian officials very difficult, EU officials may have been more forthcoming. No explanation is provided for this omission, therefore suggesting a definite exclusive and particular agenda to their analysis.

French sources also prove very illuminating to establish the background to Tunisian politics. That most university-educated Tunisians are fluent French speakers and that many prominent Tunisians have sought exile or retirement in France have surely helped in this regard. Publications in this category include Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser’ edited collection on Bourguiba’s presidency, *Habib Bourguiba: La Trace et l’Héritage* (‘Habib Bourguiba: His Imprint and Legacy’),⁵³ and former Tunisian prime minister Mohamed Mzali’s autobiography, *Un Premier Ministre de Bourguiba Témoigne* (‘The Testimony of One of Bourguiba’s Prime Ministers’).⁵⁴ Both volumes present valuable insights from different perspectives into Bourguiba’s period as president. Camau and Geisser’s volume is a collection of essays by researchers, former ministers, journalists and

⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 158-160.

⁵² Omar Mestiri and Sihem Bensedrine, *L’Europe et ses Despotes: Quand le Soutien au « Modèle Tunisien » dans le Monde Arabe fait le Jeu du Terrorisme Islamiste*, Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2004.

⁵³ Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser (eds.), *Habib Bourguiba: La Trace et l’Héritage*, Paris: Karthala, 2004

⁵⁴ Mohamed Mzali, *Un Premier Ministre de Bourguiba Témoigne*, Paris: Jean Picollec, 2004.

members of Tunisian NGOs, and addresses a range of subjects from Bourguiba's reforms to his relationship with domestic and external political actors. Mzali's volume offers a personal perspective on Bourguiba from, at different times, a former minister for defence, health, and education, in addition to one of Bin Ali's most immediate predecessors as Prime Minister. Since his time in office, Mzali has often been very critical of Bin Ali – particularly regarding the current president's assault on the Islamists – and the book was written following eighteen years of exile in France. His coverage verges on the self-congratulatory at times, particularly *vis-à-vis* some of the education reforms instigated during his period in government. Both volumes are of particular value to students of Tunisia's early development as an independent state, and in establishing the foundations of the society now governed by BinAli.

The French-language literature on the whole offers a different perspective from English-language sources, due in no small part to the accessibility and availability of first-hand accounts. One consequence of the involvement of Tunisian authors in this scholarship is a particularly critical tone found in some of their works. Once more however, with the possible exception of Bensedrine and Mestiri's volume, the focus has been on domestic political issues and Tunisia's relationship with France, providing little coverage of Tunisia's relationship with the EU.

In conclusion, whilst there are a number of book-length studies of Tunisian politics, these have some clear limitations. In short, there is no study of the relationship between Tunisia and the EU, let alone a study of the efficacy of EU-related political reform. Moreover, English-language works are increasingly dated, and the most recent have tended to address the political economy of Tunisia rather than wider political forces. French sources also include works on political economy, and offer a wider range of coverage of Tunisian politics than English works. However, many French titles are polemics written by journalists and activists rather more comprehensive academic works. Consequently, this thesis cuts new ground by addressing issues and processes in a state that is hardly covered by existing literature.

Theoretical framework

This thesis analyses the effectiveness of a foreign policy that seeks to reform the domestic politics of a particular state. By definition, therefore, it is a study which accepts that domestic and international politics are inseparable. Consequently, it is a work of international relations scholarship. Yet it is also a study of political change, or, more specifically, of a democratisation process and its deliberate encouragement by an actor

external to the society in which the process takes place. Thus the thesis should also be considered alongside another body of work that considers the democratisation of societies.

Existing studies of international relations and democratisation processes have developed a range of theoretical approaches in the analysis of their subjects. This section locates the thesis within these approaches. The section begins by conceptualising EU Mediterranean policy by drawing on theoretical analysis of regional integration processes in international relations. Later, the section considers theoretical definitions of democracy before concluding by engaging with existing conceptual understandings of democratisation processes. This section also seeks to arrive at working definitions of democracy and democratisation which will serve as a framework for the analysis of EU democracy promotion policy in Tunisia.

Theorising EU Mediterranean policy

EU Mediterranean policy is a particular type of foreign policy: an explicit attempt at ‘region-building’, one that includes the EU as part of a wider ‘region’ of actors within a defined geographical area.⁵⁵ This section explores various theoretical approaches to EU policy in the Mediterranean, arguing that both rationalist and constructivist interpretations of regional integration processes play important roles in the development of this policy.

Curiously, many of the contributions to theoretical debate on region-building have in fact emerged from scholarship on European integration.⁵⁶ This scholarship has, according to Mark Pollack, drawn from three different disciplinary backgrounds.⁵⁷ These include works from international relations, comparative politics and multi-level governance perspectives, but all address the issues of interaction within organisational structures. Additionally, this literature is primarily concerned with the motivations for and processes of EU policy making. More problematic to the issues addressed in this study, however, is the necessarily Eurocentric scope of European integration scholarship. Indeed, this body of work specifically deals with actors that either are, might, or will be part of the EU at some point in time.⁵⁸ Importantly, this work addresses societies that commonly identify

⁵⁵ See for example Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs, ‘Themes in European Democracy Promotion’, 2002, in Gillespie and Youngs (eds.), 2002, pp. 1-16; Rosa Rossi, ‘The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective’, in Fulvio Attinà, and Rosa Rossi (eds.), *European Neighbourhood Policy: Political, Economic and Social Issues*, Catania: Jean Monet Centre, University of Catania, 2004, pp. 8-14; Gillespie, 2006.

⁵⁶ Bicchi, 2007, pp. 9-11.

⁵⁷ Mark A. Pollack, ‘Theorising the European Union: International Organisation, Domestic Policy or Experiment in New Governance?’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 8, pp. 357-398.

⁵⁸ With the possible exception of the Russian state.

themselves as ‘European’, regardless of their membership status *vis-à-vis* the EU.⁵⁹ Whilst appreciating the usefulness of European integration literature, analysis of EU Mediterranean policy must also recognise the importance of the non-European context of this policy.

Likewise, there is a noteworthy difference between the process of regional integration in the Mediterranean and that experienced in Europe, the subject of much of the integration literature. Fulvio Attinà emphasises the perceived need for commonality of interests and values between actors as a prerequisite for regional integration.⁶⁰ In a critique of mainstream approaches to regionalism in international relations, he argues that ‘to the political scientist, no commonality means not cooperation and integration but instability and conflict’.⁶¹ However, whereas Europe possessed sufficient enough commonality between its states for regionalisation to occur, there is ‘little commonality and homogeneity in the group of the countries [*sic*] surrounding the Mediterranean Sea’.⁶² Consequently, Euro-Mediterranean regionalisation challenges mainstream approaches to region-building as problematic as it is not an exercise based on commonality.

Without commonality, therefore, another factor must be considered to explain regional integration in the Mediterranean. Attinà argues that attempts at cooperation in this particular region are a means of *problem-solving*, specifically in relation to challenges accompanying recent globalisation.⁶³ Typically these challenges are global in scale, including such issues as the environment or migratory population flows, but have a very significant effect on the local politics of a particular state. This is based on an assumption that these challenges are not exclusive to a single state, and are very likely to affect many, if not most, states in any given region.⁶⁴ This is also of particular concern to medium- and small-sized states which may not have the capacity to tackle these issues by themselves or may be more susceptible to actions by a neighbouring state that may exacerbate the effects of an issue in one’s own territory. Attinà refers to such problems as ‘problems of interconnection’, problems which may be addressed by regional institutions set up by the affected states. Moreover, he outlines that regional cooperation can be driven by a belief by governments that the challenges posed by globalisation can be surmounted through dialogue and engagement with neighbours. Finally, Attinà argues that there is ‘wide

⁵⁹ Turkey being the problematic exception. For more on European identity and the role played by non-EU member states in its formation see Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: ‘The East’ in European Identity Formation*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

⁶⁰ Fulvio Attinà, ‘The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal Views’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2003, pp. 181-199, p. 182.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶⁴ See also the various contributions in William D. Coleman and Geoffrey R.D. Underhill (eds.), *Regional and Global Economic Integration*, London: Routledge, 1998.

consensus' that the EMP can be seen as a 'coordinated intergovernmental reaction to the problems of the current globalisation process'.⁶⁵ The EMP, in short, is regional-level institution-building process specifically geared to address 'problems of interconnection' in the Mediterranean. Consequently, theoretical approaches to regional integration may indeed be useful in analysing EU Mediterranean policy, with the important recognition of the peculiarity of Mediterranean region-building *vis-à-vis* similar processes elsewhere in the world.

Literature on European integration, however, is far from being a single cohesive canon of work. As noted earlier, Pollack highlights the convergence of studies grounded in different disciplinary approaches. Federica Bicchì takes the debate further in her work on EU policy-making in the Mediterranean.⁶⁶ She identifies two principal opposing interpretations of policy-making processes in the EU, one rationalist and the other constructivist.⁶⁷ Both of these are useful frameworks to explain the motivation for a Mediterranean policy amongst Union policy-makers.

The first of these, a rationalist perspective, sits comfortably with Attinà's understanding that Mediterranean integration is a consequence of a problem-solving strategy by individual state governments. According to this view, states are typically the principal actors in any process, and regional integration occurs as a deliberate response to problems too large for individual states to address.⁶⁸ The governments of actors strategically engage with each other according to their own individual goals, aiming for the best possible fulfilment of these goals within the jointly accepted limitations of common institutions.⁶⁹ Cooperation exists, therefore, as a means of increasing the likelihood that individual actors achieve their policy objectives. This links the domestic politics of the actors with the international politics between actors within a region. Moreover, rather than being zero-sum affairs, negotiations involve complex processes of bargaining, although powerful members of any regional institutions have a particularly large amount of influence over the outcome of the negotiations.⁷⁰ Attinà identifies the economic problems of the 1970s and the international security concerns of 1990s as key periods during which the EU and Mediterranean states recognised the international dimension of the problems faced by their own populations, consequently seeking greater regional cooperation as a

⁶⁵ Attinà, 2003, pp. 183-184.

⁶⁶ Bicchì, 2007.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

⁶⁸ In the Mediterranean context, the problems in question are considered too large even for an actor of the magnitude of the EU. As a result, the EU comes to share a number of behavioural traits with the non-EU member states present in the Mediterranean.

⁶⁹ Bicchì, 2007, p. 12; and Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Power and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

⁷⁰ Bicchì, 2007, p. 12.

means to overcome these challenges.⁷¹ Thus, from a rationalist perspective, regional cooperation is the result of rational assumptions by actors that the most effective solutions to the problems faced by their domestic populations lie in greater cooperation with similarly-affected international partners. The Mediterranean is no exception to this rule.

An alternative perspective, however, envisages regional integration as a more gradually evolving process rather than simply being a series of rational actions by individual states. A typical constructivist understanding of this process is that actors within a regional environment are affected by the social norms common to the region in question, norms which regulate the behaviour and shape the identities and interests of the actors in question.⁷² Consequently, regional policy initiatives emerge from a history of successful cooperation between regional actors. As this pattern continues, trust between actors increases with cooperation and coordination of policies habitualised on a regional level.⁷³ In other words, policy initiatives emerge as a result of previous interaction between actors that, in turn, become ‘socialised’ during cooperation to ever greater levels of mutual trust and shared policy objectives.⁷⁴

In some contexts, cooperation and socialisation also becomes a means of deliberately converging the identities and interests of different actors within the same region. This essentially merges rationalist and constructivist approaches, creating two separate policy formulation periods based on the different perspectives. Indeed, Frank Schimmelfennig has suggested that both rationalist and constructivist approaches might be useful in any analysis of regional integration processes as he identifies a rationalist period when objectives are identified before a constructivist period of interaction between actors.⁷⁵ Schimmelfennig’s analysis, however, falls short of understanding the constructivist period as a method of executing policy that achieves the rationally-determined policy objectives.

This thesis understands the EU’s promotion of democracy in Tunisia as an attempt by the Union to shape the Tunisian government through a regional socialisation process. As revealed in Part Two of the thesis, this is based on discursive evidence of the EU’s belief

⁷¹ For advocates of economic reasons for cooperation, see George Joffé, ‘The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative: Problems and Prospects’, in George Joffé (ed.), *Perspectives on Development: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, London: Frank Cass, 1999, pp. 247-266; and Alfred Tovias, ‘Regionalisation and the Mediterranean’, in George Joffé (ed.), 1999, pp. 75-88. Amongst those works that point at the security concerns of EU policy-makers in the 1990s as the principal inspiration for action in the Mediterranean are Claire Spencer, ‘Rethinking or Reorienting Europe’s Mediterranean Security Focus’, in William Park and G. Wynn Rees (eds.), *Rethinking Security in Post-Cold War Europe*, London: Longman, 1998, pp. 143-160; and Patrick Holden, ‘Hybrids on the Rim? The European Union’s Mediterranean Aid Policy’, *Democratization*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2005, pp. 461-480.

⁷² Thomas Risse, ‘Social Constructivism and European Integration’, in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 159-175, p. 163.

⁷³ Bicchi, 2007, p. 13.

⁷⁴ Further debate on socialisation is found in Chapters Four and Five.

⁷⁵ Frank Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 284-285.

that the Mediterranean can be turned into a stable, peaceful and prosperous region *a la* Europe.⁷⁶ Regional integration is central to the achievement of this goal, and the EMP constitutes an important framework through which socialisation occurs. Yet in addition to this, Chapter Three recognises the instrumental role of security concerns within EU policy-makers as rationalist motivations for Mediterranean integration, whilst samples from EU discourse emphasise its aspirations for the region.⁷⁷ EU policy in the Mediterranean, therefore, can be understood as a combination of rationalist decision-making and a belief that a constructivist analysis of integration processes reveals a means of amalgamating the interests and identities of the different states and actors in the region. This, in turn, allows for EU policy objectives to be met. The following subsection now explores particular understandings of democracy, aiming to suggest a working definition of the term for the purpose of this study.

Democracy

This study understands democracy to be a contested concept that lacks a universal definition. Nevertheless, whilst open to contention, the term does allow the existence of common attributes between definitions. Robert Dahl's two dimensions of contestation and participation provide a useful point of departure when considering the democratic qualities of a system. Dahl suggests that democracy should include two separable dimensions: increased competitiveness brought about by political pluralisation and liberalisation; and increased political equality. For Dahl, equality entails inclusiveness in the political process. In fact, it is possible to have either competitiveness or equality without having the other. For example, competition might be increased within only a limited sector of society, thereby merely providing a move from autocracy (rule by one) to oligarchy (rule by a few) which incorporating some competition within an elite. The result therefore might be a limited form of democracy involving more – but not all – of the people. Likewise, mass-movements such as independence or revolutionary movements can be inclusive without being competitive.⁷⁸

Dahl's conceptualisation of a core within understandings of democracy serves as a useful point of departure for analysts. However, consensus on a core need not restrict a proliferation of different interpretations of democracy. David Held's work for example argues that history has provided a series of 'models' of democracy, all of which differ

⁷⁶ See for example European Union, *The EU in the World: The Foreign Policy of the European Union*, Brussels, 2007a. Available at: <www.delago.ec.europa.eu/ao/ue_global/en.pdf>; accessed 17 October 2007.

⁷⁷ European Union, *The EU in the World: The Foreign Policy of the European Union*, Brussels, 2007a. Available at: <www.delago.ec.europa.eu/ao/ue_global/en.pdf>; accessed 17 October 2007.

⁷⁸ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971.

from each other, whilst also containing variations within themselves.⁷⁹ The ‘core’ for Held’s models rests on the etymology of democracy: the Greek *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). Held clarifies this by stating that:

Democracy means a form of government in which, in contradistinction to monarchies and aristocracies, the people rule. Democracy entails a political community in which there is some form of *political equality* among the people.⁸⁰

Thus, despite a plurality of meanings, an emphasis on popular rule and equality can be identified in all of Held’s models. Indeed, Held’s stress on equality is in keeping with Dahl’s work. Perhaps, therefore, that identifying certain ‘universal’ qualities may be a step in the right direction whilst attempting to qualify a particular system as democratic.

However, what if these ‘universal’ qualities themselves are contested? To accept universalism would be to dismiss alternative understandings of particular concepts. On the issue of democracy Laurence Whitehead asks whether the core meaning of the term is really the same from one language to another, or for that matter, from one time period to another.⁸¹ Sadiki argues that if democracy is perceived not as a fixed concept but rather as ‘an ethos embodying principles of a democratic ethic, democracy denotes the opposite of fixity.’⁸² Democracy therefore is not only contested in itself, but also provides the space within which contestation takes place.

To avoid problems of endless definition and redefinition of democracy, Whitehead suggests a ‘floating but anchored’ understanding of democracy which includes ‘a core of meaning is “anchored” and a margin of contestation that is “floating”’.⁸³ Echoing Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s work on signifiers and meanings,⁸⁴ Whitehead proposes that the ‘floating’ component is forever shifting, allowing perpetual redefinition and reinterpretation as the concept encounters and is influenced by ever more different cultures and ideas. Moreover, he finds that essential to any understanding of the term ‘democracy’ is an appreciation of its contestability, its fluidity, and, furthermore, its context-dependence.⁸⁵ Such an approach allows for constant redefinition of meaning, thereby providing the possibility for alternative interpretations of democracy to be considered. It allows the concept of democracy to be removed from particular

⁷⁹ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, Second Edition.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1, original emphasis.

⁸¹ Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 8.

⁸² Sadiki, 2004, p. 64.

⁸³ Whitehead, 2002, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso 1985/2001.

⁸⁵ Whitehead, 2002, pp. 13-14.

geographical-cultural-historic contexts and exposes it to new ideas that may enrich the concept as a whole.

If a lack of fixity provides space for redefinition, it may also lead to manipulation as claims of being democratic may be made to claim an authoritarian system as a variant of democracy. Not only the Republic of Tunisia, but also political systems from the People's Republic of China to the former German Democratic Republic have draped themselves in the lexicon of democracy whilst actually demonstrating questionable evidence of contestability. The MENA region is no stranger to such systems which drape themselves in the trappings of democracy without truly opening their political systems to contestation, equality, or participation. This is reflected in the country-specific studies by Beverly Milton-Edwards, who identifies Jordan as a 'façade' democracy, and Sadiki, who extends this label to Tunisia.⁸⁶ Regarding the same phenomenon, but speaking of MENA states in general, Frédéric Volpi prefers the term 'pseudo-democracy' whilst Larry Diamond opts for 'hybrid democracies'.⁸⁷ The message from such studies is that despite the existence of some of the procedural elements of democracy, without certain political freedoms, open contestation, and equality within the political system, democracy exists only in name.

Indeed, it is not only the adoption of democratic terminology by authoritarian regimes which has come under scrutiny. The value of some of the core attributes of democracy has also been questioned. Both George Sorensen and Raymond Hinnebusch for example suggest that the competitiveness discussed by Dahl can actually be divisive, fragmenting a polity into dysfunctional parts striving to achieve their agendas at the expense of a broad picture.⁸⁸ This is of particular relevance in societies where strong social cohesion is necessary for some other purpose, such as during total war or an independence struggle. Social stability may be essential for the achievement of these other goals, and any form of disunity or instability jeopardises their obtainment.

This complicates the issue of government, juxtaposing democracy against a stable political society. The potential of instability should not serve as an obstacle to democracy *per se*. As the existence of numerous functioning democratic systems demonstrates, contestation need not necessarily equate with instability. In recent years, examples of long-standing democracies such as the United Kingdom (UK) or France have seen their fair share of domestic turmoil, strikes, economic crises and even violent internal struggle

⁸⁶ Milton-Edwards, 1993; Sadiki, 2002b.

⁸⁷ Volpi, 2004; Diamond, 2002.

⁸⁸ Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998, pp. 3-23; Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique', *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2006, p. 374.

without their democratic systems of government being suspended or scrapped. However, the concept of instability is open to interpretation, and different political systems each deal with instability in different ways. Thus, instability may be used to legitimise actions which threaten democratic government. Such reasoning is similar to that found in Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde's work on security and securitisation. For them, the representation of an actor or a phenomenon as a security threat is used to justify the use of extraordinary measures to deal with these threats.⁸⁹ Therefore, whilst instability may not itself threaten democracy, the actions often taken to prevent instability may themselves restrict democratic behaviour.

This thesis therefore understands democracy to be a contested concept, one which cannot be easily pinned down. It may include a number of practices which result or maintain popular rule by a people which are equal in say and are able to freely voice their opinions and associate as they wish. However, democracy is always context-dependent, a product of the environment in which it both develops and exists. Indeed, any attempt to universalise or fix democracy's meaning risks depriving it of its own contestability, thereby denying others the ability to shape it for themselves.

Democratisation

Questions regarding the how and why societies become democratic run through late twentieth century Western academic thinking. Over time, these explanations have shifted from modernisation theory and the role of the market, to the role of alliances between domestic elites, to civil society actors. It is only recently that international actors have been considered.

Modernisation theory, which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s based largely on the work of Seymour Lipset and Walt Rostow, tends to offer a linear path towards democracy.⁹⁰ Their work is notable for its emphasis on prerequisites for democracy, particularly economic prerequisites. Lipset summarises his hypothesis by stating that 'a society divided between a large impoverished mass and a small favoured elite would result either in oligarchy ... or tyranny.'⁹¹ Avoiding such a scenario and securing democratisation requires 'a wealthy society in which relatively few people live in real poverty' as only in such a society 'which the mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics and could develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of

⁸⁹ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1998, p. 21.

⁹⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1959, pp. 69-105; Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Process of Economic Growth*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960, Second Edition.

⁹¹ Lipset, 1959, p. 75.

irresponsible demagogues.⁹² With wealth come other factors key to the process. Hinnebusch argues that modernisation theory ‘demonstrated convincingly ... that rising literacy, urbanisation and non-agricultural employment (indicators of “social mobilisation”) were associated with an increased propensity to political participation.’⁹³ The middle class is essential in this society, with, says Lipset, its ability to ‘reward moderate and democratic parties and penalise extremist groups.’⁹⁴ Rostow meanwhile identifies clear ‘stages’ in the development of a society, beginning with the ‘traditional society’ and culminating in the ‘mass consumption society’.⁹⁵ Therefore, modernisation theory suggests that it is changes at the systemic-societal level which are central to democratisation, and, crucially, it is the evolution of a capitalist society which consolidates democracy.

Yet the importance awarded to capitalist society becomes modernisation theory’s weakness. For Jean Grugel, the theory is ahistorical in its assumption that ‘all societies can replicate a transition which actually occurred at a particular moment in space and time.’⁹⁶ There is simply no acknowledgement that societies follow different paths and the exact replication of one system in a different society is almost impossible.⁹⁷ Even democratic systems vary significantly from state to state. Furthermore, modernisation theory assumes that this replication of the capitalist-democratic model is desirable in the first place. Indeed, the essentialism of modernisation is confirmed by Lipset himself as he declares that ‘no detailed examination of the political history of individual countries’ was undertaken for his study as ‘the relative degree or social content of democracy in different countries is not the real problem’.⁹⁸ Thus, modernisation theory fails to distinguish between the different experiences and ambitions of different societies.

More recent studies have shifted their analysis from structural causes of democratisation to the agents involved in the processes. Transition theory in particular outlines the role played by indigenous actors within the democratising society, emphasising elite alliances, opposition coalitions, and the roles played by different parts of the ruling administration. In his critique of modernisation theory, Dankwart A. Rustow argues that national unity is essential for a democratic society. For Rustow ‘the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hinnebusch, 2006, p. 374.

⁹⁴ Lipset, 1959, p. 83.

⁹⁵ Rostow, 1960.

⁹⁶ Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, p. 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Lipset, 1959, p. 72.

community they belong to.⁹⁹ Whilst ‘the decision in favour of democracy results from the interplay of a number of forces’,¹⁰⁰ the role of the society’s leaders is crucial. These both drive and moderate the negotiating groups as the new political landscape is formed. Later work in the 1980s by Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead develops the focus on elites. This work shifts the focus of analysis to the interaction (in the form of deals, bargains and pacts) between authoritarian elites and opposition groups during the democratisation process.¹⁰¹ In Adam Przeworski’s work, elites also play an integral role. He breaks these into four different groups: hardliners, moderates, radicals, and reformers. Alliances formed between these actors begin a linear process which progresses from liberalisation to democratisation.¹⁰²

Yet transition theory also fails to capture the full complexity of the democratising process. Its preoccupation with the elite leaves little space for civil society or ‘bottom-up’ democratisation. Democratisation thus becomes a series of exercises in rational choice by different elites, without engaging with the population at large.¹⁰³ Indeed, Grugel highlights that transition literature sometimes suggests that popular mobilisation is in fact detrimental to democratisation as it threatens ‘the interests of powerful elites who then [go] to considerable lengths to close down tentative experiments in political liberalisation.’¹⁰⁴ Moreover – and important in the context of this thesis – transition theorists do not address the role of external actors in the democratisation process. Perhaps this might be a result of the process considered: much of the work specifically addresses Latin America and Europe.

Both the modernisation and transition theories however fail to account for arguably the most important series of transitions to democracy in recent decades. When the Eastern European communist regimes tumbled in rapid succession in the late 1980s, explanations focused on the role of transnational civil society networks.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, for the first time, the role of international actors in the promotion of democracy was becoming apparent, and this did not go unnoticed in Western European capitals.¹⁰⁶ Richard Youngs points out

⁹⁹ Dankwart A. Rustow, ‘Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model’, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1970, pp. 337-363, p. 350.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 356.

¹⁰¹ Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Lawrence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986.

¹⁰² Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Przeworski does note however that this process is dependent on the actions taken by the actors; wrong decisions can result in the end of democratization.

¹⁰³ A good example of this is indeed Przeworski, 1991.

¹⁰⁴ Grugel, 2002, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs, ‘Themes in European Democracy Promotion’, 2002, in Gillespie and Youngs (eds.), 2002, pp. 1-16, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ See for example Adrian Hyde-Price, ‘Democratisation in Eastern Europe: The External Dimension’, in Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen (eds.), *Democratisation in Eastern Europe: Domestic and*

that a key weakness in both the modernisation and transition literatures is the commonly held view that external actors are essentially redundant in transition processes.¹⁰⁷ Henceforth, a strong emphasis on supporting CSOs in authoritarian states has emerged in European democracy promotion. The following chapters of this thesis provide an analysis of current EU thinking on democratisation.

Tellingly, if one considers the theories of democratisation discussed in this section, each theory is developed based on the empirical experiences of particular periods in specific regions of the globe. Modernisation theory has clear links with Western Europe, transition theory with the 1970s and 1980s experience of Latin America and Southern Europe, and the civil society approach originates from the study of Eastern European societies. It is revealing perhaps – and entirely unsurprising – that not one of these theories has emerged from and consequently accounts for possible transition in the Arab world.

Indeed, the politics of the Arab world poses many a challenge to existing theories of democratisation. The region includes vastly wealthy states ruled by unelected monarchs alongside less affluent states which responded to popular protest by changing their political structures.¹⁰⁸ The failure of traditional explanations of democratisation in the Arab world has driven some writers to simplistic essentialist portrayals of the region. Elie Kedourie is a prime example, arguing that ‘Democracy is alien to the mind-set of Islam’.¹⁰⁹ Such a position completely disregards the diversity found in Islam and Islamic societies.¹¹⁰ Yet appreciation of the diversity and composition of democratising societies should also extend to the sources of origin of the theories themselves. The theories themselves need to be understood in their respective intellectual traditions. Sadiki in particular highlights the Eurocentricism of existing frameworks, arguing that:

No matter how potent and functional is the milieu in which they are conceived, Eurocentric interpretive frameworks cannot be expected to fit comfortably in the milieus into which they are often transplanted, or always to be congenial to the different forms of interpretation on which they are imposed.¹¹¹

Therefore, whilst similarities may be found between the politics of Arab states and other states, this should not necessarily translate into a belief that because a model worked in one state, it might also in an Arab state.

International Perspectives, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 220-254.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Youngs, *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy: Europe's Mediterranean and Asian Policies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001a, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ See for example Milton-Edwards, 1993; and Larbi Sadiki, ‘Popular Uprisings and Arab Democratization’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2000, pp. 71-91.

¹⁰⁹ Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Likewise, accounts or theories which portray the Arab world as uniform are also essentialist.

¹¹¹ Sadiki, 2000, p. 72.

Considering the contested nature of democracy, its lack of fixity, and the constantly flowing definitions in use in different global context, it follows that a definition of democratisation might also be contested. However, if democratisation *per se* might be forever contested, it may be possible to arrive at a temporary understanding of democratisation. Whitehead – who rejects any permanent fixing of meaning for ‘democracy’ – also strives for a working definition. He explains that ‘Democratisation is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic, and open-ended process. It consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory form of politics.’¹¹² Grugel on the other hand argues that it must include: institutional change (i.e. to the form of the state); representative change (change to those who influence or control the state); and functional change (change to the actions or responsibilities of the state).¹¹³ What is crucial to both of these definitions however is that they leave open the nature of the changes that might take place, providing these changes meet the minimums suggested by Whitehead and Grugel.

Democratisation therefore, like democracy, is entirely context-dependent; no two processes are ever identical. The variety of different democratisation process stems from the contestability of the term ‘democracy’. There is no universally applicable method of developing democracy. Democracy emerges for different reasons in different locations. Contrary to what modernisation theory suggests, democracy does not always emerge when particular development benchmarks have been achieved. Neither is it guaranteed when there is a consensus between elites, or following pressure from civil society. Thus, as is the case with democracy, the study of a process of democratisation should appreciate the context of the democratising society, the agents involved, and the structures in which the process takes place.

Methodology

This thesis assesses the efficacy of the EU’s attempt to promote democracy – a concept – in Tunisia. However, as is reflected by the amount of literature on democracy, the exact definition of what is promoted is not straightforward. Democracy is an ‘essentially contested concept’.¹¹⁴ Thus, questions of meaning are central to any analysis of democracy or the promotion of it. Moreover, any discussion of meaning influences the choices of methodology available to the researcher. The behaviourist social science which emerged from twentieth century Anglo-American positivism for example shows little

¹¹² Whitehead, 2002, p. 27.

¹¹³ Grugel, 2002, p. 66.

¹¹⁴ See for example Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, London: Hurst, 2004, p. 5.

interest in beliefs or meanings.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the positivist researcher grounds his or her knowledge on the assumption that laws and practices which govern social and political behaviour are universally valid,¹¹⁶ a position rejected by this thesis.

As illustrated in the previous section, transition theorists argue that modern political systems often include groups of elites with access to decision-making circles. Moreover, Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant, and Zig Layton-Henry contend that that ‘the reality of modern democracy is that many political decisions are taken by small groups of highly qualified and knowledgeable individuals’.¹¹⁷ This thesis extends this argument to also include authoritarian governments. Interpretivist approaches proceed from the understanding that people and actors act on their beliefs and preferences. Thus, it is possible to explain people’s actions by referring to the relevant beliefs and preferences of the persons involved.¹¹⁸ Moreover, one cannot reduce the beliefs and preferences of political actors to ‘mere intervening variables’.¹¹⁹ Therefore, interpreting the understandings, meanings and shared assumptions which inform these groups becomes an important part of any analysis of the decisions themselves.

Instead, this thesis takes an interpretive approach involving discourse analysis. This approach is both theoretical and methodological, as any analysis of discourse involves the collection and assessment of particular texts. Based on this framework, elite interviews and textual analysis represent the principal research methods employed in this thesis. This section outlines the process by which data was collected, beginning by outlining the process of elite interviewing. The section then considers the accessibility of official sources for the researcher, before concluding with a note on translation, transliteration, and dating system used in the study.

Discourse analysis

In the context of this study, discourse is understood to be a group of statements that attempt to govern the production of meanings, objects, concepts, subjects, and strategies.¹²⁰ Despite employing practices common to writers in the field of discourse studies, this thesis is not a study of different approaches to discourse.¹²¹ Through

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 135.

¹¹⁶ Anthony H. Birch, *Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 246.

¹¹⁷ Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004, p. 219.

¹¹⁸ Mark Bevir and R. A. W. Rhodes, ‘Interpretive Theory’ in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, Second Edition, pp. 131-152, pp. 132-133.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 133.

¹²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith), London: Tavistock, 1969/1972.

¹²¹ For such studies see for example Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999; David Howarth, *Discourse*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000; and

discourse ideas and sets of values are explained, transferred or communicated to others. It is within discourse that meanings are clarified. Discourse is instrumental in determining an actor's identity, actions and interests, but, likewise, discourses themselves are products of the environment in which they were formed.¹²² In this way, discourse is *productive* (or indeed reproductive), producing objects defined within it. Discourse makes intelligible ways of being in, and acting towards, the world.

The text of the Barcelona Declaration states that its signatories agree to strengthen the rule of law and democracy within their boundaries, whilst also recognising each other's right to develop their own political systems.¹²³ Yet nowhere within this document is there a definition of what is meant by the term 'democracy'. The question of democracy will be considered in greater detail in the next section. However, it is worth considering at this point that over two-dozen states signed the Declaration, and many of these are recognised in the aforementioned Freedom House data as 'free' democracies. None of these share the same political system with one another. Similarities exist in the form of common institutions (e.g. parliaments) and practices (e.g. voting), yet all systems differ from in each other in some particular way. Each state therefore presents its own model of what its population perceives or perceived to be a democratic system of government at its time of making. Moreover, the document itself underlines this difference between the states with its commitment to the mutual respect of each other's political cultures. The signatories therefore committed their states to the promotion of a contested concept without attempting its definition.

Delving further into the EU-Tunisia relationship leads to further ambiguity. The suggestion, for example, that democracy should be strengthened implies that democracy is not sufficiently strong in the first place. Yet the point of attainment of the desired end product of 'strong' democracy – if indeed there is such an end product – is never clarified. Furthermore, whilst the partnership embodied in the EMP addresses the entire Mediterranean region in its texts, the ENP views matters a little differently. It emphasises that the EU is 'founded' on democratic (and other) values, and now seeks to promote a commitment to democracy (as a 'shared value') in neighbouring states.¹²⁴ Returning to the

Louise Phillips and Marianne W. Jørgensen, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage, 2002.

¹²² See for example Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re-)Introduction to International Relations*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994; Jennifer Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1999, pp. 225-254.

¹²³ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

¹²⁴ Commission of the European Communities, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper*, COM(2004) 373, final, 2004b.

issue of ‘strengthening’ democracy therefore, one finds that democracy only needs strengthening in the non-EU states.

These examples reveal a problem of meaning within the EU-Tunisia relationship. Concepts, expressed in the form of words or ‘signs’, which lie at the heart of the interaction between the two actors remain contested. Yet the use of these signs by both parties suggests that they have acquired sufficient meaning in the minds of the individual actors for them to be employed; as signatories to the Barcelona Declaration, one assumes that both parties have attached meanings to the words contained within its text. However, with no clear definitions, it is left to the researcher to deduce these meanings for him- or her-self. To this end, discourse theory proves useful. David Howarth states that:

Discourse theory is concerned with understanding and interpreting socially produced meanings, rather than searching for objective causal explanations, and this means that one of the major goals of social enquiry is to delineate the historically specific rules and conventions that structure the production of meanings in particular historical contexts.¹²⁵

Indeed, language is of particular importance in the context of this study as the political relations between both parties involved are to be developed according to the content of the agreements signed by both parties. Indeed, the noun *declaration* (as in the Barcelona Declaration) is an exercise of language in itself: a commitment by the perpetrator to particular actions, practices, or, as in this case, concepts. In fact, discursive approaches to EU Mediterranean policy are increasingly popular amongst analysts, offering different understandings of actions by participants.¹²⁶

By considering the language used by actors, it is possible to learn more of the actor’s intentions. Language expresses much more than the most immediate meanings apparent to the scholar. As Sadiki argues:

An understanding of the dynamics of language is crucial not only for understanding linguistic structure and semantics but also the structure of political societies and ideological machinery or political thought. For culture is logocentric, i.e., the *logos*, either as a word, as a discourse, or as a fragment of a discourse mirrors the worldview of a cultural group.¹²⁷

The study of language therefore offers a lens through which one may identify the very essence of social structures and political actions. Howarth argues that through a discursive approach it is possible to contemplate the ‘complexities of political identity and difference...and the connection between the role of identities and interests in the social

¹²⁵ Howarth, 2000, p. 128.

¹²⁶ See for example Ulla Holm, ‘The EU’s Security Policy towards the Mediterranean: An Impossible Combination of Export of European Political Values and Anti-terror Measures?’, *Danish Institute for International Studies working paper no 2004/13*, 2004; Ulla Holm, ‘EU’s Neighbourhood Policy: a question of space and security’, *Danish Institute for International Studies workingpaper no 2005/22*, 2005; Malmvig, 2004; Pace, 2002, 2004 and 2006.

¹²⁷ Sadiki, 2004, p. 96.

sciences.¹²⁸ As is demonstrated in Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this thesis, this is of particular relevance to the study of an EU which seeks to assert parts of its identity on other actors which it engages.

The interests involved however may not be immediately apparent. But here again, the use of a discursive approach is useful. To better understand the interests of an actor, Michel Foucault suggests that the analyst engages in the study of the ‘archaeology of political knowledge’; the aim of this exercise being ‘to show whether the political behaviour of a society, a group, or a class is not shot through with a particular, describable discursive practice.’¹²⁹ If Foucault is right, behaviour is manifold, and should not be taken at face value. By considering the actor’s discourse however, one gains a better understanding of the actor’s true interests or intentions.

However, social and political relations are not exclusively linguistic phenomena. Laclau and Mouffe claim that ‘a discursive structure is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organises social relations.’¹³⁰ Likewise, it is not only a ““cognitive” or “contemplative” entity’ which deals with the conceptual alone.¹³¹ Rather, linked with a commitment to concepts such as ‘democracy’ or ‘rule of law’ are practices, such as ‘promotion’ and ‘commitment’. Laclau and Mouffe also question the practice of permanently fixing meaning to signifiers,¹³² arguing instead that meaning is forever contested due to the ‘openness of the social, a result, in turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.’¹³³ However, perhaps aware of criticism that this may result in a never-ending abyss where no meaning is ever fixed, Laclau and Mouffe also promote the concept of nodal points within discourse. Nodal points represent a temporary fixing of meaning within discourse. For an undetermined period of time, sufficient meanings are attached to a signifier for the signifier to acquire an identity and a common understanding amongst users of language.¹³⁴ Thus, the meaning attributed to concepts and practices are always available for definition, and can never be permanently fixed by any actor due to the existence of other actors and their different interpretations of the signifier. However, temporary fixity may occur when sufficient actors simultaneously agree on the meaning of the signifier in question.

A final point on the usefulness of a discursive method concerns the research environment in Tunisia. Whilst its exact nature is covered in detail later in this section, it is useful to

¹²⁸ Howarth, 2000, p. 6.

¹²⁹ Foucault, 1972, p. 194.

¹³⁰ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 96, original emphasis removed.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 96.

¹³² Ibid, pp. 112-113.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 113.

¹³⁴ Ibid, pp. 112-113.

note at this point that conducting an analysis of the discourse used by actors allows the researcher more potential to gather information than what perhaps may be gained from a positivist scientific methodology. Some research methods such as the use of questionnaires are simply not permitted by the authorities in Tunisia. Moreover, any method which includes overt questioning of participants poses some risk to these participants. Whilst being aware of the context in which it is produced and articulated, assessing the subject's voluntarily produced discourse – be it in the form of an interview, speeches, press releases or any other media – removes certain pressures from the subject. A discursive methodology therefore circumnavigates restrictions placed upon the researcher by allowing a better consideration of existing texts, and the particular articulation of meanings which they produce.

Elite interviews

One of the principal methods employed in this study was elite interviewing. In defining 'elites', this thesis concurs with Beth Leech's argument that 'elite interviewing can be used whenever it is possible to treat a respondent as an expert about the topic in hand'.¹³⁵ This allows the discourse of participants to be studied alongside other forms of text to reveal common or contradictorily discursive practices. These practices reveal much about the attitudes and ideas present in the EU-Tunisia relationship.

In this study, elites include: EU Commission officials; Tunisian government officials; current or recently retired diplomatic personnel from the EU, EU member states, and Tunisia; European or Tunisian members of parliament and/or their representatives; NGO personnel with direct knowledge of either European policy initiatives in Tunisia, or of conducting NGO work in Tunisia; journalists; and Tunisian academics with the relevant experience. In total, 26 interviews with individuals who fitted these criteria were completed.

With only one or two exceptions, interviews with European officials, whether from the Commission or from member state governments, were generally easy to obtain and arrange. Commission staff were selected primarily based on the extent of their experience in dealing either with Tunisia, or with EU Mediterranean or democracy-related policies. Commission officials were bound by their positions to repeat the EU line on record, whilst being much more open and candid off record.

Unfortunately, the author was unable to interview any representative from the Commission Delegation in Tunis. This was despite a number of emails, letters, phone

¹³⁵ Beth L. Leech, 'Interview Methods in Political Science', *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 35, 2002, pp. 663-664, p. 663.

calls, and visits during three separate research periods in Tunisia totalling some five months in length. This was offset by interviewing either serving or former Commission officials with responsibility for Tunisia of democracy promotion in the Mediterranean in Brussels. Furthermore, the outbreak of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict during the author's time in Brussels meant that a number of senior Commission officials were called away and therefore were unable to be interviewed. Nevertheless, other officials were more than willing to take their place. All Commission officials interviewed requested to be known only as 'Commission Officials' and declined requests by the author to record the interviews.

Other sources of European origin also tended to be very forthcoming in agreeing to be interviewed. Some polite refusals for interview included those from NGOs such as Amnesty International, and this was generally due to the NGO not having sufficient available staff to be put forward for interview at the desired time. Nevertheless, these sources (including Amnesty) were very forthcoming in suggesting other sources or providing printed copies of relevant material to the author.

It was also interesting to note the reluctance of a number of NGO staff in speaking 'on the record' regarding EU projects in Tunisia. As one interviewee put it, the information I would obtain depended on whether the recording device was turned on or off; I was invited to choose at the start of the interview which version I would prefer. These representatives expressed their fear that their organisations' work may be impaired due to their criticism of *both* Tunisian and EU policies and methods. One such representative expressed concern that the EU might withdraw all funding from the organisation if the person in question were to speak openly about the EU in Tunisia.

Conducting a survey of public opinion on political matters was nearly impossible due to the restrictive research environment and the unwillingness of Tunisians to be interviewed openly.¹³⁶ This reluctance to be interviewed makes deploying positivist methods that seek generalised conclusions from mass data sampling futile. Therefore, employing elite interviews as a method in Tunisia provides a practical alternative to mass sampling in addition to its other benefits. Conducting interviews in Tunisia involved its own challenges. Tunisians feared endangering their own personal safety if they spoke out of line with the government, but government officials and former officials were also bound

¹³⁶ The difficulty of conducting public research in Tunisia was illustrated by a European acquaintance of the author. The acquaintance was also in Tunisia at the same time as the author, working on a project with the regional administration of Tunis on improving the public transport system. Part of this work involved interviewing members of the public to determine possible sites for development. This work involved a team including both the acquaintance and local government officials. Nevertheless, shortly after starting the work, the team was confronted by plain clothes security officials demanding an explanation of their activity, information regarding the sponsors of the project, and further such information.

by loyalty to their positions. The process of arranging an interview often took a matter of weeks, and was nearly impossible from outside of Tunisia. Officials generally failed to reply to requests for interview in letter form, although emails proved slightly more successful. This also applied when contacting Tunisian diplomatic missions in Europe. Telephone communication was the most effective method, yet even this required numerous calls. These calls very rarely involved the desired interviewee, and often calls were either not returned or the desired interviewee would be 'unavailable'. Visiting official departments in person seeking individuals resulted in rejection either on the grounds of the said person being 'unavailable', 'away', or that the researcher did not possess a valid research permit.

Non-official sources were more accessible, with NGOs being very willing to cooperate. Interviews were easily organised, and many interviewees were ready to be openly identified in this work. Some however wished either to remain anonymous or to be identified only as representatives of their NGO. Even when anonymity is guaranteed, interviewees were often very guarded in their answers. To complement elite interviews therefore, more anthropological methods were used, including a number of informal interviews with traders, academics, artists, and other members of the public. The information collected during these informal interviews were collected in a research diary, and all names and dates were either changed or deleted to protect the source.

Finally, the author experienced surveillance and harassment during his period of fieldwork. This ranged from being followed in the street to being turned away from the offices of the *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme* (Tunisian League for Human Rights, henceforth LTDH) human rights organisation by plain clothes officers due to the offices 'being closed'. On one occasion, the telephone lines of the author's residence were cut, whilst on another, an intruder entered the residence and disturbed the contents.

Textual analysis

A great advantage of researching the EU is the wealth of material available. Hundreds of documents, communications, decisions, speeches, laws and more are easily available via the Union's website.¹³⁷ EU officials in Brussels and in the EU's delegation in Tunis were also forthcoming with further documents, although it should be stated that the majority of those referred to in the final text of this study are available from the Union's website. The ease of access to the text allowed a substantial amount of text to be analysed. Moreover, many of the texts related to the Mediterranean are signed by both EU officials and representatives from partner state governments.

¹³⁷ <www.europa.eu>.

The situation with Tunisia is rather different, and common to many who explore issues of political reform in authoritarian societies. Transparency of government and freedom of information have been highlighted areas needing reform as part of the EMP. Very often, written sources – primary and secondary – are difficult to locate, whilst those that exist are frequently heavily influenced by the political agendas of their authors. This applies to sources sympathetic to the regime for propaganda or other reasons and to other sources seeking to promote opposition to the incumbent government. Official archives, including the new National Archives in Tunis, require Interior Ministry research permits for access. These are in turn difficult to obtain, demand a lengthy period of uninterrupted stay in Tunisia, and expose the researcher to a number of official intrusions and limitations of possible sources. The media is effectively controlled by the government and counter-discourses are very difficult to locate in printed form.¹³⁸

Interestingly, the content of both King and Murphy's books on Tunisia indirectly outline the challenges facing researchers in the country. Their wealth of economic data outlines the relative ease with which it is available to the researcher. Their relative lack of political analysis however highlights the different circumstances surrounding its collection. As Garon's work illustrates,¹³⁹ the media is tightly controlled by the regime, archives require the navigation of a host of bureaucratic obstacles designed to frustrate, and conducting interviews is a time-consuming and frustrating process. In short, the government are very keen to illustrate their successes in the economic sphere, but less willing to discuss their oppression of the political. The result of this imbalance in the accessibility of sources is also therefore reflected in the content bias of the study. This bias is not intentional, and is highlighted in the Conclusions as one of the limitations of the study.

Translation, transliteration, and dates

Unless otherwise stated, the author is solely responsible for translations from French sources. This incorporates written, visual, and aural texts such as books, papers, articles, interviews, political posters, various press sources and so on.

In addition, it is worth noting that this thesis will frequently refer to 'Islamists' as a political group. This term is used in an umbrella sense, and does not signify one particular type of political Islam. Islamism, as a political outlook, is not fixed and represents a wide range of political movements, groups and parties. 'Islamists' refers here to activists espousing ideologies that emphasise the importance and implementation of Islam in public affairs.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ For an outline of the status of the media in Tunisia, see Garon, 2003.

¹³⁹ Garon, 2003.

¹⁴⁰ John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 2-16.

Due to the particular dialect of Arabic spoken in Tunisia, there is a significant inconsistency in the transliteration of Arabic terms in use in Tunisia. This applies to all words, including nouns. Moreover, a number of official and other widely available texts are published by Tunisians in French. Despite making regular use of Arabic terms, the transliteration within these texts is often inconsistent, and not necessarily in keeping with any agreed set of guidelines. Good examples of the inconsistency are the current Tunisian president's name, which may be transliterated either as 'Bin Ali' or 'Ben Ali', and the fertile eastern coastal region of Tunisia which may be referred to as either the 'Sahel' or the 'Sahil'. As a result, all transliteration in this thesis is in keeping with the most commonly accepted forms of transliterating the words in question. Transliterated terms are in italics. All dates in the study will be in the Gregorian calendar and not in the Islamic *al-Hijri* calendar. This is in keeping with the wider scholarship on the EU and the calendars used by both the EU itself and the Tunisian government.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is in two parts, along with a concluding chapter and this introduction. Part One includes Chapters Two and Three, and establishes the historical and political context of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia. Chapter Two considers the nature of government and democracy in Tunisia, arguing that a long-term commitment to European liberal-reformist values exists paradoxically alongside a deeply-entrenched authoritarian governing machine. Whilst political links between Tunisia and Europe can be traced to the early nineteenth century, the chapter firmly associates the methods and ideology of the current government with the Tunisian independence movement in the mid-twentieth century. Despite earlier aspirations of a European-style state amongst the Tunisian elite, during the independence struggle emphasis on national unity began to trump political diversity, thereby laying the foundations of a political system that restricts the opportunities available to opposition actors in Tunisia. By considering a range of major challenges to government authority in the 1970s and 1980s, the chapter outlines the strategies and implements used by both Bin Ali and Bourguiba in maintaining their hold on power. In particular, the chapter assesses the government's coercion of opposition groups to act within the state. This practice has simultaneously restricted the opposition's ability to act and extended the state into ever greater aspects of Tunisian life. The chapter concludes by assessing the political context in Tunisia in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It specifically considers the state of potential actors in a democratisation process, including opposition political parties, the trades unions, the Islamists, and wider CSOs.

Chapter Three shifts the focus of the analysis from the subject of democracy promotion to the promoter itself, the EU. The analysis centres on the possible motivations for democracy promotion by the EU, both in general and in the Mediterranean and Tunisia more specifically. These motivations, the chapter argues, are simultaneously normative and realist in nature and samples from EU discourse are provided to support this conclusion.

The normative element stems from a debate regarding the nature and identity of the EU as an international actor, particularly its depiction by some analysts as a ‘normative’ power. The chapter engages with this representation of the Union, paying specific attention to the role awarded to democracy in this supposedly normative foreign policy. Furthermore, the chapter seeks a definition by the EU of the democracy it seeks, before considering the effect of its foreign policy on the EU’s continuing development as an international actor. Thus, the chapter argues that promoting democracy is not only a product of a normative approach to foreign policy by the EU, but is also a reflection of the ongoing construction of the Union’s identity as an international actor. Alongside this normative streak, however, exists another, more traditionally realist approach to international policy. The chapter highlights a number of key EU texts highlighting the potential of democracy to maintain stability amongst communities of states, and considers the extent to which EU policy in the Mediterranean can be considered to be an attempt to establish such a community. To this end, the chapter contextualises EU policy by comparing it with that of the United States (US), another international actor to have recently launched democracy promotion policies in the MENA region within the frameworks of multilateral policy initiatives. It argues that a belief in the ‘democratic peace theory’ is central to the approaches of both actors. The chapter concludes by considering these reasons within a Mediterranean context, questioning to what extent Union representations of the region portray the Mediterranean as a region in need of democratisation.

Chapters Four, Five and Six constitute Part Two of this thesis. Building on Part One’s conclusion that Tunisia embodies Working from the position established in Part One that EU policy in Tunisia should address the issue of democracy; Part Two assesses the success of the Union’s promotion of democracy in Tunisia.

Beginning with an analysis of the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy, Chapter Four outlines the EU policy structures effective in Tunisia, and within which the Union’s strategies of democracy promotion are designed to operate. Building on the arguments of Chapter Three, the chapter first outlines the role played by commitments to democracy promotion within the frameworks of the EMP and ENP. In so doing, the

chapter argues that the EU seeks to promote democracy in Tunisia on a number of different levels, with strategies operating at the multilateral and bilateral levels of the policy frameworks, and strategies designed to target a range of actors within Tunisian society itself. The first part of the chapter considers democracy promotion within both the multilateral and bilateral elements of the EMP and ENP. The second and third parts of the chapter consider some of the strategies by which the EU encourages democracy promotion within these policies. The strategies covered include conditionality, socialisation, judicial, economic and good governance reforms, and engagement with Tunisian civil society. These strategies either attempt to encourage reform of or reform by the Tunisian ruling elite, or seek to create a climate favourable to democratisation by targeting sectors outside the political elite. In so doing, the chapter outlines the influences of past processes of democratisation on EU policy in Tunisia and the Mediterranean, and highlights how methods that promote ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ democratisations are employed alongside each other.

The next chapter then assesses the implementation of these strategies. In particular, Chapter Five argues that the EU is reluctant to use conditionality in Tunisia, and reveals a number of instances where the Tunisian government has blocked or frustrated reforms demanded by the EMP or ENP. In each case, conditionality was not exercised by the Union. Conversely, the EU has been willing to implement economic reform, yet as the chapter argues, these reforms have not resulted in an improvement in the governance of Tunisia’s economic sector. Indeed, these reforms may in fact be worsening the level of competition and participation in the Tunisian economy, creating a culture of crony capitalism controlled by individuals close to the ruling elite. The next two parts of the chapter consider the issues of civil society reform and socialisation in Tunisia. The chapter argues that the Tunisian state’s persistent involvement in the affairs of civil society organisations frustrates any constructive activity by the EU in this area. The chapter focuses on some of the Tunisian organisations that are included in EU-sponsored regional civil society initiatives, and illustrates the challenges faced by these organisations in the daily running of their programmes. The final part of the chapter examines the use of socialisation as a means of reforming the practices and norms of the Tunisian elite. Specifically, it argues that a history of cooperation between this elite and Europe represents a tradition of socialisation, a tradition which has failed to achieve any qualitative democratisation of the Tunisian political system. Moreover, the final section argues that the very visible engagement of the Tunisian elite by the EU might in fact be legitimising exclusivist trends in the policies and discourses of the Tunisian regime.

With Chapter Five having highlighted identified very specific practical challenges to EU democracy-promoting methods in Tunisia, Chapter Six addresses issues with the theoretical approach taken by the Union. The chapter makes two key arguments. Firstly, the chapter highlights the relevance of the wider regional context to understanding the Union's reticence over pushing its democracy promotion policy in Tunisia. Building on arguments proposed in Chapter Three, the chapter argues that the EU locates Tunisia within a Mediterranean that is discursively constructed as a region both violent and where threats to the Union's security prevail. Tunisia is constructed as part of this region, indistinguishable from its neighbours in characteristics, and consequently becoming subject to policy frameworks whose objectives are regional rather than Tunisian in scope. Consequently, when the EU talks about the Mediterranean, it also talks about Tunisia. Central to the EU's policy responses to the supposed threats in the Mediterranean involves the promotion of values, values which are regularly mentioned in EU discourse. As this chapter argues, however, this emphasis on values mirrorssimilar statements by the Tunisian government, and represents one of a number of points of discursive convergence between the EU and the Tunisian government. A further point of convergence is both actors' identification of political Islam as a threat to their interests, a point which has led to policies designed to exclude Islamists from political processes. Finally, the chapter considers how the policies of the EU and the Tunisian government have also converged to seek security and stability above all other objectives. The thesis begins, however, by looking at the context of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia.

PART 1 – THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

The evolution of a one-party system: the structures of government in modern Tunisia

This chapter explores the influence of different episodes in Tunisia's history on current practices in Tunisian politics, arguing that the methods of rule used by Bin Ali's current government represent the culmination of a long process of consolidating power in the hands of the state. Europeans have often played important roles in this process of consolidation. Indeed, many authors have emphasised the importance of the European colonial period on the politics of the Arab Middle East. Ayubi goes so far as to argue that 'no proper understanding of the nature and characteristics of the contemporary Middle Eastern state can be obtained without reference to the colonial legacy in the region.'¹⁴¹ It has arguably had the greatest single influence on the region during the last two centuries; the nineteenth a period of imperial expansion whilst the twentieth saw its withdrawal.¹⁴² Certainly, many of the states themselves are fabrications of colonialism, created in London and Paris by groups of men huddled over maps with rulers. Yet as the walk through the heart of Tunis demonstrates, others have centuries of history and independent development, both under external imperial rule and as an independent state.¹⁴³ Indeed, much of the development which has resulted in the modern Tunisian state occurred prior to and following the colonial era. Likewise, to attribute the problems of Tunisia to the colonial period alone would be misleading and ignorant of the development of Tunisian politics since decolonisation.

Nevertheless, despite its distinctive development, Tunisia does share certain attributes of government with its Arab neighbours. Many of the current regimes in the region trace their origins back to movements that led the independence struggle against the European

¹⁴¹ Ayubi, 1995, p. 86.

¹⁴² See for example Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, London: Faber and Faber, 1991, pp. 315-332; Mansfield, 2003.

¹⁴³ For an outline of the strength of the medieval and late-medieval dynasties based in Tunis, see Hourani, 1991, p. 95.

powers.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, many Arab states, Tunisia included, have experienced few changes in government since independence, and their independence struggles have become mythologised as central to national culture and identity. Some analysts have suggested that this is due to the presence of a distinctive politics in the region; an Arab brand in fact.¹⁴⁵ This ‘brand’ refers to the limited democratic space found within Arab societies, enforced through similar methods but to varying extent from state to state.

Yet perhaps we should not see the Arab world as monolithic; is it not in fact comprised of a number of different states, each with its own political traditions and history? Owen for example identifies two distinctive types of regime: ‘socialist republics’ and ‘liberal monarchies’.¹⁴⁶ To Ayubi, the region consists of radical nationalist-populist revolutionary (or *thawra*, meaning revolution, for short) regimes on the one hand, and kin- and financial capital-based monarchies (or *tharwa*, wealth) on the other.¹⁴⁷ Sadiki suggests even more types of government, from ‘revolutionary one-man or one-party states’ to ‘traditional clan-based systems’, and ‘pseudo-liberal regimes’ to a ‘pseudo-constitutional monarchy’ in the case of Morocco.¹⁴⁸ Regimes are associated with and conditioned by various institutional and administrative practices, the particular societal relations within each state’s territory, different economic structures, the decisions of the elites, and the different political cultures that exist in the region.

In this literature, Tunisia is usually located alongside regimes variously identified as socialist, populist, revolutionary, or single-party. The states include Syria, Algeria, Egypt and Saddam Hussein-era Iraq. Typically, these regimes in particular contain remnants of or can trace their origins to the independence movements that opposed the European colonial powers in the early twentieth century. During the independence struggles, groups and individuals which went on to form the governments of these states developed fiercely nationalist discourses to challenge the colonial power.¹⁴⁹ The struggle has often left an indelible mark on the politics of these states, and its relevance to Tunisia will be addressed in this chapter.

Furthermore, these states have for much of the last half-century or so been dominated by a single party. In Tunisia’s case, it has been the *Parti Socialiste Destourien* (the ‘Destourian Socialist Party’ or PSD) and its successor, the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD – Democratic Constitutional Party). Algeria

¹⁴⁴ Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Camau and Geisser, 2003, pp. 68-69.

¹⁴⁶ Owen, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Ayubi, 1995, pp. 447-448.

¹⁴⁸ Sadiki, 2004, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

meanwhile has experienced the *Front de Libération National* (FLN –National Liberation Front); Syria and pre-2003 Iraq their respective Ba’ath parties; whilst Egypt has seen a line of leftist-Arabist parties, including the Arab Socialist Union, the National Union, and the National Liberation Rally. The official discourses of these parties remind their populations of the links between the parties and the independence movements.¹⁵⁰ This chapter considers to what extent Tunisia can be considered as a one-party state.

This chapter therefore is an analysis of the processes of government in Tunisia which have come under scrutiny via the EU’s democratisation efforts. By considering three distinct periods in Tunisian history, the chapter argues that current practices of government are grounded in a historical context. The chapter argues that in fact, the current Bin Ali government deploys strategies developed and honed during previous periods in Tunisian history, arguably perfecting the notion of uncontested government. Thus, an analysis of this historical context not only outlines those practices which may help or hinder democratisation, but also summarises political development in modern Tunisia. The chapter begins by analysing the process of state consolidation and national independence in Tunisia, arguing that the centralising administrative reforms of both nineteenth century Tunisians and the French colonial administration provided the foundation and infrastructure of the post-independence authoritarian state. The chapter then highlights four episodes in the late Bourguiba period during which government strategies to combat opposition groups became evident. The chapter concludes by considering Bin Ali’s presidency, noting how the traditional Tunisian opposition has effectively been eradicated by the weight of accumulated government methods.

The emergence of modern Tunisia

The French troops that landed in Tunisia in the early 1880s encountered a centralised Tunisian state, administered from the splendid former Ottoman palaces of Tunis. Indeed, a separate political-territorial entity on what is now known as Tunisia can be traced back to the Roman province of Africa, or, arguably, to the Carthaginian state destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. However, the structures of the modern Tunisian state emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, based on the crumbling infrastructure of the old Ottoman province.

Beginning with the pre-French period, this section considers Tunisian state consolidation. Much of this process was influenced by political ideas emanating from Europe, and it was this period which established a tradition of cultural exchange between Tunisia and

¹⁵⁰ Pratt, 2007, p. 3.

Europe. It was the political infrastructure established during this period which the French inherited in the late nineteenth century. The section then considers the structures of authority put in place by the French, noting their emphasis on fostering the cultural links between the colony and the European *métropole*. State infrastructure was further centralised during this period, providing the basis for the state to come. Indeed, as the section later argues, the Tunisian independence movement was based on a successful blend of French modernity and a Tunisian Arab-Islamic identity. The section concludes by considering two of the products of the independence struggle: the new Tunisian state, and its charismatic ruler, Habib Bourguiba.

Early-modern Tunisian state consolidation

The independent modern Tunisian state can trace its origins to the turn of the eighteenth century. At this time, centralised Ottoman control over its empire was weakening, largely due to the failure of an economic model heavily reliant on continual imperial conquest. With a stronger Europe preventing such expansion, power within the empire began to shift to local notables.¹⁵¹ In Tunisia, a Turco-Tunisian Husainid dynasty was in power from 1705 and by this period direct Ottoman control existed in name only. The head of state or ‘bey’ (a dynastic regent) had his power-base centred in the old Ottoman provincial capital, Tunis.¹⁵² The population was sociologically fairly homogeneous, the majority being Malikite Sunni Muslims of an Arab identity. Minorities included Arabised Berbers (far more Arabised than elsewhere in the Maghreb), Italians, Maltese and a large and fully-integrated Jewish community.¹⁵³ The beylical elite themselves were of Turkish or Circassian origin, but were, like the rest of the population, immersed in the Arabic language and Islamic culture.¹⁵⁴ Then as now, the fertile *Sāhel* (the coastal plains) provided much of the economic wealth of the country, whilst the population remained centred on the traditional village community.

The Tunisian population was divided into a number of different classes. The rural population, the *afāqī*, had a significantly different identity to that of the urban dwellers,

¹⁵¹ Simon Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, pp. 48-49. Also, for an outline of the importance of the Napoleonic period, see Yapp, 1987, pp. 47-58.

¹⁵² Perkins, 2004, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Moore, 1965, pp. 8-40; Murphy, 1999, pp. 44-45. The Jewish community had been in Tunisia since their expulsion from Granada, Spain, following the 15th century conquest of the region by the Spanish crown. Tunisia’s northern coastline is dotted with Andalucian-styled villages, built by these Iberian refugees following their cleansing from what became Spain. The Jews remained a large part of Tunisian life until 1967, when anger over the Israeli-launched ‘Six-Day War’ drove many to seek safety in Israel proper. However, a minority remain, and interviews in Tunisia suggest that they are a valued part of the community. One source described how, in the wake of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, Tunisian Muslim merchants flocked to protect their Jewish counterparts when other parts of society threatened to harm their property and persons.

¹⁵⁴ Murphy, 1999, p. 44.

and tribal allegiances prevailed in many parts.¹⁵⁵ A rural middle class had developed around olive oil and agricultural production, whilst in Tunis itself, *grandes familles* (the wealthy urban elite) lived their lives fairly separated from the merchant and handicraft classes (*baladī*). The third principal urban class was the *ulama* or Islamic clerical class, who through their religious authority, held some influence over the population, often engaging in the country's political life.

Political development accelerated during the nineteenth century. Ahmad Bey al-Husaini (1837-55) centralised and consolidated state power, developing a system of 'patrimonial domination' and launching a series of social and economic modernisation processes.¹⁵⁶ These were designed to emulate in Tunisia the successes of European industrialisation and modernisation, thoroughly encouraged by Ahmad's adulation of European methods and technology.¹⁵⁷ Ahmad 'very much enjoyed the fuss that French officials made over him in according him the trappings of sovereignty'.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, Sadiki goes so far as to claim that Tunisia attempted an 'ephemeral emulation of European political notions and institutions'.¹⁵⁹

Central to these reforms were those which concerned the military. A new officer corps was developed around a military academy in Tunis' Bardo Palace, and trained by European instructors. Later, Ahmad employed conscription to swell the numbers of his army,¹⁶⁰ thus uniting both elite and peasantry alike within the same institution. This created a body of professional fighting men who swore their allegiance to the ruler and to the Tunisian state, establishing what was to become a long tradition of exchange between the Tunisian and European military elite.

The role of the new military was twofold. The first was to defend the Tunisian state from external powers. In 1830 French began their military occupation of neighbouring Algeria. Constantine, the easternmost province of Algeria, had strong economic, social and political connections with Tunisia, and this fell in the year that Ahmad took power.¹⁶¹ To the east, a decaying Ottoman Empire had reoccupied the province of Tripoli (modern-day Libya) in 1835 in a desperate attempt to restore imperial authority.¹⁶² Prior to this, Tripoli had been governed by a semi-autonomous local dynasty, the Qaramanli family, in a

¹⁵⁵ Rikke Hostrup Haugbølle, *Democracy in Tunisia: National Identity and Tribal Structures*, unpublished paper presented at British International Studies Association workshop entitled 'Europe's Legacy? From Colonialism to Democracy Promotion', Odense, Denmark, 22 April 2007.

¹⁵⁶ Hermassi, 1972, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ Perkins, 2004, p. 13.

¹⁵⁹ Sadiki, 2004, p. 203.

¹⁶⁰ Perkins, 2004, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 13.

situation very similar to that of Tunisia.¹⁶³ The military's second role was internal. Armed with modern European weapons, it was used to quell rebellious tribes, whose chiefs and notables were later integrated into the state hierarchy as local dignitaries. An extent of tribal pluralism remained however, sometimes serving as a useful means of ensuring economic, physical and psychological security in a fast-changing society.¹⁶⁴ Ahmad therefore came to power with a modern European military power expanding on his western border, a resurgent Ottoman Empire attempting to reclaim its hold on its provinces in the east, and a number of rebellious tribes seeking to challenge the state's authority. His military reforms however addressed these concerns and strengthened the authority of the centralised state as a result.

However, modernisation came at a cost, and the expense incurred led to increasing debts to European creditors.¹⁶⁵ A gradual increase in the number of European merchants and traders during the nineteenth century was soon augmented by bankers and creditors as the Tunisian state dug itself further into debt. In 1869, the Bey was forced to accept French, British and Italian control over his financial affairs;¹⁶⁶ a serious undermining of Tunisia's sovereignty. Further military, land, and tax reforms, and developments to the education sector under Prime Minister Khair al-Din (1873-7) redressed the balance to an extent.¹⁶⁷ This included the establishment of the College Sadiki. This became Tunisia's principal education establishment, responsible for the education of the majority of Tunisia's governing elite in the twentieth century. Ultimately however, the reforms failed due to official corruption and incompetence, and the financial problems deepened.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the reforms demonstrated that implementing a modernisation programme based on European values was possible in Tunisia, convincing parts of the population of the potential of such reforms.

The economic problems associated with the reforms were crucial, and scholars illustrate their importance to the French invasion. Perkins for example emphasises how the 1881 occupation was portrayed by the French as efforts by them to provide assistance to the Tunisian state in times of severe financial crisis.¹⁶⁹ Murphy argues along similar lines, suggesting that the prospect of 'imminent financial collapse' was the French excuse for landing its troops.¹⁷⁰ Through the enormous debts they incurred, Ahmad's reforms

¹⁶³ Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 16-20.

¹⁶⁴ Sadiki, 2002c, p. 500.

¹⁶⁵ Perkins, 2004, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 34.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 31-32.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 40-42.

¹⁷⁰ Murphy, 1999, p. 43.

inadvertently provided the necessary excuse for French intervention. Thus, the new military he founded to defend Tunisian independence ironically became a cause for the loss of that independence. Despite the French invasion however, both he and Khair al-Din 'had left a tradition which argued that modernisation was not incompatible with indigenous culture and religious beliefs.'¹⁷¹

The Tunisia encountered by French forces in the 1880s therefore contained core networks of political association and a shared cultural heritage, and was governed by a newly-consolidated centralised state. The reforms of the nineteenth century signified a major refocusing of Tunisia's political culture and state institutions towards European models, and introduced the Tunisian elite and thinking classes to European trends and ideas. Moreover, the Tunisian state had already displayed its willingness to use force against dissenters and rebellious groups within its territory, and to show clemency to those tribal leaders willing to cooperate.

The structures of French rule

European involvement both in Tunisia and in the wider Arab Middle East region took-off in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. By this time the region had been, in technological and financial terms at least, 'losing ground' to Europe for a century or so.¹⁷² Simultaneously, Tunisia was becoming increasingly self-autonomous, with its rulers implementing wide-ranging reform programmes, modernising their societies and economies. European imperial control however practically stopped indigenous industrialisation.¹⁷³

Under colonialism governments across the region were forced to develop along European lines, and mass-produced European goods flooded Arab markets at prices that were simply impossible for the indigenous economies to match.¹⁷⁴ Economic policies favoured the colonial powers and economic independence all but disappeared.¹⁷⁵ The policy of expanding and legalising the private holding of land by officials and local sheikhs loyal to the coloniser restricted precious money from being reinvested in local industrial or agricultural development. Furthermore, the vast increase in sea-borne trade with Europe demanded a restructuring of the economies. Sectors of the economy such as infrastructure and construction saw massive growth during this period in order to serve the increasing trade with Europe. To sustain this growth, workers were reallocated from other parts of

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁷² Pratt, 2007, p. 26.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁷⁵ Owen, 2004, p. 14.

the indigenous economy that were themselves in need of further development.¹⁷⁶ In Tunisia, as elsewhere, European countries justified colonial policies as attempts to aid in the development of the occupied countries. This development was in turn designed to enable these territories to repay debts owed to Europeans.¹⁷⁷ In Tunisia, the French administration implemented a programme for economic development and modernisation.¹⁷⁸ This involved a large influx of settlers, with a quarter of a million registered by 1956, just under seven percent of the Tunisian population.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, colonies such as Tunisia ceased to produce for the needs of their population; producing instead that which the colonial power deemed was needed for its own market to flourish.

Other reforms targeted the political administration of Tunisia, and were arguably equally far-reaching. The administrative reforms following the 1882 appointment of Paul Cambon as France's first Resident General cut all ties to the Ottoman period and practices.¹⁸⁰ French officials were appointed to key positions in newly reformed government ministries, and, initially at least, very few Tunisians were employed within the new ministries; only gradually did the colonial administration allow some French-influenced and French trained Tunisians into their ranks.¹⁸¹ Yet despite the creation of localised administration structures in Tunisia, ultimate control remained in Paris.¹⁸² In addition, any criticism of the central authority was also curtailed. In 1926, Resident General Lucien Saint introduced decrees restricting personal freedoms. These forbade any criticism of either French or Tunisian government officials, both in public and in private. These measures also extended government scrutiny over the French-language press, something until that period which had been restricted to the Arabic press.¹⁸³ The French therefore put in place a system of control designed to stifle opposition to their rule, and to assimilate the population into its administration.

The centralisation of the Tunisian state also continued under colonial rule as the French monopolised the use of force under the colonial administration, and the policing and recruitment capabilities of the central government were extended.¹⁸⁴ In a critique of France's general style of colonisation across the globe, Léopold de Saussure, brother of linguist Ferdinand and a 'naturalised' French naval officer serving in Indochina in the

¹⁷⁶ Ayubi, 1995, p. 91.

¹⁷⁷ Ilan Pappé, *The Modern Middle East*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 42.

¹⁷⁸ Yapp, 1987, pp. 247-248.

¹⁷⁹ Murphy, 1999, footnote 2, p. 43.

¹⁸⁰ Perkins, 2004, pp. 40-42.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 42.

¹⁸² Owen, 2004, p. 14.

¹⁸³ Perkins, 2004, pp. 88.

¹⁸⁴ Ayubi, 1995, p. 89.

1890s, referred to France's method of colonial rule as 'excessive centralisation'.¹⁸⁵ He argued that French culture itself has:

a tendency toward uniformity, simplicity and symmetry. An antipathy for all that is disparate, complex and unsymmetrical ... It has engendered the extreme centralisation of the administration.¹⁸⁶

Whilst this critique itself tends towards essentialism, de Saussure's observation of the hostility of the French method to dissenting forces is evident in Tunisia. Indeed, the institutions and practices of government which were established by the French and other Europeans across the MENA region were rooted in the liberal-rational concepts dominant in their own societies.¹⁸⁷ Yet the attempted wholesale imposition of European ideology on Tunisian society did not include the introduction of any form of contestable democratic government in Tunisia. Rather, the French chose to reform the existing monarchical system centred on the Bey. Elites were divided and their lines of patronage controlled. The French continued to recognise *grandes familles* of Tunis, albeit in a largely symbolic fashion, and involved them in the *Grand Conseil* established in 1907, whilst the Bey kept his position as a symbolic head of state.¹⁸⁸ As previously discussed however, overall control remained in Paris.

Finally, to differing extents, French colonialism in North Africa employed a policy of cultural assimilation, intending to turn Muslims into French citizens and incorporating their economy and society into that of the *métropole*.¹⁸⁹ There were clear differences in the application of the policy between each French-colonised Maghrebi state. Algeria and Tunisia were particularly affected by such an approach, but Morocco experienced a slightly different policy of 'association'.¹⁹⁰ Of the three, Tunisia appears to represent the middle ground in its treatment by the French authorities. Perhaps learning from their earlier experiences in Algeria, the French never considered Tunisia and Morocco to be part of France itself. However, Tunisia's population never received the political freedoms granted to Moroccans during the earlier stages of colonisation. 'Assimilation' however served to foster the previously established links between the Tunisian population and the French/European intellectual tradition. Thus, ties between parts of the elite and the colonial power were consolidated through a façade of cooperation placed on a European-modernist administrative reform programme.

¹⁸⁵ Léopold de Saussure, *Psychologie de la Colonisation Française dans ses Rapports avec les Sociétés Indigènes*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1899, p. 16. Cited in Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, p. 417.

¹⁸⁶ de Saussure, 1899, p. 307. Cited in Young, 2001, p. 417.

¹⁸⁷ Pratt, 2007, p. 27.

¹⁸⁸ Murphy, 1999, p. 43.

¹⁸⁹ Ayubi, 1995, p. 90.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 90.

The model of government established by the French in Tunisia therefore was exclusive, aspired to western notions of ‘civilisation’, and also provided only limited prospects for the Tunisian population in the running of their own territory. However, it also further centralised the administrative infrastructure of Tunisia and provided opportunities for numerous Tunisians to further explore European ideologies. Despite these circumstances, opposition to French rule flourished and, as the next part of this section will discuss, eventually gave birth to a political party that would go on to dominate post-independence Tunisian politics for decades.

The nationalist movement

A nationalist movement is one that Anthony Smith defines as ‘an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of an existing or potential “nation”’.¹⁹¹ Smith’s understanding of a ‘nation’ is also useful in this case, as he understands it to be ‘a named community of history and culture, possessing a unified territory, economy, mass education system and common legal rights.’¹⁹² Whilst open to criticism in some contexts,¹⁹³ this definition is particularly useful in the Tunisian context due to both the pre-colonial state consolidation processes (such as Ahmad Bey’s reforms) and the continued centralisation of administrative practices under the French (albeit not the economic reforms introduced by the French). Ethnonationalism meanwhile places a particular emphasis shared ethnicity within a community, which in turn entails commonalities of race, history and language.¹⁹⁴ The promotion of ethnonationalism is particularly useful if one seeks to promote the exclusive nature of nationalism, that is, to emphasise the ‘us’ and ‘them’. Due to the fairly homogenous nature of the Tunisian population (see above), ethnonationalism was to prove a particularly useful tool to the organisers of the independence struggle in Tunisia.

Popular support for the nationalist movement in Tunisia needed to overcome appreciation by many Tunisians of French rule, particularly to its commitment to modernisation.¹⁹⁵ In their eyes, the French merely built upon foundations laid with Ahmad and Khair al-Din’s earlier reforms.¹⁹⁶ The French did little to hamper and plenty to support such favourable sentiments, including the 1932-34 *tajnees* (naturalisation) campaigns as part of its assimilation programme.¹⁹⁷ Yet nationalist parties emerged nevertheless, some of the most

¹⁹¹ Anthony D. Smith, ‘The Origins of Nations’, in Vincent P. Pecora (ed.), *Nations and Identities*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 333-353, p. 335.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁹³ For example, when a ‘nation’ is not permitted to develop some of the features identified by Anthony Smith, such as a centralised education or legal system.

¹⁹⁴ Sadiki, 2002c, p. 500.

¹⁹⁵ Murphy, 1999, pp. 44-45.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁹⁷ Sadiki, 2002c, p. 501.

prominent being: the *Mouvement Jeune Tunisien* (Young Tunisian's Movement, or 'Young Tunisians') and its successor the *Parti Tunisien* (Tunisian Party); the *Destour* (Arabic for 'constitution') party; and thirdly, the later *Neo-Destour* party. Central to the three parties was a conflict over the extent to which practices and ideas gained from the encounter with the French and Europeans should determine the trajectory of the nationalist agenda.

The Young Tunisians were amongst the first to advocate Tunisian ethnonationalism as separate from colonial France,¹⁹⁸ and many of the Parti Tunisien members learnt their trade in its ranks.¹⁹⁹ The movement was modelled on the Young Turks movement that sought to reform the Ottoman Empire through a commitment to liberal-secular policies.²⁰⁰ Yet many members also appreciated the potential of the French as allies in their own attempts to modernise some of the traditional practices present in Tunisia. Such individuals often preferred a restructuring of the colonial model rather than independence.²⁰¹ Such sentiment echoed those found in neighbouring Algeria where gallicised Algerians argued against independence in the fear that this would only strengthen the grip of 'Muslim feudalism' over the territory.²⁰² During the establishment of the Parti Tunisien, founder members such as 'Abd al-Aziz Tha'albi, Hassan Guellaty, and Khairallah Bin Mustafa believed that their western education and commitment to liberal thought – obtained under French-instigated reforms – entitled them to a place in shaping Tunisia's future.²⁰³ Perhaps inevitably, the Parti Tunisien was to split following un-reconcilable differences between its founder members over the extent to which criticism for Tunisia's post-First World War problems should be directed at the French.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the Young Tunisians and Parti Tunisien further developed the tradition of Tunisian political figures championing European modernisation. These however combined this with a new Tunisian ethnonationalist agenda.

When the Destour party was established in 1920, a number of its members turned to Arab nationalist movements elsewhere in the region for their inspiration. Membership included many from the traditional Mamluk elite who were unable to benefit from the educational opportunities experienced by many Parti Tunisien activists, in addition to others from the *baldi* and the *ulama*, centred on the Zaytouna mosque-university.²⁰⁵ The executive

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.501.

¹⁹⁹ Perkins, 2004, p. 76.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 69; Murphy, p. 45.

²⁰¹ Entelis, 2007, p. 517.

²⁰² Young, 2001, p. 419.

²⁰³ Perkins, 2004, p. 76.

²⁰⁴ See for example the debate over Guellaty's reluctance to openly criticise the French administration in Perkins, 2004, p. 77.

²⁰⁵ Murphy, 1999, pp, 45-46.

committee itself was composed primarily of artisans, government clerks, progressive *ulama*, businessmen and landowners. Most were formerly-respected public figures who had suffered some form of loss of power, income or prestige, and generally despised the success of the Young Tunisians who were seen as upstarts or lapdogs of the French.²⁰⁶ Yet whilst the influence of the intellectual elite of the Zaytouna helped the party to emphasise its distinctiveness to more pro-French Tunisians such as the Parti Tunisien, it also had its drawbacks. Many of the religious elite rejected modernisation as a foreign imposition, wishing instead for an Islamic renaissance.²⁰⁷ This conservative core increasingly steered the Destour along a particularly traditional trajectory in what was a fast-changing inter-war world.

Soon, the remoteness of the Destour leadership from the daily lives of Tunisians became apparent. This was demonstrated clearly when the party failed to stop the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (General Confederation of Tunisian Workers, or CGTT) from being forcibly dissolved by the French in 1925. Murphy argues that this failure to support Tunisia's first indigenous trade union was crucial to fostering the perception that the party was failing to engage with the masses.²⁰⁸ Moreover, this was despite the involvement of many party members in the establishment of this union.²⁰⁹ As trouble between the CGTT and the French administration worsened, many Destour members distanced themselves from the struggle for fear of incarceration. Perkins argues that prison 'intimidated most Destourians, who saw it only as a shameful and humiliating experience to be avoided.'²¹⁰ This failure by the Destour to support fellow Tunisians in a dispute with the colonial power highlighted the ideological differences within the nationalist movement. It also highlighted the need for a different organisation that might combine nationalist concerns with those of Tunisia's workers.

This was not lost on some members of the Destour, and in 1934 a group of well-educated young Destourians broke away to form their own party, the Neo-Destour. Led by Habib Bourguiba, they based the nationalist struggle on a combination of a familiarity with French culture, a commitment to a similar modernism to that of the colonial power, and a commitment to support the Tunisian masses.²¹¹ Bourguiba himself was a French-trained lawyer educated at the Sorbonne who benefited from the colonial educational system for his position in society; a '*francisant*' as Sadiki describes him.²¹² Unlike some Tunisians,

²⁰⁶ Perkins, 2004, pp. 77-79.

²⁰⁷ Murphy, 1999, p. 46.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 46.

²⁰⁹ Perkins, 2004, p. 85.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 85.

²¹¹ Murphy, 46.

²¹² Sadiki, 2002c, p. 501.

Bourguiba and his Francophile allies did not reject French culture, and developed close links to the French left in the 1930s.²¹³ Their vision of Tunisian nationalism was reminiscent of the great nineteenth century reformers who championed European modernity as a means to develop Tunisia. The party even modelled itself on the French Socialist Party, and instead of relying on the old Tunisian elite for its leadership, it turned to educated professionals from the Sahel.²¹⁴ Many of these were educated at the College Sadiki and at French universities, training as doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. The party was therefore established around a particularly *francisant* core very different to the mixture of Mamluk, *ulama* and *baldi* which dominated its predecessor the Destour.

In a further break from the Destour, the Neo-Destour strongly supported organised labour, backing the establishment in 1946 of the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UGTT - Tunisian Workers' General Union) by Farhat Hached.²¹⁵ By doing so, it capitalised on the Destour's failure to support the workers in earlier disputes. Moreover, the Neo-Destour proved to be excellent organisers, establishing local committees throughout Tunisia, attracting members from a wide cross-section of society. Importantly, this inclusiveness portrayed the party as a democratic force,²¹⁶ and contrasted starkly to the exclusiveness of the Destour.

A final important factor to the Neo-Destour's success as a nationalist movement was its ability to mobilise large numbers of the population to its cause. The links with the trade unions gave access to the working classes, whilst the engagement of smaller organisations and professional associations extended the party's reach even further. Party cells were established throughout Tunisia, reinforcing the party's message and presence amongst the population. Their establishment in deprived rural areas neglected by the Destour greatly enhanced the party's popular image, whilst the sheer number of cells facilitated quick mobilisation of its supporters by the leadership.²¹⁷ This was used to great effect, as party activists infiltrated and disrupted meetings held by rivals, using physical intimidation to deter their supporters.²¹⁸ Tha'albi for example found it very difficult to mobilise his support on his return from exile in 1937 due to such tactics.²¹⁹ Thereby the Neo-Destour combined excellent infrastructure and mobilisation capabilities, strong union support, and intimidation of opponents to establish itself as the primary force of the late independence movement.

²¹³ Ibid, p. 502.

²¹⁴ Murphy, 1999, pp. 46-47.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 47.

²¹⁷ Perkins, 2004, pp. 95-96.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 101 and p. 128.

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 101.

Tunisia eventually gained its independence from France on 20 March 1956, following weeks of negotiations between a delegation led by Bourguiba and French officials in Paris. Bourguiba assumed the office of prime minister when the first independent Tunisian cabinet for 75 years was formed on 11 April 1956. The elections which followed not only provided Tunisia with a new government, but also showed a glimpse of how the issue of government would be determined in future. All 98 seats in the new parliament were won by pro-Neo-Destour candidates, and sixteen of the seventeen cabinet ministers came from its ranks.²²⁰ Within a year, the parliament had voted to abolish the monarchy, thereby making Tunisia a republic, and had elected Bourguiba as its first president and head of state.

The 'supreme combatant'

What system? I *am* the system!²²¹

Bourguiba's grandiose claim aptly illustrates the nature of the president's self-promotion. Buoyed by his success in the independence struggle, Bourguiba went on to dominate Tunisian politics for the next three decades. Even in the few weeks after independence however, glimpses of what type of politics was to come were evident during the first post-independence election, contested in the euphoria and chaos which succeeded the withdrawal of the French colonial power.

The election's proximity to the date of independence left little time for any party to devise a comprehensive electoral agenda. Thus, the Neo-Destour was able to win the election without any great ideological agenda, but rather simply on the basis that it had led the struggle for independence.²²² Indeed, one could argue that the Neo-Destour did not actually *need* any such agenda, so great was the capital it had gained from its triumph against the French.²²³ People flocked to the party's ranks to the extent that by 1957 the Neo-Destour could boast of a staggering 600,000 members – almost double the number it claimed only two years previously.²²⁴ Furthermore, Bourguiba had persuaded head of state Amin Bey to configure the electoral system to the Neo-Destour's benefit.²²⁵ This ensured a far more long-term guarantee of Neo-Destour political dominance of the Tunisian political system than that offered by any post-independence 'bounce'.

Nevertheless, other political forces were present in Tunisia after independence, most notably in the figure Salah Bin Yusuf and his supporters. Bin Yusuf, a former secretary-

²²⁰ Murphy, 1999, p. 49.

²²¹ Habib Bourguiba, quoted in Ayubi, 1995, p. 204, original emphasis.

²²² Perkins, 2004, p. 130.

²²³ See for example Murphy, 1999, p. 51; Perkins, 2004, p. 135.

²²⁴ Perkins, 2004, p. 133.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 131.

general of the Neo-Destour favoured a more pan-Arabist approach to the pro-European Bourguiba,²²⁶ and counted former Destour party activists, disaffected Neo-Destourians, conservatives, and parts of the Zaytouna-led clergy amongst his supporters.²²⁷ Indeed, despite the Neo-Destour's victory, clear opposition to both its agenda and its gerrymandering was evident in Tunisia even this soon after independence. For example, abstention rates from the elections reached 71 percent in Jerba, with even the capital Tunis seeing 41 percent of the electorate refusing to participate.²²⁸ Discrediting these forces became crucial for Bourguiba's attempts to consolidate his position as leader of the Tunisian government.

In order to do so, Bourguiba and his allies did not wish to rely entirely on their success in the independence struggle, as Bin Yusuf himself had been involved in the struggle. However, Bourguiba did take advantage of the framework of the independence movement to mobilise support for the Neo-Destour. After independence, Bourguiba frequently exploited the network of local party offices and volunteers which so successfully mobilised the population in the nationalist struggle, mobilising popular support for his own political purposes.²²⁹ The potential of such mobilisation was enormous: at one stage, the number of party cells scattered throughout Tunisia stood at a staggering 1,830, and even after a post-independence reduction, some 1,000 remained.²³⁰ To this could be added strong links with the UGTT and other unions, and personal contacts between party officials and others in their various professions.²³¹ This created a party unlike any other in Tunisia, and, in case this formidable machine was not enough to secure the Neo-Destour's hegemony over the political system, all other political parties were banned in 1963.

All sorts of national organisations flourished under Bourguiba, ostensibly catering for the interests of everyone from women to farmers to bankers. Bourguiba was shaping Tunisia as a *thawra* state: a state based on a feverish nationalist discourse and a revolutionising of the domestic political and economic sphere.²³² Yet, this revolution had its limits. The national organisations for example were strongly advised that they should not allow their zeal in protecting their own interest threaten the greater interest of national unity.²³³ Challenges from within the ruling party were pre-empted by internal reforms to the party in the first decade of government. These reforms further centralised the party structure

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 126.

²²⁷ Entelis, 2007, p. 519.

²²⁸ Perkins, p. 131.

²²⁹ Murphy, 1999, p. 51.

²³⁰ Perkins, 2004, p. 133.

²³¹ In the mid- to late-1950s, a clash occurred between Bourguiba and the charismatic leader of the UGTT, Ahmad Bin Salah. This brought a clampdown and restructuring on union activities by the state, but eventually Salah re-entered the fold, becoming a prominent government minister in the 1960s.

²³² For more on the concept of a *thawra* state, see Ayubi, 1995, pp. 447-448.

²³³ Murphy, 1999, p. 54.

under its president (also Bourguiba), and increased the power of cabinet ministers over other party members. Moreover, party congresses were limited to one every three years, and many local party federations were stifled.²³⁴ In return, only party members would be awarded the most lucrative positions in the new Tunisia.²³⁵ Thus a formidable and well-oiled machine could be mobilised at Bourguiba's whim to galvanise popular support for his decisions without the fear that the machine developed a mind of its own.

The nationalist struggle provided more than merely an infrastructure for post-independence rule for Bourguiba. The Neo-Destour started linking Tunisian national identity with party policy and with Bourguiba as an individual, a process that continued when the party changed its name to the PSD in 1964. An increasing personality cult surrounding the president was promulgated in the country, with no little help from the president himself. Bourguiba intermittently cast himself as the 'patriarch, teacher and disciplinarian' of his people;²³⁶ a 'father of the nation' figure. For three decades, he dubbed himself '*al-mujahid al-akbar*' (the supreme combatant),²³⁷ signifying perhaps his ability to triumph over all adversity. The main roads at the heart of countless towns and cities throughout Tunisia were re-named 'Avenue Habib Bourguiba', and the president's image appeared on street corners, in official buildings and overlooked children at their school desks. Camau and Geisser compare Bourguiba's style of leadership with the traditional Arab figure of the *zā'im*: a figure that intercedes or responds on the behalf of a number of other weaker individuals.²³⁸ Furthermore, the *zā'im* is a charismatic leader who acquires an almost spiritual significance amongst his (the *zā'im* being male) people. Camau and Geisser compare Bourguiba to Saad Zaghlul, the Egyptian nationalist leader who campaigned for independence from the British in the 1910s and 1920s. Zaghlul was considered by his people as the *zā'im al-umma* (leader of the community), a term with clear religious significance.²³⁹ By promoting himself in a similar image, Bourguiba integrated traditional symbolism into his public persona, further diversifying his claims of legitimacy.

Combining this self-aggrandisement with his brand of Tunisian nationalism, Bourguiba promoted 'a sense of belonging to a new nation-state which could be articulated through the party and his person' as Murphy puts it.²⁴⁰ State hegemony was consolidated in the twin notions of *l'État-patron* (State as patron) and *l'État-parti* (State as party).²⁴¹ The

²³⁴ Ibid, pp. 51-52.

²³⁵ Perkins, 2004, p. 133.

²³⁶ Ibid, p. 130.

²³⁷ Ayubi, 1995, p. 204; Perkins, 2004, p. 130.

²³⁸ Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 79.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Murphy, 1999, p. 50.

²⁴¹ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 63.

state was everything, but Bourguiba and the party were the state. National unity was once emphasised as the struggle for national independence gave way to a new struggle for modernisation: '*la lutte contre le sous-développement*' (the struggle for development). However, the promotion of national unity of any sort poses problems to democratic ideals which demand contestation and difference. Pratt argues that in the Arab world, the nationalist movements' discourse 'acted to erase social differences, yet, simultaneously, it constructed new hierarchies of social relations by privileging one identity over others.'²⁴² The interests of groups below the level of the nation were subsumed under the greater cause, their demands put to one side.²⁴³ This powerful combination of rhetoric, revolutionary zeal, and nationalist fervour successfully restricted the development of opposition forces. For his part, Bin Yusuf's challenge quickly faded, and he fled Tunisia to Cairo, where he was assassinated by an unknown assailant in 1961. Thus, as Bourguiba moved away from the inclusiveness of the ethnonationalist independence campaign, the Tunisian state allowed an ever smaller space for political opposition.

In sum, since Tunisia's independence from the Ottoman Empire in the early eighteenth century, a number of different political forces have stamped their authority on its territory. Their successive administrations slowly consolidated a centralised Tunisian state, with its own administration, institutions, and practices. Whilst undoubtedly Tunisian, this state also drew on decades of ideological exchange with Europe, an exchange amplified by the impact of direct European rule from the late nineteenth century. The notions of reform and modernisation in Tunisia and developed a uniquely European flavour

Therefore, whilst the early years of postcolonial Tunisia were a period of consolidation for Bourguiba and his government, this consolidation took place within the framework of a well-established Tunisian state. Bourguiba and his followers had achieved their goal of Tunisian independence; an achievement which provided their leaders with enormous political capital amongst their populations. This movement had challenged a major European power and seen its wishes realised. In so doing, the movement had also shattered the power-base of traditional indigenous elites, and established a secular Western-educated Sahelian elite at the head of Tunisia's new political landscape. Dissenting voices from within the nationalist movement were stifled and widespread popular support was obtained by the overwhelming - and by now triumphant - discourses of independence and national development. As Sadiki argues, Bourguiba had begun a practice of essentialising rival centres of power, isolating them from the mainstream.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Pratt, 2007, p. 34.

²⁴³ Joel Benin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 98.

²⁴⁴ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 63.

Yet other challenges would arise, challenges which would to which a simple rallying cry for national unity in the face of adversity would not be a sufficient response. The methods used by the government to keep their hands on power serve as a lesson in authoritarian government, and the next section considers some of these methods.

The method (and madness) of Bourguiba's rule

As Bourguiba's position strengthened, reform programmes were accelerated, including the instalment of a new personal code which addressed the position of women in society, along with wide-ranging structural economic reforms designed to further modernise the country.²⁴⁵ By the time Bourguiba was eventually deposed in 1987 by his prime minister, Zine al Abidine Bin Ali, he had shaped most aspects of Tunisian life in the postcolonial period. His party, the Neo-Destour (and later, the PSD) had become exceptionally successful at maintaining its hegemonic position with Tunisian politics, overcoming many challenges in what Zartman calls 'a textbook case of single-party rule'.²⁴⁶ It is significant that when Bourguiba was eventually deposed, his successor Bin Ali came from his own cabinet and not from wider Tunisian society.

This section considers four key episodes in Tunisian politics between the late 1970s and mid 1980s. These episodes highlight the practices and methods which maintained Bourguiba and the PSD's hold on power during this particularly troublesome period. It begins by considering the riots which marked the end of the economic liberalisation of the 1970s, then outlines a period of political liberalisation, opposition and government collusion, and, finally, the growth of a new opposition movement.

'Black Thursday'

The first of the episodes to be considered was also the first main challenge to the regime established by Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour/PSD since independence.²⁴⁷ Following a flirtation with socialist centralised economic policy in the 1960s under Minister of Planning and Finance Ahmad Bin Salah, pressure from PSD members brought his removal and a programme of economic liberalisation followed. This *infitah* (liberalisation or opening) created a more favourable climate for foreign investment,²⁴⁸ but was opposed by many in the UGTT who were supportive of Bin Salah. A key advocate of these reforms

²⁴⁵ For discussion of the personal code, see Nawel Gafsia, 'Bourguiba et le Code de Statue Personnel: Réflexions sur le Recours à l'*ijtihad*', in Camau and Geisser (eds.), 2004, pp. 69-78; Perkins, 2004, pp. 135-138. On the economic reforms, see Murphy, 1999, pp. 80-102; King, 2003, pp. 25-41.

²⁴⁶ I. William Zartman, 'The Conduct of Political Reform: The Path Toward Democracy', in Zartman (ed.), 1991, pp. 9-28, p. 12.

²⁴⁷ Willis, 2006, p. 139.

²⁴⁸ See Murphy, 1999, pp. 84-92; André Wilmots, *De Bourguiba à Ben Ali: L'Étonnant Parcours Économique de la Tunisie (1960-2000)*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003, pp. 39-46.

on the other hand was Hedi Nouira, an economic liberal keen on attracting foreign investment, and, until 1970, director of the Central Bank of Tunisia. Bourguiba made this close friend and fellow native of Monastir his prime minister, and, consequently Bourguiba's designated successor. Knowing the importance of foreign investment to the success of liberalisation, Bourguiba sought to present an image of stability to investors, and dealt harshly with any sign that the party was losing its grip on the society.²⁴⁹ By the late 1970s, this stern stance was becoming ever more apparent. In 1977, the regime arrested 33 members of the now exiled Bin Salah's unofficial *Mouvement de l'Unité Populaire* (Movement for Popular Unity or MUP) as a show of force against possible opposition.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it was becoming apparent that liberal economic policy was causing great unease amongst the population.

Worse still for the regime was the increasing tension between the PSD and its former ally, the UGTT. Habib Achour, UGTT secretary general and a Bourguiba appointee, faced the difficult task of defending his members' welfare in a new liberalised economy whilst ensuring that their discontent did not threaten PSD goals of greater modernisation.²⁵¹ When Achour resigned from the party to side with the UGTT, the move was perceived by Bourguiba as a challenge to his rule and the president responded with harsher clampdowns on the union's strikes.²⁵² A general strike across Tunisia on Thursday, 26 January 1978, became the first open confrontation between the UGTT and the government. The strike was also remarkable as the anti-government feeling also spread to the hitherto pro-government university campuses. The protestors' primary demand was for a dilution of the government's project of economic liberalism.²⁵³ The society-wide nature of the disaffection was particularly significant as it displayed the growing gulf between the agenda of the ruling elite and the needs of the people.

The government's response to the demonstrations was to send in the army and security forces; an act which inevitably led to casualties. Estimates of the deaths on 'Black Thursday', as it came to be known, vary from the forties to 200, with hundreds more arrested. Those detained included Achour and others from the UGTT leadership.²⁵⁴ The UGTT was forced to curb its criticism of the government and appointed a new, more compliant, leadership under the direction of Tajani Abid.²⁵⁵ Curiously, the official in

²⁴⁹ Murphy, 1999, p. 60.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 60.

²⁵¹ Perkins, 2004, p. 164.

²⁵² Murphy, 1999, p. 60.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 61.

²⁵⁴ In terms of the fatalities, Murphy (1999, p. 60) puts the figure at 51, Camau and Geisser (2003, p. 185) estimate 'around a hundred'; Perkins (2004, p. 165) suggests a number between 47 and 200, whilst Entelis (2007, p. 525) proposes 'at least a hundred'. All sources are unspecific on the number of arrests, but concur on some 'hundreds'.

²⁵⁵ Murphy, 1999, p. 60; Entelis, 2007, p. 525.

charge of the government's response to the demonstrations was the Director General of National Security, a post held at the time by General Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali.

'Black Thursday' is significant for Tunisian politics for four reasons. Firstly, it highlighted the fragility of Bourguiba's hold on power during periods of socio-economic hardship. This coincided with increasing pressures on the government from civil society, including, importantly, sectors which had traditionally been supportive of the PSD's agenda. By organising the demonstrations, the UGTT had demonstrated that unless kept happy by the government, it could seriously threaten Bourguiba's control over the country. For the first time a civil society actor had the necessary ability and support to undermine the regime's authority. Secondly, as Murphy argues, the whole episode had demonstrated how preoccupied the PSD leadership had become with preserving its own position in society, and that its members had 'lost touch with popular concerns.'²⁵⁶ More worryingly is the fact that the elite were so disconnected that they simply had no answer to the demonstrators other than to send in the troops. Thirdly, the events clearly demonstrated the regime's willingness to crush any large-scale civil disobedience with force. Any future demonstrations could expect to be met in similar fashion. Lastly, 'Black Thursday' began to forge Bin Ali's reputation as a ruthless operator, willing to use any means necessary to achieve his aims. In sum, in order to avoid such a response from the authorities, campaigners for political reform would need to adopt different strategies.

Mzali's opening

If 'Black Thursday' had demonstrated how the government intended to deal with mass expressions of opposition, the succeeding years offer a study in the politics of the different elites in Tunisia. This was a period in which Bourguiba was suffering from numerous health problems, and his prolonged absences elevated the importance of the prime minister's office.²⁵⁷ In early 1980, Nouria, the economically liberal prime minister, suffered a stroke and was forced to step down from his post. His replacement, Mohamed Mzali, was well aware of the resentment towards Nouria's economic policies, and came to office a matter of weeks after yet another example of the country's instability. Mzali's period as prime minister can be considered as two different phases: the first is one of consolidation and liberalisation; the second one of entrenchment and ascendancy by the PSD hardliners.

On the second anniversary of 'Black Thursday', an armed raid intended to trigger a general uprising seized government and security offices in the southern industrial town of

²⁵⁶ Murphy, 1999, p. 61.

²⁵⁷ Hamdi, 1998, p. 51; Perkins, 2004, p. 167.

Gafsa.²⁵⁸ Although suppressed by the authorities, Perkins highlights the significance of the support espoused by the leaders of the raid for the ideas of Bin Yusuf.²⁵⁹ Mzali must have appreciated the importance of the event, wherein Tunisians were willing to take up arms against the government and explicitly supporting one of Bourguiba's main rivals. Deciding that reconciliation was preferable to further confrontation, Mzali ordered the release of Achour and many of the 'Black Thursday' leaders. In addition, Mzali opened the door to cooperation between government and opposition groups. His first cabinet for example included a number of non-party members, and in his role as secretary general of the PSD, Mzali re-established the tight relationship between the party and the UGTT. Both organisations combined for the 1981 elections, forming the *Front National*, winning the elections with an astonishing 94.6 percent of the vote.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, Mzali persuaded Ahmad Mestiri, a liberal critic of the PSD who resigned in the late 1960s, back into the fold. Mzali then legalised Mestiri's *Mouvement des Démocrates Sociales* (MDS – Movement of Social Democrats), the *Parti Communiste Tunisien* (PCT- Tunisian Communist Party), and the *Parti d'Unité Populaire* (PUP – Popular Unity Party), allowing them to contest elections against the PSD/UGTT coalition as an 'official' opposition to the government. Thus, Mzali's early period in office created a much more open political environment, where other parties and opponents of the government were allowed to exist, within certain limitations.²⁶¹ Suddenly, the political sphere was a more pluralised sphere than in the 1970s.

This opening of the political sphere had three effects, two of which were intentional whilst the third was perhaps not. Firstly, it diffused the obvious tensions within Tunisian society which spilled over in the violence of the late 1970s and in 1980. By involving more moderate opposition figures and organisations within the political process, Mzali managed to release some of the pressure building within the system. Crucially, this also portrayed the message that cooperating with the government was far more profitable than adopting a position of outright opposition. In particular, the legalisation of the PUP – a splinter group formed from disaffected followers of Ben Salah's MUP – demonstrated to opponents the apparent willingness of the regime to compromise.

Secondly, this change in approach divided the opposition, isolating more extreme elements within both society at large and within the different opposition groups themselves. A good example of this is the case of the UGTT, whose leadership, following

²⁵⁸ Perkins, pp. 166-167.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Murphy, 1999, p. 63.

²⁶¹ The licenses of the political parties were dependent upon government approval, and therefore could be revoked at any time.

the rekindling of its ties with the government, expelled seven of the fourteen members of its own executive committee who were judged to be ‘dissidents’.²⁶² These proceeded to form a rival union, the *Union National des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UNTT – National Union of Tunisian Workers). Thus, Mzali fragmented and brought to heel the organisation at the heart of the 1978 unrest.

Finally however, by offering opportunities to opposition groups, Mzali alienated parts of the PSD itself. Many influential party members opposed his efforts, particularly some of the conservative older and ambitious younger members.²⁶³ Mzali’s appointment of non-party members to the cabinet must have been a particularly hard pill to swallow for those with eyes on ministerial office. Moreover, the legalisation of the other parties had hypothetically opened the door for a party other than the PSD to one day take office. This opposition to Mzali’s reforms highlights the importance of the reforms to the development of the Tunisian political landscape. Not only were political parties permitted for the first time in two decades, but discontent with the government’s agenda could be legitimately expressed via the legalised opposition parties. In the wider context of democratisation processes, new actors were now permitted to exist and offer counter-discourses to that of the regime. Despite this liberalisation of the political arena, Mzali’s changes only brought temporary respite from social instability. As the 1980s developed, the people would once more take to the streets to display their anger with the government.

1984

The second half of Mzali’s prime ministership saw the return of social tensions, thus providing ample reasons for his opponents to attack. The next part of this section specifically addresses the growth of the Islamists during this period, they were not, however, the only challenge. A dramatic increase of government subsidies on a range of products from food to fuel during the late 1970s and early 1980s coincided with a downturn in revenues in the early 1980s to increase state debt.²⁶⁴ Unemployment also remained high, with around 35 percent of the workforce out of work during the 1973-1983 period.²⁶⁵ Demands by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for the government to lift certain subsidies only aggravated matters. The government agreed, leading to a doubling in the price of bread and semolina, two staples of the

²⁶² Murphy, 1999, p. 65.

²⁶³ Perkins, 2004, pp. 168-169.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 169.

²⁶⁵ Sadiki, 2000, p. 85.

Tunisian diet.²⁶⁶ The other option available to the government was raising taxes, but this would risk further alienating powerful members of the PSD, and was thus ignored.²⁶⁷

In 1984, this cocktail of almost unsolvable economic problems led to the second major outburst of rioting in recent memory. Once more the government turned to the army for support, with the familiar result of hundreds of casualties.²⁶⁸ This time however the demonstrations were not organised, but were rather 'spontaneous outbursts of general popular discontent'.²⁶⁹ Again, as in 1978, the rioting demonstrated the gulf between party and population: price rises for the whole population were preferable to dents in the pockets of the elite. However, it also emphasised Mzali's increasingly isolated position. As in 1978, the government had to turn to the army as their only answer to the demonstrations. Unable to be seen alongside a government so willing to use force against its own people, the violence drove opposition groups away from the government.²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, and perhaps fearful of a clampdown similar to that which followed 'Black Thursday', no opposition group openly supported the demonstrations.²⁷¹ Combined with pre-existing internal dissent from disaffected party members, this left Mzali stripped of much of the support he initially enjoyed.

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the rioting is that it reinforced one of the lessons of 'Black Thursday': once more, the government was willing to use force against wide-scale manifestations of public dissent. However, whilst the rioting did not trigger a wider process of political change or democratisation *per se*, it had a significant impact on the fortunes and roles of the various actors within the Tunisian political system.

The UGTT in particular was dealt a crushing blow by the episode. As architects of previous clashes with the government, this time, following a deal with the government, the union refused to support the protestors. This obviously infuriated some of the protestors, and some vented their frustration by attacking UGTT offices. Furthermore, UGTT president Achour declared that the union would not defend those arrested in the riots and would, in fact, start disciplinary procedures against any of its members found to be part of unauthorised strikes in support of the rioters.²⁷² Murphy suggests that this was due to Achour's desire to maintain the links developed between the UGTT and the PSD in the face of new competition from the UNTT.²⁷³ If this is indeed the case, the episode

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Murphy, 1999, pp. 65-66.

²⁶⁸ Perkins, 2004, p. 170.

²⁶⁹ Murphy, 1999, p. 66.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Perkins, 2004, p. 170.

²⁷² Murphy, p. 67.

²⁷³ Ibid.

demonstrates both a UGTT transition from opposition to collusion, and the success of the government's earlier strategy of creating rival organisations to threaten the support of existing opposition groups.

However, the events of 1984 were not so bleak an experience for all Tunisians. In spite of the fact that the rioting signified considerable political and economic problems within Tunisian society, this did not translate into automatic criticism of Bourguiba himself. In fact, this period demonstrated the ability of Bourguiba to turn even the most serious of disasters into political opportunity. Following the riots, and in between bouts of illness, the President restored the subsidies. Moreover, he ordered that the budget deficit should be addressed via increased taxes on luxury goods.²⁷⁴ In so doing, Perkins argues that Bourguiba was able to 'distance himself from the public outrage and to polish his somewhat tarnished image'.²⁷⁵ The president cast himself as the benevolent ruler, coming to the people's aid in their hour of need. With popular support thus established, the president could afford to raise taxes to alleviate the country's financial predicament. These hit the more affluent in particular, including a number of senior PSD members; a move which would have been very difficult for Mzali to achieve due to his lack of popular and party support. Thus Bourguiba was able to set the office of president apart from the government itself; creating an upper tier of politics immune to the tribulations consuming the official government of Tunisia.

The riots also benefited the future president. Having been sent to Poland as Tunisian ambassador in the fallout from the Gafsa incident in 1980, in the aftermath of the riots Bin Ali was summoned back to Tunis to serve in Mzali's reshuffled cabinet. His was one of a number of more conservative appointments made in the mid-1980s, and reflected a shift in party policy to rely more on repression than popular mobilisation to obtain their objectives.²⁷⁶ Again taking the post of director general of national security, Bin Ali used his position to drive through a series of reforms to the security services, making them more diverse and professional.²⁷⁷ His appointment was due to his experience with the demonstrations in 1978,²⁷⁸ and, with economic problems worsening in Tunisia,²⁷⁹ suggests that Bourguiba was bracing himself for even more unrest. Certainly, Bin Ali's appointment can be seen as a message to potential demonstrators, and illustrates the government's primary method of dealing with such disturbances. Achour clearly felt that this was the case, and showed some independence from the government by questioning

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 66.

²⁷⁵ Perkins, 2004, p. 170.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 174.

²⁷⁷ Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 203.

²⁷⁸ Perkins, 2004, p. 170.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 171.

the appointment. Perhaps also under pressure from union leaders to make a stance to prevent further defections from the UGTT to the UNTT, Achour's more critical stance only resulted in him being sent to prison again in 1985.²⁸⁰

Whilst Bin Ali was consolidating his reputation in the upper echelons of Tunisian politics, Mzali's star was waning, and he was replaced in July 1986. Meanwhile, on the grass-roots level, a new movement was taking shape. The *Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique* (MTI - Movement of Islamic Tendency) was described by Mzali himself as the force most likely to replace the UGTT as the major force of opposition to the government's policies.²⁸¹ It is with this movement that this section concludes.

The rise of the Islamists

The presence of Islam in the political life of the Maghreb can be traced back to the great medieval Arab empires. Tunisia was central to a number of events in the development of Islam, and is home to such revered sites as the city of Kairouan and the Zaytoun mosque-university in Tunis. Hermassi argues that the success of the medieval North African Almoravid and Almohad dynasties can be specifically attributed to their religious elements; without the mobilising qualities of which both groups would have been anonymous amongst the dozens of other Maghrebi tribes.²⁸² As explained earlier in this chapter, by courting religious figures during the independence struggle, and in appealing to the concept of the *zā'im*, even Bourguiba had been known to appeal to the religious aspect of Tunisian society. The origins of the modern organised Tunisian Islamist movement meanwhile can be traced to the 1960s, when resentment over Bourguiba's vehemently secular form of government began to manifest itself in the form of a social movement.²⁸³ Therefore, when the movement emerged, Islam was not wholly alien to Tunisian political life. Moreover, as the next few paragraphs illustrate, the rise of the movement demonstrates the possibility for new political actors to emerge from civil society to seriously challenge the government.

A number of reasons are suggested for the birth of Tunisian political Islam in the late-twentieth century. Hermassi argues that potential supporters were attracted to its message for a mixture of reasons, including: those 'left behind by economic growth'; those who disagreed with the overbearing nationalist and socialist discourses of the government; or indeed those who were simply disaffected with the results of a century-and-a-half of

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 170.

²⁸¹ Alexander, 2000, p. 472.

²⁸² Hermassi, 1972, p. 18.

²⁸³ Murphy, 1999, p. 70. Also, for a detailed analysis of the origins of the movement in Tunisia, see Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya 1830-1980*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986; Hamdi, 1998; and King, 2003.

successive reforms.²⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Susan Waltz emphasises a combination of a lack of vehicles for political expression, a sense of ideological alienation amongst the young, and the failure of existing political ideologies to provide answers to a generation left behind by rapid socio-economic change.²⁸⁵ Hamdi meanwhile stresses the importance of students to the growth of the movement,²⁸⁶ whilst Camau and Geisser suggest a combination of all of the above.²⁸⁷ Many of the sources point to the Iranian Revolution in 1979 as a source of inspiration for the Islamists.²⁸⁸ Intriguingly, even Bourguiba's government played its part: Bourguiba attempted to undercut support for his leftist critics by establishing the Islamist 'Association for the Preservation of the Qur'an', providing sponsorship from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.²⁸⁹ No matter what the causes of the rise of the Islamists, what is clear is that by the end of the 1970s, the Islamists were a distinct movement within Tunisian society with clearly defined political objectives.²⁹⁰

Prior to the late 1970s, the Islamists had largely avoided proposing any comprehensive economic policies, focusing on individual salvation rather than collective action or societal reform.²⁹¹ By 1981 however, they had formally established themselves as *al-Harikāt al-Ittijah al-Islāmī*, or the MTI, under the leadership of Rachid Ghannouchi.²⁹² Their consolidation as a coherent political force however caused consternation amongst government ranks, with Murphy suggesting that Mzali's decision to legalise some of the secular political parties was an attempt to isolate the Islamists within a new political landscape.²⁹³ This was a remarkable flourishing for a group that, in 1979, Prime Minister Nouria dismissed as being merely the 'froth of social agitation'.²⁹⁴ On 18 July 1981, only five weeks after the launch of the MTI and barely two years after Nouria's claim, the government's new position became apparent. A security clampdown led to the arrest of 107 Islamist activists – including Ghannouchi – on charges of disseminating false news, unauthorised association, and defaming the president.²⁹⁵ Moreover, the legal MDS, PCT, and MUP also moved to denounce and reject the MTI as a political force.²⁹⁶ Thus, from its

²⁸⁴ Hermassi, 1991, p. 193.

²⁸⁵ Susan Waltz, 'Islamist Appeal in Tunisia', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1986, pp. 651-670.

²⁸⁶ Hamdi, 1998, pp. 25-28.

²⁸⁷ Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 273.

²⁸⁸ Alexander, 2000; Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*, London: Saqi Books, 2000, pp. 128-151; Hamdi, 1998; Murphy, 1999.

²⁸⁹ Alexander, 2000, p. 470. See also a debate on the significance of this involvement in Hamdi, 1998, pp. 28-30.

²⁹⁰ These objectives generally involved the re-introduction of Islam into Tunisian public life. More detail on their political agenda is found in Alexander, 2000, pp. 465-467; Camau and Geisser, 2003, pp. 267-270; and Hamdi, 1998, pp. 7-24.

²⁹¹ Alexander, 2000, pp. 465-66.

²⁹² Murphy, 1999, p. 71; Willis, 2006, p. 139.

²⁹³ Murphy, 1999, p. 64.

²⁹⁴ Hedi Nouria, cited in François Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, Austin, TX: Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 1997, p. 197.

²⁹⁵ Hamdi, 1998, p. 43; Perkins, 2004, p. 168.

²⁹⁶ Hamdi, 1998, p. 43.

very beginnings, the principal Tunisian Islamist political party was met with a mixture of repression by the authorities and rejection by the secular opposition organisations. As will be discussed later in this chapter, despite one or two periods of reconciliation, this mixture has continued to determine the treatment of political Islam in Tunisia to this day.

The significance of the Islamists to the wider question of democratisation in Tunisia concerns their ability to mobilise large numbers of Tunisians to their cause. That they were able to do so was due to the failure or weakness of either the government or of the other opposition groups. Alexander argues that as the socio-economic problems of the 1970s exposed the limits of the hitherto overwhelming state rhetoric of social justice, people began to look for alternative ideas to those of the PSD. Tunisian Islamist leaders realised that 'issues of distributive justice provided important opportunities to expand their social base.'²⁹⁷ The other option had been the UGTT, but its refusal to support the 1984 demonstrators had alienated it from many of the public, and contrasted sharply to the MTI's encouragement of their followers to participate.²⁹⁸ Originally, the Islamists opposed leftist groups and their supporters alike on ideological grounds.²⁹⁹ However, an astute change of position their leaders saw them recognise the unions as potential sources for recruitment.

Indeed, the disaffection of UGTT members with its leadership convinced the Islamists that the unions were potentially fertile grounds for recruitment.³⁰⁰ Alexander notes how the surge in labour militancy in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with the politicisation of Islamist movements.³⁰¹ Hamdi attributes this parallel development to the same disaffection with Nourira's economic policies that drew people to the unions. In the case of those who chose to support the Islamists however, this was combined with further disgruntlement over the performance and values of the secular opposition groups.³⁰² During the early 1980s, the Islamists successfully infiltrated the UGTT by agreeing to support leftist members disaffected with the leadership.³⁰³ Moreover, the MTI itself included a number of highly-educated individuals, including students, scholars and engineers.³⁰⁴ With the available options of opposition groups so limited, the choice to support the Islamists appears favourable. The Islamists had demonstrated that there was space for a new opposition movement in Tunisian politics and that such a movement

²⁹⁷ Alexander, 2000, p. 470.

²⁹⁸ On Islamist participation in the 1984 rioting, see Perkins, 2004, p. 170.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 467-468.

³⁰⁰ Alexander, 2000, p. 466.

³⁰¹ Ibid, p. 466.

³⁰² Hamdi, 1998, pp. 10-11. Conversely, as Murphy (1999, p. 73) argues, it was support for the values promoted by the secularist groups which turned others away from the Islamists.

³⁰³ Alexander, 2000, p. 473.

³⁰⁴ Alexander, 2000, p. 473; Hamdi, 1998; pp. 26-28; Murphy, 1999, pp. 72-73.

could develop despite the restrictive working conditions imposed by the government. For the rest of the decade, the Islamists remained one of the principal opposition forces in Tunisia, a constant thorn in Bourguiba's side during the twilight of his presidency.

Following independence, Bourguiba had claimed that:

The [Neo-Destour's] object was neither more nor less than to set up a Destourian feudal system which would dictate its wishes to the central and local authorities. What is more, it was chiefly due to good people who had taken part in armed resistance and who, once independence was won, got it into their heads that the only thing that remained for them was to share out the spoils.³⁰⁵

1978 and 1984 can be seen as examples of the government's determination to pursue this vision to the extreme. In these two instances the administration had displayed its willingness to use deadly force against public demonstrations; be they organised (as in 1978) or spontaneous (as in 1984). Between and after these dates, it was able to undermine, cajole, outlaw, detain, intimidate, and bargain with opposition political actors and trade unions to assure their allegiance. Thus the dangers and failure of popular civil society opposition to the government had been highlighted. Meanwhile, Bourguiba was able to avoid internal challenges to his rule by detaching himself from his ministers' mistakes, taking advantage of internal struggles within the party to restrict any one individual from gaining too much political capital. Yet the rise of the MTI demonstrated that Bourguiba's system was fallible, and that new political movements were able to threaten the legitimacy of the government by differentiating itself from the existing political order. They were not however to take power. Instead, the eventual change at the top of Tunisian politics emerged from the very heart of government itself.

Government under Bin Ali

When Bourguiba's prime minister, Bin Ali, summoned the president's physicians to report on Bourguiba's health on the night of 6/7 November 1987, the day-to-day governing of Tunisia had fallen into the hands of Bourguiba's groupies. This collection of 'confidants and sycophants' obeyed the increasingly erratic president's every whim,³⁰⁶ as the man himself was often too ill to govern. Indeed, in their report to the prime minister, the physicians agreed that the 'supreme combatant' was in fact no longer fit enough to govern, allowing Bin Ali to trigger a clause in the constitution to remove Bourguiba from office, and install himself as Tunisia's second president.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Habib Bourguiba, quoted in Murphy, 1999, p. 50.

³⁰⁶ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 59.

³⁰⁷ Perkins, 2004, p. 175.

Whilst Bourguiba's removal was greeted with relief amongst many of the population, memories of 1978 and more recent events caused concern in others over Bin Ali's intentions.³⁰⁸ Bourguiba's demise however came during a period of high political tensions which had by summer 1987 become increasingly violent; similar conditions to those in which Bin Ali had previously proven himself. The presidency and government faced challenges from all four of the traditional areas of political opposition in post-independence Tunisia: disaffected members of the ruling elite; secular opposition groups and trades unions; the Islamists; and popular pressure. For Bin Ali to successfully consolidate his rule therefore, he would need to quickly convince or eliminate these four sources of opposition. He had already displayed his ability to use the *saif* (sword), but his years at the helm have displayed equally successful ability to employ the Arab concept of *mansaf* (reward, or literally 'banquet') to secure the allegiance of others.³⁰⁹

By considering Bin Ali's actions *vis-à-vis* various opposition actors, this concluding section outlines the means by which Bin Ali has successfully maintained his hold on power for over two decades. The section begins by outlining the highly successful initial months following the *changement*, as the take-over came to be known.

Take-over, liberalisation, and a 'national pact'

Bin Ali's immediate concern as president was the stabilisation of the political situation in Tunisia. The former security chief's successful achievement of this task displays a combination of political skill, pragmatism, and understanding of Tunisian politics. Nevertheless, when one considers Bourguiba's traditional relations with the military and security forces, it is surprising that Bin Ali was able to be in a position from which he could organise a coup at all. Both L. B. Ware and Murphy outline how Bourguiba had disenfranchised the military class by denying them the right of political association, even with his own PSD party.³¹⁰ Indeed, Bourguiba appears to have wanted to distance them from political power, perhaps wary of the role of the military in some of the neighbouring Arab states such as Libya and Egypt.

Yet Bourguiba obviously had enough confidence in Bin Ali to entrust him with the role of Tunisia's *de facto* chief of security during 1980s. At this time the Islamists were gaining

³⁰⁸ Murphy, 1999, p. 164.

³⁰⁹ Two issues are worth noting at this point. Firstly, the political use of intermarriage between ruling families traditionally seen as a feature of *mansaf* has largely been absent from Bin Ali's government. However, other parts of the concept such as the rewarding of supporters and the cooption of different parts of the society are undoubtedly evident and therefore make the concept appropriate in this context. Secondly, the terms *saif* and *mansaf* originally hail from the Mashreq, rather than the Maghreb. Nevertheless, they prove useful in outlining the nature of Bin Ali's regime. For more on the concepts of *saif* and *mansaf* in Arab politics, see Ayubi, 1995, p. 241.

³¹⁰ L. B. Ware, 'The Role of the Tunisian Military in the Post-Bourguiba era', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1985, pp. 27-47; Murphy, 1999, pp. 164-165.

momentum and increasingly being linked to violence within Tunisia, and, in addition, when external security concerns were arguably the worst they had been since independence.³¹¹ Bourguiba further demonstrated his faith in Bin Ali by twice promoting him during the last months of Bourguiba's presidency, first to interior minister in 1986 and later to prime minister in October 1987. Moreover, the second promotion occurred despite Bin Ali having disagreed with the president's draconian line against the Islamists involved in the violence of summer 1987.³¹² In spite of instigating an earlier clampdown on the Islamists in April of that year,³¹³ Bin Ali advocated a much more conciliatory line. Murphy argues that this shift in tactics by Bin Ali demonstrated that 'he had a much finer grasp on the subtleties of Tunisian politics than the man whom he deposed.'³¹⁴ What is clear therefore is that prior to his presidency, Bin Ali showed glimpses not only of ruthlessness, such as in 1978 and in early 1987, but also of a pragmatic willingness to talk to his opponents when necessary. This established him as a formidable political operator.

Indeed, the coup itself was an illustration of Bin Ali's ability to take the initiative. Zartman identifies four immediate reasons for the coup: Bourguiba's worsening mental and physical health and the resulting unpredictable cabinet reshuffles was destabilising the upper-echelons of government; public order and judicial confidence were threatened when Islamist activists who were granted clemency by the courts during trial were later executed on Bourguiba's personal orders; the accidental discovery of an Islamist plot to assassinate numerous political leaders on 8 November, including Bourguiba and Bin Ali further threatened the stability of the country; and lastly, Bourguiba had suggested that he might sack Bin Ali on 9 November.³¹⁵ If Zartman's analysis is to be believed, Bin Ali must have decided that deposing the president was the only viable option, not only for his own career, but also for Tunisia's stability. Many in the wider population however feared that a man from a military background such as Bin Ali might follow the lead of other Arab militaries and lead the army more directly into politics.³¹⁶ In addition, others wondered if a man trained in security was capable of solving the myriad problems of the

³¹¹ Following the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation had moved its headquarters from Beirut to Tunis. Nevertheless, in 1985 the Israeli Air Force bombed its new headquarters in the Tunis suburb of Hammam Lif, killing 68. Meanwhile, relations with Libya were tense following the expulsion of tens of thousands of Tunisian workers employed in the Libyan oil industry, officially due to a slowdown in the world oil market. Furthermore, in 1986 US aircraft bombed Libya, causing a decline in tourist income and further insecurity in Tunisia. For further details on these events, see Perkins, 2004, p. 171.

³¹² For more on the dispute between Bourguiba and Bin Ali, see Perkins, 2004, pp. 174-175;

³¹³ Murphy, 1999, p. 76.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³¹⁵ Zartman, 1991, pp. 12-13. On the Islamist plot, see also Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 292; and Hamdi, 1998, pp. 57-58.

³¹⁶ Murphy, 1999, pp. 75-76.

country, shifting Tunisia away from the heavily-personalised politics of Bourguiba.³¹⁷ In fact, Bin Ali's response took a number of these doubters by surprise.

In the late 1980s Bin Ali initiated the second period of political opening of the decade. Like Mzali before him, Bin Ali decided that when it came to the political opposition in Tunisia, inclusion was a potentially better strategy than exclusion. The new president declared on 7 November 1987 that:

The times in which we live can no longer admit of life presidency or automatic succession, from which the people is [*sic*] excluded. Our people deserves [*sic*] an advanced and institutionalised political life, truly based on the plurality of parties and mass organisations.³¹⁸

To this end the new government would:

... be putting forward a bill that will concern political parties and another concerning the press, which ensure a wider participation in the building of a new Tunisia and the strengthening of its independence in a context of order and discipline.³¹⁹

Supporting his words with actions, Bin Ali released hundreds of political prisoners, including many arrested following the 1984 riots, some 600 charged with MTI membership, and prominent opposition figures such as Achour and Mestiri (who had been imprisoned again by Bourguiba).³²⁰ These measures certainly calmed the waters, and the new president received support from across Tunisian society, including even the MTI. The Islamists hoped that the liberalisation would lead to further openings of the political arena in the near future.³²¹ Bin Ali appeared to be advocating a new sense of national reconciliation following the turmoil of the 1980s.

The pinnacle of the liberalisation was a 'National Pact' drafted by a group selected by the PSD but open to editing by a committee of representatives from across Tunisian society, including the Islamists. Bin Ali used the process of establishing and implementing the pact to recreate the image of an 'organic corporatist state' with national organisations as partners within the state, rather than forces that fought against it.³²² Moreover, any organisation which signed the pact however were entitled to field a list of possible candidates for general elections,³²³ a real incentive for opposition involvement. Nevertheless, the pact was criticised both by opposition figures who felt that signing the

³¹⁷ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 60.

³¹⁸ Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali, *Declaration of November 7th 1987*. Available at: <http://www.carthage.tn/en/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=7204&year=1987&month=11&day=07&Itemid=90>; accessed 17 May 2006.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Murphy, 1999, p. 168.

³²¹ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 61; Murphy, 1999, p. 168.

³²² Murphy, 1999, p. 174.

³²³ Hamdi, 1998, p. 67.

pact would limit their ability to criticise the government in future, and by RCD members who feared a weakening of their position.³²⁴ Yet with the inclusion of so many actors from Tunisian political and civil society, the government was able to portray opposition to the pact as opposition to Tunisia itself.³²⁵

In the context of democratisation, the pact, and indeed much of these first few years under Bin Ali, can be considered to have extended participation within Tunisian political society to a much more diverse group of actors. Many of the groups which were allowed a platform in the late 1980s and early 1990s were banned under Bourguiba. Bin Ali – as Mzali did earlier in the decade – proved that stability and consensus could be achieved through the inclusion of and engagement with opposition actors. Indeed, it had become possible to express opposition and opinion on government reforms, albeit within the context of the official discussions between the different actors and organisations. The true extent to which opposition could be expressed via the electoral process would be demonstrated by the 1989 parliamentary elections, elections which also saw large Islamist participation for the first time.

1989 and the demise of the Islamists

In fact, describing the Islamists' involvement in the elections as 'participation' is rather misleading. *Hizb al-Nahda* (the 'Renaissance Party' as the MTI had renamed itself; henceforth '*Nahda*') was banned from fielding candidates under its name.³²⁶ This restriction was (and indeed continues to be) based on the law governing political parties which forbids the creation of religious parties, reinforcing a desire by many in the RCD to keep religion away from politics.³²⁷ The Islamists however were permitted to field candidates listed as 'independent', and managed to gain a nationwide average of about 17 percent of the vote, second only to the RCD's enormous 80 percent. Islamist support was particularly high in the cities, reaching almost 30 percent in some of Tunisia's suburbs.³²⁸ Although remarkably lower than the RCD vote, and essentially void as each candidate was officially independent from the others, the Islamist vote was enormous compared to that of the other opposition parties. The MDS, the nearest secular opposition party and hit by defections back to the RCD, polled at just above one percent of the vote; all secular opposition parties combined only managed five percent.³²⁹ The presidential elections were an even more one-sided affair, with Bin Ali, as sole candidate, securing 99 percent of the

³²⁴ Murphy, 1999, p. 176.

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 176.

³²⁶ See for example Murphy, 1999, pp. 178-179; Perkins, 2004, p. 189.

³²⁷ Hamdi, 1998, pp. 66-67.

³²⁸ Ibid, p. 67.

³²⁹ Perkins, 2004, p. 190.

vote. Thus, despite the liberalisation and the National Pact, the 1989 elections were a sweeping success for the new *status quo*. Perkins argues that ‘the 1989 elections created a foundation for the new government in a manner reminiscent of the first post-independence elections in 1956.’³³⁰ Whilst the Tunisian state adhered to some of the procedures of democracy, the actual substance of the system left much to be desired.

Over the next five years or so, the government increasingly turned the screw on the Islamists. Despite being included in Bin Ali’s early initiatives, the government’s later clampdown on the movement has been so intense as to have essentially eradicated an organised political Islam from Tunisia. Since the 1989 election all Islamist candidates – independent or affiliated to *Nahda* – have been banned from standing in Tunisian elections. Several applications to legalise *Nahda* as a political party were rejected by the ministry of interior, contributing to a growing sense of frustration within the movement.³³¹ This occurred against the backdrop of regional problems with political Islam, most notably the electoral success of the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS – Islamic Salvation Front) which won Algeria’s local elections in 1990 and then the first stage of the national elections in 1991.³³² The cancellation of the remainder of the 1991/92 election led to a brutal civil war, a fact that would not have gone unnoticed in the presidential palace in Carthage.

Moreover, Tunisian anxiety over political Islam would not have been alleviated by the internal struggle at the heart of *Nahda* between Ghannouchi, who was released from prison in 1988, and the more radical Sadok Chourou. This struggle resulted in a radicalisation of the movement’s rhetoric, including that of the usually moderate Ghannouchi,³³³ who was no doubt buoyed by the party’s strong showing in the elections. Yet the increasing anti-Islamist sentiment in the Tunisian population which emerged as a result of events in Algeria would prove to be a difficult obstacle to overcome for any of *Nahda*’s leaders.³³⁴ This public disaffection with political Islam no doubt facilitated a government-directed security clampdown on *Nahda* members which saw most of its leadership imprisoned, forced into exile, or killed.

Indeed, Tunisian government officials also appear to have learnt lessons from the experience of their Algerian counterparts. There, the FIS was able to establish itself as the primary service provider in areas wherein the state – for a number of differing reasons –

³³⁰ Ibid, p. 190.

³³¹ Hamdi, 1998, pp. 68-69.

³³² On the elections and troubles in Algeria, see for example Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 195-212.

³³³ Murphy, 1999, p. 194.

³³⁴ This sentiment was evident during the research for this thesis, expressed in nine different interviews with non-government individuals, in 2005 and 2006.

could not provide.³³⁵ This established patriarchal structures of loyalty which could be exploited by the FIS in its struggle against the state. The repressive nature of regime policies often drive parts of the population to support Islamists,³³⁶ who often represent the most credible opposition force. Bin Ali however identified that ‘state failure in this domain opens up space for...all kinds of non-state activism.’³³⁷ In 1992 the Tunisian government established the *Fonds de Solidarité Nationale* (FSN – National Solidarity Fund) to counter this very possibility. The FSN target poverty and urban deprivation in some 1,100 *zones d’ombre* (‘shadow zones’) around the country. By occupying this space, the government has forced the Islamists to seek alternative methods of mobilisation amongst the population. Equally significant however is the fact that the establishment of the FSN has expanded the state into areas traditionally reserved for NGO activity, such as the provision of charity. Thus not only are the Islamists denied, but the state itself grows, along with the population’s dependence upon it.

Intriguingly, suggestions of the new government’s intentions for the Islamists exist in the text of the national pact, which, as discussed in the previous part of this section, was developed with the participation of prominent Islamists. In seeking to address the issue of Tunisian identity, the pact attempts to reinforce the Arab and Islamic character of the state, stating that:

The Tunisian state watches over the noble values of Islam and refers to them, so that Islam may be a source of inspiration and pride, open to the concerns of mankind and to the problems of the modern day and modern life, and so that Tunisia may remain what it has always been, a centre of Islamic influence and a focal point for science and *Ijtihad*.³³⁸

This was a clear move away from Bourguiba’s secularist vision, and must have appealed to some Islamists. However, it can also be seen as a statement of intent at a period when the Islamists were attracting supporters due to their own claims of Tunisian ‘authenticity’. Yet through the national pact Bin Ali’s government was able to stake its own claim on Tunisian identity, and the long-term effects of this redefinition of the country’s identity will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. The national pact was significant, however, in that the national consensus it briefly achieved provided a formidable legitimising framework within which Bin Ali’s government could in future.

³³⁵ On the rise of the FIS in Algeria, see Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*, London: Verso, 2003, pp. 82-104.

³³⁶ See for example Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner’s Guide*, London: Pluto, 2006, pp. 65-73. This provides a brief explanation of the role of social welfare programmes in the development and eventual electoral victory of Hamas in 2006.

³³⁷ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 59.

³³⁸ Murphy, 1999, p. 174.

Thus, whilst there was an air of optimism surrounding the 1989 elections, Islamist success suggested that politics in Tunisia were changing, the subsequent period revealed the continuing hostility of the Tunisian government towards Islamist political movements. In 1991 Hermassi wrote that ‘it is the political groups with organisation structure and networks such as the RCD and the Renaissance [*Nahda*], who win elections’.³³⁹ By the middle of the decade however the crushing of the Islamists had left the RCD as the only major organised political movement in Tunisia. The Tunisian Islamist movement had all but disappeared.³⁴⁰

Democratic life under Bin Ali

The results of every election since 1989 confirm Bin Ali and the RCD’s dominance of Tunisian politics. In his four presidential elections in 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004, Bin Ali secured 99%, 99%, 99.4% and 94.5% of the vote respectively.³⁴¹ Turnout in these elections is officially very high: the official figures for 2004 spoke of a 91.54 percent turnout, or some 4.4 million voting from a possible 4.6 million voters. Yet unofficial NGO estimates put the figure at a much lower 30 percent.³⁴² Currently, the Chamber of Deputies (the Tunisian parliament’s lower house), with 189 seats, is dominated by the 152 seats of the ruling RCD.³⁴³ Adorned with the lexicon of democracy yet possessing none of its inclusiveness, equality, or contestation, the Republic of Tunisia is indeed a façade democracy in every sense of the term.³⁴⁴ This is reflected in the findings of Freedom House’s 2007 report on the state of democracy in the world. This classifies Tunisia as ‘Not Free’, and specifically highlights the electoral process, the ‘functioning of government’, and associational and organisational rights as the principal areas of concern.³⁴⁵ Yet despite their questionable relevance, the elections continue, as do the opposition parties to a certain extent.

Opposition political parties have all suffered mixed fortunes under Bin Ali. The MDS for example, the most successful secular opposition party in 1989, have continued to be the most organised of the parties, despite the jailing of their secretary-general in the 1990s and the defection of some of his supporters following the party’s resulting reluctance to

³³⁹ Hermassi, 1991, p. 201.

³⁴⁰ Garon, 2003, pp. 31-33.

³⁴¹ For the first three election results see Sadiki, 2002c, p. 129; for 2004 see <<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ts.html>> accessed 11/1/07.

³⁴² Carnegie Endowment and Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), *Arab Political Systems: Baseline Information and Reforms – Tunisia*, 22 October 2007, Madrid: FRIDE, p. 15. Available at: <www.fride.org/eng/Publications/Publication.aspx?Item=787>; accessed 12 January 2008.

³⁴³ <<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ts.html>> accessed 11/1/07.

³⁴⁴ For a greater debate on this conceptualisation of Tunisia, see also Sadiki, 2002c.

³⁴⁵ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/press_release/fiw07_charts.pdf> and <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=278>>. Both accessed 30/3/07.

criticise the regime. They are one of five opposition parties now in parliament, alongside the PUP, the *Union Démocratique Unioniste* (UDU – Union of Democratic Unionists), the *Mouvement Ettajid* (Renewal Movement) and the *Parti Social-Libéral* (PSL – Social Liberal Party). As the election results suggest however, the parties have little chance of winning an election, with the MDS able to secure only 14 seats with 4.6 percent of the vote in 2004.³⁴⁶ Moreover, any party, whether in parliament or not, is dependent upon government tolerance to exist. Geisser and Camau describe the daily existence of these parties as a state of ‘permanent precariousness’ in which the parties’ material, financial or legal existence may be rescinded by the government.³⁴⁷ This has driven many who wish to express opposition to support pressure groups and NGOs instead, such as the LTDH and the *Conseil National pour les Libertés en Tunisie* (CNLT – National Council for Liberties in Tunisia). In short, elections under Bin Ali reinforce a façade of political contestation in Tunisia.

The parties’ efforts are not facilitated by the strict control the government maintains over Tunisia’s media, deliberately restricting the dissemination of any unwanted criticism. Garon highlights how the authorities regularly manipulate existing laws to their own ends, with the interior minister having final say over all newspaper and media content.³⁴⁸ For example, it is illegal to distribute material which is deemed to be a ‘threat to public order’, or indeed which ‘defames’ the authorities. In addition, the law restricts any form of partisan or monopolised ownership of media outlets, or any foreign-funding of the media.³⁴⁹ Any breaches or failure to comply with these laws may lead to the suspension or the removal of a media outlet’s licence to exist.

In fact, the state of the printed press has reached such a dire state that one world media watchdog branded the choice of available newspapers as ‘seven versions of *Pravda*’ after the Soviet Union’s infamous communist party daily.³⁵⁰ Even the foreign press have not escaped the censor’s knife. French dailies *Le Monde* and *Libération* are only found in Tunis’ newsstands when they do not contain coverage of Tunisia. More absurdly still was the 1991 banning of *Le Monde* due to its coverage of the Moroccan elections, despite the fact that the paper was freely available in Morocco itself!³⁵¹ Moreover, this censorship is extended to the internet, making Tunisia one of *Reporters Sans Frontiers*’ (RSF –

³⁴⁶ Carnegie Endowment and FRIDE, 2007.

³⁴⁷ Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 231.

³⁴⁸ Garon, 2003.

³⁴⁹ Garon, 2003, pp. 42-43.

³⁵⁰ Roland Lank, ‘worldpress.org’, 18 February 2003. Available at: <<http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/957.cfm>> accessed 24/9/07.

³⁵¹ Murphy, 1999, p. 202.

Reporters Without Borders) thirteen world states classified as ‘enemies of the internet’.³⁵² Typical of RSF’s report on Tunisia are references to the government’s filtering of websites, the cutting of internet connection of journalists and political activists, and the imprisoning of critical bloggers. By maintaining this tight leash over its media, the government is able to stifle a vital arena for the contestation essential for democratic rule.

Were one needed, a final deterrence to any potential opposition Tunisian movement exists in the state’s inflated security forces. During the 1978 and 1984 rioting, and the struggle against the Islamists, Bin Ali and the government have shown their willingness to deploy these forces to deal with political opposition. An unofficial estimate by the CNLT stated that in 2000 there were 133,000 police and security officials in a population of just over nine million, a ratio of one security official per 70 citizens. A more conservative estimate by Camau and Geisser suggests a figure of some 80,000 security personnel, or one per 113 citizens. Put in context, the average ratio for the same period in the EU was one per 265 citizens, or one per 380 in the United Kingdom.³⁵³ This figure does not include an unknown number of informants and other such unofficial agents who keep their paymasters updated with developments in the street. Not even the RCD has been immune to their involvement. In 1988 Bin Ali reduced the party’s political bureau to six members; five of whom were security or interior ministry men and included Bin Ali himself and foreign minister Abdelhamid Escheikh, who had trained with Bin Ali at the Saint-Cyr Military Academy in France.³⁵⁴ Yet it is worth noting that these numbers concern the non-military security forces. In other words, it appears that Bin Ali has continued Bourguiba’s aversion of overly-strong armed forces, depending instead on the police and internal security forces from whence he came.

Therefore the conduct of democratic life in Tunisia is constantly frustrated by the dominance of the president and the ruling party in the country’s elections, along with an almost non-existent media access to opposition voices. Moreover, the large security forces represent the government’s *saif*; a visible reminder of the state’s ability and willingness to deal harshly with any movement not content to operate within the existing political system. However, non-RCD parties and actors permitted under Bin Ali’s early reforms continue to exist, and their existence at least offers a development from the single-party years of Bourguiba’s rule.

The maintenance of consent

³⁵² Reporters Sans Frontieres, *Tunisia*, 2008. Available at: http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=26158&Valider=OK accessed 12/3/08.

³⁵³ All figures taken from Camau and Geisser, 2003, pp. 204-205.

³⁵⁴ Murphy, 1999, p. 170.

Despite clearly possessing both the ability and willingness to deploy the security forces against its own population when matters reach crisis point, the Tunisian government is not wholly dependent on this violent or, as Ayubi puts it, ‘fierce’ part of its character.³⁵⁵ Indeed, other factors have played just as important a role in perpetuating Bin Ali and the RCD’s rule as has the restrictive political climate.

For example, whilst Tunisian elections might not demonstrate levels of contestation evident in other states, this does not appear to be a mobilising factor for the population to rise in opposition to Bin Ali and the RCD. In fact, while the turnout figures may be contested, the continuing popularity and high membership enjoyed by the RCD suggests that significant parts of the population consent to the current running of the state. Sadiki attributes this support to three features of Tunisian political culture.³⁵⁶ The first of these is a ‘conditional deference to political power’, although he suggests that this might actually change due to increased political awareness and better education. The second is a tendency to strive for consensus as opposed to confrontation, as, in general, ‘Tunisians do not stomach confrontation’.³⁵⁷ This point is supported by Willis, who argues that ‘Tunisia’s small, mainly urban and relatively educated and comparatively prosperous population are unlikely to back heavily more radical movements and alternatives.’³⁵⁸ Thus, providing Bin Ali and the RCD do not make life insufferable for the average Tunisian, they are likely to retain the confidence of a sufficiently large percentage of the population. It is perhaps noteworthy that the troubles of both 1978 and 1984 occurred during periods of economic difficulty, when parts of the population saw no alternative to acting due to the seriousness of their predicament.

Since the *changement* however, the Tunisian economy has performed exceptionally well. With the notable exception of 2002 (when the Tunisian tourist industry was hit hard by the fallout from the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001), International Monetary Fund (IMF) figures show a steady and constant annual rise of between four and seven percent in the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 1996 and forecasts for 2008. For the same period, inflation has hovered around the 3.1 percent mark.³⁵⁹ Moreover, neighbouring Morocco and Algeria’s GDP growth for the same period was far less stable,³⁶⁰ and Algeria experienced a bloody civil war. These

³⁵⁵ Ayubi, 1995, p. 3.

³⁵⁶ Sadiki, 2002a, p. 61.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 61.

³⁵⁸ Willis, 2006, p. 140.

³⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), March 2008. Available via <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2008/01/weodata/index.aspx>> accessed 3/4/08.

³⁶⁰ IMF, 2008.

figures present an image of almost guaranteed economic stability and development in a country with few substantial natural resources.

It is hardly surprising therefore that this constant growth has created a contented middle class,³⁶¹ and that many of whom credit Bin Ali for their wealth. After all, this prosperity not only occurred under Bin Ali's leadership, but also contrasts so sharply to the uncertainty and instability – both economic and political – of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, Sadiki argues that much of Bin Ali's power base relies on an 'expanding stratum of *'ayshīn*' (individuals with a comfortable standard of living) that will reproduce and consolidate this power base.³⁶² Therefore, not only will any potential opposition challenge need to evade the attention of the security forces and spread its message without access to the general media. It must also convince the population of its own economic competence compared to Bin Ali's successful two decades of proven economic policy competence.

And whilst economic conditions have appeased many in the middle classes, there is also evidence to suggest that the Islamists, or rather the threat of a resurgent Islamist movement in Tunisia, may paradoxically also be strengthening the government's position. During the 1980s for example, the Islamists became a convenient device to deflect attention away from economic issues and problems within the ruling elite.³⁶³ Furthermore, the Islamists also serve to deflect the attention and energy of secular opposition groups away from the government. Some Tunisians are willing to criticise the government but also hasten to defend Bin Ali due to his success in crushing the Islamists.³⁶⁴ Activists from the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (ATFD - Tunisian Association of Female Democrats), a prominent women's rights group, whilst very critical of the government, also stressed the dangers of political Islam to the position of women in Tunisia. Indeed, they admitted that part of their effort was dedicated to countering the message of the Islamists in rural communities.³⁶⁵ Hinnebusch notes that: 'Little momentum for democratisation can be built up when the political forces that would otherwise lead the fight for it have been diverted into preoccupation with other concerns.'³⁶⁶ To this should be added the construction of the Islamists as a security threat, thereby justifying further government repression in the name of national security. This point is further developed later in the thesis. In sum however, the fact that secularist and leftist opposition groups in Tunisia find the Islamists' existence almost antithetical to their

³⁶¹ Sadiki, 2002b, p. 497; Robert J. King, 'The Political Logic of Economic Reform in Tunisia' in Azzedine Layachi (ed.), *Economic Crisis and Political Change in North Africa*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, pp. 107-128, pp. 107-108.

³⁶² Sadiki, 2002a, p. 59.

³⁶³ Ibid, p. 60.

³⁶⁴ Author's interviews, Tunis, July 2005.

³⁶⁵ Author's interviews with ATFD members, Tunis, April 2006.

³⁶⁶ Hinnebusch, 2006, p. 378.

own positions exacerbates divisions between opposition groups themselves, making it even harder to mobilise the united popular support necessary to challenge the administration. The economic stability enjoyed by large parts of the population meanwhile appears to have convinced others in the population that the maintenance of the status quo offers a degree of political and economic stability almost unmatched elsewhere in the Arab Mediterranean.

Conclusion

The Tunisian officials encountered by EU officials during the planning and implementation periods of the Barcelona Declaration represent a government which is particularly capable of maintaining its hold over its society. The government successfully overcame the various opposition forces present in the later Bourguiba period, including the destruction of the Islamists, and has successfully denied potential opposition movements the space in which to flourish. Yet, it is also a government which has presided over one of the most politically stable periods of economic growth in recent memory, managing to avoid the rioting and sharp policy shifts which dominated Tunisian politics much of the first few decades since independence in 1956. Whilst no doubt reliant on the might of the security forces to maintain its control, targeted efforts employing both *saif* and *mansaf* have been used. These have had particular success against organised political opposition movements, including the trades unions, other political parties, and the Islamists; effectively reducing 'official' opposition to the token appearances of political parties which contend unwinnable elections against the RCD. Yet *saif* and *mansaf* are also evident in the state's relationship with the wider population, ensuring that no single opposition movement has acquired the levels of popular support necessary for any wide-scale challenges to the government on the levels of 1978, 1984, or at the height of the Islamists' power.

However, as has often been the case over the last century or so of Tunisian political life, initial commitments for political reform have either not materialised, or have quickly been reversed by the powers that be. Indeed, in Tunisia, it is difficult to identify the sustained process of reform needed to fulfil Huntington's conceptualisation of democratisation (outlined in Chapter One). The openings in the Tunisian political system have tended to be different bouts of liberalisation, as each phase of liberalisation either ends or is indeed reversed before any further reforms take place. Indeed, a range of practices designed to limit the general population's access to power – such as tight control over the media – have been constant features of Tunisia's political life since the state's independence from Ottoman control in the early eighteenth century.

Intriguingly, however, these practices stand alongside a long tradition of political reform which can be traced back to Tunisia's first years as a state independent of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the reformists have often turned to Europe for inspiration, often blending European ideals with Arab-Islamic sources of legitimacy. Ahmad Bey and Khair al-Din's great reform programme in the nineteenth century sought to model the Tunisian state on those seen in Europe, and believed in the message of modernity as a template for Tunisia's development. Domination by a European power led to the further centralisation and modernisation of the Tunisian state and the French occupiers established many of the institutions which remain in place today. The coloniser's education system taught an avidly secular vision of modernity, but also ironically provided the professional and academic training for those who would eventually lead Tunisia to independence. Likewise, many in the current Tunisian leadership were trained or educated in France, and it is these individuals which have steered Tunisia into its current association with the EU, an association which, in principle, questions their right to rule. It is to the origins of this association that this thesis now turns.

Why democracy? The EU and democracy promotion in the Mediterranean

Only through structural reforms far *beyond* the economic realm can the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean improve the lives of their citizens and become more stable partners on the international scene.³⁶⁷

Just as Bin Ali was consolidating his power base in Tunisia, a series of other momentous events was reshaping the future of European politics. Having established how the new regime confirmed its position in Tunis and Carthage in the previous chapter, the thesis now considers the origin of democracy promotion in the EU's recent policies in Tunisia. In so doing this chapter will contemplate the motivations behind decisions to include democracy promotion in the Union's Mediterranean policies, in addition to analysing how the nature of the EU as an international actor may affect its foreign policy choices.

The end of the Cold War brought about significant changes in the dynamics of world politics. The bi-polar environment that had dominated since the end of the Second World War disappeared in a swift tempest of popular protest, regime collapse and nationalist fervour. Furthermore, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht turned the European Community into the European Union, accelerated the process of institutional development and standardisation, and, more importantly in the context of this study, pledged to develop a 'common foreign and security policy' for the member states.³⁶⁸ The collapse of the Soviet Union was significant for the EU's development, as no longer did European policy makers need to worry that their action might invoke a Soviet military retaliation. Strategic conditions now permitted action to address European concerns on a range of global issues, including those regarding democracy and human rights in the southern Mediterranean.³⁶⁹

Moreover, the collapse of East European communism between 1989 and 1991 resulted in a number of former authoritarian states launching processes of democratisation, many

³⁶⁷ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *The EU, the Mediterranean and the Middle East: A Partnership for Reform*, speech given at the German World Bank Forum, Hamburg, 2 June 2006a. Available at: <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/341&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>; accessed 3 March 2007.

³⁶⁸ European Union, 'Treaty on European Union', in *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 191, 29 July 1992.

³⁶⁹ Youngs, 2002, p. 40.

with the ultimate goal of EU membership.³⁷⁰ This new environment prompted many Europeans to express the belief that liberal democracy was to become ‘*the standard of legitimacy for the new Europe*’.³⁷¹ Indeed, the EU specifically refers to the Copenhagen criteria as the foundation for the norms of the Western international community, and considers the promotion and protection of liberal democracy, the democratic peace thesis, and multilateralism as central to its *raison d’être*.³⁷² By 2006, EU representatives could boast that the Union had established itself as the largest contributor of democracy-related aid in the world, spending approximately half of the estimated \$2 billion spent annually on democracy-related aid projects.³⁷³

The EU also had some previous experience of joint policy in the Mediterranean. In fact, western European policy-makers involved with the EEC had been casting appreciative glances towards the southern shore of the Mediterranean as early as the 1960s. According to Gomez, the Community had several reasons to develop closer relations with Mediterranean third countries.³⁷⁴ These included an appreciation of the strategic need to draw the region towards the Western camp during the Cold War; the strong commercial and economic links that existed between the Community’s original six member states and the region; France’s growing need for North African labour to maintain its own economic growth; and a perceived ‘doctrinal vacuum’ in EEC policy towards Mediterranean states. The importance of the Cold War strategic context as a motivating factor for European governments in the Mediterranean is also acknowledged by Bicchi, albeit as a factor which *limited* European policy activity in the region.³⁷⁵ The consequence of this interest was a series of association agreements between the EEC and various Mediterranean states. The agreements involved the formalisation of relations between the Community and both European and non-European Mediterranean states, with Tunisia signing agreements in 1959, 1965 and 1967. However, their impact and the degree of reciprocity between the actors was minimal, especially in the case of non-European states such as Tunisia that had no possibility of future EEC membership.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁰ Michael Emerson, Senem Aydin, Gergana Noutcheva, Nathalie Tocci, Marius Vahl and Richard Youngs, *The Reluctant Debutante: the European Union as Promoter of Democracy in its Neighbourhood*, CEPS Working Paper, No. 223, Brussels: CEPS, 2005, p. 1.

³⁷¹ Michelle Pace, ‘The Construction of EU Normative Power’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5, 2007, pp. 1041-1064, p. 1045.

³⁷² Frank Schimmelfenning, Stefan Engert, and Heiko Knobel, *International Socialization in Europe: European Organisations, Political Conditionality and Democratic Change*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 29.

³⁷³ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Remarks on Democracy Promotion*, speech given at a conference entitled ‘Democracy Promotion: The European Way’, Brussels, 7 December 2006b.

<<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/790&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>>; accessed 20 May 2007.

³⁷⁴ Gomez, 2003, pp. 26-27.

³⁷⁵ Bicchi, 2007, p. 45.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

In the 1970s matters took a more formalised nature as the EEC launched a Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP). This was largely in response to the region's increasingly important place at the heart of global politics due to worsening conflicts in the region and fears over oil supply security.³⁷⁷ It was, according to Gomez, 'the first noteworthy attempt to formulate a strategy for the region.'³⁷⁸ Furthermore, a long-term objective of the policy was the establishment of a Mediterranean free trade area,³⁷⁹ a concept that was revisited during the drafting of the Barcelona Process. By the 1980s, however, matters had changed again. The most notable change was the accession of Spain, Greece and Portugal to the EEC. These were all newly-democratised states either forming part of the Mediterranean's shore, or in very close proximity to it. The 1970s-1980s also saw the launch of the Euro-Arab Dialogue, an initiative which targeted a wider group of state than the future EMP partner states. It pre-empted Barcelona through its identification of European dependency on Arab natural resources as a security issue,³⁸⁰ and was yet another consequence of security fears amongst European states following the 1973 oil crisis.

The 1990s brought an even greater focus on security issues in the MENA region. The early years of the decade experienced a major conflict in the Persian Gulf, civil conflict in Lebanon and Algeria, ongoing violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories, and bread riots across the Arab world. Indeed, events in the Mediterranean and the wider MENA region in the early 1990s reiterated the instability in a region on Europe's doorstep.³⁸¹ This led to the rekindling of a desire amongst EU policy-makers to develop a distinctive Mediterranean policy for the Union.³⁸² Union policy-makers' initial interest crystallised in the form of the EMP; an ambitious policy enterprise that incorporated more than 700 million people in twenty-seven states and territories in the Mediterranean. Importantly, the EU represents a *single* partner; its member states are only included as part of and represented by the EU, rather than as independent and distinctive actors in their own right. This multi-dimensional initiative seeks closer cooperation on political-security, economic and financial, and social and cultural issues. Moreover, the political, economic and cultural components of the partnership are presumed to be 'distinct but interrelated' and representing a 'comprehensive approach to EU foreign policy'.³⁸³ A commitment to

³⁷⁷ Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London: Routledge, 2006, Second edition, p. 154.

³⁷⁸ Gomez, 2003, p. 30.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Bicchi, 2007, p. 102.

³⁸¹ Holden, 2005, p. 462.

³⁸² Stefania Panebianco, 'The Constraints on EU Action as a 'Norm Exporter' in the Mediterranean', in Ole Elgström and Michael Smith (eds.), *The European Union's Roles in International Politics: Concepts and Analysis*, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 136-154, p. 137.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

promote democracy forms part of the political element of the partnership, and Tunisia became one of the Arab states to commit to the partnership's text.

Yet, whilst the inclusion of a commitment to promote democracy is perhaps symptomatic of the international environment at the time of the partnership's creation, a number of other reasons might exist for the Union to advocate this particular course of action. This chapter presents two of these reasons.

The first of these is based on the nature of the EU as an international actor. Despite its size and wealth, the EU cuts a very distinctive figure as an actor in international relations. Put simply, it is not a state. As a result, it cannot (for now at least) draw from the range of capabilities as a state might do. However, as Henrik Larsen argues, it is not so much 'a question of what the Union in essentialist terms *is*, but rather what kind of actor is constructed in the discourses articulating the Union's actorness.'³⁸⁴ The first section of this chapter considers the construction of the EU a normative actor in international relations, one that includes democracy amongst a number of 'core' norms which it seeks to promote in others. Specifically, it addresses the merit of this construction of the EU, along with the definition of democracy presented by the Union, and, finally, the role identity has played both on the construction of the EU as an actor and its definitions of democracy.

The second reason for the EU to promote democracy however is much more closely linked to more traditional concerns over the Union's security. In the second section, this chapter identifies a common belief found among EU and US policy-makers in the utility of democracy as a means to achieve security. This is based on a belief in what has come to be known as the 'democratic peace theory', and, in the case of the EU, a belief in both a reconceptualisation of security and in the merit of forming 'security communities', within which democracy plays a part. Finally, the chapter contextualises Tunisia and the Mediterranean within EU democracy promotion. Based on the reasons presented for democracy promotion in the first two sections, the chapter closes by asking why the EU believed that democracy promotion was necessary in the Mediterranean.

A normative Union?

The EU cuts an intriguing figure as an actor in international relations, and not only due to its nature as the most advanced example of a regional-level multi-state political unit. Unlike other actors with a comparable population or economic strength, such as the US or

³⁸⁴ Henrik Larsen, 'Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy', in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.), *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 62-80, p.71, original emphasis.

China, the Union lacks a significant military capability. Any action it takes *vis-à-vis* other actors must be performed without an ability to support its policies with the threat of force. The effect of this on the EU's security policy has led to a distinctive rethinking of security, as the next section will consider. Yet, whilst the lack of military power denies the Union potential policy options available to other actors, it may also serve as a strength in its dealings with other actors. Ian Manners, for example, argues that by *not* relying on military power, the EU can adopt a 'cleaner' image when making the case for such issues as disarmament, trade, human rights and democracy.³⁸⁵ Commitments to such values have not, however, necessarily emerged due to the Union's lack of military power. Rather, these were present in key debates regarding the development of the EU as an international actor. The text of the 1973 Copenhagen Declaration on European identity for example placed many of these principles at the heart of European identity,³⁸⁶ whilst the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (or the 'Treaty on European Union', henceforth TEU) went a step further by formalising these principles as essential qualities necessary for Union membership.³⁸⁷ Indeed, these values have played an important role for many in understanding the Union's exact nature in international relations, inspiring the conceptualisation of the EU as a 'normative power'. This section considers this understanding of the Union, before later addressing the definition of democracy presented by EU texts. The section concludes by considering the role democracy plays in the EU's identity, and how foreign policy plays an important role in the reconstruction of this identity.

'Normative power Europe'

Academic debate over the nature of the EU as an international actor has paid particular attention to its non-military nature. In the 1970s, François Duchêne described the (then) EC as a 'civilian power,' alluding to the lack of a unified military arm.³⁸⁸ By the early twenty-first century, questions have emerged regarding the EU's international identity and the effect of this identity on the nature of its foreign policy.³⁸⁹ Notably, this debate has included a discussion of the concept of 'normative power Europe', stemming from an article by Manners.³⁹⁰ In this work the EU is conceived of as a particular type of

³⁸⁵ Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2002, pp. 235-258, p. 237.

³⁸⁶ European Community, 'Declaration on European Identity', in *Bulletin of the European Communities*, December 1973, No. 12, pp. 118-122.

³⁸⁷ European Union, 1992.

³⁸⁸ François Duchêne, 'Europe's Role in World Peace', in Richard Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London: Fontana, 1972, pp. 32-47, p. 43.

³⁸⁹ For a summary of this debate, see Bretherton and Vogler, pp. 37-61; and Michelle Pace, 'The Construction of EU Normative Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5, 2007, pp. 1041-1064.

³⁹⁰ Manners, 2002.

international actor, predisposed to promote its values through its interaction with other actors. Manners' work has received considerable attention, including its role in the Mediterranean context; a debate which, in turn, has also drawn a further response from Manners himself.³⁹¹

Key to understanding EU normative power, argues Manners, is the Union's existence as 'being different to pre-existing political forms', a difference which 'predisposes [the EU] to act in a normative way.'³⁹² Specifically, this involves the promotion by the EU of the supposed 'core' European norms of peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and a respect for human rights through the EU's relations with other actors. To this he adds the four secondary values of social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance. According to Manners, all these norms have a European historical context.³⁹³ Moreover, they are often portrayed as 'universal' in that they are considered valid or 'can be expected to gain approval in a free and open debate in which all those affected are heard'.³⁹⁴ Indeed, normative power is 'defined on the basis of the universality of values, which in turn guarantees the (indirect) protagonism of third parties.'³⁹⁵ Thus the EU seeks to promote democracy due to the Union's unique nature as an international actor, and, perhaps more importantly, an actor that whose identity is based on what it considers to be universal values. Democracy is one of these values.

A further important element of Manners' argument is his understanding of how these norms are to be promoted.³⁹⁶ He identifies six practices or phenomena that allow norms to be diffused in international politics. These are: contagion; informational diffusion; procedural diffusion; transference; overt diffusion; and the 'cultural filter', inherent in all actors, and through which actors understand international norms. Contagion and the role played by the cultural filter are unintentional examples of one actor changing the norms of another. These occur either when actors seek to emulate the norms of other actors, without the second actor necessarily seeking its norms to be emulated,³⁹⁷ or when one actor's behaviour is perceived in a particular fashion by another actor, and the other actor

³⁹¹ Federica Bicchì, 'Our Size Fits All: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006, pp. 286-303; Thomas Diez, 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'', *Millennium*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2005, pp. 613-636; Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006, pp. 182-199; Pace, 2007; and Helene Sjursen, 'The EU as a 'Normative' Power: How can this be?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006, pp. 235-251.

³⁹² Manners, 2002, p. 252.

³⁹³ Ibid, p. 242.

³⁹⁴ Sjursen, 2006, p. 243.

³⁹⁵ Bicchì, 2006, p. 292.

³⁹⁶ Manners, 2002, pp. 244-245.

³⁹⁷ See also David Coombes, 'Leading by Virtuous Example: European Policy for Overseas Development', in Bill McSweeney (ed.), *Moral Issues in International Affairs: Problems of European Integration*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, pp. 221-245.

changes its behaviour based on this perception. The others however are deliberate attempts by actors to change the behaviour of others. Of particular note in the Mediterranean context are procedural and transference diffusion. These involve the institutionalisation of the relationship between the EU and a third party, and the use of conditionality clauses in agreements between actors. In short, institutionalisation allows for actors to be 'socialised' to conform to the norms that govern the behaviour of the institutions. Conditionality, on the other hand, involves one actor promoting normative change in another through a series of incentives and/or penalties. Both socialisation and conditionality are outlined in greater detail later in this thesis. In sum however, being a normative power not only involves having a normative basis for one's actions. It also concerns the means by which these norms are then promoted amongst others.

Yet there are problems regarding the inclusiveness of EU foreign policy, particularly if it is to be understood as being 'normative' in any way. Bicchi stresses that the construction of the EU as a normative power has the potential to be exclusive, particularly as a normative power, the EU supposedly empowers other actors.³⁹⁸ Bicchi highlights how both Manners and Helen Sjursen stress that the 'normative value of Europe's power rests on the universal character of the principles it promotes.'³⁹⁹ However, as Bicchi points out, normative power is similar to any other form of power in that it is relational. Moreover, in order for it to be normatively justifiable, EU foreign policy must in some form or other give voice to people outside the EU. In assuming that the EU promotes universal norms however, the normative power argument presents the risk that the EU 'speaks for' outside the EU, rather than 'giving voice to' other actors; the EU is constructed as an actor which somehow either represents the interests of other actors, or is even a more desirable model of what an international actor should be.

To guard against this, Bicchi suggests that thorough scrutiny should be applied to the norms being promoted by the Union to assess their hypothetical inclusivity and their potential to be shared by those outside of the EU. In addition, empirical analysis should also be made of the inclusivity of the actual process of EU foreign policy-making. Central to this analytical exercise are questions regarding who might be the intended targets of the norm promotion and whether and to what extent should the EU consider the views of those actors which may be affected by EU normative power. Inclusivity therefore is not limited to those who may be directly involved with the EU, such as state governments themselves. Rather, it should be extended to those others who might also be subjects of the EU's exercise of normative power.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 289.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

Other critiques of the normative power argument stem from studies of the role played by the EU in the Mediterranean. Richard Youngs, for example, argues that the EU's promotion of democracy and human rights varies depending on its strategic considerations.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, democracy promotion becomes embroiled in processes of rational calculation, and Union commitments are inconsistently supported by its actions. Youngs' work is echoed in a more general context by Adrian Hyde-Price, who argues that the EU only seeks to promote certain norms in others if this creates a more favourable international climate for the EU itself.⁴⁰¹ Thus, the promotion of particular norms appears selective and inconsistent. Karen E. Smith also outlines inconsistencies with the application of (particularly) human rights elements of EU policy.⁴⁰² Smith stresses how the EU's emphasis on norms highlights the importance of its strategic and economic interests.⁴⁰³ In these analyses, democracy increasingly shifts from being a goal of EU foreign policy to becoming a means by which other policy goals may be achieved. In this sense, normative power merely represents an alternative or complement to other forms of EU power. Thus these criticisms do not reject the concept of normative power outright; rather they question the way in which normative power should be understood.

There is another problem with Manners' original model, which will be addressed in further detail later in this thesis. Specifically, it concerns Manners' identification of the particular 'core' and 'minor' norms advocated by the EU. Applying his conceptualisation of normative power does not allow for an evolution of these norms, or indeed for other, less evident norms to acquire prominence over time. Manners' model may indeed be an accurate analysis of the EU's core norms at one particular point in time. Yet norms and the degree to which they are prioritised change over time, particularly as an actor adapts to shifting circumstances. As this thesis will later argue, in the context of the EU's relationship with Tunisia, stability is given greater precedence than the norms specified by Manners.

The normative power argument as presented by Manners suggests that the EU promotes norms in others due to the universal nature of the norms themselves. Democracy is one of these norms. Thus, the EU believes that the promotion of norms is somehow the 'right' thing to do. Some critics have pointed to exclusive nature of this thinking, whilst others perceive the promotion of norms as merely a means by which other, more important

⁴⁰⁰ Richard Youngs, 'Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2004, pp. 415-435.

⁴⁰¹ Adrian Hyde-Price, "'Normative' Power Europe: A Realist Critique", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006, pp. 217-234.

⁴⁰² Karen E. Smith, 'The EU, Human Rights and Relations with Third Countries: "Foreign Policy" with an Ethical Dimension?', in Karen E. Smith and Margot Light (eds.), *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 193-198.

⁴⁰³ Karen E. Smith, 2001, pp. 196-198.

policy goals may be achieved. This chapter will return to this perspective shortly. Now however, the chapter considers how democracy has come to represent such a central part of the external identity of the EU.

Identity and foreign policy

Having identified how democracy has come to play a part in the construction of the EU as a normative power, the thesis now considers the significance awarded to democracy in EU foreign policy discourse. Central to the normative power understanding of the EU are particular assumptions about the identity of the EU as an international actor, and that democracy forms a part of this identity. Indeed, there is ample evidence to support Manners' argument that a belief in the virtue of democracy is prominent in EU foreign policy discourse. An introductory document by the Commission which outlines this foreign policy asserts that the Union's approach concerns 'more than trade and aid' by providing 'a framework for discussing political issues like democracy and human rights'.⁴⁰⁴ Intriguingly, despite containing a section entitled 'proactive foreign and security policy', this document does not propose a link between democracy and security.

In the same document however, there is a clear attempt to link the Union's foreign policy with its own development over the past few decades. The Commission explains that:

Having brought stability and prosperity to its own citizens today, the EU seeks to work with others in an interdependent world to spread the advantages of open markets, economic growth and a political system based on social responsibility and democracy.⁴⁰⁵

This is significant to any who seek to understand the nature of the EU as an international actor, as it underlines the Union's belief in its own values and identity. An updated draft of the TEU provides an even clearer example of this school of thought. Not only does it assert that the 'Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law' as these are principles 'which are common to the member states'.⁴⁰⁶ It also declares that:

The Union shall ... *assert its identity on the international scene*, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence ...⁴⁰⁷

Thus a Union identity based on values (including democracy) provides a basis for its foreign policy. Moreover, it assumes that its identity is something worthy of exporting.

⁴⁰⁴ EU, 2007a.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ European Union, 'Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community', *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 321, 29 January 2006a, Article 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, Article 2, emphasis added.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European commissioner for external relations, states that:

As an organisation founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, [the EU] believe[s] democracy is inherently valuable and universally desirable.⁴⁰⁸

Thus, the EU is constructed as a model actor to which other actors should aspire. In addition, there is a further assumption that democracy possesses a universal element, which in this case is its desirability. For Ferrero-Waldner at least, EU foreign policy should seek to export Union norms to other actors so that all can emulate Europe's success.

In fact, the practice of associating an actor's identity and its foreign policy is hardly new. Many actors construct their roles in international politics based on their own processes of national consolidation. In a study of the ways in which actors conceive their roles in international politics, Kalevi Holsti argues that the manner in which a foreign policy actor perceives its role is predominantly a product of its particular society's socialisation process, along with its historical, cultural and societal background.⁴⁰⁹ Although Holsti does not refer to national identity *per se*, allusions to the distinctive nature of an actor's history, culture and society is in keeping with Smith's definition of a nation discussed in Chapter Two.

Conversely however, this very identity might in turn be shaped by the policies the actor chooses to follow. Lisbeth Aggestam, for example, argues that foreign policy plays an important role in the socio-political imagination of a collective identity.⁴¹⁰ She observes that key foreign policy speeches often refer to specific 'customs, institutions, myths and rituals' associated with the policy-maker's particular nationality or political community.⁴¹¹ Aggestam builds on earlier work by William Wallace on foreign policy and national identity in the UK, which argues that 'foreign policy is about national identity itself: about the core elements of sovereignty it seeks to defend, the values it stands for and seeks to promote abroad.'⁴¹² Foreign policies may not only be reflections of the identity of the foreign policy actor, but may actually play a part in the creation of the identity itself.

Moreover, it is not only the actor's identity which is affected during this process, but any future policies by the actor. As Aggestam points out, the actions and perceptions of

⁴⁰⁸ Ferrero-Waldner, 2006b.

⁴⁰⁹ Kalevi Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy', in Stephen G. Walker (ed.), *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983, pp. 5-43. It is worth noting that Holsti uses the term 'nation' rather than 'society'. The term 'society' is used here as a means of broadening Holsti's analysis to include non-state (or indeed non-*nation*-state) actors such as the EU.

⁴¹⁰ Lisbeth Aggestam, 'Role identity and the Europeanisation of foreign policy: a political-cultural approach', in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.), *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 81-98, p. 83.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² William Wallace, 'Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom', *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 1991, pp. 65-80, p. 65.

foreign policy-makers tend to ‘set the norm for what is considered rational in foreign policy-making’.⁴¹³ Thus, a continuous process of identity expression, construction, and reconstruction occurs via foreign policy; with the policies simultaneously being deliberate actions by the actor and affecting the decision-making process which may lead to future policies.

However, the national (or political) identity and values integral to a foreign policy may themselves have been deliberately constructed by the actor, during either a previous or ongoing process of community construction. Benedict Anderson highlights the ‘imagined’ nature and deliberate political processes involved in the creation of new communities,⁴¹⁴ whilst elsewhere Anthony Giddens argues that nationalism is essential to the process of state formation by supplying its ‘myths of origin’.⁴¹⁵ This argument might equally be applied to the EU or any *other* types of ‘imagined political community’; where myths of origin and an institutionalisation of identity occur for political purposes. Therefore, the existence or legitimacy of an actor which pursues a foreign policy – be it a state, the EU, or any other form of policy actor – may in fact be contested by parts of its population. Moreover, as Iver B. Neumann argues, this identity may be constructed in opposition to the identities of neighbouring societies.⁴¹⁶ Exercising a declared ‘foreign policy’ in such a neighbouring society underlines the differences between the policy-maker and that other society, thereby adding a further legitimising element to the foreign policy actor. In sum, by asserting a particular political identity, foreign policy becomes a useful tool which legitimises the community itself.

This is perhaps more significant for the EU than to most other international actors. Having only formally committed to develop a distinctive foreign policy actor in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Union remains a relatively new actor on the world stage. Debates over the proposed EU constitution have highlighted a continuing popular discomfort in many European states with the existence of the Union as a political actor distinctive to the members states themselves. A clear and distinctive foreign policy helps to consolidate the distinctiveness of the EU *vis-à-vis* the member states. Placing commitments to democracy at the heart of this foreign policy serves the dual function of both providing a further legitimising factor for the Union, and of answering some of the criticisms of the Union’s own democratic legitimacy in the eyes of its critics.

Union definitions of democracy

⁴¹³ Aggestam, 2004, p. 84.

⁴¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 2006, revised edition.

⁴¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, p. 221.

⁴¹⁶ Neumann, 1999.

Despite policy commitments to its promotion, locating a clear definition of ‘democracy’ in Union foreign policy documents is difficult. Whilst no single defining document exists to act as a reference point for policy-makers and commentators, a number of documents – when considered alongside each other – provide a rough outline of how the concept is imagined by EU foreign policy-makers. In these documents, it is possible to identify a general consensus on practices, rights, and beliefs these documents which are fundamental to democracy in the eyes of these policy-makers. However, an understanding of the meaning of ‘foundationalism’ is useful for this particular analysis of Union texts. Here, ‘foundationalism’ is understood to mean an ‘ahistorical framework assuming certainty and incorrigibility in defining and justifying a “given”, a “logos”, an “essence”, or a “basic premise”’.⁴¹⁷ As this part of the chapter argues, foundationalist and universalist thinking lie at the heart of EU definitions of democracy.

When interviewed, Commission officials pointed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the source of their understanding of the term.⁴¹⁸ This is echoed in the work of other analysts, including Karen E. Smith, who argues that the UDHR acts as the ‘benchmark’ for EU policy on the subject.⁴¹⁹ In fact, the European Commission itself openly associates EU policy with the declaration in its proposal for the ENP. It reminded Mediterranean states included in the Neighbourhood Policy that:

Signatories to the Barcelona Declaration [sic] have accepted inter alia a declaration of principles to act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems...⁴²⁰

Those parts of the declaration most closely resembling a definition of democracy are Articles 19 and 21. Article 19 defends the individual’s right to ‘freedom of opinion and expression’, rights which could also be considered (as is the case with the declaration itself) as human rights independent of democracy. Article 21 however is democracy-specific. Here, ‘democracy’ includes the right of everyone ‘to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives’. Moreover,

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁷ Sadiki, 2004, p. 54.

⁴¹⁸ Author’s interviews with four Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

⁴¹⁹ Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, Cambridge: Polity, 2003, pp. 131-132.

⁴²⁰ Commission of the European Communities, 2004b.

⁴²¹ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

This representation of democratic practices, and particularly the championing of the rights of individuals, reflects practices and understandings common in liberal-democratic North American and Western European societies at the time of the UDHR's writing. Commission officials and representatives from European and Tunisian NGOs however were dismissive of this point when it was put to them in interviews. Indeed, there appears to be an uncritical acceptance of the universal applicability of the UDHR amongst Commission and NGO personnel.⁴²²

Despite the emphasis on the UDHR in the interviews however, there is also evidence of a uniquely EU conceptualisation of democracy. Three documents are particularly illuminating. The first is a common position adopted in 1998 towards Africa (excluding Arab North Africa), and as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This explains that democratic principles should include the right to select and change leaders in free and fair elections; the separation of legislative, judicial and executive powers; and guarantees of freedom of expression, information, association and organisation.⁴²³ This definition is somewhat short, and presents democracy as a largely procedural matter, combined with a collection of associated freedoms.

The second document is a Commission communication on democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance. This is a declared attempt to determine a 'shared, practical and operational understanding' of a number of concepts deployed in its foreign policies and including democracy.⁴²⁴ Despite specifically addressing the Union's relations with African, Caribbean, and Pacific states (ACP), the document's clarification of the Union's position on democracy offers a change from the ambiguity found in more general foreign policy texts. According to this communication, 'democratic principles' are those which emphasise the

universally recognised principles that must underpin the organisation of the State and guarantee the enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms, while leaving each country and society free to choose and develop its own model.⁴²⁵

Smith notes how this particular document favours the term 'democratic principles' to democracy;⁴²⁶ an alteration which suggests a certain acceptance by the EU that the term

⁴²² Author's interviews with representatives from *Ligue Arabe des Droits d'Hommes* (the Arab League for Human Rights, or LADH) and the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (the Tunisian Association for Democratic Women), Tunis, April 2006, and with Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

⁴²³ Council of the European Union, 'Common position of 25 May 1998 concerning human rights in Africa'.

⁴²⁴ Commission of the European Communities, *Democratization, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance: the challenges of the partnership between the European Union and the ACP States*, COM(98) 146 final, Brussels, 12 March 1998, pp. 2-3.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴²⁶ Karen E. Smith, 2003, p. 132.

‘democracy’ itself is problematic.

Arguably more pertinent, however, is the reference to ‘universal’ principles which underpin any understanding of the term. This foundationalist turn of phrase builds on the aforementioned commitment to the UDHR; reasserting a belief that ‘basic truths’ are associated with the concept. Specifically, the document identifies legitimacy, legality, and ‘effective application’ as central to these ‘democratic principles’. Legitimacy is guaranteed through the appointment of leaders in a system recognised by the state’s citizens. Legality means the equal application of rules to all citizens, without discrimination. Lastly, ‘effective application’ involves a number of practices, including:

- the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms;
- the separation of powers thereby securing both the independence of the legislative and judicial powers from the executive power *and* the effective exercise of the three powers;
- institutional arrangements for participation in decision-making and development choices at national, regional and local level;
- political and institutional pluralism embodied in a free and open political system, an independent civil society, and a free and independent media; and
- transparency and integrity of the institutions, reflected by citizens’ access to information concerning the activities of state institutions.⁴²⁷

The communication is also useful as it presents a working definition of ‘governance’. This term ‘describes the exercise of political, economic and administrative power in the management of public affairs.’ ‘Good governance’ meanwhile implies:

managing public affairs in a transparent, accountable, participative and equitable manner showing due regard for human rights and the rule of law. It encompasses every aspect of the State’s dealings with civil society, its role in establishing a climate conducive to economic and social development and its responsibility for the equitable division of resources.⁴²⁸

Governance therefore plays an important role in the state’s relationship with its population. Yet as Chapter One argues, transparency, accountability, participation and equality are also concepts traditionally linked with democracy. Indeed, the document continues to outline how ‘good governance refers to the transparent and accountable

⁴²⁷ Commission of the European Communities, 1998, pp. 6-7. See also Karen E. Smith, 2003, pp. 132-133.

⁴²⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 1998, p. 7.

management of all a country's resources for its equitable and sustainable economic and social development.⁴²⁹ Moreover, the 'concept of good governance remains implicit in a political and institutional environment respecting human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law' whilst also taking 'specific account of the role of the authorities in managing resources, promoting a favourable climate for economic and social initiatives and deciding how to allocate resources.'⁴³⁰ According to this EU definition, therefore, good governance addresses issues regarding economic or resource management rather than the political control of a state.

Perhaps the most comprehensive definition of all, however, is found in the third document to be considered. In its *Annual Report on Human Rights* for 2006, the EU states that:

Democracy is a dynamic process by which citizens are able to get involved in the decision-making process that affects their lives. There is no single model of democracy, *but genuine democracies have features in line with international standards*, that include: control over government decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected representatives, who are chosen in regular and fair elections; all adult citizens have the right to vote and to run for public office; people have the right to express themselves on political issues without the risk of punishment, and have the right to seek information from a diversity of sources; people have the right to form independent associations and organisations, including political parties, and to disseminate their opinions; government is autonomous and does not face overriding opposition from groups like un-elected officials or the military or international blocs. Genuine democracy respects rights of persons belonging to minorities and views [*sic*].⁴³¹

This definition is notable due to its recognition of the contested nature of the term, and thus suggests a departure from the foundationalist undertones of the previous texts. However, it also emphasises the importance of participation and equality (equality of opinion, of opportunity, and of access to power and information). One also learns of the actors that play a part in a democratic society, with the reference to people's right to form independent associations suggestive of belief in the importance of civil society to democracy.⁴³² Thus, by simultaneously respecting the contested nature of democracy and demanding the incorporation of certain procedures, democracy assumes a form similar to Whitehead's 'floating but anchored' conceptualisation discussed in Chapter One.

Intriguingly however, this definition introduces an international element to the process of recognising a government as 'genuinely' democratic. This has fundamental implications

⁴²⁹ Ibid, p. 8.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ European Union, *EU Annual Report on Human Rights 2006*, Brussels, 2006b, p. 42. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/doc/report_06_en.pdf>; accessed 22 September 2006. Emphasis added.

⁴³² For more on civil society in EU democratisation policy, see Chapter Four.

for the legitimacy of a government in the eyes of the EU, with the government now having to conform to ‘international standards’. Legitimacy therefore must exist both among a state’s population and amongst its peers on an international level. The ultimate arbiters are the voting citizen and those actors which define the international standard; the state has ceased to exist in isolation and has become subject to unspecified international dynamics.

This brings us back to the emphasis on the UDHR discussed by the interviewees. More specifically, it suggests that democracy possesses universal – or at least internationally recognised – qualities. The Commission certainly subscribes to this view as it argues that ‘democracy and protection of human rights are universal values to be pursued in their own right’.⁴³³ This is not to deny the benevolence of the document, but this suggests that somehow the meaning of democracy is fixed or incontestable, thereby contradicting much of the theoretical literature on the matter. It is a clear example of a foundationalist understanding of knowledge, with potentially serious implications for any policies based upon this definition of democracy. The EU, and indeed the UDHR, fixes democracy in one place, denying it an element of contestation which, if scholars such as Whitehead are to be believed, is integral to its existence. Therefore, a policy actor that sets out to promote a concept to which it has allocated fixed understanding will have difficulty recognising the success of its policy if it is unwilling to recognise contending interpretations of the same concept. In other words, based on its understanding of democracy, the EU might face great difficulty in recognising other states as democratic if their systems do not conform to its own understanding of democracy.

It appears, therefore, that democracy has found a place at the heart of EU foreign policy. Some have argued that its promotion, along with that of other norms common to member state societies, is symptomatic of the EU’s distinctive nature as an international actor. Critics however have pointed to the lack of inclusivity and inconsistencies in the execution of EU democracy promotion policy, making the conceptualisation of the EU as a ‘normative power’ somewhat problematic. In attempting to export democracy outside its borders, the EU sometimes assumes that the concept is universally desired, and the benefits of EU’s experience should be shared by all. Furthermore, the construction of a foreign policy which includes the promotion of democracy as one of its central principles represents a common practice in foreign policy actors of reflecting their own identities in their policies. However, this process inevitably contributes to the future development of the actor itself, thereby reconstructing the very identity upon which the policy was based.

⁴³³ Commission of the European Communities, *Thematic Programme for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide under the Financial Perspectives (2007-2013)*, COM(2006) 23 final, Brussels, 25 January 2006a, p. 3.

Finally, the Union's definition of democracy is grounded in uncritical references to the UDHR. Thus, the democracy it seeks to promote is based on a foundationalist understanding of the term, seemingly leaving little space for the contestation of the concept.

Democracy and security

Despite democracy's prominence in some texts emanating from the EU, it is far from the only focus of EU policy. Indeed, Manners' normative power concept locates democracy alongside other values, rather than championing it above other considerations. This is reflected in EU foreign policy frameworks, particularly in the Mediterranean. Indeed, as highlighted by other parts of this thesis, the EMP itself is a multi-dimensional agreement, and its commitment to promote democracy represents but one of a number of other commitments in areas of political (including security), economic, and cultural cooperation. Democracy is far from the most prominent of these commitments. Youngs argues that the Partnership's commitment to a Mediterranean free trade area appears to be a far more substantive element of the Partnership than commitments to political reform.⁴³⁴ Indeed, the EMP's own origins lie in bilateral cooperation and AAs signed in the late 1960s. These were fairly limited agreements chiefly designed to allow agricultural producers from Southern Mediterranean states, including Tunisia, greater access to European markets.⁴³⁵ As we shall see in Chapter Four, democracy was almost entirely excluded from the final text of the Barcelona Declaration. Yet it was not, and its inclusion can be attributed to beliefs prevalent amongst foreign policy-makers at the time of the Declaration's drafting over the value of democracy to achieve other goals.

Significant among these goals is security. As this section argues, the shifting international climate of the post-Cold War period led many international actors to consider new responses to the challenges of this unfamiliar international strategic landscape. New security threats had apparently emerged, to which the EU would require a response. The promotion of democracy figures prominently in this response. Yet the EU is not alone in its belief in the utility of democracy. The US too has advocated its support for the spread of democratisation since the end of the Cold War, support which has only grown in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 (henceforth '9/11') attacks. Beginning by considering this US position on democracy promotion, this section considers how promoting democracy becomes a means by which security may be achieved.

⁴³⁴ Youngs, 2002, pp. 51-52.

⁴³⁵ George Joffé, 'Southern Attitudes towards an Integrated Mediterranean Region', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1997, pp. 12-29, p. 13.

Arguably one of the most publicised attempts by an external actor to promote democracy in another actor's society has been the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. US President George W. Bush specifically cited democracy promotion as one of the motivating factors for the invasion;⁴³⁶ a reason which became ever more important when other justifications (such as to restrict Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction) were proved increasingly problematic in the aftermath of the war.⁴³⁷ Yet in fact, a commitment to democracy promotion in US foreign policy is far from new.

In the search for a peaceful settlement to the First World War, US president Woodrow Wilson emphasised his personal vision for a stable and peaceful future. Central to his views was a belief that democratic states were the ideal foundation stones of international society due to their more stable and peace-loving disposition.⁴³⁸ The post-Second World War redevelopment of Western Europe – funded by US Marshal aid – also sought to consolidate democratic government and a liberal economic system as the basis for future peace. More recently, Ronald Reagan turned to democracy promotion during the later years of the Cold War, attracting support from both his own Republican and the opposition Democratic Party.⁴³⁹ Following the attacks of 9/11, democracy promotion became a central part of George W. Bush's first administration's response as it was believed that 'fostering democracy in the Middle East would drain the pool from which terrorist organisations draw their recruits in their global struggle against the US'.⁴⁴⁰

In fact, possible links between democratic government and US security were explored by previous US administrations. In the 1990s in particular, faith in the efficacy of the democratic peace theory became a motivating factor for US democracy promotion.⁴⁴¹ This theory advances the belief that democratically-elected governments do not go to war with each other for fear of losing the population's support due to the enormous costs conflict incurs. Therefore, a community of democratic states will be more peaceful than one which includes non-democratic states.⁴⁴² Democratic peace also 'neatly reconciled ethical and pragmatic concerns' as it advanced Western notions of government alongside

⁴³⁶ Katerina Dalacoura, 'US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique', *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5, 2005, pp. 963-979, p. 965; Thomas Carothers, *US Democracy Promotion During and After Bush*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 3.

⁴³⁷ Carothers, 2007, p. 3.

⁴³⁸ For two different perspectives on Wilson's ambitions for democracy, see

⁴³⁹ Carothers, 2007, p. 16.

⁴⁴⁰ Dalacoura, 2005, p. 963.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 974.

⁴⁴² A more detailed outline of the democratic peace approach can be found in Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism and Socialism*, London: Norton, 1997.

guaranteeing the West's security and commercial interests.⁴⁴³ The Clinton administration was particularly fond of this approach,⁴⁴⁴ although perhaps only as a secondary policy goal to broadening economic liberalisation.⁴⁴⁵ By 2006, the US government was explicitly emphasising the link between democracy and security. The US' *National Security Strategy* (NSS) claims that:

Transnational terrorists are recruited from people who have no voice in their own government and see no legitimate way to promote change in their own country. Without a stake in the existing order, they are vulnerable to manipulation by those who advocate a perverse vision based on violence and destruction.⁴⁴⁶

The NSS awards democracy an almost mythical status, returning time after time to its virtues. Democracy promotion is, in short, 'the most effective long-term measure for conflict prevention and resolution'.⁴⁴⁷ According to the strategy, the 'genius of democracy' has four different uses in the struggle against terrorism:

- To combat alienation by making the citizen a stakeholder in a state's society, and by allowing individuals to shape their own destinies.
- To address 'festering grievances' by offering the rule of law and a forum in which disputes may be settled through compromise.
- To address a 'culture of conspiracy and misinformation' by offering freedom of speech and the diversification of ideologies.
- To replace 'an ideology that justifies murder' with a framework which embraces human dignity and rejects the persecution of civilians.⁴⁴⁸

The NSS therefore brings the welfare of the citizen to the heart of US security and foreign policy doctrine. Democracy, however, is not only a goal in itself, but is also a means to an end, where the end is security.

In fact, the MENA region has been at the forefront of US security policy in the post-9/11 period, with the invasion of Iraq again serving as the most publicised example of its policy in the region. Yet the military dimension has been limited to Iraq, and two much broader policy frameworks have been preferred elsewhere in the region. Most notably, the US State Department launched the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in

⁴⁴³ Gillespie and Youngs, 2002, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁴ Dalacoura, 2005, p. 974.

⁴⁴⁵ Steve Smith, 'US Democracy Promotion: Critical Questions', in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 63-82, p. 67.

⁴⁴⁶ White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2006, p. 10.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

December 2002, just over a year after 9/11 and four months before the invasion of Iraq. MEPI's general approach was heavily influenced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Arab Human Development Report* of 2002.⁴⁴⁹ This report underlined region-wide problems with political freedom, women's empowerment, and knowledge.⁴⁵⁰ Interestingly, MEPI's method and composition can be compared to the EMP, both in its use of four mutually-reinforcing 'pillars' (political, economic, education and women's empowerment), and through its combination of regional and country-specific projects.⁴⁵¹

MEPI was complemented by a further initiative proposed less than a year after the invasion of Iraq. The US proposed a Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) as a collaborative project alongside other G8 states. Its goal was to put further pressure on MENA governments to reform their political structures.⁴⁵² Vice President Dick Cheney, speaking during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos in January 2004, called this initiative 'the most ambitious US democracy effort since the end of the Cold War'.⁴⁵³ Both MEPI and GMEI are significant however in that their support of a combination of cultural, economic, and political programmes presents an unprecedentedly broad US policy approach to the problems of the MENA region.⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, they also signify at the very least an acknowledgement by Washington that these political, economic and social problems require addressing. At the very least therefore, MEPI and GMEI represent US policy commitments which support the proposals outlined in its NSS, proposals which argue that the promotion of democracy is a genuinely viable means of achieving security.

European security

Just over a year after the publication of the US's security strategy, the EU published its own strategy. The *European Security Strategy* (ESS) is very much a product of its time, reflecting a shift in the circumstances facing European states in the early twenty-first century from those they faced in the early 1990s.⁴⁵⁵ With the Soviet Union no longer present, and some the states in its former sphere of influence, the Union now recognises

⁴⁴⁹ Dalacoura, 2005, p. 264.

⁴⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, New York: United Nations Development Programme/Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, 2002.

⁴⁵¹ For more details on MEPI, see US Department of State, 'Middle East Partnership Initiative', at <<http://mepi.state.gov/>>, accessed 9/11/2007.

⁴⁵² Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 'The Middle East and Security Strategy', in Roland Dannreuther and John Peterson (eds.), *Security Strategy and Transatlantic Relations*, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 78-96, p. 87.

⁴⁵³ Cited in Ehteshami, 2007, p. 87. In fact, following negotiations with other G8 states, the GMEI was changed from its original US-defined format to the essentially identical Broader Middle East and North Africa Partnership Initiative.

⁴⁵⁴ For a more detailed assessment of US (and the EU's) democracy promotion strategy in Tunisia, see Brieg Powel, 'The Stability Syndrome: US and EU Democracy Promotion in Tunisia', *Journal of North Africa Studies*, forthcoming.

⁴⁵⁵ Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 2003.

that ‘large-scale aggression against any Member State [*sic*] is now improbable. Instead, Europe faces new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable’.⁴⁵⁶ Importantly, the ESS also argues that the end of the Cold War has forced a rethinking of European security from being based on protecting one’s borders through primarily military means, to a more internationalist, pre-emptive and even interventionist perspective. It explains that:

Our traditional concept of self-defence – up to and including the Cold War – was based on the threat of invasion. With new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad ... we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early.⁴⁵⁷

Furthermore, the ESS identifies five key threats to European security: terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regional conflicts (such as Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region and the Korean Peninsula), state failure, and organised crime.⁴⁵⁸ Many of these necessarily involve non-state actors, making state-centric responses difficult.

Yet any action the EU might take is constrained by its capabilities, or, more precisely, its lack of military capability. It cannot presently undertake military action on a scale of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and could not do so at the time of drafting of the EMP. Realists and neo-realists might argue that the EU’s lack of significant permanent military capability – due in part to questions regarding member states’ sovereignty – prevents it from exercising a similar assertiveness to that enjoyed by powerful nation states. This lack of military power has created a ‘capabilities-expectation gap’ for some analysts,⁴⁵⁹ severely hampering the EU’s ability to act independently on the world stage. Indeed, some go so far as to dispute whether the EU may be an international actor at all, arguing that power ultimately remains in the hands of states.⁴⁶⁰ This line of thinking however relies on a very limited conceptualisation of actorhood in international relations. In opposition to this view, Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler suggest that an actor is ‘an entity that exhibits a degree of autonomy from its external environment...and which is capable of volition or purpose’.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, the EU may also be considered as an independent actor based on its ability to execute ‘significant and continuing functions

⁴⁵⁶ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 3-5.

⁴⁵⁹ Christopher Hill, ‘The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 1993, pp. 305-328.

⁴⁶⁰ Hill, 1993; Jan Zielonka, *Explaining Euro-Paralysis: Why Europe is Unable to Act in International Politics*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998.

⁴⁶¹ Bretherton and Vogler, 2006, p. 16.

[that have] an impact on inter-state relations.⁷⁴⁶² Whilst the Union may be limited in its capabilities, this merely restricts rather than denies its ability to pursue its own distinctive policy agenda.

Lacking the US' military capabilities, the EU is forced to consider non-military means to achieve its security. This allows democracy promotion a much more prominent role in both security and – due in part to the ESS – foreign policy. Furthermore, the shift in emphasis in security policy from a prioritisation of defence from invasion (by the Soviet Union) to pre-emption and conflict prevention also broadens the available policy options, as conflict prevention does not necessarily involve the use of military force. Indeed, the ESS recognises that the diverse nature of the threats the Union faces cannot be addressed by military means alone. It argues that as 'none of the new threats is purely military', they cannot 'be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments.'⁷⁴⁶³ The Commission agrees, arguing that:

Concerns with security and the fight against terrorism have tended to dominate international agendas, but they have also begun to highlight root causes of violence and the importance of ensuring human rights, rule of law and inclusive democracy to avoid alienating communities and creating conditions of insecurity. Conflict prevention has thus added a new dimension to development strategy and work with civil society.⁴⁶⁴

There are clear echoes here of the US belief that socio-political and economic factors become 'root causes' of security threats, and particularly so in the case of international terrorism. Also in common with the American position, the EU advocates reversing these conditions, seeking to create the conditions for political opportunity to pre-empt terrorism. Democracy therefore becomes a weapon in the arsenal of those seeking to challenge terrorism and terrorist movements.

However the EU's approach differs from that of the US by being far more specific on the type of security it seeks. It talks of 'human security' which, in the words of Ferrero-Waldner, 'means looking at the comprehensive security of people, not the security of states, encompassing both freedom from fear and freedom from want.'⁷⁴⁶⁵ Moreover, the commissioner also admits that the concept is 'central to the EU's approach' to democracy promotion.⁴⁶⁶ Human security shifts the focus of security analysis from the state to the individual and his or her community. Such analysis addresses non-military in addition to

⁴⁶² Carol Ann Cosgrove and Kenneth J. Twitchett (eds.), *The New International Actors: The UN and the EEC* London: Macmillan, 1970, p. 12.

⁴⁶³ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2006a, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁵ Ferrero-Waldner, 2006b.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

more conventional military threats to an individual's security.⁴⁶⁷ Sven Biscop argues that a human security approach sees its security not as an end in itself, 'but as a means of – and necessary precondition for – providing security for people. Indeed, the state itself can be the source of the insecurity of its citizens.'⁴⁶⁸ This conceptualisation of security suggests that perhaps it is no longer enough to commit to the protection of the state alone. Security should always address the protection of the individual human being. This includes that of individuals outside the traditional territorial boundaries of the states or actors which seek the security of their own citizens. In EU terms, this involves seeking the security of those outside the current boundaries of the EU, a stance epitomised by the 'ring of friends' concept sometimes advocated by the Union.⁴⁶⁹

Parallels can be drawn therefore between EU and US security policies through their common emphasis on the role democratic government in other states plays in assuring EU or US security. Yet the democratic peace approach has attracted a number of critics. Sebastian Rosato for example argues that the democratic peace theory reflects an unwarranted lack of trust and respect in non-democracies by democracies.⁴⁷⁰ By assuming that democratic states are less likely to wage war, the democratic peace approach *de facto* assumes that non-democratic states are more likely to wage war. Additionally, the theory is heavily dependent on a belief that the state remains the principal perpetrator of conflict. Very few conflicts in recent decades however have been explicitly inter-state affairs, with non-state actors often the principal belligerents. Both the EU and the US have shown signs of moving away from a state-centred conceptualisation of security in the MENA region, forcing a potential reconceptualisation of the democratic peace approach. The EU has certainly been far more elaborate in its efforts to move away from state-based security, and appears to have firmly settled on a definition of security that places the security of the individual as the foundation for the security of the larger actor in international relations. Democracy is key to this thinking.

Region-building and securitisation

Central to both normative power and democratic peace approaches is the development of a community which includes all actors involved in the policy. For normative power, it is through the shared norms developed at the community-level that norms are diffused amongst its members. A democratic peace approach meanwhile argues that members of a

⁴⁶⁷ Sven Biscop, *The European Security Strategy: A Global Agenda for Positive Power*, Abingdon: Ashgate, 2005a, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ See for example Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁰ Sebastian Rosato, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 4, 2003, pp. 585-602.

community entirely composed of democratic states is, according to the theory at least, far less likely to resort to war as a means of resolving their differences than a community which includes non-democratic states. This is of particular relevance to the EU, as its own existence has been linked to a project of developing and expanding a liberal democratic security community.⁴⁷¹ The ideal of a democratic peace is central to such a community.

Indeed, post-Second World War Europe offers one of the most developed and successful examples of security built around a political community, or ‘cooperative security’. Emmanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford define cooperative security as a notion of security ‘based on concepts of pluralistic integration and inclusion’; an understanding of security which is ‘comprehensive’ due to its association of ‘classic security elements to economic, environmental, cultural and human rights factors.’⁴⁷² This draws on Karl Deutsch’s earlier work which defined a ‘security community’ as a collection of integrated actors that consider war to be an obsolete method of conflict resolution.⁴⁷³ According to Deutsch, the common institutions and mutual interests of the group contribute to the development of a collective identity, a ‘we-feeling’ particular to its members.⁴⁷⁴ Within such a model, the security of each participating state is tied to that of the others. For success (that is, security) to be achieved, confidence and cooperation are essential so that disputes may be resolved peacefully, preferably within the frameworks of international institutions. Thus, as Adler and Crawford explain, ‘it primarily means treating the social, economic, and political conditions that foment terrorism with multilateral means and within the boundaries of international law.’⁴⁷⁵

This clearly corresponds with the three pillars of the EMP. Indeed, the Barcelona Declaration explicitly states that one of its central pillars is to promote and strengthen the ‘peace, stability and security of the Mediterranean region’.⁴⁷⁶ Adler and Crawford themselves draw parallels between the EMP and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the process which has helped shape European approaches to security since the early 1970s.⁴⁷⁷ Both processes involve the establishment of a

⁴⁷¹ See for example Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; and Fulvio Attinà, ‘European Neighbourhood Policy and the building of security around Europe’, in Fulvio Attinà, and Rosa Rossi (eds.), *European Neighbourhood Policy: Political, Economic and Social Issues*, Catania: Jean Monet Centre, University of Catania, 2004, pp. 16-24, pp. 17-18. Available at: <<http://www.fscpo.unict.it/EuroMed/ENPCataniabook.pdf>>; accessed 17 September 2006.

⁴⁷² Emmanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, ‘Normative power: the European practice of region-building and the case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership’, in Adler *et al.*, 2006, pp. 3-47, p. 9.

⁴⁷³ Karl Deutsch, Sydney A. Burrell, and Robert A. Kann, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷⁵ Adler and Crawford, 2006, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁶ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁴⁷⁷ Adler and Crawford, 2006, p. 20.

community of states committed to fostering peace and stability in their midst, and based on commitments to shared principles and values.⁴⁷⁸ As Malmvig suggests, the EMP allows the EU and its Mediterranean partners to become a security community, based on a common perception of threats that encourages cooperation.⁴⁷⁹ The discursive emphasis is on ‘partnership’, cooperation and joint solutions to problems. The EMP goes much further than the CSCE however with a much greater focus on economic and financial harmonisation, leading to an ‘area of shared prosperity’,⁴⁸⁰ and culminating in a free trade area.

Moreover, the establishment of institutions to govern the community enables democracy-promoting members of the community to include other (non-democratic) actors within the same institutional frameworks as the ‘self’, thereby providing the necessary space within which norms may be diffused through socialisation. Democratic peace theorists, on the other hand, might argue that such a community would only be sustainable if the members were already democratic. On the other hand, the larger the number of democratic actors which are included, the more likely it may be that peace and security are maintained.

However, the concepts of security and democracy do not always sit comfortably with each other. Moreover, the construction of an actor or process as a security threat is a very subjective process. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue, security issues do not exist by default.⁴⁸¹ Rather, they have to be ‘securitised’, that is to say, they need to be portrayed by authorities as threats, responses to which require actions that would not normally be considered within conventional political practice.⁴⁸² The use of the term itself is therefore ‘constitutive of security, as it presents a claim to use special rights to counter the threat.’⁴⁸³ These ‘special rights’ involve the breaking of ‘normal’ accepted behavioural rule, therefore creating an exceptional situation warranting special methods of operating. Typically, when a situation is securitised, governments attempt far more direct methods of control over their populations.⁴⁸⁴ Principles such as freedom of expression, rule of law and contestability generally suffer due to securitisation. In extreme cases, the procedures of democracy may be suspended, and actors excluded from the political process if these were to be securitised. Crucially however, the number of those able to securitise is limited to security ‘experts’, politicians, bureaucrats, and government officials without opening

⁴⁷⁸ For more on the origins of the CSCE, see Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 55-88.

⁴⁷⁹ Malmvig, 2004, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸⁰ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁴⁸¹ Buzan, *et al.*, 1998, p. 24.

⁴⁸² Bicchi and Martins, 2006, pp. 190-191; Buzan, *et al.*, 1998, p. 24.

⁴⁸³ Bicchi and Martins, 2006, pp. 190-191.

⁴⁸⁴ Helle Malmvig, ‘Security through Intercultural Dialogue? Implications of the Securitization of Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue Between Cultures’, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2005, pp. 349-364.

the issue to public debate or scrutiny.⁴⁸⁵ Populations are excluded from the decision-making process, making security issues very difficult to contest, and therefore not compatible with approaches to democratic practices that value contestation. Securitisation therefore might trigger consequences that affect the lives of entire populations, yet those with the ability to securitise are limited in number and often belong to exclusive circles.

Indeed, this can be extended to the initial process of establishing security communities. As was the case with both the EMP and the CSCE, those individuals who designed, instigated, and committed themselves to the texts of the founding documents of security communities were representatives of the participating governments. In the EMP's case, whilst civil society movements may have been consulted at various times during its life,⁴⁸⁶ the signatories of the Barcelona Declaration and the attendees of the major conferences are predominantly bureaucrats or politicians. Security communities therefore have the potential to be largely state-centric and top-down affairs, with little or no scope for direct democratic involvement by the populations affected by their existence. Yet, as the 'threats' listed in the ESS demonstrate, issues and actors that are constructed as security threats might not necessarily emanate from the state level; 'terrorist' movements being a case in point. Responses to such threats might require considerable engagement with these other levels, both above and below the state. The EU has in fact recognised as much, developing its security policy around the concept of human security. The extent to which it has recognised this in its policy in Tunisia however will be considered in the next chapter.

The EU's promotion of the concept of human security is therefore compatible with both a democratic peace approach and the practice of developing security communities. Democracy and its promotion can potentially play central roles in this process. Yet this also poses interesting questions to those who seek to portray the EU as a normative power. The EU might indeed seek to improve the political, economic, and social conditions of populations outside its boundaries. However, this might only be as a means of achieving other objectives, namely security for itself and its neighbours. In this context, it may even be misleading to label the EU as a democracy promoter. Rather, the term 'security promoter' may be more apt.

The EU in the Mediterranean

⁴⁸⁵ Bicchieri and Martins, 2006.

⁴⁸⁶ See Chapter Four.

With the northern coasts of Morocco and Tunisia merely a few dozen kilometres from its southern shoreline, and Asia Minor on the horizon of many a Greek islander, the Mediterranean represents the nearest possible non-European region of EU foreign policy. As Chapter Two illustrated, European powers have often ventured across the ‘middlesea’, with their empires having dominated the southern shoreline until the mid-twentieth century. As the Cold War drew to a close and the Maastricht Treaty was being signed, events such as the 1991 Gulf War, ongoing troubles in Palestine and Lebanon, a bloody civil war in Algeria, and region-wide growth in Islamist political parties maintained the region’s place continued to highlight the precariousness of the region’s future stability.

By launching the EMP in 1995, the Union demonstrated that it sought to respond to these issues and had every intention of capitalising on its opportunity. At the heart of this response was a commitment to promote democracy in the region. As Youngs argues, the Barcelona Declaration ‘enshrined one of the EU’s most high profile commitments to democracy promotion, within one of its most far-reaching and deeply institutionalised external policy commitments.’⁴⁸⁷ This section considers the Union’s reasons for engaging with the Mediterranean, beginning by looking at representations of the region in EU discourse.

A region of problems

Appreciating the role democracy plays in EU security policy provides an ideal framework to understanding its relationship with the Mediterranean. The presence of energy resources in states is clearly important to this relationship.⁴⁸⁸ Not only is the EU the world’s largest importer of oil and gas, but by 2030 it will be reliant on imports for 70 percent of its energy needs.⁴⁸⁹ North Africa is vital to the supply of this oil. Indeed, the ESS clearly highlights the importance of the region’s energy resources to the Union’s future security.⁴⁹⁰ Yet the ESS also awards particular significance to the Mediterranean for other reasons. It argues that the region is characterised by ‘serious problems of economic stagnation, social unrest and unresolved conflicts’.⁴⁹¹ Thus the region is constructed as more than just a provider of Europe’s insatiable energy demands.

There are a number of other examples of this practice by Union officials of associating the region with potential problems for the EU. Moreover, these examples often combine their emphasis on the dangers present in the Mediterranean with calls for greater EU

⁴⁸⁷ Youngs, 2001a, p. 47.

⁴⁸⁸ Bretherton and Vogler, 2005, p. 154.

⁴⁸⁹ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 8.

engagement with the region. In a speech given at a World Bank forum in Hamburg in 2006, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner stated that:

The Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region is undergoing fundamental shifts – economically, politically and socially. In an interconnected world, these developments have an impact on the European Union. Europe cannot be an ‘introspective bystander’. On the contrary, we are and must remain a *key actor* in the region; a political and economic partner who supports and manages change and who helps reap the opportunities that flow from it. This is not just a political imperative, but a *matter of self interest*. If Europe did not ‘export’ stability, it would import ‘instability’. The European Union is neither an island nor a fortress.⁴⁹²

This quote is instructive in many ways, and is central to an understanding of the how some in the Union perceive its role to be in the Mediterranean. Not only does Ferrero-Waldner echo the observations found in the ESS of the economic, social and political problems in the region. The commissioner also implicitly supports the concept of human security found in other EU texts by her emphasis on the EU being integral to supporting political and economic change outside its borders. Ferrero-Waldner repeats calls by the EU, outlined in the previous section of this chapter, to improve the welfare of non-EU citizens as a means of achieving security for the EU itself. Thus, this speech also constructs the Union as a particularly realist actor in the region. This occurs not only through the commissioner’s argument that engagement is a ‘matter of self interest’, but also by portraying the environment in which the Union exists as ‘unstable’ or anarchic. Moreover, by emphasising the term ‘key actor’, Ferrero-Waldner clearly seeks to elevate the EU above other actors, exporting its ‘stability’ and therefore ‘managing’ the region to its own ends. Hence not only is the Mediterranean constructed as a source of problems for the Union, but the EU also suggests that the method of addressing these problems is through the promotion of economic and political reform.

Indeed, the EU’s discursive portrayal of the Mediterranean has become the subject of a number of studies.⁴⁹³ A common theme in this literature draws attention to the

⁴⁹² Ferrero-Waldner, 2006a, original emphasis.

⁴⁹³ See for example Ulla Holm, ‘The EU’s security policy towards the Mediterranean: an impossible combination of export of European political values and anti-terror measures?’, *Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper no. 2004/13*, 2004; Helle Malmvig, ‘Cooperation or Democratization? The EU’s Conflicting Mediterranean Security Discourses’, *Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper no. 2004/8*, 2004; Michelle Pace, *The Politics of Regional Identity: Meddling with the Mediterranean*, Oxford: Routledge, 2006.

representation of the Mediterranean as a violent and conflict-ridden space, or as a space in need of socio-economic development.⁴⁹⁴ Illustrative of these perspectives is a document detailing the EU Presidency's conclusions for a 2003 conference of Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministers.⁴⁹⁵ This conference followed a number of explosions in Casablanca, Morocco, and two earthquakes in Algeria and Turkey. However, rather than recognise the earthquakes as natural disasters and the bombings as very infrequent incidents in individual Mediterranean states, the conclusions portray the entire region as an area of turmoil. The Presidency notes that 'violence, destruction, suffering, human rights violations and bloodshed have continued in the region, reaching again an alarming level during the last weeks'; and that the foreign ministers 'expressed also their concern and eagerness to confront violence and hatred by addressing the very causes of violence, terrorism and dehumanisation in Mediterranean societies.'⁴⁹⁶ Thus the entire region is portrayed as a dangerous and violent place, and further EU action is necessary to address these issues.

The Union believes that lack of political and economic opportunities is the heart of the violence supposedly emerging from the Mediterranean. A Commission communication on democratisation for example states that 'authoritarianism and poor economic and social performance favour political marginalisation and provide fuel for radical movements and violence'.⁴⁹⁷ A further communication stresses the need for the ENP in specific to address the conflicts in the region as 'such conflicts can threaten the Union's own security.'⁴⁹⁸ In fact, former French Foreign Minister Hervé Charette provided an apt summary of European views when he noted that 'when violence returns to the Middle East, sooner or later it will show up in Paris'.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, the Mediterranean as a whole is constructed as a region suffering from a range of problems and instability. As earlier sections of this chapter argued, democracy is seen by the EU as a means to overcome this instability, therefore making a strong case for the inclusion of democracy-related components in the Union's Mediterranean policies. The implications of this construction of the Mediterranean on the EU's policy in Tunisia meanwhile will be addressed in Chapter Five.

⁴⁹⁴ Pace, 2006.

⁴⁹⁵ Commission of the European Communities, *Mid-Term Euro-Mediterranean Conference (Crete, 26-27 May): Presidency Conclusions*, 9890/03 (Presse 151), 28 May 2003c.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Commission of the European Communities, *Reinvigorating EU actions on human rights and democratization with Mediterranean partners*, COM(2003) 294 final, Brussels, 24 May 2003a, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COM(2006) 726 final, Brussels, 4 December 2006b, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁹ Roland Dannreuther, 'Recasting the Barcelona Process: Europe and the Greater Middle East', in Peter Seeberg (ed.), *EU and the Mediterranean: foreign policy and security*, Odense, Denmark: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2007, pp. 38-58, p. 51.

Europe as the answer

Democracy also forms a central part of the EU's response to these 'problems' in the Mediterranean. Moreover, Union discourse continually suggests that it holds the key to these issues. In addition to arguing that 'Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world',⁵⁰⁰ the ESS, for example, proposes that:

[The EU's] task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.⁵⁰¹

According to this text, therefore, the EU has taken it upon itself to act in the region. Commission documents expand on the ESS's proposal to improve the governance of the region as a response to the problems, including the first references to the use of democracy promotion as to contain violence in the Mediterranean. In 1995, in its proposal for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean 'partnership', the Commission argued that 'supporting political reform and defending human rights and freedom of expression' might contain extremism. Furthermore, the promotion of economic and social reform was also aimed at 'stemming violence and easing migratory pressure.'⁵⁰² Elsewhere, the Commission also argues that

Concerns with security and the fight against terrorism have tended to dominate international agendas, but they have also begun to highlight root causes of violence and the importance of ensuring human rights, rule of law and inclusive democracy to avoid alienating communities and creating conditions of insecurity. Conflict prevention has thus added a new dimension to development strategy and work with civil society.⁵⁰³

Here, the EU clearly links the lack of political opportunity and socio-economic deprivation issues with international terrorism. Democracy becomes a weapon in the arsenal of those wishing for the elimination of terrorism. Democracy is therefore clearly constructed as a means rather than as an end. In the context of the normative power debate, the promotion of democracy as a norm is relegated below the promotion of security.

The EMP can be seen as an exercise of EU normative power, with democracy central to the values it seeks to promote, alongside other core norms such as human rights and a

⁵⁰⁰ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 1.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁰² Commission of the European Communities, *Strengthening the Mediterranean policy of the European Union: proposals for implementing a Euro-Mediterranean partnership*, COM(95) 72 final, 8 March 1995, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ Commission of the European Communities, 2006a, p. 4.

respect for the rule of law.⁵⁰⁴ These values follow directly from the so-called ‘Copenhagen criteria’, the criteria setting the political and economic standards necessary for EU membership.⁵⁰⁵ Yet never are the origins or exact meanings of these values questioned, opening the Union to criticism that it is involved in an exercise of promoting specifically European norms, or, at the very least, a European understanding of the norms. Other documents also illustrate the role of normative power in the Mediterranean, yet some are more explicit than others in highlighting Europe’s role in either creating the norms, or at least providing an idealised example of its execution. The *Common Strategy on the Mediterranean* (2000), for example, explains that the EU will ‘take measures to persuade all Mediterranean Partners to abolish the death penalty *in accordance with agreed EU guidelines*.’⁵⁰⁶ Thus, it is envisaged that Mediterranean partners are to be brought into line with European behaviour and the belief in Union policy circles that the ‘European way’ provides the answers to the region’s problems. This emphasis on the primacy of European values is also present in Union texts relevant to Tunisia. Romano Prodi, when president of the European Commission, stated in November 2002 that ‘the Agadir Initiative – the decision by Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan to speed up the liberalisation of trade between them – must be seen as a very positive step [of them becoming more like us]’.⁵⁰⁷ The use of normative power in this context appears to show little regard for values which are not part of a European way of behaviour.

Under its economic section, the EU-Tunisia AA (1998) talks little of developing common approaches. Rather, it states that: ‘Cooperation shall be aimed at helping Tunisia to *bring its legislation closer to that of the Community* in the areas covered by this agreement.’⁵⁰⁸ Never is a state’s association with the EU portrayed negatively: it is assumed that this can only be positive. A member state diplomat claimed that due to the extent of the economic relationship between the two actors, Europe is Tunisia’s *only* hope for comprehensive development. Whatever the carrots being dangled by Washington and other interested parties, nothing can replace those offered by Europe.⁵⁰⁹ The EU believes that its

⁵⁰⁴ See for example Bicchi, 2006; and Diez, 2005, pp. 230-232.

⁵⁰⁵ Diez, 2005.

⁵⁰⁶ Council of the European Union, *Common Strategy of the Council of the European Union on the Mediterranean region*, 2000, p. 3, emphasis added.

⁵⁰⁷ *EuroMed Report*, Issue no. 52, 28 November 2002. Romano Prodi, *Europe and the Mediterranean: Time for Action*, speech given at Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, 26 November 2002. Cited in Pace, *The Politics of Regional Identity*, p. 105.

⁵⁰⁸ European Union and the Republic of Tunisia, 1998, p. 13, emphasis added.

⁵⁰⁹ Interview in Tunis, March 2006. According to

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/tunisia/index_en.htm>; accessed 13/01/07), 79% of Tunisia’s €6.2 billion worth of exports and 76% of its €8.7 billion of imports go to and come from the EU. Moreover, the EU is the largest contributor of foreign direct investment to the country, and 81.8% of Tunisia’s tourist revenue comes from EU citizens.

neighbours can only ‘... benefit from the prospect of closer ... relations with the EU.’⁵¹⁰ As Ulla Holm argues, ‘humanity, universalism and European values are thus constructed in a chain of equivalence whose opposite is terrorism identified with anti-democracy, and destruction of humanity.’⁵¹¹ Repeatedly therefore, one finds a conviction amongst EU policy makers that Europe’s way is best.

This indicates a belief amongst European policy-makers that the promotion of European norms – or a European understanding of norms – is a viable means of developing non-European societies. This position is unreflective and the confidence in the morality of the European message is reminiscent of nineteenth century (particularly, but not only) French colonial expansion in the Mediterranean. The objective of the *mission civilisatrice*, as it came to be known, was to spread the benefits of French culture and values across the globe. It was believed that French culture was progressive and possessed ‘unquestioned supremacy of knowledge, technology and prosperity.’⁵¹² The colonised peoples would be offered the very best educational and cultural education and facilities, providing these peoples renounced their own culture and religion.⁵¹³ Unlike normative power however, military force played a major role in the nineteenth century. Bicchi highlights a similar trend in current EU policy, noting how policy-makers unreflexively link domestic European norms with international norms, characterising the mindset of European foreign policy-makers as ‘our size fits all’.⁵¹⁴ More than fifty years since decolonisation in Tunisia, little appears to have changed to the means by which European policy-makers seek answers to the challenges they face from the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

The rapid evolution of the EU as an international actor has forced its members and officials to construct an approach to international politics which has placed democracy at its heart. Some of the seminal texts on EU consolidation have repeatedly highlighted both the Union’s own belief in the principle of democracy and its desire to promote democracy amongst its international partners. Lacking the resources of other international actors, some observers have noted the normative character of its foreign policy, based on what the Union considers to be its own identity. Whilst this identity has helped shape its foreign policy, including contributing to the inclusion of democracy within the policy, the foreign policy may in turn be used to legitimise the very existence of the Union as an actor in the

⁵¹⁰ Commission of the European Communities, *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, COM(2003) 104, final, 2003b, p. 4.

⁵¹¹ Holm, 2004, p. 12.

⁵¹² Young, 2001, p. 88.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵¹⁴ Bicchi, 2006, p. 293.

face of criticism from its own population. Nevertheless, the tendency to use normative power and socialisation rather than hard-power to achieve its foreign policy objectives provides further credence to the normative power argument. As democracy is one of these values, it is therefore constructed as one of the goals of the EU's foreign policy.

Other evidence suggests however that the actual goal of the Union's promotion of democracy is more closely tied to how the EU imagines it might best achieve its own security. Indeed, its own analysis of the threats it faces in a post-9/11 world reveals a propensity to focus on the dangers stemming from non-state actors and supra-state phenomenon. Moreover, the responses it advocates to these threats are not based on traditional notions of hard-power maximisation and major growth in defence spending, but rather on engagement with other societies, the diffusion of (what the EU considers to be) positive values, and improving the welfare other citizens across the globe. Security then becomes focused on the individual rather than the state, and democracy becomes vitally important for its achievement.

Therefore two different reasons are present for the EU's desire to promote democracy in the Mediterranean. The first is linked to a wider debate over the Union's international identity, and argues that being a democracy promoter is simply what the EU should be. The establishment of democracy in other parts of the world represents one of the core objectives of the EU's foreign policy, stemming from the very identity of the EU as an international actor. Democracy is believed by some in the EU to be a universal value, desired by populations across the globe. Thus, it is somehow the EU's duty to promote this fundamental value as part of its foreign policy. In short, the EU promotes democracy because this is what it thinks it should do, and democracy is one of the end goals of its foreign policy.

The second perspective is a much more realist take on international relations, but one that also draws on the liberal thinking on democratic peace prevalent in the mid-1990s. Advocates of this perspective believe that whilst democracy may indeed be an objective of EU foreign policy, it is always a secondary objective to that of achieving security for the Union's citizens. Put simply, democracy ceases to be an end for EU foreign policy, but rather becomes a means of achieving an end, the end in question being security. The establishment of security communities aids this process, allowing the EU to diffuse its norms through the socialisation of its international partners within multilateral policy initiatives.

The Mediterranean is a good example of such thinking. Often, the region is constructed as an area of threat or instability; a zone of conflict and insecure governments, where the

individual citizens often feels compelled to turn to violence and extremism by the socio-economic circumstances in which he or she finds him/herself. Policy initiatives such as the EMP are designed with the explicit goal of turning the region into an area of peace and stability. Democracy is of course present in the Union's Mediterranean policies. Definitions of democracy are imprecise however, tending to be constructed around the supposed 'universality' of the concept. This leaves contestation of the concept difficult, and with democracy often perceived as a fundamentally contested and contestable concept, one begins to wonder at the democratic nature of the Union's definition. Such doubts are only exacerbated when considered alongside other statements by the EU which appear to promote its understanding of concepts, practices, and principles above those found in its partners' societies. Thus, the democracy the Union promotes appears to have a particularly European flavour

It is within this context of EU policy thinking that Tunisia finds itself. Since 1995 the relationship between Tunisia and the Union has become ever more entwined, and as the next chapter argues, the promotion of democracy has featured prominently within this relationship. Thus far, the thesis has argued that defining Tunisia's current administration as a democratic government is problematic, as the political process is so heavily skewed in favour of the President and the ruling RCD party. This is based on a process of regime consolidation that has been in effect since the nineteenth century, but which has been perfected in the post-independence period. The incumbent Tunisian government officials' positions at the top of Tunisian politics have been strengthened by a combination of good socio-economic development, a series of successful strategies that have weakened opposition forces, and an over-sized security apparatus with personal links to the cabinet.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Mediterranean region, including Tunisia, has become an increasingly focal point of EU foreign policy. Crucially, this period has also seen a significant growth in the capabilities and cohesiveness of the EU as an actor in the international arena. Debates over this issue have often identified the promotion of democracy as one of the EU's key foreign policy objectives, due in no small part to the prominence awarded to democracy in the EU's own international identity. Yet the period has also seen the development of very different challenges to the security of European citizens, born out of social deprivation and lack of political opportunities, according to some. Thus, the thesis has also argued that democracy is promoted by the EU in the Mediterranean due to two reasons. Firstly, democracy is promoted because of the way in which particular individuals understand the role of the EU as a 'normative' actor in global

politics, a role that somehow ‘predisposes’ the Union to promote democracy. Secondly, democracy is promoted due to the belief of many in the EU that the spread of democracy in its neighbourhood is essential if it is to achieve long-term security for its citizens.

As one of the EU’s nearest Mediterranean neighbours, and one in which the democratic qualities of its current government are far from perfect, Tunisia has found itself at the heart of the EU’s Mediterranean policies. As the second part of this thesis will argue, the promotion of democracy occupies a central role in these policies. Yet, as Chapter Two has established, it is not immediately evident that any policy that is supposedly promoting democracy in Tunisia is having any significant effect. Judging by the conclusions of Chapter Three, this is surprising, as EU commitments to promote democracy could hardly be clearer. Therefore, the second part of this thesis asks why does government in Tunisia appear to be as undemocratic as ever, when the EU has invested so much time, effort, and resources in developing policies that seek to bring democracy to its neighbours?

PART 2 – PROMOTING **DEMOCRACY?**

Between the many and the few: the structure and method of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia

This chapter argues that the EU uses both multilateral and bilateral frameworks to promote democracy in Tunisia. In addition, the chapter argues that the four principal methods of democracy promotion used by the Union display its awareness of previous democratisation processes and a belief that only through holistic approaches to reform that its objectives may be met. Chapter Two argued that Bin Ali and the RCD have successfully restricted the development of a contestable democratic political system in Tunisia. Chapter Three meanwhile claimed that EU foreign policy-makers awarded a prominent place to democracy promotion within their foreign policies, either due to the EU's nature as a normative power, or due to a commitment to the democratic peace theory. This chapter outlines the policies and the means through which the EU seeks to promote the democratisation of Tunisia. Therefore, the principal question of this chapter asks how does the EU attempt to promote democracy in Tunisia?

A number of developments precede the EU's current Mediterranean and democracy promotion policies. During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of southern European states experienced democratisation processes, going on to become fully-fledged EU members within a few years of their democratic transitions.⁵¹⁵ Despite this gradual spread of democracy in the Mediterranean, references to democracy remained absent from the EC's formal relations with its Arab and Mediterranean neighbours during this time. Initiatives such as the Euro-Arab dialogue and early association agreements with Mediterranean states avoided calls for political reform, choosing instead to concentrate on enhancing the EU's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process or on closer economic cooperation respectively. Youngs suggests that this European reluctance to seek political reform in the Mediterranean was a symptom of a lingering anxiousness amongst Europeans regarding any intervention in domestic affairs of the region's states in the aftermath of

⁵¹⁵ See for example Huntington, 1991.

decolonisation.⁵¹⁶ Others, however, have preferred to highlight the fact that until the creation and signing of the TEU in the early 1990s, the Union simply lacked the impetus to include political elements within its external policies.⁵¹⁷ Whatever the reason for the exclusion of democracy-promoting components from these earlier policies, the Barcelona Process became significant as the first European foreign policy initiative to place the promotion of democracy at the heart of EU-Mediterranean relations.

Since 1995, however, democracy has acquired a much more notable position in EU-Tunisia relations. A communication from the Commission in 2004, for example, states that the EU's first 'priority action' in Tunisia should be 'the pursuit and consolidation of reforms which guarantee democracy and the rule of law'.⁵¹⁸ Elsewhere, the EMP-related *National Indicative Programme* for 2005-2006 states that '*better governance, promotion of democracy and respect for human rights* constitute core objectives of the EU's external policies.'⁵¹⁹ Yet stating a desire to promote democracy is one thing; developing policies capable of delivering these objectives with any degree of success is a far more difficult task entirely. This chapter considers how the EU seeks to match its rhetoric on the democratisation of Tunisia with its actions.

Yet Tunisia is but one of a number of states and regions in which the EU promotes democracy. This promotion typically takes places within the frameworks of region-wide or multi-actor EU foreign policy initiatives, such as the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy in the Mediterranean.⁵²⁰ As is argued in this chapter, EU policy in Tunisia is framed by the multilateral EMP and ENP which also include a number of other Arab and Mediterranean states within their structures. Indeed, the EU's relationship with Tunisia is now entirely framed by the texts of the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy. This preference by the EU for foreign policy initiatives that are regional or multilateral in scope is mirrored in the coverage of Tunisia in academic literature. Typically, Tunisia is generally considered only alongside other MENA and Mediterranean states as one of the EU's 'southern neighbours', rather than on its own accord.⁵²¹ This chapter asks two questions regarding the frameworks of the EMP and ENP.

⁵¹⁶ Youngs, 2001a, pp. 52-53.

⁵¹⁷ Bretherton and Vogler, 2006, p. 155.

⁵¹⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *Proposal for a Council Decision*, COM(2004) 792 final, Brussels, 9 December 2004c, p. 9.

⁵¹⁹ Commission of the European Communities, *Tunisia – National Indicative Programme 2005-2006*, Brussels: Euro-Med Partnership, 2004d, p. 5.

⁵²⁰ For a useful overview of the various EU democracy promotion projects, see Richard Youngs (ed.), *Survey of European Democracy Promotion Policies 2000-2006*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2006, pp. 51-81. Available at: <<http://www.fride.org/EuropeanDemocracy2000-06>>; accessed 17 September 2007.

⁵²¹ See for example Youngs, 2001, pp. 47-93; Karen E. Smith, 2003, pp. 75-77; Nicole Alecu de Flers and Elfriede Regelsberger, 'The EU and Inter-regional Cooperation', in Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 317-342; Bretherton and Vogler, 2006, pp. 154-158; Adler *et al.*, 2006.

Firstly, how are commitments to democracy promotion included in the frameworks? Secondly, how do the frameworks seek to apply their reform programmes specifically to Tunisia?

As argued in Chapter Three, the EU considers democracy promotion as part of its overall foreign policy. Democracy-promoting mechanisms as part of the EU's foreign policy agenda, therefore, are not limited to EU Mediterranean policy. This chapter argues that the EU's approach to democracy promotion in the Mediterranean has inherited much from experiences of democratic transitions in other world regions. In actual fact, the period in which the EMP was being developed was also an important period in the development of thinking on democracy and democratisation processes, influenced in no small part by the transitions that had occurred in the Southern and Eastern Europe.⁵²² Typically, these processes have been driven either from the 'top' down, in the form of changes implemented by a state's elite, or from the 'bottom' up, involving popular pressure on the elite to reform emerging from the general population. Indeed, the development of multilateral policies by the EU in the Mediterranean has coincided with a dramatic rise in EU funding for democracy promotion efforts, which have more than tripled since the start of the 1990s.⁵²³ Importantly, the experience of democratisation processes in Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEECs) has played a role in shaping the EU's choice of democracy promoting strategies in Tunisia. In the CEECs, civil society and international actors played an important part in the processes of democratisation, whilst as outlined in Chapter One, the experience of democratic transition processes elsewhere in the world have also suggested the importance of shifting dialogues amongst the political elites of authoritarian countries. The EU has sought to use its experience of these processes to help structure its democracy promotion policy in the Mediterranean.⁵²⁴ This chapter asks what are the methods used by the EU to promote democracy in Tunisia.

This chapter is in three parts. The first part considers the wider policy context of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia. It assesses the role played by commitments to democracy and political reform within the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy. Both the general structure and the bilateral components of these frameworks are assessed. The second and third parts consider how the EU promotes democracy within the

⁵²² Typical of these studies on these processes are Huntington, 1991; Pridham and Vanhanen (eds.), 1994; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; and Geoffrey Pridham, Eric Herring and George Sanford (eds.), *Building Democracy: The International Dimension of Democratisation in Eastern Europe*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1997, Second Edition.

⁵²³ For a breakdown of the development of EU funding for democracy promotion initiatives, see Richard Youngs, *Democracy Promotion: The Case of European Union Strategy*, CEPS Working Paper, No.167, Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2001b, pp. 3-5.

⁵²⁴ Gillespie and Youngs, 2002, pp. 10-12.

EMP and ENP. The second part focuses on attempts to promote ‘top-down’ change which concentrate their efforts on reforming the practices of the political elite in Tunisia. The chapter specifically addresses the Union’s use of conditionality and socialisation as means of promoting democracy. In addition, the chapter outlines how the EU might exert pressure on Tunisia as part of strategies of conditionality and socialisation. The final part of this chapter considers how the EU seeks to encourage ‘bottom-up’ pressure for democratisation. It includes one section on the potential contribution of economic reforms to democratisation, and another section on EU efforts to engage with Tunisian civil society organisations.

From multilateral to bilateral

This part of the chapter argues that EU democracy promotion in Tunisia takes place within the frameworks of the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood policy. It considers both policies on a multilateral and bilateral level, and outlines the role played by democracy promotion in the policies’ wider contexts.

Multilateral approaches to international problems were not new to European foreign policy thinking in the 1990s. As early as the 1960s, the EC signed a number of association agreements with former European colonies in Africa under the Yaoundé I, II (1963 and 1969 respectively) and Arusha (1968-1969) processes. These agreements were expanded under the Lomé Convention framework agreed in 1975. These initial relationships however were largely economic agreements, based more on historical ties between European and African states rather than on any grander form of foreign policy design by the EC.⁵²⁵ It was also at this time that Western Europeans developed their first formal agreements with the Mediterranean states, coinciding with increasing concerns over the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict and other troubles in the Mediterranean region. As outlined in Chapter Three, Tunisia figured among these early agreements, signing its first association agreement with the EC in the late 1960s. This agreement principally sought to allow greater access for Tunisian products into the European market. These first forays into a pan-European Mediterranean foreign policy established the foundation upon which future relations could be developed; relations which took a leap forward in 1995 with the signing of the Barcelona Declaration. This section assesses the two principal EU foreign policy frameworks that have shaped its relations with Tunisia since 1995. In so doing, it pays particular attention to the inclusion of demands for political reform evident in EU

⁵²⁵ De Flers and Regelsberger, 2005, p. 321.

foreign policy, therefore outlining the policy context of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia.

The EMP and political reform

This section argues that democracy promotion was included as one of the objectives of the Barcelona Process in 1995, and that the EMP intended to establish commitments to democratic government as a foundation for its relations with Mediterranean partner states. Following the lack of references to political reform in previous EC/EU policies in the Mediterranean, the section also argues that the EMP represented a significant change from its past policies, as referred to in the introduction to this chapter, a change that was not welcomed by all parts of the EU. The section begins by addressing these disagreements over democracy promotion's inclusion in the EMP.

As argued in the introduction, early association agreements between the EEC/EU and Mediterranean states did not contain any references to political reform. Thus, the inclusion of calls for such reform within the Barcelona Declaration represented a break from established EEC/EU practice. Yet the policy shift brought about by the EMP was far from guaranteed. Disputes between northern and southern EU states included a threat by southern states to exclude references to democracy from the Barcelona Declaration. This threat was only withdrawn when northern EU states agreed to commit more aid funding for the region and despite protestations by Mediterranean partners to the contrary.⁵²⁶ Further opposition was experienced during the planning phase of the policy, with the European Parliament demanding democracy's inclusion in return for providing the support necessary for its implementation.⁵²⁷ Gillespie argues that those seeking to include democracy in the agreements succeeded in convincing the doubters with two principal arguments.⁵²⁸ Firstly, supporters of its inclusion argued that further standardisation was necessary in EU foreign policy to portray the Union as a more convincing actor in international politics.⁵²⁹ As democracy was already a major part of EU policy in eastern European and ACP states, its omission from the Union's Mediterranean policy would send the wrong signals to these other regions. Secondly, spreading democracy to the Mediterranean might, according to its supporters, also help achieve regional stability, another of the EMP's political objectives. Not only does this demonstrate the influence of the democratic peace theory over EU policy-makers at the time, but it also highlights the primacy of stability over democracy in EU policy objectives.

⁵²⁶ Youngs, 2002, p. 44; Richard Edis, 'Does the Barcelona Process matter?', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1998, pp. 93-105, p. 96.

⁵²⁷ Gillespie, 2006, p. 86.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 86-87.

⁵²⁹ On this point, see also Youngs, 2002, p. 41.

In fact, the emphasis on political reform is far from the only noteworthy feature of the EMP. Its combination of mutually reinforcing political, economic and cultural pillars was also a novel approach to the region. As previously argued, earlier agreements were limited to economic cooperation alone. With the EMP however, the promotion of democracy forms part of a 'triple logic', alongside the nurturing of markets and regional multilateralism.⁵³⁰ Thus, similar to the frameworks of US initiatives such as MEPI and BMENA, the EMP seeks to promote democracy within the framework of a wider multilateral process. However, the EMP predates the US initiatives by almost a decade. Furthermore, the multi-pillar structure of the EMP displays clear similarities with earlier European initiatives, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Other similarities with the CSCE include the fact that both are attempts at region-building, albeit in very different political, strategic, historical and geographical contexts. It is clear therefore that the structure of the EMP shares a number of commonalities with not only other European multilateral initiatives, but also with more recent efforts by the US in the MENA region. When it was launched however, the EMP's approach was a departure from all previous European policies in the Mediterranean.

The ambition and scope of the EMP has generally been commended by commentators and the Union alike. Youngs, for example, identifies the Barcelona Process as the 'most distinctive of EU policies',⁵³¹ whilst Pace argues that it 'is undoubtedly an ambitious [policy] which will remain in the history books as the first attempt to create a strong bond between EU member states and their partners in the Mediterranean.'⁵³² The Commission meanwhile explains that:

In the political domain the Barcelona Process constitutes a unique regional forum to further mutual understanding with a view to abating tensions in the Middle East, even if it is not the forum in which a settlement will be reached.⁵³³

If nothing else, the partnership offered a significant break from previous EU foreign policy practice in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, with democracy established as one of these commonly agreed norms, there is clear potential for its promotion via normative power and socialisation.

Socialisation itself requires an advanced level of regional integration, one that the EMP's three pillar system seeks to cultivate. Indeed, the integration of political, economic and

⁵³⁰ Etel Solingen and Saba Şenses Ozyurt, 'Mare Nostrum? The Sources, Logic, and Dilemmas of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership', in Adler *et al.*, 2006, pp. 51-82, p. 51.

⁵³¹ Richard Youngs, *Europe and the Middle East: In the Shadow of September 11*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006, p. 3.

⁵³² Pace, 2006, p. 75.

⁵³³ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Regional Strategy Paper (2007-2013) and Regional Indicative Programme (2007-2010) for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, Brussels, 2007, p. 4.

social development processes in the Mediterranean into EU institutional frameworks provides a further example of the innovativeness of the EMP as an approach to promoting reform in others. Regular meetings between European and Mediterranean foreign ministers, in addition to other regional forums involving actors from the world of business and civil society provide structured spaces for cooperation to seek answers for challenges common to all participants. Indeed, the text of the Barcelona Declaration contributes to community-building as it speaks of ‘common challenges’ posed by ‘new political, economic and social issues on both sides of the Mediterranean’.⁵³⁴ Thus, the solidarity between the EU and the partner states is emphasised, which in turn facilitates the development of a common identity amongst the participants. This identity is constructed around the ‘commonly agreed attributes, norms, and principles of legitimate behaviour’ found within the EMP’s institutional frameworks.⁵³⁵ In this regard, not only does the EMP represent a continuation of practices associated with other European or US initiatives, but also echoes the stress on common values and identity associated with the development of the EU itself.

Central to the success of such an approach is the maintenance of a perception of equal participation within the frameworks. To this end, the use of the term ‘partnership’ proves particularly effective. A former Tunisian diplomat who was involved in Tunisia’s relations with the EU argues that the stress on the word ‘partnership’ plays a significant role in maintaining belief in partner state administrations in the long-term viability of the EMP as a vehicle for EU-Mediterranean relations. This is strengthened by the sense of inclusion generated by continual engagement between EU and partner state officials within inter-governmental EMP forums.⁵³⁶ Other Tunisian officials emphasise that inclusion within a multilateral partnership is more conducive to cooperation on more difficult issues, and the concept of joint-ownership of an agreement makes difficult reforms much easier to swallow.⁵³⁷ Indeed, giving voice to external actors within EU policy-making frameworks is potentially one of the Union’s major strengths in its relations with others.

By launching the EMP in 1995 therefore, the Union significantly changed its approach to the Mediterranean. Moreover, this shift also included making hitherto unprecedented demands for political reform in states which had, for the half-century since decolonisation, enjoyed considerable freedom from a post-imperial Europe to develop their political systems as they saw fit. Through the EMP, democracy was established as one of the core norms upon which future EU-Mediterranean relations would be

⁵³⁴ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁵³⁵ Adler and Crawford, 2006, p. 15.

⁵³⁶ Interview with Ambassador Abderraouf Ounaies (retired), Tunis, April 2006.

⁵³⁷ Interviews in Tunis, March and April 2006.

conducted. Its inclusion was made all the more palatable for the partner states by placing the principle of joint ownership at the heart of the EMP.

Democracy through association

Vital to the inclusion of a partner state within the framework of the multilateral EMP process are the country-specific association agreements (AAs). This section considers the role played by the AAs in the EU's relations with Mediterranean states, focusing particularly on the content of Tunisia's AA and the contribution of the AA to the democracy promotion process.

These provide legally-binding bilateral cooperation frameworks between the EU and each Mediterranean partner state, and are designed to concentrate on the specific needs of the different societies in the Mediterranean. On 17 July 1995, Tunisia became the first partner state to sign such an agreement, and in 1998 was the second to ratify the AA's programme. The agreements replicate the three pillar approach of the multilateral EMP, and in so doing reflect 'the general principles governing the ... Euro-Mediterranean relationship'.⁵³⁸ Although each partner state's Agreement is based on negotiations between the EU and the state in question, thereby reflecting issues particular to the state in question, a number of common features are identifiable. These include:

- Political provisions, covering respect for human rights, democratic principles, and a framework for multi-level and regular 'political dialogue'. Included is the stipulation that the Agreement may be suspended 'in the event of major human rights violations'.
- Trade, leading to free trade in accordance with WTO rules, and including a gradual liberalisation of trade in agricultural products and other services.
- 'Other economic provisions', including greater harmonisation of intellectual property rights and provisions on competition, state aid, and capital movements.
- Financial cooperation, including the provision of unspecified amounts of EU financial assistance for partner states (excluding Cyprus, Israel, and Malta).
- Social and cultural cooperation, including provisions on workers' rights and migration and immigration issues.

⁵³⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and MEDA Regional Activities*, EuroMed Information Notes, June 2002a, p. 1.

- Institutional and ‘final’ provisions, involving the process of ratification for the Agreements by the European Parliament, each EU member state, and the partner state itself.⁵³⁹

The political- (let alone the democracy-) related content of the Agreements therefore forms part of a much larger framework of bilateral cooperation, with a heavy emphasis on economic and trade issues. By the EU’s own admission the Agreements are principally free trade agreements with a ‘much wider scope’.⁵⁴⁰ According to Pace, this provides the Union with sufficient leverage to drive political reform in the partner states.⁵⁴¹ Crucially, and in contrast to the text of the Barcelona Declaration, the text of the AAs are legally binding,⁵⁴² therefore making them potentially far more potent frameworks for use in the promotion of democracy.

In the case of Tunisia’s AA, specific commitments to democracy-promoting measures are difficult to locate. In fact, even the word ‘democracy’ is entirely absent from the document, as is any reference to ‘political reform’ of any sort. Even the word ‘political’ is only used in a number of references to ‘political dialogue’. A commitment to ‘democratic principles’ however is made, in Article Two of the Agreement. This states that:

Relations between [the EU and Tunisia], as well as the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles which guide their domestic and international policies and constitute an essential element of the Agreement.⁵⁴³

Although hardly ground-braking in terms of its language, at the very least, this is recognition that relations will be conducted from a foundation that respects democratic principles. Yet there is a distinct lack of specificity regarding the supposed democratisation of Tunisian society.

Whilst outlining the Agreement’s objectives, Article One provides a further example of the Agreement’s ambiguity on the subject of political reform. Refusing to advocate any particular democracy-promoting measures, it calls only for a provision of ‘an appropriate framework for political dialogue between the parties, allowing the development of close relations in all areas they consider relevant to such dialogue’.⁵⁴⁴ Indeed, all five Articles which constitute the ‘political dialogue’ section of the Agreement refer only to unspecified ‘joint initiatives’, ‘meetings’ and ‘consolidating dialogue and increasing its effectiveness’.⁵⁴⁵ However, by calling for the ‘full integration of the Tunisian economy in

⁵³⁹ Commission of the European Communities, 2002, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Pace, 2006, p. 79.

⁵⁴² Youngs, 2001a, p. 74.

⁵⁴³ European Union and the Republic of Tunisia, 1998.

⁵⁴⁴ European Union and the Republic of Tunisia, 1998.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, Articles 1-5 and 11.

the world economy and participation in the community of democratic nations’,⁵⁴⁶ the Agreement implies that Tunisia was not, at the time of the Agreement, part of this ‘democratic community’. Yet its silence on matters of political reform suggests that either one, or both, the EU and the Tunisian government, believe that political reform is either not necessary in Tunisia, or that there are far more pressing concerns in need of attention.

In fact, Tunisia’s Agreement is not alone in its paucity of democracy-promoting frameworks. Biscop argues that a problem with the AAs as a whole is their generalist style. Commitments to rule of law, political dialogue and human rights for example remain vague at best, and even these are often not pursued.⁵⁴⁷ Writing shortly after the establishment of the Partnership, Eberhard Kienle concludes that commitments to democracy promotion by the signatories were far more prominent in the Declaration’s text than they were in the subsequent AAs outlining the specific policy programmes for the Mediterranean partner states.⁵⁴⁸ As the full range of AAs came into force, it became increasingly obvious that efforts to establish a political and security dialogue between the partner states and the EU, and based on a respect of ‘democratic principles’, were more integral to the Agreements than the promotion of democracy *per se*.⁵⁴⁹ In many states, this is a consequence of what Roland Dannreuther calls the ‘disastrous collapse’ of the security situation in the region following the launch of the EMP.⁵⁵⁰ After all, the decade immediately succeeding the Barcelona Declaration saw a number of violent incidents specific to the EMP or wider MENA region. These included the *al-Aqsa Intifada*, various bombings involving Islamist-related perpetrators, 9/11, the launch of the ‘war on terror’, and, of course, the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Yet Tunisia’s Agreement was signed and brought into force *before* any of these events, making such analysis problematic in the case of Tunisia.

Therefore, as part of the EMP framework, the EU and Tunisia launched an association agreement in 1998. This agreement, along with similar agreements signed by other partner states, was designed to tailor the contents of the multilateral partnership to the needs of the individual states. Yet in the actual text of some of these agreements, including Tunisia’s, what mention there was of democracy was often vague and inconclusive, and did not reflect the commitments made to democracy promotion at the

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Sven Biscop, ‘The European Security Strategy and the Neighbourhood Policy: a new starting point for a Euro-Mediterranean security partnership?’, paper presented at EUSA Ninth Biennial International Conference, Austin, Texas, 31 March – 2 April 2005b, p. 6. Available at: <<http://aei.pitt.edu/2984/>>; accessed 11 November 2007.

⁵⁴⁸ Eberhard Kienle, ‘Destabilization through partnership? Euro-Mediterranean relations after the Barcelona Declaration’, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1998, pp. 1-20, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁹ Said Haddadi, ‘Political securitization and democratization in the Maghreb: ambiguous discourses and fine-tuning practices for a security partnership’, in Adler *et al.*, 2006, pp. 168-190, p. 174.

⁵⁵⁰ Dannreuther, 2007, p. 42.

multilateral level. In Tunisia's case, the weakness of the democracy-promoting element in its Agreement is even more perplexing when one considers that according to at least one analysis, Tunisia was the only Arab state to express enthusiasm for the EMP's emphasis on democracy and human rights.⁵⁵¹ Chapter Six will address reasons for this inconsistency. Now however, the thesis considers the second major EU policy initiative that advocates the promotion of democracy in Tunisia.

Review and reform: from EMP to ENP

By the early twenty-first century, evidence was emerging of dissatisfaction with the progress of the Barcelona Process. A number of Commission texts, for example, reveal frustration at the lack of progress on many parts of the Barcelona Process, including on democracy.⁵⁵² Moreover, the UN's *Arab Human Development Report* had also been published in 2002, drawing further worldwide attention to the democratic deficit in the region.⁵⁵³

In addition, the EU itself was changing, and the design and area of coverage of the ENP reflects this further expansion that was to take place in the subsequent five years or so. In the context of the EMP, Cyprus and Malta, two of the original 'partners', were set to become EU member states, whilst eventual Turkish membership was also crystallising. This meant that only Israel remained from the original non-Arab partner states, drawing even further attention to the importance to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Mediterranean relations. EU expansion also saw the relatively successful incorporation of formerly communist states into the EU, and significantly more developed relationships between the Union and other eastern European states. Indeed, Patrick Holden argues that the ENP was designed not only to reinforce the ailing EMP but also signals a 'more differentiated approach to countries and the adoption of techniques used to manage enlargement.'⁵⁵⁴ In short, the ENP is a consequence of both a need to reinvigorate the EMP and a reaction to the political changes which had occurred since the Barcelona Process had first been envisaged.

Yet the shift towards the ENP is also significant as it marked distinctive changes in both the 'actorness' of the EU and in its own perceptions of its foreign policy objectives. As Dannreuther points out, the ENP suggests that a clear shift was emerging in the EU's

⁵⁵¹ Adrián Mac Liman, *Iniciativa euromediterránea de la Unión Europea: La respuesta de los países terceros mediterráneos*, CIDOB Dossier 3, Barcelona: Centre d'Informació i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona, 1995, p. 20. Cited in Gillespie, 2006, p. 87.

⁵⁵² See for example Commission of the European Communities, 2003a; and Commission of the European Communities, 2003b.

⁵⁵³ *Arab Human Development Report*, 2002.

⁵⁵⁴ Holden, 2005, p. 462.

perception of its international identity and role. The ENP, for example, showed increasing willingness to incorporate ‘traditional realist or Great Power principles, such as recognition of the utility of military force, and the need for defining interests’ in Union foreign policy.⁵⁵⁵ Indeed, the previous chapter of this thesis illustrated how an increasingly realist character is evident in EU discourse since 2003. In short, the ENP reflects something of an evolution in the EU’s conceptualisation of itself as an international actor.

This evolution is not however limited to the EU’s perception of itself. For a number of reasons, the ENP also signifies a major shift in how it had decided to deal with its neighbours, including Tunisia. The most obvious shift regards the coverage of the ENP and the subsequent relocation of the Mediterranean within EU foreign policy. In 1995, at the launch of the Barcelona Process, the EU was very much focused on developing distinctive policies towards its eastern European and Mediterranean neighbours. From 2003, however, and perhaps as a further reflection of internal EU standardisation processes,⁵⁵⁶ both these regions have been included within the same policy framework (the ENP). Even in its own discourse, the Union refers to a ‘ring’ of neighbours,⁵⁵⁷ thereby creating a crescent-shaped *de facto* ‘frontier zone’ stretching from the Arctic Circle to the coast of Western Sahara.

Moreover, a significant discursive shift occurs during the naming of the new policy. The ‘partner’ states, included in the Euro-Mediterranean *Partnership*, are suddenly rebranded as ‘neighbours’ within the new European *Neighbourhood* Policy. This has potentially significant repercussions on the ownership of the policies. The use of ‘partnership’ suggests an element of cooperation. By the ENP however, this word has disappeared, as has the term ‘Mediterranean’. Indeed, the ENP’s title only refers to one international actor; it is a *European Neighbourhood Policy*, designed and executed by ‘Europe’, notwithstanding any further issues regarding the exact definition of ‘Europe’. Discursively at least, the EMP was far more forward-thinking and egalitarian. This change in terminology is, in fact, identified as a potential problem by Tunisian officials, who felt some unease over the potential ramifications of such a discursive demotion for EU-Tunisian and EU-Arab relations.⁵⁵⁸ This demotion is only confounded by Tunisia’s inclusion in the ENP alongside states which may potentially become EU member states; an option that might never be open to Tunisia and other Arab states, as demonstrated by

⁵⁵⁵ Dannreuther, 2007, p. 45. On the EU’s evolving nature as an international actor, see also Richard Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower? The International Identity of the European Union*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998.

⁵⁵⁶ Michelle Pace, ‘The Euro-Mediterranean *Partnership* and the *Common Mediterranean Strategy*? European Union Policy from a Discursive Perspective’, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2004, pp. 292-309, p. 293.

⁵⁵⁷ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 8. See also Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁵⁵⁸ Interviews in Tunis, March and April 2006.

the continued opposition to Morocco's aspirations to membership.⁵⁵⁹ The ENP therefore has significantly readjusted Tunisia and the Mediterranean's position within EU foreign policy discourse.

Whilst the ENP is an initiative with a clear multilateral dimension, like the Barcelona Process, it too possesses a bilateral framework. Similarly to the AAs, the ENP's 'APs' are agreed between representatives of the Union and the neighbouring state. Aware of the slow progress of EMP-related programmes in some states, the Neighbourhood Policy is designed so that progress with individual states is not dependent on agreements made in major conferences which include all the participants. Indeed, in policy terms, the Neighbourhood Policy never sought to replace other agreements such as the EMP; rather it sought to build on these and supplement their strength. Thus, the joint ownership concept present in the EMP remains in existence, with regular regional-level conferences. Yet the parallel ENP bilateral frameworks prevent the slower progress of negotiations with some states, such as Syria, from holding back the progress of others which are more advanced in terms of meeting their EMP targets, such as Tunisia.

To a certain extent, therefore, the ENP has reconfigured Tunisia's relations with the EU. Whilst remaining part of the Mediterranean, Tunisia has also been reconstructed as one of the EU's 'neighbours'. More significantly perhaps, the ENP's terminology has created a further sphere of relations between the Union and Tunisia in which Tunisia might not necessarily be regarded as a 'partner'. Yet clear similarities also exist between the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy, including their simultaneous use of both multilateral and bilateral tracks. This section closes by considering the significance of the bilateral element of the ENP framework to Tunisia.

A plan for action

As the ENP was implemented in 2003, Tunisia once again became one of the most eager states to exploit this new phase in relations between the EU and the Mediterranean. It was one of the first to agree to an 'action plan' (AP) with the Union,⁵⁶⁰ and the plan came into force in July 2005. EU democracy promotion in Tunisia now occurs within the framework of this Plan. Whilst similar in approach to the earlier AA, the content of the AP differs somewhat to that of the Agreement, particularly in its references to democracy and democracy promotion. In addition, it is worth noting that the final content of the Plan was approved by the Tunisian government in a series of negotiations with Commission officials.

⁵⁵⁹ See for example BBC, 'Morocco's quest to be European', 2000. Available at: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/699760.stm>>; accessed 14 June 2005.

⁵⁶⁰ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2004.

Most noticeable is the difference in both the amount and clarity of content relating to democracy. Put simply, the AP is far more direct in its observation of problems with the political process in Tunisia. It is also explicit in its recognition of the areas in which the AA was failing. Before making any other recommendations, for example, the Plan lists a number of ‘priority actions’, covering all three areas of the original scope of the Barcelona Process, which require ‘particular attention’. At the top of this list are calls for greater effort in ‘the pursuit and consolidation of reforms that guarantee democracy and the rule of law’, and in ‘enhancing political dialogue and cooperation in areas such as democracy and human rights, foreign and security policy, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, whilst promoting respect for human rights.’⁵⁶¹ EU concerns over the political situation in Tunisia are therefore made immediately clear.

The clarity continues in other parts of the document. In the section on ‘political dialogue and reforms’, ten clear objectives are highlighted relating to democracy and the rule of law. The five short-term objectives include: increasing participation by all sections of Tunisian society in political life; developing the role of civil society; establishing exchange programmes between Tunisian and European members of parliament; developing structured political dialogue on democracy and the rule of law; and to continue providing support to political parties to strengthen their positions in the democratic process.⁵⁶² To these is added the medium-term goal of providing EU support for administrative reform within the Tunisian state, particularly regarding increasing the transparency of Tunisian government.

Whilst clearly a shift from the tamer language found in the AA, Tunisia’s AP is also in keeping with others from across the Mediterranean region. Karen E. Smith also comments on the ‘striking’ prominence awarded to democracy and human rights in the Plans.⁵⁶³ She attributes this to the ‘new zeitgeist’ of the time, noting the similarities between the shift in the EU’s approach and the content of the US’s MEPI and BMENA initiatives. Yet the US initiatives are clearly products of post-9/11 US foreign policy, representing attempts to reach out to a region within which the US was also conducting major military and security operations. As the previous chapter argued, security was at the heart of US policies, and the inclusion of references to democracy and human rights was often done with the explicit intent to deny ideological recruiting space for future ‘terrorists’. If the democracy-related content of the APs was part of a new zeitgeist, so was the association of democracy with security.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁶² European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2004.

⁵⁶³ Karen E. Smith, ‘The Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, 2005, pp. 757-773, p. 765.

Indeed, other parts of Tunisia's AP make no secret of the importance of the security element to the relationship, despite the increased prominence awarded to democracy. These are particularly aimed at strengthening regional-level cooperation on security issues, particularly in the fields of conflict prevention and combating terrorism. This builds on the foundations laid by Articles Three, Four, and Five of the AA, and, as was the case with democracy in the AAs,⁵⁶⁴ this is based on continuing high-level dialogues between the EU and the partners. This dialogue, along with other such engagement between the EU and other Mediterranean partner states, contributes to the process of region-building amongst the region's governments. The dialogue is centred on the identification of common threats and challenges present to the actors involved, and their combined responses to these issues. 'We-feelings', as discussed in Chapter Three, are encouraged by the acknowledgement of common threats by the partners, simultaneously 'othering' any actors associated to these threats.⁵⁶⁵ Thus, the APs, including Tunisia's, not only include a number of security-related points, but also link the bilateral relationship between the EU and a partner state to the wider multilateral region-building process.

It is interesting to note that the majority of the objectives and proposals outlined above tend to focus EU engagement on Tunisia's ruling elite. This presents a particularly 'top-down' model of democratisation, heavily dependent on the EU's ability to reform or persuade the upper echelons of the Tunisian state to instigate political reform programmes. The next part of this chapter outlines the nature of 'top-down' democracy promotion in Tunisia in more detail. The AP also contains an entire section on 'fundamental freedoms' which includes measures targeting human rights and the promotion of civil society activity. These will be addressed in the last part of this chapter, where it will also be argued that the EU believes that securing the protection of such freedoms helps increase popular pressure on an incumbent regime for political reform.

Taken as a whole however, the frameworks of both the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy involve promoting reform by engaging the ruling elites in Tunisia and its Mediterranean neighbours. Meanwhile, promoting democracy represents but one of the EU's many policy objectives in Tunisia, as indeed is also the case in the wider Mediterranean region. Both EMP and ENP frameworks alike include democracy-promoting measures alongside much wider political, economic, and cultural components. Moreover, the structure of the EMP and ENP combine multilateral and bilateral tracks, creating two different levels upon which the EU is able to push its agenda in the partner states.

⁵⁶⁴ European Union and the Republic of Tunisia, 1998.

⁵⁶⁵ For more on different forms of 'othering' in international politics, see Diez, 2005, pp. 628-629.

‘Top-down’ democracy promotion

Having outlined the bilateral and multilateral nature of EU policy in Tunisia, the chapter now considers the means by which the EU directly targets the Tunisian ruling elite with conditionality and socialisation. In addition, this part of the chapter outlines the extent of the EU’s economic leverage in Tunisia, leverage that if exploited successfully, could be instrumental to the success of conditionality in promoting democracy in the country.

As Chapter One illustrated, a state’s political elite can play an important part in processes of democratisation. Transition theory in particular highlights how the distinctive roles of different parts of an elite, and alliances between members of the elite may contribute to changes that may lead to democratisation. O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, and Przeworski’s works were particularly notable on this point.⁵⁶⁶ These outlined how alliances between moderates and reformers within an elite and between parts of an elite and leading opposition moderates often contributed to successful democratic transitions in some Eastern European and Latin American states. These studies, however, were limited in that they tended to focus on internal processes, thereby ignoring the role or potential role of international actors in encouraging support for political reform amongst an elite. This part of the chapter focuses directly on strategies used by one such international actor to directly encourage a more pro-democracy attitude within the Tunisian elite.

Conditionality and socialisation

This section argues that the elite of an authoritarian state may be encouraged to instigate or support a democratisation process through the use of one or both of conditionality and socialisation. The section also illustrates how these two strategies operate within the context of the EU’s policy in the Mediterranean and Tunisia. It begins, however, with a brief definition of conditionality.

In short, conditionality, as it is known, involves two different methods of coercing the partner state. ‘Positive’ conditionality, entails rewarding the partner states for progress in political reforms with greater economic and financial benefits. ‘Negative’ conditionality, on the other hand, involves punishing lack of progress by refusing rewards or withdrawing concessions agreed at an earlier date. Therefore, conditionality rests on the existence of ‘red lines’: points agreed between the signatories of an agreement that, if breached or not achieved, will either limit cooperation or trigger punitive action by the dominant actor. By attempting to force the government of a state to reform the political

⁵⁶⁶ O’Donnell *et al.*, 1986; Przeworski, 1991.

structures of the state, conditionality is considered to be a ‘top-down’ and direct method of democracy promotion.

In fact, conditionality played a part in the EU’s policy towards its European neighbours before it came to occupy any prominent role in its relations with Mediterranean states. Indeed, clear parallels can be drawn between the conduct of the EU’s relations with CEECs and with its more recent engagement with Mediterranean states. Both sets of relations have been coloured by the inclusion of conditionality clauses demanding political reform in exchange for further EU aid donations or enhanced EU cooperation on areas such as trade and economic reform.⁵⁶⁷ Likewise, both regions have experienced formal attempts at security region-building,⁵⁶⁸ with the ‘Pact for Stability’ an attempt to do in CEECs what the EMP attempts in the Mediterranean.

However, the similarities do not lie in the procedures alone. Dannreuther observes that the ENP itself was designed by officials who were previously responsible for eastward enlargement; officials who had rightly noticed the potential effect of positive conditionality clauses in EU foreign policy.⁵⁶⁹ Judith Kelley argues that this type of conditionality typically favours those partners most able to conform to a policy’s most minute details.⁵⁷⁰ However, as Kelley points out, it is most successfully deployed *alongside* other pressures and rewards, such as eventual EU membership. Conditionality was exercised within frameworks such as EU-CEEC association agreements, and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). CEFTA, however, differs from the EMP and ENP on one significant point: it offered (and indeed granted) EU membership to states that complied with its demands. As mentioned, whilst some states subject to the ENP may indeed become EU members in the not-so-distant future, this is not currently an option for Tunisia. In sum, EU strategies that have proved successful in promoting reform in CEECs have been applied to Tunisia, regardless of the fact that their original success in CEECs was in part due to the leverage possessed by the Union by offering the carrot of EU membership.

Positive conditionality is also an attractive tool for the EU in the Mediterranean as it is a more conducive method of engendering ‘we-feelings’ amongst a community than negative conditionality may be. Put simply, positive conditionality does not ‘punish’ partners, and ‘punishing’ another actor is not helpful if in time that actor may be in a position to retaliate in some way. As has already been established, the EMP and ENP are

⁵⁶⁷ Karen E. Smith, 2003, p. 81.

⁵⁶⁸ Rossi, 2004, p. 9.

⁵⁶⁹ Dannreuther, 2007, p. 47.

⁵⁷⁰ Judith Kelly, ‘New Wines in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2006, pp. 29-55, p. 35.

not only democracy-promoting policies, but rather are complex frameworks seeking cooperation on a wide range of issues. Gillespie and Youngs point out that the EMP in particular is ‘an exercise in region-building’, requiring close cooperation between the EU and partner governments on much more than political reform alone.⁵⁷¹ Other areas where cooperation with Mediterranean states is important to the EU include migration, the environment, trade, and security, and all require positive inputs from southern states for progress to be made. To these should be added the threats identified in the ESS, threats which again might require intergovernmental cooperation to overcome. Indeed, negative conditionality might in fact accentuate security threats, particularly if considered within the human security framework. The denial or restriction of aid payments worsens the living conditions of the citizens, thus potentially driving more to seek extremist methods of action. The government of the state in question would also be put in an ideal position to manipulate the situation to their own ends, whether through spinning the situation as a new form of imperialism, or by deliberately encouraging issues known to concern the exerciser of conditionality. In a Mediterranean context, negative conditionality offers more potential problems than advantages.

The second method used by the EU to encouraging support for political reform amongst the upper levels of Tunisian society is socialisation. In short, this involves promoting norms by including other actors within the same institutional frameworks as the ‘self’.⁵⁷² As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, it is associated with the perception of the EU as a normative power as socialisation involves the promotion of specific norms. Socialisation’s principal logic is that the promotion of norms within institutional frameworks often changes the existing behavioural norms of the actors participating in these institutions. It gradually makes behaviour that begins as intentional attempts to conform to institutional structures a more routine part of an actor’s overall behaviour. In other words, an actor that might not normally be committed to democratic principles and practices might become more democratic as a result of becoming a member of a particular international organisation. At first, the actor’s commitments to democracy might only be rhetorical, in order to portray an image that allows it to be considered as part of the organisation. However, over time, as its commitments to democracy becomes more normalised, it too becomes a passionate supporter of democratic principles and values. Authoritarian regimes might initially attempt to withstand this normative pressure by presenting a front of compliance. Yet, even these regimes become constrained by their

⁵⁷¹ Gillespie and Youngs, 2002, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁷² For a good introduction to the concept of socialisation in international relations, see Trine Flockhart, “‘Complex Socialization’: A Framework for the Study of State Socialisation”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2006, pp. 89-118.

commitments to institutional standardisation, so that ‘despite their original intentions they fall into a pattern defined by [the institution’s] principles.’⁵⁷³ Thus, through socialisation, the norms of institutions also become the norms of the actors that participate in these institutions.

The promotion of norms plays a central role in socialisation, and thus socialisation can be considered to be an exercise in normative power. Indeed, socialisation is nothing less than a deliberate attempt by one actor to alter a second actor’s behaviour by promoting norms specific to the first actor. In addition, conditionality can play an important role in facilitating the socialisation of an actor. Trine Flockhart identifies two strategies that may be used during socialisation.⁵⁷⁴ She argues that socialisation includes

‘social influence’, which elicits pro-norm behaviour through the distribution of social rewards and punishments, and ‘persuasion’, which encourages norm consistent behaviour through a process of interaction that involves changing attitudes without the use of either material or mental coercion.⁵⁷⁵

Conditionality provides the framework in which punishment or reward may be offered, depending on the success of the socialisation, and the EMP and ENP frameworks provide ideal settings for socialisation to be effective. These provide both ‘social influence’ and ‘persuasion’ in the form of conditionality clauses and fora of inter-governmental cooperation apparently free of mental or material coercion. Crucially however, the EU plays a pivotal role in that it determines the norms of behaviour within these multilateral frameworks, and therefore has been able to award commitments to democracy a prominent place within their language.

Conditionality and socialisation are but two of the strings to the EU’s democracy-promoting bow. Conditionality seeks to punish the partner state as a whole for their failure to drive through agreed reforms. This can be seen as deliberate exercise in power by the EU. However, the EU’s use of socialisation only strengthens the arguments of those who imagine the Union to be a normative power in international relations. Moreover, in the Mediterranean, the EU has tended to place a greater emphasis on positive forms of conditionality, suggesting perhaps that it prefers more discreet uses of its power. Its preference for positive conditionality can also be seen to stem from the success the EU achieved with its use in encouraging reform in former communist European states. Conditionality however does not seek direct engagement with the wider

⁵⁷³ Bicchi, 2006, p. 291; Diez, 2005, p. 630.

⁵⁷⁴ Flockhart, 2006, p. 97.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid. See also Trine Flockhart, ‘“Masters and Novices”: Socialisation and Social Learning in NATO-Parliamentary Assembly’, *International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2004, pp. 361-380; and Alastair Johnston, ‘Treating International Institutions as Social Environments’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2001, pp. 487-515, p. 499.

populations of the partner states. This is despite the fact that their consequences – positive or negative – may have lasting repercussions on the welfare of their citizens. What is more, conditionality, if implemented, can have very visible and dramatic effects; a public slap on the wrist of the ruling regimes. But concerns over the negative effect that such public shaming might have on future EU-partner state relations have generally tended to deter EU officials from activating conditionality clauses. But, as the next part of this section argues, there is considerable potential for conditionality to be an effective tool for the EU to achieve its policy objectives in Tunisia.

EU economic leverage

This section explores the way in which conditionality may be exercised in Tunisia, and argues that the EU possesses enormous political leverage over the Tunisian government. For conditionality that involves economic rewards for cooperation to be effective, the actor that is the subject of conditionality measures must, in some form or other, be in need of the support on offer by the second actor. This suggests that the relationship between the two actors contains a degree of economic inequality, one that may be exploited by the more economically powerful actor to compel change in the weaker actor. The relationship between the EU and Tunisia is an example of such a relationship, and statistical evidence supports this assumption.

One of the most consistent barometers of economic and social development in the world is the UN's annual *Human Development Report*. The report tracks development on a range of issues, from the availability of healthcare, to literacy rates, to figures outlining that condition of a state's economy. The findings of the 2007/2008 report provide an excellent illustration of the differences between levels of economic development between the EU member states and the Arab Mediterranean partner states.

Figures detailing each state's purchasing-power-parity (PPP) GDP per capita value provide a good example of the economic gulf between the two groups of states. On the one hand, the EU member states have a combined average PPP GDP per capita value of US\$25,277. This figure is almost five times that of the Arab partner states, which stands at US\$5,185.⁵⁷⁶ Although the data is less complete, another indicator of the disparity between the two blocks of states is the number of people officially recognised to be living

⁵⁷⁶ The calculation of the averages presented here are the author's own, based on the data presented in: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2007/2008 – Fighting Climate Change Human Solidarity in a Divided World*, New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2007, pp. 277-280. The 'Arab' states considered in this calculation are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia. No data was available for Libya or the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and these states were excluded from the calculation of the Arab average. For further analysis of the socio-economic inequalities between both sides of the Mediterranean, see Pace, 2006, pp. 58-88.

in poverty. Those earning below US\$2 per day is relatively high in the southern Mediterranean, including 44 percent of Egyptians and 63 percent of Mauritians.⁵⁷⁷ Although direct comparison is difficult as the data for EU states conforms to the slightly different OECD benchmark of earnings of US\$4 or less per day, the only EU member states with comparative figures are Romania and Bulgaria, with 55 percent and 40 percent respectively.⁵⁷⁸ Yet Romania and Bulgaria have only very recently become member states, and were not in the EU at the launch of the Barcelona Process. No data was available that outlined how many citizens from those states that were members of the EU in 1995 fell into this category, and none of these states had more than 15 percent of their populations living on less than US\$11 per day in 1995.⁵⁷⁹ In terms of the relative GDP figures and the number of people living in poverty at least, a general overview presents a clear disparity between EU states and the Arab Mediterranean partner states.

This however is the regional overview, which helps explain why the EU states might be in a position to support southern Mediterranean development. EU proposals to provide great economic aid and to allow greater access to EU markets for external goods and products are very appealing for partner states whose economies are far less wealthy, and provide the necessary incentives for conditionality to be effective.⁵⁸⁰ Sometimes, such regional overviews fail to grasp the specificities of individual cases. Indeed, in this case, Tunisia's economic profile presents something of a contradiction to the average Arab Mediterranean partner state. As argued in Chapter Two, Bin Ali has overseen a period of remarkable economic growth and stability; a feature of his rule that has endeared him to a number of Tunisians.⁵⁸¹ Moreover, Tunisia outperforms its neighbours in relation to the GDP and poverty figures referred to above. Its PPP GDP per capita stands at US\$8,371, whilst less than seven percent of its population earn two dollars a day or less.⁵⁸² In fact, these figures are the most impressive of all of the Arab partner states, and compare very favourably to those of a number of new EU member states. Moreover, they are consistently higher than those of its *Maghrebi* neighbours, Morocco and Algeria.⁵⁸³ Nevertheless, the disparity between the economic conditions found in Tunisia and in EU

⁵⁷⁷ UNDP, 2007, pp. 238-239.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 241. OECD member states are measured with the poverty benchmarks being set at less than either US\$11 or US\$4 per day.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 240-241.

⁵⁸⁰ The Tunisian government's own appreciation of the importance of EU economic aid and access to EU markets was confirmed by Tunisian officials in the author's interviews, Tunis, July 2005 and March/April 2006.

⁵⁸¹ This conclusion is based on responses from a number of Tunisian individuals during informal interviews in 2005 and 2006. These included three shopkeepers, two artists, three university academics, two teachers, and four who worked in the hotel business.

⁵⁸² UNDP, 2007, pp. 278 and 238 respectively.

⁵⁸³ Morocco's PPP GDP per capita stands at US\$4,555, whilst Algeria's total is US\$7,062. Morocco and Algeria have 14.3 and 15.1 percent respectively of their populations living on less than two dollars per day.

states remain significant enough for the promise of greater economic cooperation with the EU to serve as an incentive for Tunisian cooperation with Union demands.

Indeed, these two issues notwithstanding, the EU already possess an enormous amount of potential economic leverage over the Tunisian government. Tunisia is the EU's thirty-second largest trade partner, with a total trade value of €16.2 billion in 2006, and is considered by the EU to be one of its 'most established trading partners in the Mediterranean region'.⁵⁸⁴ Yet the EU is Tunisia's primary trading partner by some distance, as illustrated by its trade figures. A staggering 74 percent of all Tunisian exports (worth €7.6 billion) and 72 percent of imports (€9.4 billion) are destined for or come from the EU. Trade with Tunisia however represents a mere 0.6 percent of overall EU imports and 0.7 percent of exports. Indeed, with the exception of the agricultural products, and clothing and textile sectors, Tunisia is a net importer of goods in all documented sectors of economic activity with the EU.⁵⁸⁵ In addition, the EU is the largest contributor of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the country.⁵⁸⁶ Even individual European citizens play their part through choosing Tunisia as the destination for their annual holidays: 81.8% of all tourist revenues come from EU citizens.⁵⁸⁷ In short, Tunisia's relationship with the EU is far more important in economic terms to Tunisia than it is to the EU, therefore providing the EU with a phenomenal amount of leverage in negotiations.

Yet in addition to these macro-economic disparities, a further two socio-economic issues are currently brewing in Tunisia. Whilst overall unemployment was down from 15.7 percent of the population in 2000 to 14.2 percent in 2005, the demographical distribution of these unemployed persons paints a different picture.⁵⁸⁸ In data published by the EU's statistical unit *Eurostat*, 30.7 percent of the under-25 age group are unemployed, a figure which is over double that of the national average. Tunisia lags behind some of the other Arab partner states in this area. Morocco and Lebanon's figures for the same age group are markedly better, with 15.7 and 20.9 percent respectively. The situation in Algeria is much closer to Tunisia's, where 31 percent of under-25s are unemployed, yet due to the civil war, Algeria has not experienced the same sustained levels of growth as Tunisia. In fact, since the civil war in the 1990s, Algeria has undergone an employment revolution as overall unemployment almost halved from 28.9 to 15.3 percent between 2000 and

⁵⁸⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/tunisia/index_en.htm> accessed 13/01/07.

⁵⁸⁵ Commission of European Communities, *EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World: Tunisia*, Brussels, 7 August 2007. Available at: <<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/111593.htm>>; accessed on 3 January 2008. The other documented sectors are: energy, machinery, transport equipment, and chemicals.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁷ <<http://www.deltun.cec.eu.int/fr/article.asp?ID0=12&ID1=179&ID=179>> accessed 12/10/06.

⁵⁸⁸ Eurostat, *The European Neighbourhood Policy – Key Indicators*, February 2007. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/leaflet_enp_eurostat.pdf>; accessed 15 December 2007.

2005.⁵⁸⁹ Worse still for the Tunisian authorities is that some predictions foresee that without considerable investment in Tunisia's economic infrastructure, a considerable deterioration in the situation will occur over the next few years. According to the EU, in 2007 there were 70,000 unemployed graduates in Tunisia; by 2012 there could be 300,000.⁵⁹⁰ Moreover, the UNDP reports that in 2005, 26 percent of Tunisia's population was under the age of 15.⁵⁹¹ A number of these will undoubtedly find themselves within the burgeoning mass of unemployed.

This demographic change is also placing intense pressure on Tunisia's education system. Tunisia has traditionally spent a higher percentage of its GDP on education than any of the partner states that signed the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, including Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey. This figure stood at over seven percent for the period between 2002 and 2005, representing almost 21 percent of overall government expenditure.⁵⁹² This is a clear indication of the importance placed on education by the Tunisian government as part of its overall development strategy. However, the EU is now questioning Tunisia's ability to maintain this level of funding in the future.⁵⁹³ It expresses particular concerns over the ability of the higher education sector to cater for increased demand, in addition to questioning the current level of cooperation between the education system and the research and labour markets. Existing unemployment and a declining ability to support the higher education sector may drive increasing numbers of Tunisians either to seek work abroad, or even to vent their frustration on the government. In the context of the EU's understanding of security outlined in the previous chapter, this presents a potential time-bomb that threatens to undermine Tunisia's long-established stability.

Moreover, the Union also casts doubt over the Tunisian government's ability to control future expenditure in this sector within 'acceptable' levels.⁵⁹⁴ Subsidies in general have declined remarkably under Bin Ali, with only the education sector continuing to receive similar levels of government funding to those it received in 1991.⁵⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Tunisia continues to maintain one of the most costly public sectors of all MENA states.⁵⁹⁶ In sum, the Tunisian state is facing increasing difficulty in maintaining its high levels of spending on higher education, and further economic reform is necessary to maintain Tunisia's long-established economic stability.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁹¹ UNDP, 2007, p. 244.

⁵⁹² Ibid, pp. 265-267. Data was unavailable for Algeria, Egypt, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Syria.

⁵⁹³ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Sadiki, 2000, p. 73; UNDP, 2007, p. 265 and p. 295.

⁵⁹⁶ Clement M. Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalisation and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 135.

Thus, two different problems are combining to challenge Tunisia's continued economic development. Over the next five years or so, the Tunisian government faces the prospect of hundreds of thousands of their young adult citizens unemployed and unable to enter the higher education system. Providing for these individuals will become a policy priority, yet the government increasingly lacks the resources to do so. Therefore, unless other major international partners and donors become apparent, Tunisia desperately needs the EU to maintain similar levels of economic support that those offered over the last few years. Yet, Tunisia's need for this support provides the EU with a perfect opportunity to drive political reform in Tunisia by making its support conditional on Tunisia meeting agreed benchmarks in reforming the country's political system.

This part of the chapter has outlined the way in which conditionality and socialisation can be expected to encourage commitments to political reform amongst the ruling elite of an authoritarian state. Moreover, it illustrated how these are expected to operate within a Mediterranean and Tunisian context. Conditionality would involve the EU applying overt pressure on the Tunisian regime to reform. Socialisation, on the other hand, might operate far more discreetly, sparing the regime in question from the potential embarrassments of the public humiliation conditionality might bring. However, if socialisation were not achieving the desired results, it may be encouraged by applying further pressure on the regime by integrating conditionality alongside socialisation, as is the case in the EU's relations with Tunisia. The second section of this part then went on to illustrate how conditionality might be effective in the Tunisian context. It emphasised that Tunisia is extremely dependent on continued EU economic cooperation and financial support so as to avoid the effects a number of potentially destabilising crises faced by its population. Having considered EU strategies that apply external pressure to reform on the Tunisian elite, the chapter now turns to address methods aimed at encouraging domestic actors to apply further pressure on the regime to instigate a process of democratisation.

'Bottom-up' democracy promotion

The final part of this chapter argues that the EU also seeks to encourage the democratisation process in Tunisia by targeting actors not directly connected to the political elite. In effect, the processes analysed here are attempts by the EU to encourage further pressure for political reform from within Tunisian society itself. Specifically, the following two sections respectively consider EU attempts to reform Tunisia's judicial and economic sectors, and how it engages with civil society organisation in the Mediterranean and in Tunisia. These correspond with the agendas found under the political, economic,

and cultural pillars of the EMP, and reiterated in the ENP. Whilst ostensibly being attempts to reform parts of Tunisian society that are not connected to the country's system of government *per se*, the measures discussed in the sections below contribute to the democratisation process by 'creating an environment conducive to fostering democracy', as Aliboni puts it.⁵⁹⁷

The EU's choice to support the approaches in this part of the chapter once more owes something to the experience of transitions in CEECs. As Chapter One discussed, 'bottom-up' democratisation in these states involved much activity by transnational civil society networks.⁵⁹⁸ In addition, in such transitions there is a clear role to be played by international actors in encouraging and sponsoring such civil society activity. Moreover, whilst modernisation theory makes clear references to the role of economic development in democratisation, the analysis here regards the spread of practices and values through economic reform rather than a need for any particular benchmarks to be met as prerequisites for democratisation. It is also by demanding better practice that reforms to a state's judicial sector have a bearing on the democratisation process, and it is with these reforms that this part of the chapter begins.

Democracy through judicial and economic reform

This section considers how the democratisation process in Tunisia might be encouraged through reforming the country's judiciary and the practices determining Tunisian economic life. By emphasising the potential effect economic liberalisation might have on political liberalisation, the section recalls some of the ideas concerning modernisation approaches to democratisation in Chapter One. Yet rather than discuss 'benchmarks' of development and prerequisites for democracy as is done in some of the work addressed in Chapter One, the section focuses on the potential transfer of values and practices needed for good economic governance from the economic sector to the daily running of the Tunisian state. The section begins, however, by discussing reforms to the judicial sector in Tunisia.

Chapter Three argued that promoting a respect for the rule of law is considered by some analysts to be one of the core norms of EU foreign policy. Indeed, there has been evidence of the EU's interest in encouraging the rule of law in the Mediterranean through the frameworks of the EMP and the ENP. The 2002 Valencia Action Plan, for example, led to the MEDA 'Justice, Freedom and Security Programme',⁵⁹⁹ a major initiative that made the

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 49.

⁵⁹⁸ See also Gillespie and Youngs, 2002, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁹ Commission of the European Communities, *Valencia Action Plan*, 2002b. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/external/neighbourhood/fsj_external_neighbourhood_mediterranean_en.htm>; accessed 23 June 2006.

rule of law one of its three principal focuses. On a bilateral level, the EU's AP for Tunisia directly addresses the question of rule of law by demanding specific improvements to judicial procedures, including improving a suspect's right of defence, prison conditions, prisoner rehabilitation schemes, and more general measures aimed to modernise the entire judicial system.⁶⁰⁰ These reforms are particularly designed to provide better protection for the individual from the state during judicial procedures. However, such an improvement to the rights of the individual in his or her relationship with the state is also necessary for the success of a democratisation process, as was argued in Chapter One.

Also illustrated in Chapter One was the role traditionally played by processes of economic liberalisation in facilitating democratisation. However, approaches such as the modernisation theory of democratisation are flawed due to their somewhat linear and particularly universal understanding of development. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, EU policy-makers clearly believed in the potential of economic liberalisation as a democratising force as it would dismantle statist and rentier economic systems that had so effectively maintained the powerbase of the Arab elites for so long.⁶⁰¹ Brynjar Lia, for example, goes so far as to claim that 'a certain degree of Marxist historicism' exists in EU thinking on the Mediterranean due to policy-makers' belief that political liberalisation is only possible when the necessary economic foundations have been established.⁶⁰² Moreover, some of the principal objectives of EU policy in the Mediterranean have been economic or trade-related, the most obvious of which is the Mediterranean free trade area. This conclusion is supported by the disproportionate amount of funding discussed earlier in this section that is awarded to economic projects. These however should be considered as objectives in themselves, and not only means by which democracy may be promoted. EU officials affirm that both the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy are as much about economics as they are about politics.⁶⁰³ Indeed, the fact that political components are included at all marks a significant departure from past pan-European initiatives in the Mediterranean. As argued earlier in this chapter, the initial agreements between Tunisia and the EC in the 1970s and 1980s were wholly economic in nature.

Developments since 1995 suggest that the EU is in fact questioning its faith in economic liberalisation as a democratising influence, and that, on the contrary, it might actually be contributing to the entrenchment of authoritarianism. Youngs argues that this stems from two phenomena that have become increasingly apparent as EMP-related economic

⁶⁰⁰ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2004.

⁶⁰¹ Youngs, 2002, p. 52.

⁶⁰² Brynjar Lia, 'Security Challenges in Europe's Mediterranean Periphery – Perspectives and Policy Dilemmas', *European Security*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1999, pp. 27-56, p. 33.

⁶⁰³ Interviews with Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

reforms have taken hold.⁶⁰⁴ Firstly, the short-term economic instability caused by liberalisation may contribute to wider social instability, particularly if the liberalisation stems from relations with a ‘western’ actor. This might drive more of the region’s citizens towards groups that are publicly anti-western, such as Islamists. As Chapter Six argues, these groups, in turn, represent the *bête noir* of EU Mediterranean policy discourse. In fact, the potential destabilising impact that EMP economic reforms may have in the Mediterranean has also been addressed in a number of other studies.⁶⁰⁵ Secondly, partner state regimes have actually sought additional powers within their societies in order to more effectively implement the reforms necessary to join the Mediterranean free trade area. This has helped reinforce patronage networks and has seen preferential treatment awarded to companies closely linked to the incumbent government. As the next section argues, this has been particularly noticeable in Tunisia, where the state’s *Mise à Niveau* programme has further consolidated Bin Ali’s grip on power.⁶⁰⁶ Therefore, despite the initial belief amongst its officials that economic liberalisation might lead to democratisation, the EU is increasingly cautious over the merits of approach.

Existing EU reform proposals in Tunisia already present a framework within which patronage networks might be successfully challenged by reforms seeking to improve economic governance. Indeed, the concept of ‘good governance’ features prominently in EU policy in Tunisia, in addition to being listed as one of the norms that Manners highlights are essential to understanding the EU as a ‘normative power’.⁶⁰⁷ As Chapter Three outlined, the EU understands ‘good governance’ to entail the transparent, accountable, and equitable management of public affairs whilst also showing due regard to human rights and the rule of law.⁶⁰⁸ This is of specific relevance to democracy promotion as again it highlights the relationship between authority and the individual, albeit below the level of the state. Yet according to the EU, the state itself may also be affected by good governance initiatives.⁶⁰⁹ This stems from a belief that good governance frames the state’s relations with civil society whilst also helping to establish a political climate conducive to both economic and political development. By promoting and establishing norms of transparency and accountability at a community level, it is hoped that good governance initiatives indirectly contribute to the reconstruction of the political

⁶⁰⁴ Youngs, 2002, pp. 52-53.

⁶⁰⁵ See for example Kienle, 1998; Bradford Dillman, ‘International Markets and Partial Economic Reforms in North Africa: What Impact on Democratization?’, in Gillespie and Youngs (eds.), 2002, pp. 63-86, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁰⁶ Murphy, 2006. Also, for an earlier study of the effects of the Association Agreement on Tunisia’s economy, see Jean-Pierre Cassarino, ‘The EU-Tunisian Association Agreement and Tunisia’s Structural Reforms’, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1999, pp. 59-74.

⁶⁰⁷ Manners, 2002.

⁶⁰⁸ See also Commission of the European Communities, 1998, p. 7.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

culture of the polity within a state. Unlike initiatives seeking to improve the rule of law however, good governance initiatives are usually included within the economic and financial parts of EU-Mediterranean frameworks, including those with direct relevance to Tunisia.⁶¹⁰ Thus, initiatives that are officially included under the economic sections of the EU's policy agreements with Tunisia also play a potential part in the democratisation process. Yet as the next section reveals, reform of the economic sector in Tunisia since 1995 has arguably only deepened the problems of economic governance in the country, rather than produce the desired boost to the democratisation process.

In sum, initiatives and reforms that improve economic governance and practice constitute a major part of the relationship between Tunisia and the EU. Crucially, they contribute to fostering a climate in which democratic practices might be more easily performed. They assure more protection for parts of the polity from the state, a polity which, due to the reform of its economic practices, may itself become increasingly familiar with the practice of principles associated with democracy due to these reforms. However, some of these reforms may actually have a detrimental effect on a democratisation process, particularly if certain caveats are not heeded. Moreover, being predominantly reforms to the economic sector, these measures alone might not be enough to assure democratisation.

Engaging civil society

The concluding section of this part of the chapter considers efforts that predominantly take place under the third or 'cultural' pillar of the EMP, particularly regarding the supporting of civil society groups within the Mediterranean.

The importance of the EU's experience in Eastern Europe once more plays a central role in explaining the EU's choice of policy in the Mediterranean. As argued in Chapter One, EU policy-makers drew on analyses of democratisation in Eastern Europe that highlighted the role played by civil society in bringing about the rapid collapse of the Eastern European communist regimes in the late 1980s. Furthermore, some of these analyses extended to consider the importance of the support provided to Eastern European CSOs by foreign actors during this time.⁶¹¹ As a result, a number of EU foreign policies devised in the 1990s include a significant cultural component that engages CSOs in its partner states. The EMP is typical of this trend. In addition, the post-9/11 period has seen a further surge in interest in 'third pillar' EMP initiatives, possibly tied to the new thinking

⁶¹⁰ Roberto Aliboni, 'EMP Approaches to Human Rights and Democracy' in Haizam Amirah Fernandez and Richard Youngs (eds.), *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Assessing the First Decade*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2005, pp. 47-58, p. 49. Available at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/publicaciones/libros/Barcelona10_eng.pdf>; accessed 8 January 2006.

⁶¹¹ See for example various contributions in Pridham and Vanhanen (eds.), 1994; and Pridham *et al.*, 1997.

on security discussed in Chapter Two. Central to this new wave of cultural initiatives has been the launching of a ‘Dialogue on Cultures and Civilisations’ in the Mediterranean, along with a number of bilateral socio-cultural initiatives agreed between the EU and the partner states.⁶¹²

Indeed, the sources of EU funding for Mediterranean civil society initiatives also highlight civil society’s importance to European understandings of democratisation processes. Until the end of 2006, much of this funding originated from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Thereafter, funding came directly from the ENPI, with its previous areas of focus incorporated within the wider Neighbourhood Policy framework.⁶¹³ Although not specific to the Mediterranean, the EIDHR’s aim was to provide grants to international, regional and local NGOs to strengthen democratisation, good governance, rule of law and human rights. This approach is another illustration of the perceived importance of civil society to democratisation processes within EU foreign policy thinking. Originating from a 1994 European Parliament initiative it was distinctive as it negotiated most of its grants directly with partner NGOs without any governmental intervention or participation by the partner states. Commission officials stressed that the EIDHR offered useful additional support to EMP democracy-promoting measures.⁶¹⁴

Moreover, the EU’s new worldwide ‘thematic programme’ approach to democracy and human rights (one of the EIDHR’s successor policies) continues the emphasis on civil society’s role in processes of political transition. One of its strategic objectives is to ‘strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in supporting conflict prevention and in developing political participation and representation.’⁶¹⁵ It identifies three mutually-reinforcing levels of activity: national, regional/transnational, and local. The emphasis on CSO cooperation, coalition-building, and on civil society dialogue is common to all levels. This indicates that the Union aims to continue work with civil society to develop a cohesive force for democratisation.

In material terms, a number of region-wide initiatives have emerged aimed at supporting civil society in the Mediterranean. One of the most significant of these has been the establishment of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation. Its main objective is to ‘promote dialogue between cultures and contribute to the visibility of the Barcelona

⁶¹² Commission of the European Communities, *Dialogue Between Cultures and Civilisations in the Barcelona Process*, Brussels, 2002c. See also Richard Youngs, *Ten Years of the Barcelona Process: A Model for Supporting Arab Reform?*, FRIDE Working Paper, No. 2, Madrid: FRIDE, 2005, p. 3.

⁶¹³ However, specific democracy and human rights assistance within political section of the APs are funded through MEDA.

⁶¹⁴ Author’s interviews in Brussels, July 2006.

⁶¹⁵ Commission of the European Communities, 2006a, p. 7.

Process through intellectual, cultural and civil society exchanges.⁶¹⁶ Interestingly, it has deemed 2008 to be the ‘Euro-Mediterranean year of intercultural dialogue’.⁶¹⁷ The foundation’s principal activities involve fostering links and dialogue between individuals and CSOs from both sides of the Mediterranean. Other initiatives have targeted more specific areas of partner states’ societies. For example, the Tempus programme and the EuroMed Youth Platform have been aimed at improving interchange, cooperation and dialogue between universities and youth organisations respectively.⁶¹⁸

Further positive developments have been the creation of the ‘EuroMed Civil Forum’ and its successor the ‘Euro-Med Non-Governmental Platform’, in 2004. Both are noteworthy in the context of democratisation as they have provided forums for dialogue between European and partner state CSOs on a range of issues, including on democracy, citizenship, and ‘political strategy’.⁶¹⁹ Such an approach encourages these organisations to move away from single-issue campaigning which is seen as detrimental to the efforts of civil society. Signed by a number of CSOs that belong to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, the Non-Governmental Platform is arguably even more significant for a number of reasons. Its charter, for example, is built around a foundation of shared values. Thus, it emulates EU efforts at region-building on governmental level. By establishing this platform of common values, it sets about creating a distinctive identity for itself and its members, generating a ‘we-feeling’ based on shared values. It also establishes an ideal institutionalised framework within which norms and values may be diffused through socialisation.

In fact, the values promoted by its charter are also reminiscent of the intergovernmental discussions between the EU and the partner states. Democracy is one of the principal values listed in its charter, along with a number of others including good governance, pluralism, representation and participation, transparency, and a number of freedoms such as expression and association. Intriguingly, the charter also commits its members to abide by ‘international human rights, in their *universality*’.⁶²⁰ These clearly echo the values being promoted in the political and economic pillars of the EMP *and* the values espoused by some of the democratic theorists covered in Chapter One. Moreover, the charter

⁶¹⁶ Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation, ‘Mission and Values’, 2008. Available at: <<http://www.euromedalex.org/AboutUs/EN/MissionValues.aspx>>; accessed 15 January 2008.

⁶¹⁷ See for example the Anna Lindh Foundation’s homepage at <<http://www.euromedalex.org/home/EN/Home.aspx>>; accessed 15 January 2008.

⁶¹⁸ For the Tempus programme, see <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/index_en.html>; accessed 15 January 2008. For the EuroMed Youth Platform, see <<http://www.euromedp.org/en/home.asp>>; accessed 15 January 2008.

⁶¹⁹ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *Amending the EuroMed Civil Forum: Strengthening Civil Society Cooperation in the Barcelona Process*, Strategy Paper, Copenhagen, February 2003. Available at: <<http://www.euromedplatform.org/spip/spip.php?article13>>; accessed 16 January 2008.

⁶²⁰ Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform, *Charter*, Paris, 2004, p. 1, emphasis added. Available at: <<http://www.euromedplatform.org/spip/spip.php?article13>>; accessed 16 January 2008.

commits its members to strive to achieve a number of shared objectives. Again, democracy features prominently, with the ‘democratisation of societies and states’ ranking second to the charter’s principal goal of achieving civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. A number of prominent Tunisian NGOs participate in the Platform by right of being members of the Human Rights Network, including the ATFD, the CNLT, the LTDH, and the *Comité pour le Respect des Libertés et des Droits de l’Homme en Tunisie* (CRLDHT – Committee for the Respect of Freedom and Human Rights in Tunisia). In sum, the Non-Governmental Platform is an attempt to formalise the relationship between CSOs throughout the Mediterranean region on very similar principles upon which the relationship between the EU and the partner state governments is founded. Importantly, a number of Tunisian NGOs are included within its framework.

The last two sections have revealed that EU democracy promotion in Tunisia therefore is multilayered, simultaneously targeting several layers of Tunisian society. Just as the EMP and ENP frameworks present holistic approaches to ‘common’ international political, economic and social issues, EU democracy promotion is also a comprehensive engagement with a wide cross-section of Tunisian society. ‘Bottom-up’ attempts to foster a climate that might facilitate democratisation have centred on encouraging the practice of transparent and accountable government amongst economic actors, and promoting a more vibrant civil society through encouraging regional interaction between CSOs. Moreover, in its initial phases, evidence suggests that EU support of economic liberalisation processes in Tunisia and the Mediterranean was linked to an appreciation of the modernisation theory of democratisation. The EU’s indirect work with CSOs has seen Tunisian non-state actors supported by European counterparts, and builds on understandings of democratisation processes inspired by processes of democratic transition in Eastern Europe. Indeed, the importance of this activity to the promotion of democratisation processes is highlighted by the fact that until 2006 at least, civil society initiatives in the Mediterranean were directly funded by the EU’s global democracy-promoting initiative. Therefore the EU’s approach to democracy promotion in Tunisia has been comprehensive in scope, yet as the next chapter reveals, the implementation of these strategies has been anything but comprehensive.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the ways in which the EU promotes democracy in Tunisia within the frameworks of the EMP and ENP. It has argued that the EU promotes democracy through the multilateral and bilateral components of the EMP and the ENP, resulting in the encouragement of both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ pressures for political

reform. The methods not only seek to reform the practice of government in Tunisia, but also aim to foster a sustainable political climate in which democracy and democratic practices may flourish.

The Barcelona Process itself marked a departure from almost half-a-century within which European involvement in the internal politics of Mediterranean states (the Soviet Union apart) was minimal. However, the shifting political landscape in the 1990s made re-engagement not only possible, but in the eyes of some EU policy-makers, necessary. Selling the EMP to non-EU states was made easier by the Union stress that the policy would be jointly owned between it and the partner states. Moreover, doubts from within the EU were convinced of the necessity of including democracy promotion as part of the EMP's agenda due to the emphasis by some of its proponents on democracy's merit as a means of achieving security in the EU's neighbours. Within the EMP framework, democracy is to be promoted alongside other political, economic and social reforms. Tunisia was amongst those states that signed the Barcelona Declaration, and appeared to be one of the states most enthusiastic to implement the EMP's reform programme. As the terms of the AA between Tunisia and the EU confirms, future relations between the two actors are to be conducted upon a common respect for democracy and other principles and values. Therefore the EMP established democracy as a centrepiece of the EU's relations with Tunisia.

Slow progress in the initial decade of the EMP however, in addition to the changed international climate following the 11 September 2001 attacks, led the EU to reform its approach to the Mediterranean with the launch of the Neighbourhood Policy. The Neighbourhood Policy has continued the multilateral-bilateral structure of the EMP, allowing for country-specific development strategies to be developed within the policy's overall objectives. Likewise, the holistic approach combining reforms across a number of different sectors of the partner states' societies is still present. However, the element of joint ownership has been noticeably weakened, with Tunisia and other states no longer merely 'partners' but now also 'neighbours'. In discursive terms at least, this has reconfigured the relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean states.

This chapter also argued that the comprehensive and holistic overall scope of the EMP and ENP is matched by the way in which these agreements seek to promote democracy. Instead of focusing on reforming one aspect of the political systems of Mediterranean partner states, EMP and ENP democracy promotion attempts to engage with a range of actors from across the societies of the states in question. Thus, not only the elite are targeted, but also parts of the economic community and representative and organisations

from within a state's civil society. Therefore, the EU's approach to democracy promotion in Tunisia and the Mediterranean does not focus exclusively on reforming a particular aspect of their political systems. This draws on the experiences of a number of different processes of democratisation in recent decades, and reflects the diversity of explanations for democratisation processes present in the theoretical literature. Yet to these existing experiences, the EU adds the presence of a coercive international actor. Prior to 1995, the role of such actors had generally been ignored in the literature on democratisation processes. Effectively, with its range of different strategies, the EU tries to ensure that even if one strategy fails to deliver the expected results, democratisation might still be achieved via one of the other strategies. The next chapter considers the extent to which this has occurred in Tunisia.

From reform to regression: implementing democracy promotion

This chapter argues that the frameworks and methods of the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy are failing to promote democracy in Tunisia. Furthermore, some of these methods might in fact be strengthening the hold of certain parts of the ruling elites over Tunisian society. Indeed, as Chapter Two revealed, the Tunisian political system is anything but a system in which democratic life is freely practiced. Elections exist more in name than substance, and Bin Ali and the ruling party show little signs of relinquishing their dominance over the country's politics.

This chapter explores problems specifically related to the means by which the EU tries to promote democracy in Tunisia. Therefore, the main objective is to assess the success of the strategies of democracy promotion identified in the previous chapter in Tunisia, namely conditionality, judicial and economic liberalisation or reform, the engagement of Tunisian civil society, and socialisation in encouraging democratisation. In assessing these methods, the chapter considers two overarching research questions. Firstly, how successful have the different means of promoting democracy used by the EU been in Tunisia? Secondly, the chapter asks what specific challenges continue to hamper the progress of the EU's democratisation efforts?

As the previous chapter argued, the EU's method of promoting democracy is not restricted to a single approach. Rather, the EU takes a broad approach that targets different parts of Tunisian society in different means. Thus EU democracy promotion is reminiscent of its broader approach to promoting reform in others, which is also holistic and broad-ranging in scope. Democracy promotion forms but one part of these reforms. As Chapter Four outlined, the EU employs conditionality and socialisation to reform the practices of the political elite and the state's legal and constitutional structures; good governance and economic liberalisation to target a state's economic leadership; and a range of regional fora and funding measures help invigorate civil society organisations. Moreover, these different measures are, in theory at least, often mutually reinforcing. Lack of progress on, for example, good governance reform might be encouraged by applying greater pressure on the incumbent regime via conditionality. Similarly, reforms to a state's civil or business societies might over time filter through to reform the practices

of the governing classes. Thus, the Union displays an awareness of earlier processes of democratisation in other parts of the world, most notably those of its near neighbours in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

By using such a range of methods and engaging with a diverse cross-section of actors in the political reform process, the Union is also able to counter opposition to democratisation by or in one particular sector of the society in question. If, for example, the ruling elite are showing little signs of reforming the governing structures of the state then, with the type of approach that the EU takes, there might still be the chance of progress in areas such as economic reform. As the EU has displayed an understanding of different types of processes of democratisation (elite-driven, modernisation associated, civil society-led), it is essentially acknowledging that any one of these sectors might bring about change in states such as Tunisia. Thus, analysis of EU support of democratisation in Tunisia forms part of a wider analysis of the effectiveness of different approaches to democratisation. Put simply, the EU's democratising eggs are not all in the same basket. If one method was not achieving the desired results, then at least there were others already in operation that might achieve success in their respective sectors. This chapter assesses the effects of these different 'eggs' in the Tunisian context, thereby providing a comparative study of different approaches to democratisation within one context.

This chapter is in three parts. The first part considers the conditionality and economic reform in Tunisia, and the effects these have had on the democratisation process. It argues that whilst conditionality is potentially a very effective means to exercise pressure on the Tunisian political leadership, in effect it is rarely used, and therefore fails to deliver the pressure it is intended to provide on the Tunisian elite. The second section considers the effects of economic liberalisation in Tunisia, asking whether economic liberalisation and reform has brought about any noticeable changes in the practices of the Tunisian regime. It argues also that economic liberalisation is having unintended effects on the distribution of power in Tunisia, effects that are not necessarily conducive to further democratisation.

The second part of the chapter assesses the potential of civil society in Tunisia to contribute to the democratisation process. To this end, it assesses the current state of civil society in Tunisia, outlining a definition of a civil society organisation and applying this definition within the Tunisian context. It argues that the state maintains a dominant and intrusive role in this civil society, and creates exceptionally restrictive conditions in which CSOs must operate in Tunisia. The second section focuses specifically on the interaction between Tunisian CSOs and other such organisations from the Euro-Mediterranean area. It assesses the extent to which the EU's promotion of region-wide civil society activity

affects the Tunisian process of democratisation, and argues that in the current political climate, any EU cooperation with Tunisian civil society is fruitless as the space for CSO activity is so limited.

The chapter closes by arguing that promoting democracy through socialisation in Tunisia is also problematic. However, as socialisation involves promoting changes in norms and values that are less apparent than changes to structures, procedures and institutions, assessing its effect is consequently a more difficult and long-term affair.⁶²¹ This part of this chapter is in three sections. The first section argues that the members of the Tunisian elite targeted by EU socialisation have a long history of conscious and deliberate acceptance of European norms and practices, with many having been trained or educated in Europe. The next section assesses the utility of socialisation in Tunisia. It argues that the model of socialisation attempted by the EU in the Mediterranean fails to compensate for deliberate resistance from the actors that the process intends to socialise, and that in the Tunisian case, the elite have accepted European norms and practices for centuries, but implement only those which they deem appropriate to conditions in Tunisia at particular points in time. The chapter closes with a section assessing the indirect effects of socialisation. This argues that the close relationship between EU and Tunisian officials that is necessary for socialisation inadvertently legitimises the regime as the government becomes able to claim international support for its methods of running Tunisia.

Missed opportunities and further challenges

The contention here is that EU attempts to reform the structures and practices of government, governance, and civil society in Tunisia have produced very little substantive change. It argues that whilst structural reform has been slow and ineffectual, the authorities have made any civil society activity almost impossible to undertake. An even worse development for supporters of democratisation in Tunisia is that economic liberalisation appears to be making Tunisian society even less transparent, and has shifted control over the country's economic resources in to the hands of a privileged few. This part of the chapter begins, however, by looking at the proposed use of conditionality by the EU to encourage reforms that may have a bearing on the future development of the Tunisian political system.

An aversion to conditionality

⁶²¹ See for example Gillespie, 2006, p. 92.

As established in the previous chapter, the potential effectiveness that conditionality may have in encouraging reform in Tunisia is clear. The EU is overwhelmingly Tunisia's largest trading partner, and is the source of much of the country's overseas income. The EU thus possesses enormous economic leverage with the Tunisian government, leverage that could be brought to bear if the EU sought a more forceful pursuit of its policy agenda. Moreover, the Tunisian government was, at least initially, generally enthusiastic for the inclusion of conditionality in its relations with the EU. Indeed, the promise of rewards for cooperation continues to serve as an incentive for compliance to EU demands for reform, at least in Tunisia and Morocco. These two states have generally welcomed the use of positive conditionality, also boasting the most highly developed records of institutional cooperation with the EU.⁶²² Despite these factors however, this section illustrates that the EU is unwilling to exercise conditionality in order to push through political reforms in Tunisia.

The EU has been willing to recognise that progress in Tunisia on the political reforms agreed upon in the texts of the AA and AP has generally been slow. Rather euphemistically, the Union complains that implementing reforms in the areas of civil society, media, and justice in Tunisia 'has proved challenging'.⁶²³ This has included a long delay to a €30 million project to modernise the Tunisian judicial system, and the continued blocking by the Tunisian government of three other human rights and civil society projects since 2003.⁶²⁴ The EU has also spoken out on the cancellation on short notice of an international conference on employment and workers' rights in the Euro-Mediterranean which was set to take place in September 2006.⁶²⁵ Freedom House maintains that the reason for this cancellation was concern in the Tunisian government that the conference might serve as an international platform for opposition groups to make themselves heard.⁶²⁶ Regardless of the reason, it is significant that the EU publicly recognises Tunisia's intransigence on matters relating to political form.

This is not to say that no progress at all has been achieved. In 2002, for example, the introduction of an upper house in Tunisia's parliament reformed the structure of Tunisian government. This currently includes a number of female members, continuing a trend

⁶²² Dannreuther, 2007, pp. 47-48.

⁶²³ Commission of the European Communities, 'External cooperation programmes: Tunisia', 2008. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/country-cooperation/tunisia/tunisia_en.htm>; accessed 12 February 2008.

⁶²⁴ European Union, *EU Annual Report on Human Rights 2007*, Brussels, 2007b, p. 72. Available at: <http://www.deltha.ec.europa.eu/eu%20features/HR%20report07_en.pdf>; accessed 10 October 2007.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, p. 72. See also Commission of the European Communities, *ENP Progress Report: Tunisia*, SEC(2006) 1510, Brussels, 4 December 2006c, p. 3.

⁶²⁶ Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World: Tunisia (2007)'. Available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2007&country=7290&pf>; accessed 12 February 2008.

established under Bourguiba of awarding women with prominent public positions. However, this little progress has been more cosmetic than substantive. In the parliament, contestability remains elusive. Of the 126 members in the new chamber, 71 are elected by the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, and by city councils. These institutions are dominated by the ruling RCD party. Meanwhile, a further 41 members are personally appointed by the President, whilst the remaining 14 are to be chosen by the UGTT. Moreover, its inaugural elections in 2005 were boycotted by the UGTT, and left the only seats in the chamber realistically open to potential opponents empty.⁶²⁷ This reinforces the argument presented in Chapter Two, which is that little actual change has occurred in the level of democratic contestability in Tunisia since the start of the EMP and ENP processes. Bin Ali's continuing ability to register an improbable 95 percent or so of the vote is further evidence of the failure of political reform since 1995. On the surface, the 'façade' of democracy continues, providing clear reason for the EU to turn to conditionality clauses to encourage greater reform.

Nevertheless, the EU is yet to restrict cooperation on economic or trade issues, and aid payments continue to be made. As the last chapter argued, cooperation with the EU plays an enormously important role in the development of the Tunisian economy; cooperation that continues despite the outstanding problems with political reform. Aid payments also continue unabated, funds that could be stopped to encourage reform. Moreover, the sums involved are not insubstantial. Between 1995 and 2006, Tunisia received an annual average of €85 million in MEDA aid funds.⁶²⁸ For the 2007-2010 period, the EU is set to donate a further €300 million per annum to fund the 'priority areas' of its 'National Indicative Programme' (NIP) for Tunisia. In financial terms, by far the largest of these projects is aimed at improving economic governance and competitiveness (€127 million), whilst the next two major areas of investment are educational reform programmes (€65 million), and cooperation on energy and environmental issues (€43 million). Interestingly, only €30 million per annum is sidelined for democracy-related issues, and must be divided between all projects associated with 'services, justice, freedom, security and migration'.⁶²⁹ The money therefore keeps coming, regardless of the lack progress in political reforms.

Even so, it appears however that some officials would like to see *more* conditionality in the EU's relations with Mediterranean states. Some privately believe that the problem lies

⁶²⁷ On the 2005 elections for the Chamber of Councillors, see Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Parliamentary Developments', *The World of Parliaments Quarterly Review*, No. 19, November 2005. Available at: <<http://www.ipu.org/news-e/19-9.htm>>; accessed 15 April 2006.

⁶²⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 2008.

⁶²⁹ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007, pp. 5-6.

less in the lack of enforcement of conditionality clauses, but rather that the clauses themselves do not go far enough. As one Commission official claims, more rigorous application of *existing* conditionality mechanisms would be counterproductive. Instead, the outright suspension of economic cooperation and aid payments would be far more effective.⁶³⁰ This would mark a radical shift in EU practice, and one that has shown little visible signs of emerging. Elsewhere too, there is evidence of at least a continuing interest in the usefulness of conditionality as a means by which the EU may achieve its goals. Following the Council of the European Union's *Declaration on Combating Terrorism* in 2003,⁶³¹ an EU official threatened to cut aid and withdraw preferential trade agreements with countries in which 'the fight against terrorism was considered insufficient.'⁶³² This suggests that in the case of security issues at least, EU officials continue to regard conditionality as a useful means by which EU objectives may be met. At least in some parts of Brussels, conditionality remains a viable tool of EU foreign policy.

It appears however that in the case of EU democracy promotion Tunisia, conditionality exists more in name than in anything else. The little progress that has been made on major institutional reforms proposed under the EMP and ENP frameworks has often been procedural rather than substantive, in addition to being laboriously slow. Meanwhile, aid continues to flow, and the Union continues to support further economic liberalisation. However, as the next part of the chapter argues, the economic liberalisation that is taking place is having unexpected results; results that have a direct effect on the distribution of power within Tunisia.

Crony capitalism

As EU-Tunisia economic cooperation continues regardless of the lack of Tunisian political reform, a study of the practice of economic governance of Tunisia reveals yet more challenges for the EU's reform policies in the country. Indeed, whereas the EU has been willing to highlight the problems with unsustainable government spending and youth unemployment in Tunisia, it has been silent on a worsening problem that further limits the economic opportunities available for Tunisian citizens. Moreover, this problem has implications for not only the Tunisian economy, but also for the distribution of political power in Tunisia during the latter years of Bin Ali's presidency.

Encouraging greater economic liberalisation has been central to the EU's economic objectives in Tunisia. A recent EU memo on the progress of its policies in Tunisia, for

⁶³⁰ Author's interview in Brussels, July 2006.

⁶³¹ European Union, *Declaration on Combating Terrorism*, Brussels, 25 March 2003. Available at: <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/DECL-25.3.pdf>>; accessed 14 December 2005.

⁶³² Quoted in Stefania Bianchi, 'War on Terror "threatens aid"', 25 March 2004. Available at: <<http://ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=23031>>; accessed 12 January 2007.

example, once again highlights that continuing the ‘progressive liberalisation’ of trade between Tunisia and the EU and within Tunisia itself is a principal goal of these policies.⁶³³ Moreover, the promotion of economic reforms has been perceived by some in the EU to be an important means of facilitating a democratisation process in Mediterranean states, and reforming the practice of economic governance is central to these reforms. However, as Chapter Two argued, socio-economic progress in Tunisia has helped legitimise the regime’s methods rather than lead to any political liberalisation as envisaged by modernisation theorists of democratisation. Indeed, as this section argues, rather than opening the country’s economy and dismantling the states’ control over its citizens’ economic activity, economic liberalisation in Tunisia has instead been a tightly controlled and measured process which is producing an economy increasingly dominated by ‘crony capitalism’.⁶³⁴

This process is progressively more visible in academic literature on Tunisia. Moreover, it is specifically linked to the efforts of parts of the ruling elite to maintain their hold on power. Clement Henry and Robert Springborg, for example, observe that the regime has kept a tight grip on the privatisation process, tending to selectively favour individual trusted capitalists, rather than opt for a more competitive form of capitalism in which other, less familiar, actors might prove successful. This, according to Henry and Springborg, stems from the regime’s continuing distrust of civil society, and allows the government to perpetuate patronage networks that help shore up the governing security elite.⁶³⁵ Cassarino meanwhile comments that economic liberalisation in Tunisia has allowed the development of a ‘highly visible’ group of entrepreneurs. Through a selective allocation of financial resources, family ties, and high media profiles, this group however has successfully consolidated its ties to the state, forming a new element in the government’s control on its population.⁶³⁶ Typically, those who benefit most from economic reform in Tunisia are those closest to the centre of power, including individuals within Bin Ali’s family itself. Beau and Tuquoi highlight the increasing hold of Bin Ali’s son-in-law, Slim Chiboub, and the Trabelsi family (of which the President’s wife, Leila, is a member) over newly-privatised parts of the Tunisian economy. Chiboub now enjoys a ‘playboy’ lifestyle between a number of mansions, whilst both he and the Trabelsis have been implicated in a number of financial scandals involving state money.⁶³⁷ Thus, whilst

⁶³³ Commission of the European Communities, *Politique Européenne de Voisinage – Tunisie*, MEMO/08/214, Brussels, 3 April 2008b.

⁶³⁴ For the argument for ‘crony capitalism’ in Tunisia, see Murphy, 2006, p. 523.

⁶³⁵ Henry and Springborg, 2001, p. 136.

⁶³⁶ Cassarino, 1999, pp. 69-72.

⁶³⁷ Beau and Tuquoi, 2002, pp. 152-157. See also Hibou, 2006, p. 337.

the Tunisian state appears to be privatising its previously enormous range state-owned enterprises, direct control of these sectors remains within the grasp of the ruling elite.

Although those close to the political elite have benefited more than most from privatisation, the corruption, according to some observers, has reached systemic proportions. Hibou is particularly scathing of Tunisian political system, arguing that the different branches of the state, and particularly the legal and security elements, have been complicit in the new elite's money-grab. She argues that the success of the crony capitalists has only been possible due to an indiscriminate breaking of laws and regulations, helped by the very partisan and corrupt security apparatus. Corruption in the economic sphere is inseparable from the state's use of its security forces; one cannot exist without the other. According to Hibou, corruption has now become the 'daily bread' of the authorities. Complicity is essential to all who wish to engage in social relations, or who seek to climb Tunisia's social hierarchy.⁶³⁸

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this climate has created a network of competing groups, each eager to curry the favour of those more powerful than themselves. At the highest level, this involves a number of key families whose struggles, according to Camau and Geisser, evoke those of the Capulet and Montague families in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.⁶³⁹ Tunisian shopkeepers and businessmen meanwhile suggest that business opportunities were increasingly limited to those with the necessary personal connections.⁶⁴⁰ Typical of their complaints are references to the difficulty in obtaining planning permission; trading licenses not being renewed or becoming more expensive as a business became more successful; and a general need for patronage from a powerful family for progress with administrative procedures. It appears that the old requirement of being a party member is no longer enough to secure favour by the authorities. Today, one needs also to win the support of one of the new capitalist 'clans' vying for control of the assets cut from the Tunisian state.⁶⁴¹

Even potential foreign investors are sometimes deterred from investing in Tunisia. Two foreign diplomats based in Tunisia and responsible for fostering trade links between their states and Tunisia echoed the concerns voiced by the Tunisian businessmen.⁶⁴² In particular, they expressed their concern that companies from their states had been

⁶³⁸ Hibou, 2006, pp. 336-337.

⁶³⁹ Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 198. Also, the dissident Tunisian monthly, *L'Audace* (available at: <<http://www.laudace.fr>>, although the site is usually inaccessible), runs a feature called *Les familles qui pillent la Tunisie* ('the families who pillage Tunisia'). This regularly summarises the most recent intrigues emerging from Carthage. For more details, see Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 198, note 2.

⁶⁴⁰ Author's interviews with Tunisian merchants and shopkeepers, in Tunis, Sousse, Bizerte, and La Goulette, July/August 2005 and March/April 2006.

⁶⁴¹ The clan analogy is also found in Hibou, 2006, p. 337.

⁶⁴² Author's interviews in Tunis, April 2006.

dissuaded from investing in Tunisia due to a lack of transparency in business deals. Both diplomats also noted however that some sectors of the Tunisian economy were better than others, with sectors that were more dependent on foreign expertise and cooperation (such as the oil sector) being far more transparent than those which could be run with the minimal foreign involvement (such as tourism and construction). This is supported by Transparency International's annual *Corruption Perceptions Index*. The index's findings, based on a number of questionnaires directly involving the populations of the states under scrutiny, has seen Tunisia plummet from 31st in the world in 2001 to 61st in 2007.⁶⁴³ Therefore, as Tunisia continues to liberalise its economy, a number of signs suggest that those who are closest to the ruling elites are the main economic beneficiaries of this process.

This makes something of a mockery of the EU's desired aim for transparent and accountable governance in Tunisia. Moreover, with corruption increasingly widespread in the economic sphere, any hopes that good governance practices there might inspire wider political reforms seem far-fetched. Indeed, rather than Tunisia experiencing an improvement in the governance of its economy since the launch of the Barcelona Process, one might reasonably conclude that the situation has in fact deteriorated, particularly in the early twenty-first century. Economic growth may indeed be continuing for the time being, yet the control of Tunisia's economic assets increasingly lies in the hands of a select few.

This part of the chapter has assessed the way in which the EU seeks to encourage reform by threatening to use conditionality, and how economic liberalisation and reform might in itself encourage further political liberalisation. Conditionality, the most direct method of encouraging the reform of Tunisia's government available to the EU, exists more in name than in practice. Despite a number of breaches of the terms of the AA and AP, and exceptionally slow progress on any substantive reforms, conditionality has not been exercised. Aid continues to flow into Tunisia, and cooperation on a number of major financial and economic projects goes on. However, any notions that these economic reforms may in themselves encourage a climate more sympathetic to democratic government have proved misplaced. The consequences of economic liberalisation in Tunisia have, on the whole, led to a consolidation of former state-owned enterprises in the hands of a small number of families directly connected to the ruling elite. Worse still, perceptions of corruption in Tunisia are rising rapidly, and economic opportunities for the

⁶⁴³ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2007*. Available at: <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007>; accessed 12 January 2008.

population are decreasing as personal connections take precedence over economic good governance in the running of day-to-day Tunisian economic life.

In sum, neither conditionality nor economic liberalisation has had any significant effect on the process of government in Tunisia. The principal problems faced by the EU regarding these methods are its own unwillingness to employ conditionality to encourage greater reform, and the worsening state of economic governance as Tunisia's economy is increasingly controlled by an ever-smaller number of individuals. The chapter now turns to consider the state of civil society in Tunisia, and the EU is more successful in its promotion of civil society actors than it is in promoting democracy through political and economic reform.

Civil society in Tunisia

So far, this chapter has established that the EU is reluctant to use conditionality in Tunisia, and that economic liberalisation has been far from the democratising force envisaged by some in EU foreign policy circles. This next part of the chapter argues that current operating conditions for CSOs make it impossible for these organisations to make any significant contribution to the democratisation process in Tunisia.

In order to better understand Tunisian civil society, the chapter first establishes a working definition of civil society. It should be noted, however, that the concept of civil society in general is contested, and there is some debate over its suitability in an Arab context.⁶⁴⁴ The thesis will not seek to establish an entirely new definition that contributes to this literature. Rather, the purpose of arriving at a definition is to provide a framework in which one might better understand the meaning of a civil society organisation in Tunisia. Moreover, it provides a framework in which the EU's support for CSOs and the effect this support has on the democratisation process can be assessed. Finally, it helps identify which members of Tunisian society are targeted by EU civil society programmes, and therefore might be considered by the EU to play a role in the democratisation process. This chapter will however provide a working definition of the concept, based on the theoretical literature and definitions found in EU texts. It is with this definition that this part of the chapter begins.

Legality and illegality

⁶⁴⁴ For a good overview of the origins and relevance of the term in an Arab context, including coverage of its contestability, see for example Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, 'The Concept of Civil Society and the Arab World', in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (eds.), 1995, *Political Liberalisation and Democratisation in the Arab World, Volume One: Theoretical Perspectives*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 131-148; and the various contributions in Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East Volume One*, Leiden, the Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995.

Crucial to the analysis found in this section is a definition of a CSO that is suggested by Lawrence Whitehead.⁶⁴⁵ This itself is based on earlier work by Philippe Schmitter.⁶⁴⁶ This definition proposes that to qualify as a civil society organisation, a group must conform to certain criteria. A CSO therefore must be independent from both public authorities and private units of production such as businesses and families; be capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in line with their interests; not seek to overthrow or replace either state or private producers, or seek to govern the polity as a whole; and must agree to act with respect to the welfare, desires and concerns of others. In short, four ‘conditions’ or ‘norms’ must be present for an organisation to be considered as a CSO, which are: dual autonomy; collective action; non usurpation; and civility.⁶⁴⁷ The organisations considered within this section are understood to conform to these criteria.

It appears however that this definition does not sit comfortably in the minds of Tunisian government officials, whose principal point of disagreement is over the condition of dual autonomy. The Tunisian government requires that all civil society actors become officially licensed organisations by registering with the Interior Ministry.⁶⁴⁸ Failure to register denies the organisations any legal status in Tunisia, and activists claim that the terms of this registration essentially nullifies their autonomy,⁶⁴⁹ therefore disqualifying them from Whitehead’s model. This allows the regime to ‘invoke the organisation’s “illegal” status’ as and when they deem it useful to do so.⁶⁵⁰ This effectively creates a two-tier civil society in Tunisia, of legal and illegal CSOs, or, in other words, of controlled and independent CSOs.

The practical value of the government’s position on CSOs in Tunisia was demonstrated in November 2007. Then, the unregistered CNLT’s offices were surrounded by police, and the authorities were able to use the CNLT’s ‘illegal’ status to justify clamping down on a CSO that openly criticised the government.⁶⁵¹ Indeed, more general NGO activity in Tunisia has been almost impossible in recent years, with the government regularly using the law to restrict events and clamp-down on civil society activity. According to some activists, no independent Tunisian NGOs were able to arrange a major meeting between 2003 and the end of 2006.⁶⁵² The LTDH for example has in recent years been refused permission to hold its annual conference, and has also been restricted in its attempts to

⁶⁴⁵ Whitehead, 2002, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁴⁶ Philippe Schmitter, ‘On Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy: Ten Propositions’, mimeo, Stanford Department of Political Science, July 1995. Cited in Whitehead, 2002, p. 73.

⁶⁴⁷ Whitehead, 2002, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁴⁸ Author’s interviews, Tunis, July 2005, and March and April 2006.

⁶⁴⁹ Author’s interviews, Tunis, April 2006, and Brussels, July 2006.

⁶⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, ‘Tunisia’, *Country Summary*, January 2008, p. 2. Available at: <<http://hrw.org/wr2k8/pdfs/tunisia.pdf>>; accessed 23 February 2008.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² ATFD and WWHR, 2006.

hold smaller local meetings.⁶⁵³ Their case also illustrates the regime's practice of infiltrating the hierarchy of critical organisations with supporters or members of the RCD. These then proceed to block or stall the activities of the CSOs which they join, as happened with 22 such individuals who infiltrated the LTDH hierarchy.⁶⁵⁴ The 22 originally claimed allegiance to the LTDH, only to take out a court order in 2005 to block the organisation from holding its annual conference only a matter of days before the event was set to take part. It has been alleged that these individuals are 'known to be affiliated' to the RCD.⁶⁵⁵ As is the case with the CNLT, the LTDH's offices are regularly surrounded by police, both in plain clothes and in uniform, as the author witnessed on a number of occasions whilst in Tunisia.

Whilst the intensity of the government's attitude towards CSOs may appear surprising at first, it is worth recalling the methods used by the regime to challenge the Islamists in the early 1990s. Key to this struggle was the use of the FSN to pump government money into the deprived *zones d'ombre* in order to deny potential recruiting grounds for *Nahda*. As Chapter Two argued, this took the regime into spaces usually reserved for NGO activity, and also helps construct a benevolent 'face' for the government. Hibou however goes even further, arguing that the 26.26 project, as the FSN are also known, is nothing less than yet another extension of the Tunisian state's security apparatus.⁶⁵⁶ Not only does the 26.26 target the *zones d'ombre* wherein security threats might develop, but it is also used to reward the 'good' poor, who toe the government line, and further isolate the 'bad' poor that are critical of the government. In this way, the FSN becomes one of the most significant tools of the governing class in Tunisia.⁶⁵⁷ In addition, the security aspect of the 26.26 has clear parallels with some EU thinking on security, as highlighted in Chapter Three, albeit without the EU's emphasis on the potential role of democracy. The government has therefore sought to claim Tunisian civil society for itself, and use the space to consolidate its own position. Any independent NGO or CSO activity, on the other hand, might be seen as a challenge to the government's authority in spaces it has increasingly claimed as its own.

Part of the FSN project has involved providing official funding for a number of 'legal' organisations with similar overall objectives as the 'illegal' organisations, although

⁶⁵³ International Federation for Human Rights, 'No Congress for the LTDH', 21 September 2005. Available at: <<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article2675>>; accessed 4 January 2006; Amnesty International, 'Tunisia', in *Amnesty International Report 2007*. Available at: <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/middle-east-and-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia#report>>; accessed 25 May 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁴ International Federation for Human Rights, 2005.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Hibou, 2006, pp. 238-239.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 239.

always with the blessing or even encouragement of the regime. A good example of such an organisation is the *Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne* (UNFT – National Union of Tunisian Women),⁶⁵⁸ whose work essentially covers similar areas to the ATFD, albeit ‘officially’ and with the full political support of the government and the financial clout offered by the FSN. Furthermore, the UNFT are strongly backed by the Tunisian Ministry for Women, the Family, Children and the Elderly, in addition to a number of other government ministries.⁶⁵⁹ With such a close connection to the government in terms of funding and infrastructure, it is almost impossible to conceive of the UNFT as a truly independent CSO. Rather, the existence of such organisations once more highlights the government’s attempts to dominate every aspect of Tunisian society, denying any space for opposition to its policies to emerge.

On the whole, the room for manoeuvre available to Tunisian CSOs is severely limited. By requiring all CSOs to seek legal recognition by the authorities, the government is able to either force organisations to conform to its message, or render their activities so difficult to maintain that the organisation itself is made useless. This has taken place, however, alongside a determined campaign by the authorities to populate ‘civil’ society with organisations faithful to its own message, often directly funded by the government as part of the 26.26 initiative. Indeed, Tunisia has seen an evolution of the state’s ability to stamp out dissent. In the 1970s and 1980s, it had to resort to using the security forces to stamp out street protests and rioting. By the 1990s, it was using a combination of brute force and social-welfare strategies to eradicate organised political Islam in the country. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the role of the security forces is limited to establishing cordons around office blocks, as the FSN enable the state to claim almost all civil society space for itself. Thus, it restricts the space in which dissent may be concentrated, and effectively crushing the dissent before it is able to manifest itself in the form of public demonstrations or uprisings.

The EU and Tunisian civil society

It is interesting to note that both the CNLT and the LTDH are two of the Tunisian CSOs included within the Euro-Med Non-Governmental Platform supported by the EU. The Platform mimics the inter-governmental platforms of the Barcelona Process and Neighbourhood Policy in that it establishes social settings in which interaction between Europe and non-European organisations is allowed to occur. Also, the Platform is

⁶⁵⁸ For more information, see their homepage at: < <http://www.unft.org.tn/>>; accessed on 17 May 2007.

⁶⁵⁹ In fact, all nine of the UNFT’s domestic sponsors are either ministries or initiatives launched by the government. For a full list of the UNFT’s domestic sponsors, see UNFT, ‘Partenariat à l’échelle nationale’, available at: <<http://www.unft.org.tn/fr/partenariat/nationale.html>>; accessed 17 May 2007.

consistent with the aims of the worldwide EU thematic programme of democracy promotion. According to the thematic programme, the themes upon which cooperation will take place ‘need not be predetermined since they would derive from local priorities’, in addition to some ‘cross cutting issues’ such as gender equality of labour standards.⁶⁶⁰ This was confirmed in interviews with representatives from both the ATFD and the LADH, who claimed that EU officials and other organisations within Euro-Mediterranean civil society frameworks were sympathetic to their demands.⁶⁶¹ In terms of dialogue at least, some Tunisian NGOs are involved in an increasingly vibrant flow of ideas throughout the Mediterranean.

These are fairly recent developments, however, with the Non-Governmental Platform itself only coming about in 2004, in the wake of the ENP. This is reflective of a general reluctance by the EU to engage with the civil societies of the partner states. As one Commission official admitted, the EMP was, until around 2003 or 2004, largely only an intergovernmental affair, with little stress on activities under the third ‘cultural’ pillar that includes civil society initiatives.⁶⁶² This was due, according to the official, to the fact that at that time, Euro-Mediterranean civil society had failed to organise itself to the extent to which it might be capable of participating constructively in both EMP and ENP.⁶⁶³ Bicchi however rejects this view, arguing that in reality the EU has been remarkable for its inability to engage with the civil society it seeks to promote.⁶⁶⁴

Indeed, evidence from Tunisia suggests that the EU has had very little impact on the state of Tunisian civil society, and has failed to stop the harassment by the authorities of CSOs involved in some of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society initiatives. Moreover, the Tunisian government has also been able to limit the activities of non-Tunisian CSOs that have tried to engage with their Tunisian counterparts. The case of the ATFD, one of the Tunisian member organisations of the Non-Governmental Platform is a case in point. Despite being members of the Platform, the ATFD but have been subject to regular harassment by the authorities.⁶⁶⁵ They also seek to engage with CSOs from other Arab and Mediterranean states to address issues concerning women’s rights. One such event was a conference organised in 2006 by ATFD and Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR), entitled ‘Women, Sexual Rights, and Reproductive Rights: Gains, Freedoms,

⁶⁶⁰ Commission of the European Communities, 2006a, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁶¹ Interviews in Tunis, April, 2006.

⁶⁶² Author’s interview in Brussels, July 2006.

⁶⁶³ Author’s interview in Brussels, July 2006. The official in question claimed that Mediterranean civil society only reached the necessary level of organisation in 2006.

⁶⁶⁴ Bicchi, 2006, p. 294.

⁶⁶⁵ Author’s interviews with ATFD representatives, April 2006.

Resistance'.⁶⁶⁶ This sought to involve women's rights organisations and activists from a range of partner states, and addressed a range of issues specifically concerning improving the social positions of women in the Mediterranean. However, representatives from Egyptian and Jordanian CSOs were denied entry visas by the Tunisian authorities, whilst a participant from Palestine 'was subject to Israeli police harassment at the airport and could not come'.⁶⁶⁷ According to ATFD members, the authorities have also tried to frustrate an awareness-raising campaign on domestic violence on women,⁶⁶⁸ despite the issue being no direct threat to the government's authority. Other international CSOs engaged with Tunisian organisations have also faced hostility by the Tunisian authorities, with foreign representatives of these organisations typically restricted from attending or holding meetings, or barred from sitting-in on trials of Tunisian activists.⁶⁶⁹ As argued earlier, other Tunisian member organisations of the Non-Governmental platform such as the LTDH and the CNLT have also been subject to similar harassment as the ATFD. In short, it appears that being associated with EU civil society initiatives offers no protection to Tunisian CSOs from being harassed by their own government.

These events have not gone entirely unnoticed by the European political classes. Indeed, the Tunisian government has gone so far as to threaten to sever diplomatic relations with a number of unspecified countries should their representatives continue to meet with Tunisian opposition and human rights activists.⁶⁷⁰ It is known for example that delegations from a number of northern EU member states regularly attend court hearings of human rights and freedom of speech activists in Tunisia, much to the administration's annoyance.⁶⁷¹ Criticism from the EU has been more limited, particularly from the Commission. However, relations became very strained after the offices of the German-funded Goethe Institute in Tunis were stormed by the security forces during a meeting of civil society activists as part of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2005.⁶⁷² Arguably the most vocal criticisms of Tunisia from any part of the EU have been from the European Parliament, which regularly criticises the Tunisian government on the human rights situation, and on the lack of a number of freedoms associated with

⁶⁶⁶ Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates and Women for Women's Human Rights, 'Summary Conference Report', for a conference on *Women, Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights: Gains, Freedoms, Resistances*, Tunis, 17-19 November 2006. Available at: <<http://www.kadinininsanhaklari.org/files/TunisiaSummaryConferenceReportII.pdf>>; accessed 18 December 2007.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Interviews in Tunis, April 2006.

⁶⁶⁹ See for example Amnesty International, 2007; and Human Rights Watch, 2008.

⁶⁷⁰ Author's interviews with diplomats from EU member states, Tunis, July 2005 and March 2006; and Amnesty International, 2007.

⁶⁷¹ Author's interviews with a diplomat from an EU member state, Tunis, April 2006.

⁶⁷² Author's interviews with member state diplomats, Tunis, March and April 2006, and with Commission officials, Brussels, July, 2006.

democratic life.⁶⁷³ These criticisms have had little effect on the Tunisian authorities however, and there is no evidence of any more constructive pressure being put by the EU on the Tunisian government to improve conditions for civil society in Tunisia. The situation remains, therefore, one in which *any* civil society activity is exceptionally difficult to sustain, with little space for any CSO to be able to operate effectively, regardless of any part it plays in Euro-Mediterranean civil society frameworks.

The current working environment for both domestic and international CSOs in Tunisia, therefore, is highly restricted. Without any changes to these conditions, EU efforts to involve civil society actors in its democratisation programme will be fruitless. Indeed, as it stands, pan-Mediterranean civil society initiatives such as the Civil Forum and the Non-Governmental Platform have had little effect on conditions faced by Tunisian CSOs. If anything, these conditions have actually deteriorated since 1995, as the regime has sought to claim Tunisian civil society for itself by using government money to support ‘official’ organisations that target some of the needs of Tunisia’s poorest regions. This involvement has been overtly political, traceable to the regime’s successful assault on the Islamist opposition in the 1990s. Yet in its opposition to the development of Tunisian civil society, the government indirectly acknowledges the threat potentially posed by CSOs to its hold on power. With political parties subdued, as illustrated in Chapter Two, and the media in the President’s pocket, CSOs have come to represent one of the last spaces in which organised critical political action can manifest itself in Tunisia. The final part of this chapter now moves the focus of analysis back to the top of Tunisian political society, and on to the EU’s attempts to use socialisation as a means of promoting democratisation.

A legacy of socialisation

The final part of this chapter argues that socialisation, as it is currently practiced, is an ineffective means of promoting democracy in Tunisia. Moreover, by attempting to promote democracy and other norms through socialisation in Tunisia, the EU paradoxically stalls the democratisation of Tunisia by providing legitimacy to the governing agenda of the ruling elite.

As outlined in the previous chapter, socialisation requires a significant amount of contact between the actors involved in the socialisation process. Recalling the chapter’s

⁶⁷³ All statements and decisions made on Tunisia by the European Parliament are available via a search at: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/archive/search.do?language=EN>>; accessed 13 June 2006. The Parliament was particularly critical of the events which unfolded at WSIS, for example, and its resolution on the situation in Tunisia during this time is available at: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B6-2005-0669&language=EN>>; accessed 13 June 2006.

understanding of socialisation, the process involves altering the behavioural norms of third party actors by incorporating these actors within the same institutional frameworks as the self. Membership of these institutions is conditional upon a commitment to a set of common norms and values, ideally determined by the self. Socialisation succeeds, therefore, when the behaviour of the other actor becomes similar or identical to that of the self. Whilst these may initially be in conflict with the norms of the other actors, over time the actors' continued adherence to the rules of the institutions changes their behavioural norms to conform to those of the institutions.

In order to assess the effectiveness of socialisation in promoting democracy in Tunisia, a number of questions need to be addressed. These questions also apply to a more general analysis of socialisation, although they are considered here within the Tunisian context. Firstly, *who* or *what* are the actors targeted by socialisation? Secondly, at what point can the socialising actor consider the third party actor to have been socialised, and how is it envisaged that this point is reached? Finally, are there any other issues related to socialisation that may not be apparent in more abstract theoretic discussions on the subject? This part of the chapter begins by looking at who the EU is seeking to socialise in Tunisia.

The tradition of cooperation

In any study of socialisation, the question of whom or what is being socialised is important. This section addresses this question. The EU is understood to be exporting norms to 'Tunisia', yet Tunisia may involve a number of different elements. Is the EU, for example, attempting to socialise the Tunisian *state*, or the state's *officials*? Or, is the EU attempting to socialise the Tunisian population in general? And what exactly is meant by 'the Tunisian state'? In her study on the effects of socialisation on states, Flockhart clarifies matters.⁶⁷⁴ During socialisation, she argues, the state should not be understood as a single entity, but rather as an actor that contains a number of different individuals who all possess some degree of influence over the actions of the state.⁶⁷⁵ Thus it is not so much the state as an individual object that is socialised, but rather it is the numerous individuals who occupy roles that affect the behaviour of the state. As Chapter Two argued, in Tunisia, the state, the President, and the ruling party are barely distinguishable from each other. Thus, all must be targeted in order for socialisation to be an effective method of instigating political change in Tunisia.

⁶⁷⁴ Flockhart, 2006, pp. 92-93.

⁶⁷⁵ Flockhart, 2006, pp. 92-93.

The problem with these individuals, however, is that they are already exceptionally familiar with European norms. Moreover, the EMP was not the first instance of Europe providing the inspiration and models for political reform in Tunisia. In fact, there has been a long tradition of such exchange between Europe and Tunisia in this field. It is worth recalling, for example, that it was to Europe that Ahmad Bey turned for advisors help steer his modernisation of Tunisia in the nineteenth century. Indeed, as argued in Chapter Two, Ahmad sought nothing less than the emulation of the successes of European industrialisation in post-Ottoman Tunisia. European ideas also had a profound effect on one of Ahmad's greatest protégées, Khair al-Din Pasha. Although al-Din was of Caucasian origins himself, he established himself as one of the central figures of political reform in Tunisia in the mid-nineteenth century. Albert Hourani explains that the four years al-Din spent in Paris from 1852 onwards, along with the modern French education he received under Ahmad's patronage in Tunis, had a profoundly formative effect on his political thought.⁶⁷⁶ During this period the Tunisian elite came to recognise European ideas and methods as the most attractive means possible of reforming the Tunisian state. Indeed, Hourani argues that al-Din's attempt to maintain the support provided to the Tunisian government by the various European powers, whilst trying to avoid favouring one in particular, eventually led to his sacking as prime minister in 1877.⁶⁷⁷ European, and principally French, influence grew further still during colonisation, and as Chapter Two also argued, it was partially due to the Europeanisation of some of the independence movement's leading figures that the country gained its independence in 1956.

Arguably, the most heavily Europeanised part of Tunisian society of all was the military. Military and security forces emerged from colonialism with strong ties to the former *metropole*. European instructors and officers continued to train and command colonial forces until independence. Many of the officers in the post-independence armed forces who were trained in Western military academies, had served alongside or within imperial forces; and, as is the case with many Maghrebis, would have helped liberate the French *metropole* from Axis forces in the Second World War. Over half-a-century after independence, these connections remain. Military and security officers from the former colonies are still trained in Western academies, continuing a link that goes back to Ahmad Bey's reforms. Bin Ali, of course, is a case in point: a career police officer, taught at the Saint-Cyr military academy in France and at the Senior Intelligence School at Fort Holabird in the US. Thus, Europeanisation has been particularly noticeable in military and security sectors in Tunisia.

⁶⁷⁶ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 84.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 85-86.

Bin Ali's case also illustrates how the Europeanisation of the military and security forces in Tunisia is made ever more significant as those who are Europeanised may move from the security forces into government. In Tunisia's case, Bin Ali and, as noted in Chapter Two, a number of his former security colleagues have gone right to the top of a country's political structure. Moreover, their positions are incontestable within the current structures of the Tunisian political system. Although writing in reference to the military and security apparatuses of the Arab states in general, Ayubi is particularly illuminating on the dangers of such former security officers obtaining political office.⁶⁷⁸ He points out that the Western military training takes place within the context of one of the most bureaucratic and hierarchical elements of the Western state. The rigid systems of military discipline are not designed for questioning, let alone plurality of opinion. Ayubi argues that despite the espousal of populist pseudo-socialist terminology by Arab military officers when in political office, 'they were still, culturally speaking, within the same camp, pursuing the same goals: "progress", premised on the concept that "man" can control his destiny.'⁶⁷⁹ Thus, it is not any form of Europeanisation that is carried into high political office by such individuals. Rather, it is one of the most rigid, hierarchical and incontestable social frameworks in existence in modern Europe.

The Europeanisation of the upper echelons of Tunisian society is not limited to the military and security forces. Many of the diplomatic service in Tunisia also benefit from French schooling or university education. It is these diplomats and officials that are encountered by EU officials within the structure of the EMP and ENP frameworks. All the Tunisian officials interviewed for this study, for example, had either lived or been educated in Europe, mostly in France.⁶⁸⁰ More intriguing still is the impact that this Europeanisation has had on a number of the Tunisian elite's understanding of their *own* society, including on their perceptions of how Tunisia has been best served by its rulers in the past. As Sadiki observes, methods and practices learned and acquired in Europe are often touted as the most credible way in which Tunisia may develop in the future, with many now openly championing the modernising impact of colonial rule.⁶⁸¹ This viewpoint is not as surprising as it may at first appear, as the elite's reliance on knowledge produced in Europe is noticeable. Not only do these individuals receive significant schooling and training in Europe, but, as Ayubi points out, many Tunisian intellectuals acquire their entire knowledge of Tunisia and the Maghreb from French sources.⁶⁸² In urban areas, one can feasibly live much of their life by speaking French alone, including taking degree

⁶⁷⁸ Ayubi, 1995, p. 99.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Author's interviews, Tunis, 2005 and 2006.

⁶⁸¹ Sadiki, 2002c, p. 500.

⁶⁸² Ayubi, 1995, endnote 3, p. 134.

programmes in a whole range of subjects entirely through the medium of French. Thus for many among the ruling classes in Tunisia, Europe provides not only a place where exchanges of knowledge may happen, but offers the means by which Tunisia may continue to develop.

Therefore, those targeted by state socialisation are those individuals who have direct input and influence over the behaviour of the state. In the case of Tunisia, this includes not only the President, his ministers, and those who work for the Tunisian state, but also the entire apparatus of the ruling party which is indivisible from the state itself. These individuals are from a highly Europeanised background, with a long tradition of dealing with European officials. Moreover, they have often been sympathetic to European ideas, and have often turned to Europe in search of inspiration for reforming Tunisian society.

The merits of socialisation

The section considers the potential ability of socialisation to change the behaviour of members of the Tunisian political elite. Firstly, it is worth noting Gillespie's point that socialisation may in fact be a very long-term process, and that the results of its use by the EU in the Mediterranean may not be visible for some time yet.⁶⁸³ Yet if this is the case, how is it possible to determine the point at which socialisation has achieved its goals?

Once more, Flockhart's work provides a useful point of reference.⁶⁸⁴ She argues that socialisation is achieved only when

a "tipping point" is reached where the norm in question can be institutionalised into state structures, at which point the norm can be said to have been successfully adopted and to have become a "state norm". Such a point cannot be said to have been achieved until the norm has been institutionalised, which essentially will be when those individuals who occupy key roles within the state structures have become convinced of the salience of the norm and have acted on their conviction through legislation or in other ways institutionalising the norm set into national law and practice.⁶⁸⁵

Despite this however, Flockhart goes on to explain that this might in itself not guarantee that the norm transfer process has been successful amongst the wider population of the state in question. Such continuing problems with the process of socialisation 'would be indicated by persistent failure in a significant proportion of the population to conform with the institutionalised norm set.'⁶⁸⁶ Therefore, socialisation can be judged to have been successful only when the norm in question has been institutionalised within official state structures *and* when there are not widespread breaches of the norm within the population.

⁶⁸³ Gillespie, 2006, p. 92.

⁶⁸⁴ Flockhart, 2006.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

Tunisia's case however presents some interesting challenges to this perspective. Firstly, Flockhart's assessment is subjective in that it relies upon the analyst or the norm-promoter concluding that the individuals within the state in question becoming 'convinced of the salience of the norm'. This is problematic as it fails to compensate for superficial conformity by the individuals in question. One specifically thinks of the analysis presented earlier in this thesis that identifies Tunisia as a 'façade democracy', or indeed of any other state with pseudo-democratic credentials. In the context of democracy, Tunisia and similar states 'tick the boxes' of Flockhart's conclusions in that they possess all the trappings of a democratic system, yet these have little substantive value. Flockhart argues that the norm is institutionalised as and when it is put into 'national law and practice', but Tunisia already *is* a republic by name, law, and practice. The problem with democracy in Tunisia is not in the institutional provision for democracy but rather in the quality of laws and practices present.

Moreover, the interviews conducted for this thesis suggest that Tunisian officials do not require any convincing of the value of democracy *per se*. Indeed, with such extensive experience of living and learning or training in Europe, it could be said that Tunisian officials are more aware than most of what democracy has to offer. Rather, what is suggested by the interviews is that Tunisian officials are yet to be convinced of the value of democracy within the current Tunisian political climate. As is discussed later in this chapter, it is often the case that democracy is not seen as the best political framework within which certain challenges that are perceived to be facing Tunisia can be tackled. Likewise, they would be aware of the disadvantages of democracy, particularly to their own positions. With the party, the state and the state's bureaucracy so intimately intertwined, any challenge to the ruling party that might emerge within a more democratic system would also constitute a challenge to their personal positions as leading figures within the state. Therefore, the Tunisian officials being exposed to socialisation have a personal stake in maintaining the status quo.

A further problem that socialisation must overcome is deliberate resistance to the norms being promoted by the individuals targeted by it. Chapter Four suggested that two strategies that may be employed to overcome this resistance are the exercising of 'social influence', in the form of conditionality within the EMP and ENP frameworks, and 'persuasion' through lengthy social interaction between the actors involved. However as argued earlier in this chapter, conditionality faces its own fair share of problems in Tunisia, therefore removing this option in the Tunisian case. This leaves 'persuasion' as the only viable alternative, and involves the EU continuing to engage with the Tunisian government within the association committees and subcommittees established under the

conditions of the AA and AP. However, as noted at the beginning of this section, some analysts believe that socialisation is a long-term process. If this is indeed the case, then perhaps it might just be too early to tell whether socialisation is having the desired effect in the EU's efforts to instil democratic norms within the Tunisian state.

However, Gillespie's analysis exclusively considers the EMP and ENP, two policy frameworks within which the EU has intended for socialisation to play a role. Recalling the definition of 'persuasion' provided in Chapter Four, 'persuasion' can include any social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes without the use of coercion. In addition, it is worth remembering that Manners also argues that norms can be diffused in international politics through contagion. This occurs when an actor seeks to emulate the norms of other actors, without the actor whose norms are being emulated necessarily seeking to diffuse those norms.⁶⁸⁷ The Tunisian elite's two centuries of interaction with Europe has allowed for considerable exposure of these individuals to European norms. Indeed, some of these norms have been accommodated into Tunisian political behaviour. Examples of such instances previously addressed by this thesis are Khair al-Din's reforms, Bourguiba's centralisation of the Tunisian state, and Bin Ali's economic liberalisation measures. Yet other methods and norms have not been adopted in Tunisia, including democracy.

This suggests a degree of agency by the Tunisian officials, with them able to pick and choose which European norms and practices they deem necessary for application in Tunisia. Thus, the implementation of European-inspired reforms in Tunisia is more of a process of deliberate acquisition than one of socialisation. Moreover, it illustrates that socialisation alone cannot be relied upon as a means of promoting democracy in Tunisia. This has been confounded by the fact that the EU has been loath to implement conditionality clauses to encourage socialisation, and it seems unlikely that socialisation will have any significant effect on the democratisation of Tunisia. The chapter now considers a final and more indirect effect of the socialisation process in Tunisia.

Development and exclusion

This section highlights a problem with the inclusion of Tunisia within the same institutional frameworks as the EU. As this thesis has already argued, socialisation relies upon including the actors that are to be socialised within the same institutional frameworks as the self, as it is within these frameworks and their associated social settings that norms are diffused between the participating actors. This section argues, however, that by involving the Tunisian government as 'partners' in reform-oriented

⁶⁸⁷ Manners, 2002, p. 244.

policy frameworks, the EU inadvertently gives credence to a regime which has historically used the need to reform as a pretext for authoritarianism.

The issue of national development has played an integral role in Tunisian politics. Indeed, reform and development have often been constructed as nationalist projects that the government has used to mobilise populist support. Chapter Two argued that one of Bourguiba's early successes was the refocusing the energies of the struggle for independence into a struggle for national development. As was argued, *la lutte contre le sous-développement* served the dual purposes of modernising post-independence Tunisia and an unofficial objective of maintaining popular support for Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour/PSD regime. Bourguiba's *thawra* state was able to use claims of addressing Tunisia's post-independence socio-economic difficulties to maintain popular support.

Bin Ali has continued to associate the president and the ruling party's rule with Tunisian development. In an extract from his speech to commemorate the forty-ninth anniversary of the Tunisian Republic, Bin Ali lists the achievements of his government since 1987, declaring that

Since the change, we have emphasised that our people is eligible for a developed and organised political life, based on reference to concepts and values that are essentially national in character. We have worked to fashion a model that embraces common universal values, deals wisely with events and developments, anticipates the future and its challenges, and endeavours to acquire the mechanisms and means of the time; our constant motto, in this regard, being exclusive allegiance to Tunisia.⁶⁸⁸

This extract constructs Tunisia as a state that is ready for 'developed' political life. However, the 'we' who emphasise this fact are Bin Ali's government, and thus the President promotes his own administration. Interestingly however, the extract also outlines how the government has achieved this state of readiness by taking advantage of Tunisia's 'national character' and the values contained within it. Thus, the regime is nothing less than an embodiment of the Tunisian nation itself. It proves that despite the half century since independence, nationalist-revolutionary discourse remains integral to the regime's legitimacy.

The regime's nationalist-progressive discourse is evident in other examples of Tunisian government discourse, and is particularly evident to any who visit a Tunisian city- or town-centre. One is subjected to an onslaught of nationalist symbolism and imagery, typified by Tunisian flags, statues depicting the figure '7' in various guises (after 7

⁶⁸⁸ Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali, *Speech on the 49th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic*, Carthage, 25 July 2006a. Available at: http://www.carthage.tn/en/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=7500&year=2006&month=07&day=25&Itemid=90; accessed 17 May 2006.

November 1987, the date of the *changement*),⁶⁸⁹ and principal streets named after heroes of the independence struggle. Even the ubiquitous local brand of cigarettes, *20 Mars*, is named after the date of Tunisian independence in 1956. A common government poster depicting two men and a woman dressed in overalls reaching forward to hold a torch under the Tunisian flag, has been in existence in Tunisia for decades. A more recent version, however, has an image of Bin Ali superimposed on top of the torch, with the workers and the flag as his backdrop.⁶⁹⁰ Despite being in a poster rather than in one of Bin Ali's speeches, the message remains clear: a unified Tunisia progresses under Bin Ali's leadership.

The ruling party plays an instrumental role in fostering this progress; a fact recognised by Bin Ali himself. In an address to the RCD's central committee in 2007, the President constructs the RCD as *the* model for progress in Tunisia, due to its nationalist character and its commitment to 'civilised' behaviour. Bin Ali claims that:

The RCD, which has always served as a school for the education of successive generations, instilling in them the sense of patriotism and allegiance to Tunisia alone, as well as ... [a] commitment to the rules of civilised behaviour, is now called on to step up its efforts in this field ...⁶⁹¹

Bin Ali therefore tasks the ruling party with steering Tunisia's future progress, which is nothing less than a civilising mission. Moreover, this mission is patriotic, with participation representative of allegiance to Tunisia itself. Both Bin Ali and the RCD's positions are only strengthened by the regime's successful record of economic growth and stability, as illustrated earlier in this thesis.

By constructing the role of the RCD in this way, the President essentially divides Tunisian society. It is implied that those who are *not* members of the ruling party are essentially unpatriotic and uncivilised. As in the time of Bourguiba, commitment to the ruling party is one and the same as commitment to the Tunisian nation itself. Thus, Bin Ali and the ruling party claim Tunisian national identity for themselves. It allows the regime to portray opposition to the President or the RCD as nothing less than treason. In this way, not only does revolutionary discourse remain integral to the regime's legitimacy, but more importantly, opposition to the ruling party is treasonous. Any political system therefore that depends on opposition amongst parties is therefore *de facto* unpatriotic itself. Indeed,

⁶⁸⁹ See Appendix 1.

⁶⁹⁰ See Appendix 2.

⁶⁹¹ Zine el Abidine Bin Ali, *Address at the close of the 7th ordinary session of the central committee of the RCD*, 16 June 2007. Available at: <http://www.carthage.tn/en/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=14708&year=2007&month=06&day=16&Itemid=90>; accessed 26 June 2007.

Sadiki argues that in Tunisia ‘national unity continues until this day to be shorthand for political uniformity’,⁶⁹² and that the hegemonic nationalist discourse of the regime is constructed to exclude counter-hegemonic opposition actors.

Recently however, the regime’s nationalist development project has acquired a more international dimension. Gone are the days of the 1950s and 1960s when commitments to nationalisation and import-substitution industrialisation were seeking to consolidate Tunisia’s economic independence. In a speech to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Tunisia’s independence, Bin Ali states that Tunisia is attempting to ‘join the ranks of developed nations’.⁶⁹³ Thus, he constructs a group of states (or ‘nations’ as he puts it) to which Tunisia does not belong at present. Cooperation with the EU is seen as a means to achieve this goal, as was illustrated by Tunisian Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdelwaheb Abdallah in a speech at the 2005 EuroMed summit in Barcelona. Abdallah expressed his country’s desire for the EMP ‘to make a quantum leap ... which will offer promising prospects that meet our peoples’ aspirations for further solidarity and progress.’⁶⁹⁴ Once more we see the notions of unity (or ‘solidarity’ in this case) and progress combined in official discourse. In this instance, however, they are ushered firmly within the context of the EMP. Indeed, Abdallah is here identifying the EMP as a vehicle that will further Tunisian progress, and implicating the EU in Tunisia’s quasi-revolutionary struggle for progress.

There are also clear similarities between the discourse of parts of the Tunisian government and that emerging from parts of the EU. For example, according to the earlier extract from Bin Ali’s speech on the forty-ninth anniversary of the Tunisian Republic, Tunisia is to develop to embrace ‘common universal values’.⁶⁹⁵ Tunisian government officials also present a similar line during interviews.⁶⁹⁶ Herein, there is common ground between Bin Ali’s discourse and that of parts of the EU. As argued in Chapter Three, a number of EU foreign policy-makers also believe that the EU also stands for universal values. Indeed, as was illustrated, there is a view that argues that the entire international identity of the EU should be constructed around a commitment to these values. Thus the

⁶⁹² Sadiki, 2002c, p. 502.

⁶⁹³ Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali, *Speech on the 50th Anniversary of Independence*, Rades, 20 March 2006b. Available at:

<http://www.carthage.tn/en/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=3725&year=2006&month=03&day=20&Itemid=90>; accessed 17 May 2006.

⁶⁹⁴ Abdelwaheb Abdallah, *Address before the Euro-Mediterranean Barcelona summit*, Barcelona, 27 November 2005. Available at:

<http://www.carthage.tn/en/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=3754&year=2005&month=11&day=27&Itemid=90>; accessed 26 June 2007.

⁶⁹⁵ Bin Ali, 2006a. Also, the author’s interviews with Tunisian officials revealed a similar general belief in the desirability and universality of those values promoted by the EU and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

⁶⁹⁶ Author’s interviews, Tunis, 2005 and 2006.

EU espouses similar commitments to those of the Tunisian regime, albeit perhaps for very different reasons.

Discursively associating Tunisia (and more specifically, the RCD and the Tunisian government) with universal values and civilisation allows the government to internationalise its legitimacy. By highlighting that the message it projects is not only Tunisian but is also ‘universal’ in origin, the regime portrays itself alongside other international actors such as the EU. This is only reinforced when the EU considers Tunisia as a ‘partner’ state, effectively an equal in a wider community of Mediterranean states. Indeed, as Bensedrine and Mestiri argue, European (both EU and member state) cooperation with authoritarian governments in North Africa only supports these regimes’ claims for legitimacy amongst their own populations.⁶⁹⁷ Yet, paradoxically, this cooperation is essential for socialisation to be allowed to take effect. As argued previously, socialisation depends on the intended subjects of socialisation to be included within the same institutional structures as the socialising actor. Therefore, whilst cooperating closely and publicly with the Tunisian government is integral to the EU’s method of promoting democracy in Tunisia, the cooperation contributes to a perception fostered by the regime that only through it may Tunisia continue to develop.

Discursively at least, Tunisia remains to a large extent a *thawra* state, one that seeks to mobilise popular support by constructing itself as the vehicle for continued reform and progress in Tunisia. Bourguiba’s use of national development as a means to galvanise the Tunisian population behind his government has been continued in different guises by Bin Ali. Moreover, based on a sound economic foundation, Bin Ali has constructed both himself and the RCD as the means by which that development will continue. This process of construction has included indentifying the party and the state with wider international standards, portraying the regime as emulating similar developments elsewhere in the ‘civilised’ world. By cooperating with the Tunisian government on its reform programme, the EU appears to support this nationalist-progressive discourse. However, a commitment to socialisation makes this cooperation essential, leaving the EU in a position where it seeks to reform a government that legitimises its own existence through advocating its reformist credentials.

Indeed, socialisation in general is a problematic means of promoting democracy in Tunisia. Socialisation is based on the assumption that through processes of social interaction, norms can be diffused from one actor to other actors involved in the same processes as itself. Yet the process fails to accommodate the possibility that the actors that

⁶⁹⁷ For a more thorough critique of the legitimising effects of the EU’s association with the Tunisian government, see Bensedrine and Mestiri, 2004.

are intended to be socialised might already be very familiar with the norms of the socialising actor. Moreover, they may have consciously decided to reject the implementation of the norms in question within their own societies as the norms may be unsuitable for their own particular needs.

It has been argued that as it stands, socialisation is not an effective means of promoting democracy in Tunisia. It has been highlighted that the governing elites of Tunisia haven been familiar with European norms for some two centuries. Indeed, at various times, these norms have proved effective in the governance and development of Tunisia. Yet, members of this elite have also decided against introducing some norms that might have a detrimental effect on either Tunisian society or for their own positions within that society. Moreover, as argued earlier in the chapter, the EU has been unwilling put any pressure on the Tunisian government by using the conditionality clauses available through the terms of the EU-Tunisia AP. This has effectively removed one of the two ways in which the socialisation of Tunisia may be encouraged. In addition, Tunisia's long history of relations with Europe has illustrated that relying on a relationship in which no pressure is applied on the Tunisian government is unlikely to encourage the Tunisians to adopt more democratic practices. Worse yet for the Union is the fact that by acting as a very public partner in Tunisia's reform programme, it is in effect demonstrating collaboration with a regime that bases its legitimacy on a nationalist-progressive discourse which excludes opponents in the name of national reform.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this chapter, it is difficult to identify much substantive success of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia. As the previous chapter revealed, the EU does have a range of methods to promote democracy in Tunisia, and all within the frameworks of the EMP and ENP. These methods have targeted actors from a number of different parts of Tunisian society, from government and ruling party officials, to civil society organisations working with individual Tunisian citizens. Yet, on every level of Tunisian society, EU activity has either failed to capitalise on the tools the Union has at its disposal; stalled due to the control held by the regime over its population; or, worst of all, contributed to an entrenchment of undemocratic practices. Progress has been particularly slow on issues such as such as judicial reform, issues that are key to facilitating greater political reform. Tunisian intransigence on such issues has been matched by only relatively small financial support by the EU for political reform, particularly in light of its funding of economic reform programmes. Where progress has been achieved, such as the establishment of an upper house for the Tunisian parliament, the actual effects have

essentially been cosmetic in nature, offering little actual challenge to the status quo. Despite this slow progress, the EU is yet to bring pressure to bear on the Tunisian authorities by threatening to use conditionality. Indeed, as the chapter argued, conditionality exists more in name than in practice.

If supporters of the modernisation approach to democratisation might be encouraged by the significant funding allocated by the EU to further the economic liberalisation of Tunisia, the consequences of the process have produced little cause for enthusiasm. Whilst economic development has continued at a steady pace, the process of economic liberalisation in Tunisia has seen the almost wholesale transfer of state resources into the hands of a few powerful families. These families have been able to capitalise on personal links to the presidential palace in Carthage to acquire their new-found empires. In the process, the families have carved-up Tunisia's former burgeoning state sector, thus monopolising the control of almost all principal centres of economic activity in the country. Success in the economic sphere is based less on good governance practices and more on new patrimonial networks, shrinking the economic space and opportunities available for ordinary Tunisians. Any hope that good practice in the economic sphere will carry over to the government of Tunisia is yet to be fulfilled.

The chapter also considered the role of civil society in Tunisia. It argues that the current weakness of this part of Tunisian society makes any attempts by the EU to foster Tunisian CSOs optimistic at best. The Tunisian regime has essentially claimed civil society for itself, ruling it with an iron fist that has suffocated almost all opportunities for independent civil society activity. Even CSOs that participate in EU initiatives and those advocating welfare rather than political reformist messages have not been spared, leaving Tunisian civil society a barren wasteland where actors are barred from leaving their offices. In response, the EU has offered little, and was generally slow in fully supporting the civil society components of the EMP. Recent years have seen a renewed commitment by the Union in this area, in addition to more vocal criticisms over the treatment of Tunisian activists by the Tunisian regime. Yet this has changed little in the daily life of Tunisian CSOs, and the government continues to keep its civil society on a tight leash.

The chapter then turned its attention to the EU's hope that democratic norms might be diffused to Mediterranean partner states, such as Tunisia, by socialising their officials within institutional frameworks based on 'universal' norms, including democracy. The chapter recognised that socialisation is by definition a long-term process, and judging the extent of its success is not as clear cut as it might be with other methods. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that socialisation's potential to significantly encourage the

democratisation process in Tunisia is dubious. Tunisia's long history of relations with Europe has produced a number of instances where European norms and practices have indeed been imported to Tunisia, and put into effect by the country's administration. Crucially, however, and with the exception of the colonial period, this has invariably been done at the behest of the Tunisians. The government has actively sought to employ only those norms and practices which it has considered appropriate for Tunisia at that point (or indeed those points) in time. Furthermore, socialisation as a means of transferring norms between actors often needs to be encouraged through the use of incentives or threats. Although these exist in the EU-Tunisia relationship in the form of conditionality, and as this chapter also demonstrated, they have not been exercised.

The final point made is that, as is the case with economic liberalisation, the social interaction between Tunisia and the EU that is necessary for socialisation to be effective might in fact be strengthening rather than weakening the position of the ruling elite. The Tunisian government has long based part of its legitimacy on a nationalist revolutionary discourse in which it has constructed itself as the only means by which Tunisia may continue to develop. Today, the reforms advocated by the regime are carried out within an international context, and its discourse has made it clear that it stands for 'civilisation' and 'universal values' as it strives to make Tunisia one of the world's 'developed' nations. Whilst necessary if socialisation is to have the desired effect, uncritical EU cooperation with Tunisia on the reformist agendas of the Barcelona Process and the Neighbourhood Policy allow the regime to continue as it has done for decades.

In conclusion, therefore, this chapter has considered the four principal methods of promoting democracy illustrated in Chapter Four. Together, they represent a holistic and broad-ranging attempt by the EU to encourage democratisation in Tunisia. Implemented together, they offer the possibility that democratisation may occur even if one or more of the methods face resistance from parts of Tunisian society. However, when *all* of the measures face difficulties or, in the case of conditionality, are simply not pursued, very little progress is made. Crucially however, the chapter has suggested that the problems encountered by economic liberalisation, in dealings with Tunisian civil society, and with socialisation might all be alleviated by the application of greater pressure by the EU on the Tunisian government. Yet, the Union is loath to do so. The next chapter explores the reasons for this reluctance.

Stability, democracy, or both? EU indecision and Tunisian inaction

This final chapter argues that a convergence of interests between Tunisian and EU officials and an increase in the importance of security in EU foreign policy have led to a weakening of EU pressure for democratisation in Tunisia. Chapters Four and Five considered the means through which the EU seeks to promote democracy in Tunisia, and argued that every strategy it has employed is either being frustrated by the Tunisian authorities or is not being pursued to its full capacity by the Union itself. This chapter argues that the reasons for the EU's reluctance to pursue its democracy agenda in Tunisia are linked to the EU's concerns over its own security and the Union's construction of the Mediterranean as a source of those concerns. Specifically, it is contended here that as promoting democracy has come to be seen more as a method of EU foreign policy practice rather than as an objective of the foreign policy, the EU's eagerness to promote democracy when its actual objectives have been achieved has declined.

The thesis has thus far argued that the EU sees democracy promotion as both an objective of its foreign policy and as a means of achieving other objectives such as security. Yet, the analysis of Chapter Five revealed that the EU is reluctant to exert any significant pressure on the Tunisian regime to implement political reform. This chapter seeks to understand the apparent contradiction between the EU's discursive commitments to democracy promotion and its inability to do so in practice in Tunisia. Thus, this chapter re-evaluates the objectives of EU foreign policy in Tunisia and the Mediterranean, asking whether democracy continues to occupy the role it once did in that foreign policy. If not, the chapter seeks to understand why the EU has seemingly changed its position on democracy promotion in Tunisia.

One very noticeable aspect of EU-Tunisia relations is that since 1995 they have been conducted within a much wider multinational context. This has involved Tunisia being included in EU foreign policy initiatives that have either a regional Mediterranean focus, as in the case of the Barcelona Process, or address the EU's neighbourhood as a whole, including the Mediterranean and Eastern and Central Europe. Therefore, Tunisia is never only considered alone, but always as part of a much wider 'whole' within EU foreign policy. To this regard, Chapter Three explored some of the reasons why the EU believes

that democracy should be promoted, both in its general foreign policy and more specifically in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, Chapter Four outlined how the EU has integrated democracy promotion within multilateral and holistic policy frameworks, with these frameworks engaging Tunisia on both the multilateral level and on a further bilateral level. This chapter considers this classification of Tunisia alongside other states, and asks whether this classification might have any bearing on specific treatment of Tunisia by the EU.

Finally, the chapter considers whether the EU might see any value in maintaining the current Tunisian government. With the EMP identified earlier in the thesis as an exercise in region-building, and its programme strongly dependent on mutual dialogue and partnership, cooperation with the Mediterranean state governments is essential for the EU to meet its objectives. To this end, the chapter seeks to identify common policy objectives for the EU and the Tunisian regime, which are areas in which cooperation might be better achieved. The thesis has already argued, for example, that one such area of policy convergence have been over EU willingness to help the Tunisian government's efforts in the field of economic development. Furthermore, as is the case with the EU in the Mediterranean, objectives often emerge from recognition of concerns, and a subsequent desire to tackle them. Security communities, for example, depend on the existence of common threats to their members. The chapter also therefore seeks to identify whether any common concerns exist between EU and Tunisian officials.

The chapter is in two parts. The first part considers the role that classifying Tunisia alongside other Mediterranean states might have on the EU's understanding of Tunisia. It begins, in the first section, by locating Tunisia in EU discourse, seeking to identify in what context and at what times Tunisia is represented in EU discursive structures. The second section considers the implication of this categorisation by asking what signifiers might be attached to Tunisia due to it being considered alongside its neighbours. The final section in this part addresses the EU's response to its own representation of the Mediterranean discussed in the previous section. The second part of the chapter considers how this EU response corresponds with Tunisian government positions, identifying policy convergence on some critical issues. It begins with a section that observes the similarities between the discourses of the EU and the Tunisian regime, asking what effect these may have on the political process in Tunisia. The common concerns and objectives that are identifiable in the discourses of both EU and Tunisian officials are then discussed, again within the wider context of democratisation in Tunisia. The chapter closes with a final section which considers the implications of a convergence in policy objectives between

the EU and the Tunisian government on the EU's own efforts to promote democracy in Tunisia.

The effects of regional discourses

The contention here is that the discursive structures of the EU's Mediterranean policies have become increasingly focused on security since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995. Moreover, Tunisia is often considered not only on its own merits, but as part of a much wider Mediterranean region that is dominated by security problems and threats to the EU's long-term stability.

In its debate on the nature of discourse, Chapter One highlighted a key point made by Laclau and Mouffe in their understanding of discourse. To recall, they argue that all social and political relations not only produce discursive structures, but that these structures then shape and organise future social relations between those involved in the discursive structure.⁶⁹⁸ Meanings for objects are constructed within the discursive structures as signifiers are given to the objects, and the meanings then play an important role in how that object is then understood in social processes. Tunisia's relationship with the EU is subject to a number of such discursive frameworks. Not only do the multilateral and bilateral tracks of the EMP and ENP produce their own discursive structures, but the EU's wider foreign policies also contribute to their own structures. According to Laclau and Mouffe's approach, these structures and the meanings they produce help determine the future direction of the EU-partnerstate relationship.

Three questions must therefore be asked here. The first, in the first section, asks whether Tunisia is located in any wider categorisations within the discursive structures of EU foreign policy. The second section then asks how these discursive structures represent Tunisia. Finally, the last section asks how EU and European officials have responded to these representations.

Tunisia in the Mediterranean

This thesis has previously highlighted some of the terminology used by the EU in its policies towards Tunisia. In policy terms, Tunisia is both a partner state within the EMP and a neighbour of the EU within the ENP. Moreover, both policies discuss Tunisia on a multilateral and a bilateral level. However, as has been argued, there are also differences within these categorisations, with many European 'neighbours' being entitled to closer links with the EU than Mediterranean 'neighbours'. Furthermore, as this section will

⁶⁹⁸ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 96, original emphasis removed.

explore, there have been attempts by the EU to create sub-divisions within the Mediterranean region. These will potentially reclassify Tunisia in yet more discursive and/or geographical groupings. This section seeks to clarify to which discursive categories Tunisia belongs. This categorisation is important as it helps identify which signifiers are attributed to Tunisia within EU discourse.

The EU's use of the term 'Mediterranean' is intriguing. In geographical terms, the 'Mediterranean' is the sea that stretches from the Strait of Gibraltar and the Spanish and Moroccan coasts in the west, to the Suez Canal and the shorelines of Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Syria in the east. It is rimmed by no fewer than three continents, and has for centuries been home to a number of different cultures, peoples, empires, and civilisations. When constructing policy however, the EU often constructs the sea as a political dividing line in addition to being a common geographical feature for the states on its shores. Whilst the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* for example refers specifically to the sea in question, it also establishes a duality of Europe *and* the Mediterranean. Thus, it curiously distinguishes Europe from the Mediterranean, and discursively establishes the Mediterranean as a zone different to and independent of Europe.

This turn of phrase presents two distinct actors (or collections of actors) in the form of 'Europe' and 'Mediterranean'. Commentators such as Cavatorta have identified the sea as a 'fracture zone' between Europe and the Mediterranean, arguing that the division it has established is the single greatest factor in determining the regional policies of Mediterranean countries.⁶⁹⁹ Indeed, the Mediterranean is a region which is addressed under EU *foreign* policy, under the European Commission's external relations branch. As has been previously argued, the Mediterranean is identified as a distinctive region within this foreign policy, with initiatives such as the EMP constructed to address problems and issues specific (but not necessarily exclusive) to the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean therefore is not only a geographical feature, but is a political dividing line between Europe and non-Europe, the domestic and the foreign.

However, even within EU discourse, the Mediterranean is far from being a coherent actor with which the Union conducts its affairs. Indeed, despite common use of the term 'Mediterranean', the region is often divided in the discourse into any number of sub-regions. For example, the Barcelona Declaration talks of the 'southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean'.⁷⁰⁰ The 2007-2013 *Regional Strategy Paper* (RSP) meanwhile talks initially of 'the implementation of sub-regional initiatives in the Maghreb, the Mashreq

⁶⁹⁹ Francesco Cavatorta, 'Geopolitical Challenges to the Success of Democracy in North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco', *Democratization*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2001, pp. 175-194, p. 180.

⁷⁰⁰ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

and between Israel and the Palestinian Authority',⁷⁰¹ thereby creating three rather vague sub-regions within the Mediterranean. This detachment of Israel and Palestine from the rest of the Mashreq hints at political rather than geographic reasons for this division. The same document speaks elsewhere of a 'Southern Neighbourhood', of which Tunisia is part.⁷⁰² Tunisia, however, is simultaneously identifiable as both an individual state *and* one of a number of states grouped together, albeit grouped with different states at different times. The groups in which Tunisia is located include North Africa, the Maghreb sub-region (itself undefined), and the southern shoreline (or simply 'southern') of the Mediterranean Sea.⁷⁰³ Pace argues that there is a 'frequent attempt in Commission documents to classify the Mediterranean – which marks EU attempts at breaking this area into sub-component parts.'⁷⁰⁴ EU policy on the Mediterranean includes Mauritania and Jordan (with no geographical boundary with the Mediterranean Sea) and increasingly excludes Syria (which has a Mediterranean coastline). Likewise, Libya has been only recently included in policies. In fact, as Pace argues, there are no fixed geographies of a Mediterranean region, rather a series of shifting and inconsistently employed classifications.⁷⁰⁵

These classifications have at times been employed as a basis for closer and more structured interaction between the non-EU Mediterranean states. Such cooperation between *all* non-EU Mediterranean states has been almost impossible, due largely to the Arab-Israeli disputes.⁷⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Commission officials continue to aspire to engaging with sub-regional multinational Mediterranean bodies.⁷⁰⁷ There is also support for such 'south-south' cooperation amongst member state governments. President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, for example, made a visit to the Maghreb one of the first overseas trips of his presidency, using the opportunity to call for a 'Mediterranean Union' to deal with the region's problems.⁷⁰⁸ These could be similar in scope to the Arab-Maghreb Union (AMU), or the group of signatories to the Agadir Agreement (Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) that seeks to establish a 'southern' free trade area.

⁷⁰¹ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007, p. 29.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁰³ See for example Commission of the European Communities, 2004c. This deems Tunisia to be 'Arab, Mediterranean and African' in addition to forming part of the 'Maghreb region' (all p. 4). Economically, one could add the group of Agadir Agreement states.

⁷⁰⁴ Pace, 2006, p. 100.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

⁷⁰⁶ Author's interviews with Tunisian officials, Tunis, March and April 2006, and with Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

⁷⁰⁷ Author's interviews with Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

⁷⁰⁸ See for example *International Herald Tribune*, 'Sarkozy's proposal for Mediterranean bloc makes waves', 10 May 2007. Available at: <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/05/10/africa/france.php>>; accessed 14 May 2007.

However, the Agadir Agreement aside, partner states have generally been wary of any deeper integration of southern Mediterranean states. Tunisian officials, for example, cite the practical impossibility of the AMU with Morocco and Algeria at loggerheads over the Western Sahara issue.⁷⁰⁹ Currently it is almost impossible for goods to travel by land from Libya to Morocco as the Morocco-Algeria border has been shut since 1994.⁷¹⁰ In a useful summary of further obstacles facing any ‘south-south’ integration, Adler and Crawford have also highlighted the importance of lingering historical issues such as a fear of colonialism and a perceived need in many states to continue to assert their independence through fiercely nationalist policy choices.⁷¹¹ This has been particularly true in the economic sphere, with the heavily centralised state structures remaining in existence across the region’s Arab states, Tunisia included. In short, the pan-Mediterranean that involves the EU as a key participant has been much easier to achieve than any lasting cooperation between the non-EU states themselves.

Therefore, in policy terms, the principal means through which the EU engages with Tunisia remain through the EMP and ENP frameworks. Whilst these do have bilateral policy components, and, in the case of the ENP, a component that allows states to develop their cooperation with the EU at their own pace, the over-arching discursive structure remains regional in focus. The EU has on a number of occasions tried to encourage such sub-regional political entities with which it may deal in future, but such groupings remain elusive. Indeed, there are some examples in EU discourse of Tunisia being associated with regional sub-groupings. Even in the Maghreb, where some of the more prominent examples of ‘south-south’ cooperation have been attempted, long-standing political disputes between individual governments have restricted any substantive development of that cooperation. With no discernible political entities having emerged within these sub-regions, the focus of EU discourse has continued to be driven by policy structures created for the Mediterranean level. The next section now considers some of the signifiers the EU associates with Tunisia as a result of being associated with other states in the Mediterranean.

The instability complex

This section argues that the EU’s discourse on the Mediterranean continues to be based on an assumption that the region is a source of threat to the EU’s security. This discourse of security is important as it not only reveals some of the motivations for the EU’s

⁷⁰⁹ Author’s interviews, Tunis, March and April, 2006.

⁷¹⁰ *Magharebia.com*, ‘Algeria-Morocco border remains closed’, 10 October 2005. Available at: <http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2005/10/10/feature-02>; accessed 13 June 2006.

⁷¹¹ Adler and Crawford, 2006, pp. 26-32.

Mediterranean policy. As the previous section argued, Tunisia is identified as part of the Mediterranean in EU discourse, and is therefore subject to the same discursive constructions as other states and societies also included in this category. This section assesses the implications of Tunisia's categorisation alongside other Mediterranean states within EU discourse.

Essential to this analysis are some of the findings of Chapter Three. Specifically, it was argued that promoting democracy was – and indeed may still be – seen by many EU foreign policy-makers as a means of guaranteeing the long-term security of the EU's citizens. This conclusion, based on references to the democratic peace theory and on a human security approach to security issues, helped ensure that commitments to democracy promotion were incorporated within the EU's foreign policies. Moreover, the inclusion of these commitments was, as Chapter Four argued, far from guaranteed when the EMP was first imagined, and was opposed by many in the EU. Yet by including commitments to promoting democracy in its Mediterranean policy, the EU recognises that the Mediterranean is, in some way or other, a region in which security has not yet been achieved. This was confirmed in a range of samples from EU discourse, as discussed in Chapter Three. These typically depict the Mediterranean as a region characterised by the existence of a number of factors which are identified as threats to the EU's security within the Union's *Security Strategy*.

In fact, since 1995, references to security and, in particular, to stability have occupied a central role in the discursive structures of the EU's Mediterranean policies. The very title of the Barcelona Declaration's political basket is: 'Political and Security Partnership: Establishing a Common Area of Peace and Stability'.⁷¹² The title does not refer to democracy, but rather to 'peace' and 'stability', the discursive opposites of 'conflict' and 'instability' discussed in some of the texts covered in Chapter Three. The actual text of the political basket however does refer to democracy, but only in the context of peace and stability. It claims that: '... turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity requires a strengthening of democracy'.⁷¹³ Again however, democracy is established only as a secondary goal of the EU's policy, as its strengthening is seen as a means of achieving the primary objectives of peace and stability. Democracy thereby exists in a causal relationship with stability, wherein stability is not possible in a climate in which there is also a lack of democracy. Thus, the discourse of the Barcelona Declaration itself reveals stability and security as two of the EMP's central objectives, with democracy being a

⁷¹² *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*

means to achieve these objectives. More importantly, however, the policy itself was based on an assumption that conditions in the Mediterranean prior to 1995 were not capable of guaranteeing peace and stability.

Security and stability have not disappeared from these structures, and have, if anything, been given a new lease of life in the post-9/11 period. The ESS makes specific references to the Mediterranean, identifying it as a region that ‘generally continues to undergo serious problems of economic stagnation, social unrest and unresolved conflicts.’⁷¹⁴ It goes on to specifically identify the Barcelona Process as the means by which these problems should be tackled, and as the framework in which the ‘European Union’s interests’ may be secured.⁷¹⁵ Even EU expansion is potentially problematic according to the ESS, as ‘the integration of acceding states increases [the EU’s] security but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas.’⁷¹⁶ The following sentence, as quoted in Chapter Three, highlights the need to promote a ‘ring of well governed countries’ to tackle this insecurity, and specifically refers to the Mediterranean as one of these ‘troubled areas’. Therefore, the ESS also constructs the Mediterranean as a region characterised by security threats and conflict.

The text of the ESS merely reflects an on-going trend in EU discourse of representing its near-neighbours predominantly in security terms. The ENP, which was launched within months of the ESS, reflects a similar perception of the Mediterranean, albeit in reference to the ‘neighbourhood’ in general, rather than to the Mediterranean in specific.⁷¹⁷ These concerns remain an important part of the Neighbourhood Policy, as a recent Commission communication that reviews the ENP’s progress reveals.⁷¹⁸ It states that:

If the ENP cannot contribute to addressing conflicts in the region, it will have failed in one of its key purposes. Such conflicts can threaten the Union’s own security, whether through the risk of escalation or of an exodus of refugees, or by interrupting energy supplies or cutting trade and transport links, or through the spread of terrorism and organised crime including trafficking in human beings, drugs and arms.⁷¹⁹

This extract is useful as it specifically identifies symptoms or consequences of all five ‘key threats’ to EU security as highlighted in the ESS.⁷²⁰ Moreover, it shows that the region is viewed in the context of the EU’s security specifically, rather than in terms of the security of the region’s own states and populations. Indeed, the extract defines conflict

⁷¹⁴ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 8.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Council of the European Union, 2003.

⁷¹⁷ Yet, of course, the Mediterranean and Tunisia are by default included in the neighbourhood.

⁷¹⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 2006b.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

⁷²⁰ As Chapter Three illustrated, they are: terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime.

as something that threatens large strategic regional issues such as the severing of trade and transport links and threatening energy supplies. One could assume from this extract that conflict is rife in the neighbourhood, yet, the Israel/Palestine conflict aside, no major conflict was ‘active’ in the Mediterranean during December 2006, the time of the document’s writing.⁷²¹ Indeed, Commission officials repeatedly stress that the prevention of terrorism and violence is their priority, both in the region and specifically in Tunisia.⁷²² Such claims by EU officials demonstrate that Tunisia is considered alongside other Mediterranean states, plagued by the same problems of insecurity and terrorism as its neighbours.

Thus, EU discursive structures persist in constructing the Mediterranean region as one in which threats to the EU’s security flourish, and as the EU categorises Tunisia as part of the Mediterranean, the same threats are associated with it as are with its neighbours. This construction occurs not only in texts associated with EU policies specific to the region, but also in much more general EU foreign policy texts such as the ESS. Indeed, the presence of threats in the Mediterranean was suggested as justification for EU policies that consider the region as distinctive from other parts of the globe. The Barcelona Declaration, for example, seeks to address these concerns, identifying democracy as a means of doing so. However, its promotion alone is but one of the EMP’s objectives, and not necessarily one of its principal objectives. Other EU texts demonstrate how this discursive construction of the Mediterranean continues. It is now embodied not only within the EMP’s successor, the ENP, but also within the ESS, the core document outlining the basis of the EU’s understanding of security, the threats it faces, and the responses it seeks to tackle these threats. The first part of this chapter now closes by taking another look at these responses.

A value-based response

This section argues that the EU’s emphasis on promoting values such as democracy as a means of addressing its security concerns in Tunisia is misplaced. It has been established that in the context of both EU discourse and policy, Tunisia is identified as either a single state or as part of a wider Mediterranean region. Due to its identification as part of the Mediterranean, signifiers present in EU discourse that relate to the Mediterranean are also attributable to Tunisia. Specifically, these signifiers have constructed the Mediterranean as

⁷²¹ It is worth noting however that Israel did wage a brief and unsuccessful war on Hezbollah that summer, but a ceasefire and the deployment of international forces on the Lebanese-Israeli border had diffused the situation by the end of the year.

⁷²² Author’s interviews with Commission officials, Brussels, July 2006.

a region fraught with conflict and instability. This section now considers the means proposed by the EU to deal with the perceived conflict and instability.

As has already been explored, values have come to play an important role in EU foreign policy, and, more specifically, in its promotion of democracy. As Chapter Three argued, some analysts imagine the EU as a normative power that is predisposed to promote its values as part of its foreign policy, with democracy being one of these norms. According to this argument, the spread of democracy in the world is one of the EU's foreign policy's primary objectives, alongside the spreading of six other core norms or values. The chapter also argued however that democracy is also promoted not so much as an objective in itself, but as a means of achieving another objective, namely security. Nevertheless, as this section argues, some EU sources suggest that achieving security requires more than merely the promotion of democracy, but also the promotion of a whole series of other values associated with European identity.

To better understand the role and the nature of the values considered here, this section first turns to consider Europe's troubled recent history. As the examples of EU discourse considered earlier in this thesis have painted a rather gloomy and troubled picture of the non-EU Mediterranean states, it should not be forgotten that the symptoms of instability and conflicts supposedly present in the Mediterranean are not altogether alien to the EU member states themselves.

Indeed, authoritarianism, terrorism, failures of governance and the rule of law, and poor economic performance have all existed in Europe in the very recent past. The two decades prior to 1995 saw transitions from authoritarian rule in a number of current EU member states from the Baltic to the Atlantic. In fact, Ole Wæver argues that seeing these phenomena in Europe's neighbours remind Europeans of the darker moments of their own recent past.⁷²³ Threats to Europe's security, he argues, are to be found in time in addition to geographic space; and such threats include wars, genocide, terrorism and dictatorship. Thus, the nature of the fear Europe has of other regions is often based on its own experiences. Europe has sought to address these fears within its own societies by 'othering' Europe's dark past. This process has involved making commitments to liberal values and dialogue as opposites to the totalitarian or violent past.⁷²⁴ The right values therefore become central to security and stability, and democracy is one of these values. Wæver argues that the threats present in Europe's past have since been shifted to the non-European present, in regions such as the Mediterranean. In this context, it is perhaps

⁷²³ Ole Wæver, 'European Security Identities', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1996, pp. 103-132, p. 122.

⁷²⁴ Wæver, 1996; Larsen, 2004, p. 74.

unsurprising that the EU sees the spread of its values as an effective means of spreading the security it has achieved to its neighbours.

Wæver's contribution is notable not only for its claims that the same threats that the EU alleges to face in the Mediterranean are also present in Europe's past. It is also important as it argues that security is to be achieved by promoting far more values than merely democracy alone. Wæver suggests that it was through the development of an entire group of values that peace and stability were finally achieved in Europe. To an extent, this is reflected in EU discourse. Certainly, commitments to the democratic peace theory continue. Eneko Landaburu, Director General of External Relations for the Commission, has, for example, again reiterated the claim made by the Barcelona Declaration that democracy is integral to security. In a speech given in Brussels in 2006, he explained that: 'Lack of democracy, lack of respect for the rule of law, governance failures, all contribute to instability.'⁷²⁵ However, other EU officials have broadened their discourse to include wider values, and specifically identifying their relationship with the security threats that are perceived to be facing the EU. Bertie Ahern, for example, when president of the Council of the European Union, argued that:

Terrorism is not just undemocratic. It is anti-democratic. It is not just inhuman. It is an affront to humanity. It runs counter to all the values on which the European Union is founded.⁷²⁶

By discussing terrorism, Ahern specifically addresses one of the EU's main security threats, and one that has been associated with the Mediterranean. His criticism deliberately juxtaposes terrorism with the EU's values, despite not elaborating on his understanding of terrorism.⁷²⁷ This is echoed by EU institutional discourse in the Union's *Declaration on Combating Terror*. This states that 'acts of terrorism are attacks against the values on which the Union is founded.'⁷²⁸ Violence is thus portrayed as an assault on what is fundamentally European, and those who commit such acts are Europe's enemies.

Member state politicians also participate in this championing of values as a means of bringing security and stability to the world, let alone to the Mediterranean. Notable recent examples have been British Foreign Secretary David Miliband who spoke of the 'democratic imperative' and the need to spread 'universal values' in today's world,⁷²⁹ and

⁷²⁵ Eneko Landaburu, *From neighbourhood to integration policy: are there concrete alternatives to enlargement?*, speech given at CEPS Conference 'Revitalising Europe', Brussels, 23 January 2006. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/060223_el_ceps_en.pdf>; accessed 20 May 2007.

⁷²⁶ Bertie Ahern, speech at press conference, Brussels, 25 March 2004. Available at: <http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/news.asp?sNavlocator=66&list_id=462>; accessed 12 January 2007.

⁷²⁷ It should be noted however that Ahern was speaking two weeks after the 11 March 2004 bomb attacks in Madrid.

⁷²⁸ European Union, 2003.

⁷²⁹ David Miliband, *The Democratic Imperative*, speech given at St Hugh's College, Oxford, 12 February 2008. Available at: <http://www.davidmiliband.info/speeches/speeches_08_02.htm>; accessed 14 February 2008.

President Sarkozy, who sought to carve a new path for French and ‘European’ foreign policy based on Europeans’ own identities.⁷³⁰ Importantly, both Miliband and Sarkozy’s contributions explicitly link values with security. Therefore, there is a clear emphasis in the discourse of the political leadership of the EU and its member states on a need to promote values as a means of achieving foreign policy goals. Additionally, security is paramount amongst these goals.

There is, however, an interesting thread common to these statements that concerns the nature of the values being advocated. Crucially, the Commission’s proposal for the EU’s AP with Tunisia sought to justify the plan on the basis that it ‘will significantly advance the approximation of Tunisia’s legislation, norms and standards to those of the European Union.’⁷³¹ Typically, these are ‘universal’ or ‘European’ values, with ‘European’ values themselves being portrayed as ‘universal’. Thus, these statements are in keeping with assumptions about the value of the EU discussed in Chapter Three. It has been argued that the EU was essentially seeking to promote itself as an answer to the problems of the Mediterranean, even to the extent that the text of its policy documents in Tunisia or the Mediterranean spoke of making the region more like Europe. It appears, therefore, the European politicians and EU representatives clearly believe that it is through the Europeanisation of the world’s societies, including Tunisia’s, that their foreign policy objectives will be met.

Thus the thesis returns to the debates over the reasons why the EU includes democracy promotion in its Mediterranean policy addressed in Chapter Three. Two different reasons for promoting democracy were identified, namely that some EU officials and scholars believe that, due to the EU’s own identity, it is the ‘right’ or natural thing for the Union to do, or that promoting democracy is a means of achieving the Union’s long-term security. Whilst these reasons had an important influence on the development of EU foreign policy in the mid-1990s, when the Barcelona Process was launched, it has been argued here that a slightly different approach has emerged in recent years. Intriguingly, elements of the normative power argument survive, as EU and European officials still clearly believe that the EU and European states should place the spreading ‘European’ or ‘universal’ values at the heart of their foreign policies. However, the spread of these values is no longer a goal in itself, but is rather a means of achieving other goals. Thus, values acquire a far more utilitarian role than they possess in the normative power approach. Furthermore, the

⁷³⁰ José Ignacio Torreblanca, ‘Sarkozy’s Foreign Policy: Where do European Interests and Values Stand?’, *FRIDE Comment*, Madrid: FRIDE, 12 February 2008, p. 6. Available at: <<http://www.fride.org/publication/355/sarkozys-foreign-policy-where-do-european-interests-and-values-stand>>; accessed 12 May 2008.

⁷³¹ Commission of the European Communities, 2004c, p. 2.

democratic peace approach, which always emphasised the utilitarian qualities of one of these values, has expanded in scope to promote an entire group of values. Security, however, remains the principal goal of foreign policy. In short, EU foreign policy has seen a convergence of the normative power and democratic peace approaches. Democracy therefore remains important, but it is now increasingly seen as an instrument rather than an objective of that foreign policy.

Tunisia not only finds itself as part of the EU's wider Mediterranean policies but is also included alongside its neighbours within the discursive structures of the EU's foreign policy. Despite some efforts to establish sub-regional groupings amongst the non-EU Mediterranean states, these have largely failed, and the multilateral and bilateral frameworks of the EMP and ENP remain the only EU policy structures in the Mediterranean. Their accompanying discursive structures identify Tunisia both by itself and as part of the 'Mediterranean'. Yet, by virtue of its inclusion with its non-EU neighbours as part of this discursive 'Mediterranean', Tunisia acquires very particular signifiers. The Mediterranean has consistently been identified by the EU as a region characterised by conflict and instability, and as a host to a number of the security challenges identified by the EU's security policy. Indeed, security concerns have come to dominate many examples of EU discourse on the Mediterranean. Crucially, democracy has been identified as a means of addressing these challenges, and, as Chapter Three argued, the promotion of democracy was seen as an important part of EU policy in the Mediterranean. However, as has been argued here, European officials have placed concerns over the security of their populations at the forefront of their foreign policies, consequently relegating the promotion of democracy beneath the promotion of security and stability in their lists of foreign policy objectives. The promotion of democracy is still present in the EU's Mediterranean and foreign policies, yet only in a more utilitarian fashion, and only as part of an entire package of values destined to be promoted to achieve security for the EU's citizens.

A convergence of interests?

The second part of this chapter argues that the interests of the EU and the Tunisian government are gradually converging through mutual emphasis on security and stability. It has been illustrated in Chapter Five that references to values are also an important part of Bin Ali and the RCD's discourse in Tunisia, albeit in the context of development rather than security. Yet, the fact that both the EU and the Tunisian regime stress 'universal' values illustrates that the discourses of both actors converge on some particular issues.

This part of the chapter considers this convergence, and asks whether there are any other areas where there is common ground between the actors.

Identifying and understanding points of convergence between EU and Tunisian policies is important in the context of democracy promotion. If sufficient interests are shared between both actors, then greater opportunities for cooperation between the EU and Tunisia become apparent. Moreover, if each actor strives for the same objectives, then cooperation becomes even more useful. However, understanding whether and on what points the actors' interests converge might also identify policy areas, such as security policy, for example, that are considered more important than the promotion of democracy for the EU. In other words, if the interests or objectives in common between the EU and Tunisia are important enough, then democracy promotion may be put to one side in the name of achieving these objectives. This part of the chapter begins by considering the common values present in both actors, before identifying common concerns for the EU and Tunisia. It will be concluded by outlining any policy convergence between the actors and how this might affect the EU's promotion of democracy in Tunisia.

'Common' values

This section argues that the EU's newfound shift to place commitments to values at the heart of its relations with Mediterranean states creates a framework through which some actors may be excluded from the relationship. As has been highlighted in the first part of this chapter, the promotion of values is an increasingly important part of the EU's security agenda. This section argues that this promotion also acts as a security community-building exercise, but one that is designed to exclude those actors who may not conform to the values promoted by the Union. The section begins by considering a slightly different EU representation of the Mediterranean to the one outlined previously in this chapter.

In addition to representing the Mediterranean as a conflict-ridden and unstable place, EU texts also suggest that there is great hope for cooperation amongst the populations of the region. Helle Malmvig identifies a 'common security' strand in EU discourse on the Mediterranean, stemming from the region's common Greco-Roman heritage.⁷³² This discourse holds that both regions share a common history and background, 'two children from the same mother' as Malmvig puts it.⁷³³ Malmvig argues that the Mediterranean Sea is portrayed as the geographical and historical fulcrum of the relationship between the peoples of the region, and that it is due to the sea that these peoples have been able to

⁷³² Malmvig, 2004, p. 13

⁷³³ Ibid.

flourish and develop alongside each other. This process has resulted in the current state of interdependence around the sea. In effect, a shared Mediterranean past is constructed in the discourse in which different cultures were born, or ‘our’ cultures as the EU puts it.⁷³⁴ Non-EU Mediterranean states are therefore constructed as at least having the potential to share common features with their EU counterparts.

Typical of this position is the language found in a 2004 report outlining the need for a strategic partnership to be consolidated between the EU and the Mediterranean. The report affirms that:

Europe and the Mediterranean and Middle East are joined together both by geography and shared history. The Mediterranean Sea has always linked the peoples of these areas. An increasing number of residents and citizens of the EU have origins in the Mediterranean and Middle East, further building the links at the most basic and personal level. Our geographical proximity is a longstanding reality underpinning our growing interdependence; our policies in future years must reflect these realities and seek to ensure that they continue to develop positively.⁷³⁵

Thus, the Mediterranean is constructed as a foundation for the historical development of the populations of Europe and non-European societies alike. Indeed, in its conclusions to the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Crete in 2003, the EU presidency refers to the Mediterranean as a region which ‘is the birth place of several great civilisations of the history of the world in which originated the three great monotheistic religions.’⁷³⁶ This creates a feeling of belonging through the use of discourse, setting the foundation and defining the context in which future actions may take place.

Not only, however, do the various societies in the Mediterranean possess a common heritage and history, but there are also ‘common’ or ‘shared’ values. The 30-page *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper* makes no fewer than twenty-one references to ‘common’ or ‘shared’ values between the Union and its Mediterranean neighbours.⁷³⁷ Furthermore, it states that ‘the privileged relationship with neighbours will build on mutual commitment to common values’,⁷³⁸ and that ‘the levels of ambition of the EU’s relationships with its neighbours will take into account the extent to which these values are effectively shared.’⁷³⁹ Thus, the promotion of values which, as argued earlier, is so important to achieving EU security, that it also becomes an exercise of inclusivity. The

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Council of the European Union, *Final Report on an EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, June 2004, p. 2.

⁷³⁶ Commission of the European Communities, 2003c, p. 13. See also Malmvig, 2004, p. 13.

⁷³⁷ Commission of the European Communities, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper*, COM(2004) 373 final, Brussels, 12 May 2004b.

⁷³⁸ Ibid, p. 3.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

EU not only seeks to promote values in the Mediterranean; it also aims to establish a community of similar actors who are also committed to these values. In the Mediterranean, the Union believes such actors exist.

Crucially however, these values are never questioned, and are merely assumed by the EU to have ‘universal’ relevance.⁷⁴⁰ This again reinforces the argument made in Chapter Three that the EU perceives itself to be acting in the ‘universal’ good, and that the values that it stands for must surely also be the values of its international partners. Furthermore, the Barcelona Declaration itself makes no such claims to common values, referring only to ‘common challenges’ and a respect for the *different* values of the participants.⁷⁴¹ This reinforces the argument made earlier in this chapter that the stress on values has increased since the launch of the Barcelona Process.

By placing such a stress on shared or common values, the EU contributes to the creation of a Mediterranean security community, as defined in Chapter Three. A security community is developed from perceptions of common threats, the establishment of common institutions, and the gradual formation of a common identity based on increasing amounts of ‘we feelings’.⁷⁴² Yet, such a process of identity formation is necessarily exclusive. William Connolly argues that

An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity.⁷⁴³

Thus, just as a security community is constructed around a series of ‘we feelings’, it also depends on those ‘we’ being sufficiently different from a potential ‘them’. Moreover, as David Campbell points out, constructing an identity is based on accentuating dichotomies, dividing social spaces into ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, and ‘helps constitute a moral space of superior/inferior’.⁷⁴⁴ Thus, by emphasising ‘common’ values, the EU is also highlighting that there are values that it does not share, and presumably does not seek to share. In effect, those who do not agree to those values cannot be part of the same communities as the EU. And with no questioning of these values, the EU may become blind to any problems arising from the promotion of the values. Thus, whilst an emphasis on common values is useful to establishing a security community, the process of establishing such a community becomes exclusive. The resulting community is one whereby actors are

⁷⁴⁰ Larsen, 2004, p.74.

⁷⁴¹ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995. Emphasis added.

⁷⁴² Adler and Crawford, 2006, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁴³ William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of a Political Paradox*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, Second Edition, p. 64.

⁷⁴⁴ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and Politics of Identity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, Second Edition, p. 73.

committed to ‘universal’ values and welcome ever closer ties with Europe; yet there is little space for those who hold divergent or contradictory beliefs.

By focusing on the practice of promoting values in the Mediterranean, this section has argued that the EU essentially establishes a framework from which some political actors may be excluded. The Union has emphasised that it believes that there is clear potential for cooperation with Mediterranean actors due to a common civilisational background and a commitment to common values. However, by attempting to develop a relationship and a security community based on such values, the EU risks alienating those actors that do not conform to these values.

Common concerns

Having argued that basing the EU’s relationship with Mediterranean states on a need for security and on commitments to common values, this section argues that the principal victims of this exclusion are Islamist political actors. By studying EU and Tunisian discourse and actions, a clear process of exclusion is taking place, although not necessarily one which is clearly justified. In the exclusion of Islamists, there is clear evidence of a further convergence between the discourses of the EU and of the Tunisian government.

There is ample proof of EU concern over radical, political, Islamist organisations. For example, discussion of specifically Islamist or religious violence can be found in two key documents addressing EU security policy. The ESS, for example, identifies religiously-inspired terrorism as one of the principal security threats to the Union.⁷⁴⁵ It argues that ‘the most recent wave of terrorism is global in its scope and is linked to violent religious extremism’ and that its causes are ‘the pressures of modernisation, cultural, social and political crises, and the alienation of young people living in foreign societies.’⁷⁴⁶ The *European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism* concurs with this analysis, stating that the ‘terrorism perpetrated by al-Qa‘ida and extremists inspired by al-Qa‘ida has become the main terrorist threat to the Union.’⁷⁴⁷ Moreover, as argued in the first part of this chapter, some EU sources such as Ahern and the Union’s *Declaration on Combating Terror* construct such violence to be an attack on the values of the EU itself.

Whilst the ESS is careful to avoid making any specific reference to Islamist movements, and the *Strategy* sticks to identifying al-Qa‘ida as the source of religious violence, the

⁷⁴⁵ Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ European Union, *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, DOC 14781/1/05, 24 November 2005.

Union's 2007-2013 *Regional Strategy Paper* for the Mediterranean is more revealing. It clearly identifies political Islam as a threat to the EU's strategic ambitions in the Mediterranean, stating that:

The political situation in the region is characterised by persistent tensions due to the Middle East conflict, the war in Iraq and its spill-overs [*sic*] to other countries, regular upsurges of terrorist activity, and in some countries domestic political tensions, lack of political openness and increasing popularity of political Islam movements.⁷⁴⁸

Thus, although not explicitly identified as violent, political Islam is specifically identified as a challenge to the strategic interests of the EU in the Mediterranean. By constructing Islamist movements as such, the Union excludes them from any form of cooperation within its policies in the Mediterranean. This is reflected in hostility by the EU towards anything vaguely related to Islamism in Tunisia itself. Despite a decade or more of democracy promotion within the EMP framework, Commission officials, member state diplomats, and European and Tunisian NGO representatives stated that the EU never engages Tunisian Islamist political or civil society organisations.⁷⁴⁹ This also extends to bilateral policies by member state governments, some of which hold regular meetings with secular parties, but not with Islamists.⁷⁵⁰

The failure to engage with Islamists has meant that there is little understanding amongst EU officials of either the differences between *Nahda* and other MENA or Arab-Mediterranean Islamist parties, or indeed of the overall agenda of Tunisian Islamists.⁷⁵¹ Rather, EU officials express a fear of 'another Algeria' or a 'Mediterranean Taliban', invariably associating the concept of an Islamist government in Tunisia with that of an extremist Islamist administration.⁷⁵² This fear also extends to the NGO sector as many NGO representatives admitted that their organisations' policies restricted cooperation with secular, Tunisian NGOs. Islamists as a whole, according to those interviewed, were 'not to be trusted.'⁷⁵³

Moreover, this phenomenon is apparently not constrained to Tunisia. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, at the time of writing, no Brussels-related funding has reached Islamist

⁷⁴⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 2007, p. 3, emphasis added.

⁷⁴⁹ Author's interviews with Commission officials, member state diplomats and representatives from Tunisian and European NGOs, 2005 and 2006.

⁷⁵⁰ Author's interviews with member state diplomatic missions in Tunis, July 2005 and March/April 2006. The UK government, for example, regularly invite representatives from secular opposition parties and human rights organisations to the British embassy.

⁷⁵¹ Interviews with Commission officials, member state diplomats and representatives from Tunisian and European NGOs, 2005 and 2006.

⁷⁵² Interviews in Tunis, March/April 2006 and Brussels, July 2006.

⁷⁵³ Interviews in Tunis, April 2006, and Brussels, July 2006.

political organisations.⁷⁵⁴ Youngs also observes this practice in Palestine. In this example, EU funding is denied to NGOs which are critical for the Middle East peace process. Instead, its financial support was concentrated on former President Yasser Arafat's administration, with Hamas-affiliated organisations particularly ignored.⁷⁵⁵ Thus, the EU often appears more partial than impartial during processes of promoting political reform in the region, preferring to back its favourite horse rather than support a democratisation process *per se*.

Nevertheless, none of the texts considered thus far infer a connection between violent extremist groups and popular, political, Islamist movements, either in Tunisia or the wider Mediterranean. This is supported by member state diplomats, who expressed their belief that whilst the largely Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) may indeed have penetrated Tunisian society, there is little evidence to link Tunisian *Nahda* members to al-Qa'ida or other violent organisations. Michael Willis, for example, argues that very little firm evidence exists to justify the classification of either the MTI or *Nahda* as 'violent' organisations.⁷⁵⁶ Indeed, Willis goes on to argue that even estimates of the Islamist's strength at the ballot box are exaggerated, even at the peak of the supposed peak of their popularity in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

Some European officials also express their doubts regarding the violent nature of parts of Tunisian Islamism. The British government, for example, receives regular demands from the Tunisian government for the extradition of *Nahda* leader Rachid Ghannouchi from his exile in London on 'terrorism' charges. However, British officials reiterate that they have no firm evidence linking Ghannouchi with such activities.⁷⁵⁷ Indeed, in stark contrast to the Tunisian perspective on Tunisian Islamists, there is little in EU discourse to suggest any link between *Nahda* and violence. Furthermore, even general references to Islamist violence are absent from Tunisia-specific, Union texts. This suggests, once again, that when contemplating engaging with Islamists in Tunisia, the EU is far more faithful to its general representations of political Islam rather than to any understanding of the specificities of the Tunisian case. In other words, it is allowing its beliefs on the nature and dangers of political Islam on a Mediterranean level to affect its policies in Tunisia. Islamists as a whole have been securitised and constructed as a threat to the EU's interests.

⁷⁵⁴ Federica Bicchì and Mary Martin, 'Talking Tough or Talking Together? European Security Discourses towards the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2006, pp. 189-207, p. 197.

⁷⁵⁵ Youngs, 2004, p. 424.

⁷⁵⁶ Willis, 2006, pp. 140-141.

⁷⁵⁷ Author's interviews with British officials, Tunis, March 2006, and with a Tunisian official, April 2006.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, following the history of clashes between Islamists and the Tunisian government, a similar attitude towards political Islam movements exists amongst Tunisian officials. As Chapter Two argued, the various incarnations of political Islam in Tunisia have regularly been suppressed by the authorities, usually in the dual context of security and Tunisian identity.⁷⁵⁸ Part of this campaign has involved the ‘securitisation’ of Islamist political movements; Bin Ali in particular fostered a ‘security doctrine’, securitising Islamist actors to strengthen his own position.⁷⁵⁹ Furthermore, Tunisian officials are keen to emphasise how both Tunisia and the EU share a common threat and a responsibility to ‘fight terror’.⁷⁶⁰ In the early 1990s for example, it was under the pretext of preserving the state’s security that Bin Ali’s regime attempted to discredit *Nahda*, and this after the breakdown of talks between the government and the Islamists.⁷⁶¹ This they did by revealing details of an alleged Islamist plot to assassinate the president by firing a Stinger missile at his aircraft, on 28 September 1991. The government newspaper *Al-Hurriya* claimed that the Islamists had ‘sick minds’ and ‘criminal hands’ and were enemies of the Tunisian people.⁷⁶² In a later interview, Bin Ali attempted to essentialise the Islamists, claiming that:

... there is not much difference between what you call “moderates” and “extremists.” Their final goal is the same, to form a theocratic and authoritarian state ... I do not fear Algerian contamination, Tunisia is a safe body.⁷⁶³

Whilst the Islamists in Tunisia have virtually disappeared as a coherent political force following government clampdowns in the 1990s, official suspicion of public displays of religiosity remains. A recent illustration of the Tunisian government’s position vis-à-vis public displays of faith was an argument over the wearing of headscarves. Echoing similar moves in France, in October 2006 the Tunisian authorities sought stricter imposition of Law 108 forbidding the wearing of headscarves in the workplace. When implemented by Bourguiba in the early 1980s – pre-dating a similar French ban by some two decades – it was welcomed in France and the United States as a ‘liberal’ reform.⁷⁶⁴ Figures from Islamist *and* secular groups have criticised this as an attack on basic human rights.⁷⁶⁵ The recent clampdown was in response to a noticeable increase in the wearing of the headscarf amongst young, Tunisian women, in part due to the popularity of Saudi teen soap operas on satellite channels.⁷⁶⁶ The row worsened following comments by Hédi

⁷⁵⁸ See also Sadiki, 2002c.

⁷⁵⁹ Bensedrine and Mestiri, 2004, p. 49.

⁷⁶⁰ Author’s interviews in Tunis, March and April 2006.

⁷⁶¹ Hamdi, 1998, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁶² *Al-Huriya*, 29 September 1991. Cited in Hamdi, 1998, p. 73.

⁷⁶³ Quoted in Hamdi, 1998, p. 73.

⁷⁶⁴ Sadiki, 2004, p. 183.

⁷⁶⁵ Author’s interviews in Tunisia, July 2005 and April 2006.

⁷⁶⁶ Author’s interviews in Tunis, La Marsa, and Sousse, April and August 2005, and April 2006.

Mhenni, General Secretary of the RCD, who declared that wearing the headscarf was a practice not ‘of Tunisian origin,’ and timed his comments to coincide with the start of Ramadan.⁷⁶⁷ Bin Ali also claimed that the headscarf was not a traditional Tunisian garment; it was in fact ‘foreign’ and did ‘not fit with Tunisia’s cultural heritage’.⁷⁶⁸ According to Bin Ali, therefore, wearing the headscarf is tantamount to treacherous behaviour. Yet one should also recall that evoking nationalist sentiment is also one of the Tunisian government’s favoured forms of stoking up popular support, and of excluding political opponents from the main Tunisian polity.

Therefore, whilst a row over headscarves might not appear overtly anti-democratic, it is a continuation of the government’s drive to stifle and exclude public or political manifestations of Islam in Tunisia. Indeed, it is after all the Islamists that have represented the greatest threat to Bin Ali’s hold on power during his two decades at the helm,⁷⁶⁹ although Willis’ observations suggest that this might not necessarily be too significant in itself. Yet the enforcement of the ban of the headscarf brings with it new exclusions and creates new divisions within societies.⁷⁷⁰ What remains largely unexplained in the Tunisian government’s discourse are reasons *for* wearing the headscarf. In Tunisia, the headscarf represents a plethora of issues, from tradition and religion to simply an act of teenage devotion to their Saudi heartthrobs.⁷⁷¹ Instead, the regime has attempted to associate the headscarf and any explicitly religious behaviour with ‘backwardness’, attempting to distinguish between the ‘modern’ or ‘progressive’ secular and the ‘traditional’ religious.⁷⁷² Yet by doing this, the Tunisian government not only denies the expression of religious identities of its population, but also reasserts its position within Tunisian society as sole guarantor of ‘Tunisianness’.

The attitudes of both EU and Tunisian officials, however, contradict the founding principles of the EMP. Whilst the Barcelona Declaration does express its dislike of any religious fundamentalism, including a suspicion of religious-political groups, and particularly Islamist groups,⁷⁷³ it is, on the whole, fairly open to expressions of religious belief. Primarily through its cultural pillar, it calls for the support of religious freedom,

⁷⁶⁷ *Magharebia.com*, ‘Scarf controversy in Tunisia heats up’, 27 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2006/10/27/feature-01>; accessed 7 November 2006.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁹ See for example Alexander, 1997; Hamdi 1998; and Murphy, 1999.

⁷⁷⁰ Shampa Biswas, ‘The “New Cold War”: Secularism, Orientalism, and Postcoloniality’, in Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (eds.), *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 184-209, p. 200.

⁷⁷¹ Author’s interviews in Tunis, Sousse, Nabeul and Sousse, 2005 and 2006.

⁷⁷² Author’s interviews in Tunis, La Marsa, and Sousse, March, April, and August 2005, and April, 2006.

⁷⁷³ Ziya Önis and E. Fuat Keyman, ‘A New Path Emerges’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2003, pp. 95-107, p. 106.

demanding a greater understanding of different cultures in the Mediterranean.⁷⁷⁴ Yet in general, the EU makes no recognition of the diversity of Islamist political organisations in the region. There is considerable evidence that suggests that rather than being a single monolithic entity, political Islam in the Mediterranean is in fact a collection of numerous groups and organisations, which adapt and respond to the political conditions particular to the state which they challenge for power.⁷⁷⁵ Instead, for the EU, Islamism is ‘the product of sick, social, political and economic systems that need a long-term process of healing.’⁷⁷⁶

In sum, the discourses and actions of the EU and the Tunisian government converge on the issue of political Islam. Both actors are openly hostile at times, and have often constructed political manifestations of Islam as a threat to their interests and their security. In addition, there is a particularly securitised element to both actors’ treatment of Islamists, as the EU and Tunisian officials link them to violence, terrorism, and regional instability. The extent of the EU’s hostility is further demonstrated by its failure to support almost any Islamist-related activity in the entire Mediterranean region. Moreover, this is in contradiction to some of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration, and suggests once again that security concerns take precedence over all other policy areas.

Policy convergence

The final section in this chapter argues that it is not only in their treatment of Islamists that the interests of the Tunisian government and EU officials converge, but also in their aspirations for stability and security. In addition, these aspirations serve as an obstacle to further democratisation. The concerns of Tunisian and EU officials regarding Islamist movements reveal another area of convergence in the officials’ interests. Not only are Islamists generally disliked or distrusted, but this distrust is generally articulated in the context of the Islamists’ threat to security and stability. Indeed, the importance placed on security and stability is the principal point of convergence between the policies of the EU and Tunisia.

In fact, the thesis has already identified some examples of this convergence in previous chapters. Chapter Three, for example, included an extract from a document which outlines the EU’s role in the world.⁷⁷⁷ This extract suggests that having established

⁷⁷⁴ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁷⁷⁵ For a discussion on the origins of, guiding influences on, and differences between various Arab Islamist movements, see Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London: Routledge, 1993; or Salwa Ismail, ‘Being Muslim: Islam, Islamism and Identity Politics’, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2004, pp. 614-631.

⁷⁷⁶ Silvestri, p. 390.

⁷⁷⁷ European Union, 2007a.

stability within its own borders, the EU should now export that to the rest of the world. Also in that chapter was an extract from a speech by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner which states that ‘if Europe did not “export” stability, it would import “instability”’.⁷⁷⁸ Indeed, the Barcelona Declaration itself has made much of the need for stability in the Mediterranean.⁷⁷⁹ Most revealing of all however is the Union’s *Regional Strategy Paper* for the Mediterranean, which argues that the ‘region is of strategic importance to the EU, in both economic (trade, energy, migration) and political (security, stability) terms.’⁷⁸⁰ Thus, the security and stability of the Mediterranean are established as two of the EU’s strategic objectives, yet no reference is made to democracy as a further objective.

A similar stress on security and stability is also evident amongst Tunisian officials. As Chapter Two and the previous section of this chapter emphasised, the security forces and concerns of supposed threats to security have played a major role in Tunisian politics since 1956. Indeed, the number of security personnel in the country makes it an especially securitised state. Bin Ali, however, also emphasises the role played by the ruling party in contributing to the country’s security. He states that: ‘I ... appreciate the diligent efforts exerted by the RCD structures, at the grassroots and local levels, in order to protect the country’s gains and preserve its stability.’⁷⁸¹ The party thus becomes a tool of the state, able to control the local level to preserve national ‘gains’ and ‘stability’. Other officials also emphasise the importance of stability, and argue that whilst democracy may be desirable as an ideal, one needs stability before democracy can take place.⁷⁸² Even ordinary Tunisian citizens are willing to claim that whilst there may be some serious problems with Bin Ali’s method of governing, under his rule Tunisia has been a fairly stable place to live, and has been spared the troubles and travails seen in other parts of the region.⁷⁸³ In short, stability has been established as the principal goal of Tunisian officials, and it is only from this basis of stability that Tunisia might continue to develop.

The effects of this convergence of interests on democracy promotion are clearly evident in the EU’s recent policy discourse. An internal Commission review of the ENP, for example, however has dropped the term ‘democracy’ entirely, preferring instead to call for ‘better governance’ in the Union’s neighbourhood.⁷⁸⁴ The same document, however, continues to stress the need for economic reform and security cooperation. Thus, the language used in the political and economic parts of the policy blur into one:

⁷⁷⁸ Ferrero-Waldner, 2006a.

⁷⁷⁹ *Barcelona Declaration*, 1995.

⁷⁸⁰ ENPI, 2007, p. 3.

⁷⁸¹ Bin Ali, 2007.

⁷⁸² Author’s interviews with Tunisian officials, 2005 and 2006.

⁷⁸³ Author’s interviews in Tunis, August 2005, and March and April 2006.

⁷⁸⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2006b, p. 2.

‘governance’ is used in both parts. Indeed, in the Commission’s most recent *Country Strategy Paper* for Tunisia, it has actually dropped all calls for democratisation, despite recognising that ‘progress on political aspects such as freedom of expression or association has been very slow’.⁷⁸⁵

This is confusing, and suggests that the Union has in fact abandoned its *democracy* promotion policy altogether. In the internal review of the ENP mentioned above, the EU boasts that one of the ENP’s strengths is its holistic approach to regional issues. Such an approach, according to the Commission, means that ‘focusing exclusively on economic issues to the exclusion of uncomfortable governance or human rights issues thus becomes more difficult’ for the state on the receiving end of the policy.⁷⁸⁶ Yet, in practice, the EU appears to be doing much more on economic issues than it is on political ones. Has ‘governance’ therefore replaced ‘democracy’? Or has governance acquired a wider meaning? If so, it is not explained. Indeed, this text specifically identifies ‘good governance’ as an objective of the ENP’s economic and trade component,⁷⁸⁷ and within this context, the Union seeks to donate further funds ‘to support governance and investment facilities.’⁷⁸⁸ In this policy review, at least, emancipatory calls for democracy *and* good governance that featured in other documents therefore have evolved into calls for better governance alone.

In other documents too, democracy appears to be slipping out of EU discourse. In another Commission document, *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Time to Deliver*, its twelve pages made only one mention of the term ‘democracy’.⁷⁸⁹ The document does, however, place some stress on inter-parliamentary cooperation, based on the assumption that the region’s parliaments are ‘able and willing to assume an active role’ in driving the Barcelona Process.⁷⁹⁰ ‘Able’ and ‘willing’ might not be the first words to spring to the minds of some of the opponents of Tunisia’s regime, and allowing such bodies to have a potentially instrumental role in shaping the future direction of the EMP is a curious move indeed by the EU. Also interesting to note is that although the document’s mention of democracy occurs in the ‘political and security’ section of the document, the section itself is overwhelmingly security orientated. Moreover, security threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, and organised crime which were identified as threats to EU security by the ESS are specifically described here as ‘threats to the security

⁷⁸⁵ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁶ Commission of the European Communities, 2006b, p. 3. Emphasis added.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁸⁹ Commission of the European Communities, *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Time to Deliver*, COM(2006) 620 final, 25 October 2006e, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

of Euromed [*sic*] partners'.⁷⁹¹ Of course, non-EU states may indeed face similar challenges to the EU, particularly if they share the same geographical space. However, this document maintains the practice of identifying these threats as *common* threats, thereby including the partner state governments within the same category as the EU.

The practice of leaving references to democracy out of policy documents appears to have transferred to the meetings between EU and Tunisian officials. As one Commission official admitted, non-security related political issues are usually only addressed in post-meeting dinners, and are generally kept out of the actual meetings.⁷⁹² Thus, democracy is not only increasingly absent from policy documents related to Tunisia, but is now disappearing from the social frameworks established by these policies. It is hard to understand how socialisation, a method that relies upon repeated referencing of the values and norms intended to be diffused, can hope to promote democracy when all references to it cease to exist. Indeed, if claims by Commission officials that the references to democracy were removed at the request of Tunisian officials are true,⁷⁹³ one begins to wonder who might be socialising who in the EU-Tunisia relationship.

Yet, it is not only socialisation that is affected by the convergence in EU and Tunisian interests. As the thesis argued in the previous chapter, *all* of the EU's methods of promoting democracy in Tunisia are facing difficulties. The EU is increasingly wary of putting any form of pressure on the Tunisian government to accelerate the political reforms agreed upon by the two actors. The reasons for the EU's reluctance are not immediately clear, but its discourse reveals a deep-seated fear of anything that may encourage instability in its near neighbours. Security has slowly come to overwhelm its relations with Mediterranean states, Tunisia included, despite there not always being any immediately visible threats.

In Chapter One, the thesis referred to Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's observations on the dangers of securitisation. They argue that by securitising actors or issues, the use of extraordinary measures becomes more acceptable within a society, and 'rules' may be broken as a means of dealing with the actors or issues in question. During a decade or so when its relations with Tunisia and the Mediterranean have become increasingly securitised, the place awarded to democracy within the EU's discourse on the country and the region has diminished. When a situation is securitised, a typical state government might resort to violence or torture, or deploy increase the powers of its security forces in

⁷⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁹² Author's interview, Brussels, July 2006.

⁷⁹³ Author's interviews, Brussels, July 2006.

response to the issues at hand. But having no such capabilities prevents the EU from committing such actions.

Yet, in its own way, the EU might indeed be taking extraordinary measures in the Mediterranean. By reneging on its own commitments to either the potential of normative power or the value of the democratic peace theory, the EU is breaking its own rules. Indeed, it appears to forget some of the ideas that it itself sometimes advocates. That is that ‘democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law ... are all essential prerequisites for political stability, as well as for peaceful and sustained social and economic development.’⁷⁹⁴ By forgetting these ideas, the EU’s commitments to promoting democracy get left behind.

As the last three sections have argued, the EU and the Tunisian government have developed a number of common policy interests and objectives. As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, both actors regularly make commitments to ‘universal’ values, although this chapter has argued that such commitments are sometimes made as a means of establishing divisions between the self and another actor which may be a source of threat.

Both the EU and the Tunisian government have, according to this chapter, identified political Islam as a threat to their interests or agendas. Whilst the EU has predominantly focused on violent manifestations of Islamism, there are suggestions that political Islam *per se* is considered to be anathema to its interests in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it appears that the Union’s relations with the entire Mediterranean are being securitised as a result of these concerns. The Tunisian government, on the other hand, has been far more willing to attack *any* public manifestation or display of Islamic identity, and have, since the late 1980s, tended to securitise Islamists to justify often severe and wide-ranging security clampdowns. Thus, both actors have displayed a willingness to securitise their policies, establishing security and stability as their primary policy goals. Evidence suggests that the EU’s general concerns over political Islam, violent or not, are slightly misplaced in the Tunisian context. Nevertheless, the securitisation trend continues, corresponding with a gradual decrease in references to democracy within its regional and Tunisian policy texts. By failing to distinguish Tunisia from the regional context, the EU allows security to dominate the agenda. And in Bin Ali’s regime, the EU already has a willing partner which shares its values and concerns, and, more importantly, has been able to guarantee the stability of one little part of the Mediterranean at times when violence Tunisia’s neighbours has spilled over into attacks on European soil. Why risk losing this stability by encouraging reform that might remove this trusted partner from office?

⁷⁹⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2003b, p. 7.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the securitisation of the EU's relations with the Mediterranean has led to a weakening of EU pressure on the Tunisian government to implement political reform. By prioritising security issues above other aspects of its relationship with Mediterranean states such as Tunisia, the EU neglects some of the other original objectives of the EMP. Chapters Three and Four argued that promoting democracy was but one of a number of the aims and objectives of the EU's relations with Tunisia and the Mediterranean. However, it was also argued that for some EU foreign policy-makers, security was always the overall objective of initiatives such as the EMP. This chapter has supported that argument, and has also demonstrated that if that security already exists, as it does in the case of Tunisia, the EU appears not to be overly enthusiastic about pursuing any great political reforms that may remove the existing political *status quo*.

Central to the chapter's argument is the observation that Tunisia is imagined by the EU on two different levels: one on a state level and the other as part of a wider Mediterranean region. This is reinforced by the EU foreign policy frameworks in which Tunisia is involved, and the fact that no other sub-regional political entities currently exist with which the EU has developed any formal relationship.⁷⁹⁵ However, closer scrutiny of the representations of the Mediterranean in the discursive structures of the EU reveals a heavily securitised region characterised by threats, conflict and insecurities. Consequently, policy frameworks that are regional or multinational in scope tend to be conditioned by such regional-level discourses. Texts associated with the ENP reflect this trend, with security becoming an ever more important feature of their proposals for future relations with the subjects of the ENP. As it is only within such multilateral policy frameworks that EU relations with Tunisia currently occur, these relations too become subject to the same degree of securitisation as occurs on the regional level.

As argued earlier in the thesis, values have come to play an important role in the EU's response to its security threats and in its foreign policy more generally. According to democratic peace theory, EU officials have effectively supported the promotion of one value as a means of achieving security for some time. This chapter argues, however, that such officials now argue for the promotion of an entire set of values for the same purpose; that is, to achieve security. This more wholesale promotion of norms and values is reminiscent of observations that EU is in fact nothing less than a normative power, naturally inclined to structure its foreign policies around commitments to promoting

⁷⁹⁵ The thesis considers the Agadir Agreement to represent predominantly economic interests, and lacking in any wider political ambition.

values. To a certain extent, this chapter concurs with this perspective, but argues that as was the case with the promotion of a single value in the democratic peace thesis, the promotion of norms or values always occurs in the context of a more fundamental effort to assure the Union's security.

Indeed, security and values offer two points at which the discourses of the EU and the Tunisian government converge. Previous chapters have highlighted that commitments to 'universal' values are present in the discourses of EU and Tunisian officials alike, and these commitments have played a part in the Tunisian regime's efforts to legitimise itself amongst its population. However, such discourses are necessarily exclusive; deliberately so in the case of the Tunisian government. This chapter has argued that by its own emphasis on 'universal' or 'civilised' values in statements regarding religiously-inspired violence, the EU supports this exclusionist practice. Moreover, by highlighting that groups such as Islamists threaten its strategic interests in the Mediterranean, the EU is effectively siding with regimes such as Tunisia's that have, quite literally, made a living from such behaviour.

The EU and the Tunisia government's treatment of political Islam is useful in two ways. Firstly, it reveals a further point upon which the opinions of their respective policy-makers converge. Yet also their willingness to securitise the issue and the discursive forcefulness of this securitisation reveals the importance awarded to security issues within their thinking. This is perhaps hardly surprising in the case of a Tunisian government long known for its inflated security services and its ability to construct almost anything or anybody who disagrees with its message as a security threat. But for the EU, it signifies a move away from the more normatively-orientated language of the mid- to late-1990s, when democracy still found a prominent place within its policy texts. Gradually, these references to democracy have diminished in its texts since the early-2000s, almost to the point of extinction in the case of documents specific to Tunisia. Indeed, as the Union has developed an ever more sophisticated approach to security, and has eagerly sought to identify to common positions and values it shares with the Tunisian government, its commitments to political reforms have faded into the distance, leaving Tunisia's political landscape as uncontested as it was in 1995.

Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to assess the effect of EU democracy promotion policy in Tunisia since 1995. In so doing, the thesis is the first in-depth study of the EU-Tunisia relationship in general, and the first of any sort to assess the impact of EU democracy promotion policy in Tunisia. It further contributes to knowledge by being the first book-length English-language work to specifically consider Tunisian politics since Murphy's work in 1999.⁷⁹⁶ Its findings shed light on issues including the nature of the EU as an actor in international relations, the prospects for democratisation in an Arab-Mediterranean state in the post-9/11 world, the democratisation strategy of the EU, the nature of bilateral relations between the EU and one of its Mediterranean partner states, the relationship between democracy and security, and on the state of Tunisian politics more generally.

To fulfil its aim of assessing EU democracy promotion in Tunisia, the thesis asked three key questions. The first asked why the EU feels the need to promote democracy in Tunisia. The second question was two-fold, asking what methods are used by the EU to promote democracy in Tunisia, and how effective these methods are. The thesis's third question asked what factors frustrate the development of democracy in Tunisia.

The thesis' response to the first question is based on the understanding that Tunisia is not a democratic state. Indeed, for the last two hundred years or so, the government of Tunisia has tended to be dominated by a few powerful individuals centred around either the Bey's palace, the French colonial administration, or, since independence, the president and the ruling party. Wholesale political change has occurred rarely, and the only change in head of state since independence occurred after a constitutional *coup d'état* by one of the president's own ministers. Values and practices associated with democracy, such as contestability in elections and freedoms of association and expression, and which were discussed in the theoretical debate on democracy in Chapter One, remain elusive. Tunisia's democratic system is as much of a façade today as it was at the launch of the Barcelona Process, with elections being exceptionally one-sided and democratic institutions dominated by the RCD and officially-recognised opposition parties. The thesis has argued that the ability of the current regime to remain in power stems from decades of experience of holding on to power, with many of the current cabinet having

⁷⁹⁶ King, 2003, being a work of political economy.

been prominent security men with a history of dealing with political opposition within Tunisia. Bin Ali himself is the model example, a career security man who gained crucial experience when occupying prominent cabinet positions during some of the Tunisian regime's most difficult times.

According to samples of EU discourse, however, Tunisia is not alone in being characterised by the weakness of its democratic institutions. It exists in a region where a lack of political opportunity is the norm, and, as outlined in Chapters Three and Six, a region with an abundance of other problems central to the Union's security. The EU has, however, sought to address these problems by launching multilateral policy initiatives such as the EMP and the ENP, both of which now represent the principal policy frameworks that shape Tunisia's relations with the EU. Moreover, both identify the spread of democracy as a means of combating the challenges identified in the Mediterranean. Samples of EU discourse used in this thesis, for example, include references to the Union's intent to establish a ring of well-governed countries around its borders, or express a need for EU intervention in the region as a means of conflict prevention. Indeed, one of the key objectives of the EMP itself was to develop a region of peace and security on the southern border of the EU. As Chapter Four argued, a post-Cold War belief in the utility of the democratic peace theory as a means of achieving this security convinced doubters in the EU that democracy promotion initiatives should be included within the Barcelona Process. It was also contended that a similar belief in the democratic peace theory is evident amongst US policy-makers, who have launched their own multilateral policy initiatives involving Tunisia and other MENA states. Indeed, the US initiatives have coincided with a new wave of EU security- and Mediterranean-related policies, all of which reiterate the security-enabling capabilities of democracy and have emerged in the post-9/11 period.

Simultaneously, however, a further debate within academic and policy-making circles addresses the role and identity of the EU as an international actor. As Chapter Three discussed, the 'normative power Europe' debate identifies democracy as one of a number of 'core' norms which the EU is 'predisposed' to promote in its foreign policy. Much of this debate centres on the dual-belief that democracy is fundamental to the EU's identity, and that the EU seeks to promote this identity via its foreign policies. Thus, democracy is not so much a tool of Union foreign policy to be used to achieve security, but rather is one of the foreign policy's central objectives. Yet, normative power also possesses an instrumentalist element stemming from the EU's lack of military means to achieve its foreign policy objectives. However, with the possible exception of the studies by Hyde-

Price and Youngs,⁷⁹⁷ the literature on normative power tends to stress the importance of democracy and other norms as the *objectives* rather than the method of EU foreign policy. In short, the thesis has contended that when devising the frameworks of EMP and the ENP, the EU included democracy promotion initiatives due to both a belief in the democratic peace theory and a perceived need for the EU to express its identity in its foreign policies.

The analysis contained within this thesis, however, argues that this may no longer be the case. This thesis has argued that promoting democracy in EU neighbours such as Tunisia is no longer considered as a primary objective for EU foreign policy. In Tunisia's case, there has been a visible decrease in the amount of references to democracy within EU policy texts related to the country. Likewise, EU funding for democracy-related projects in Tunisia pales in comparison to funding for economic reform initiatives that are also part of the same overarching EU foreign policy structures. In addition, as Chapter Five argued, there is little evidence to suggest that the Union is likely to increase its pressure on the Tunisian government to push through some of the political reforms demanded by either the AA or the AP. Chapter Six argued that this has occurred during a period when the EU's wider discourses on the Mediterranean have become ever more securitised. Moreover, that chapter also contended that by putting ever greater emphasis on security as an objective of its foreign policy, the EU's policy becomes increasingly similar to that of the Tunisian government. Intriguingly, where references to values remain in EU discourse, they are almost always in the context of achieving security. Therefore, whereas a 'normative power Europe' might still exist, it is only normative due to its use of norms to achieve policy objectives; the spread of the norms itself has ceased to be an objective for the EU's foreign policy. In Tunisia's case, security has effectively been achieved, therefore removing the EU's principal motivation to promote democracy.

The lack of a need to promote democracy is reflected in the very slow progress achieved by the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' methods of democracy promotion implemented by the Union in Tunisia. The complete failure of the EU to exercise conditionality to encourage reforms is the most glaring example of EU inertia. Conditionality offers the Union a potentially priceless means of achieving cooperation from the Tunisian government over EU policy objectives. As Chapter Four illustrated, the Tunisian economy is overwhelmingly geared towards trade with the EU, and any significant decrease in that trade could have devastating consequences in Tunisia. The corresponding economic value of these relations for the EU, however, is negligible. Not once, however, has the EU sought to 'punish' the Tunisian regime by exercising the conditionality clauses, which

⁷⁹⁷ Hyde-Price, 2006; Youngs, 2004.

themselves have been welcomed by Tunisian officials as a means of facilitating progress in their relationship with the EU. This is despite a number of instances where conditionality could have been brought to bear to drive through political reforms. Of the relatively few projects launched thus far under the political sections of EU-Tunisia agreements, many, such as a major judicial reform programme, have been stalled by the Tunisian authorities. This again contributes to the wider understanding of the EU as a foreign policy actor, as it reveals how reluctant the EU is risk destabilising its relations with an international partner over an issue such as democracy.

Another method the EU has used to encourage 'top-down' political reform in Tunisia and the Mediterranean has been socialisation. Stemming from the field of social psychology, socialisation is based on the assumption that by involving actors within the same social and institutional settings as each other, norms can be diffused amongst actors by making membership of the institutions conditional on conformity to the norms and guiding principles of the institutions. As a process which presents little in the form of tangible outputs, the analyst faces significant problems in assessing the true impact of socialisation upon an actor. Moreover, as the thesis argued, it is necessarily a long-term process which may take years if not decades to achieve its results. Nevertheless, in the case of EU-Tunisia relations, Chapter Four outlined how the EMP and the ENP, along with their associated bilateral sub-committees, provide the institutional frameworks necessary for socialisation.

Tunisia's case, however, demonstrates how an actor may resist acquiring some of the norms of the institutions. Some studies have suggested that it might be too soon to see whether socialisation might spread democracy in the Mediterranean, as processes of democratisation and of socialisation often require long-term commitments and usually involve gradual rather than sudden changes in the behaviour of the actors involved. However, the theoretical literature suggests that socialisation need not necessarily be a deliberately instigated process, and that socialisation may also occur inadvertently through a long period of informal relations between two or more actors. Indeed, this thesis has outlined how the Tunisian political elite have a long history of close relations with European societies, involving a regular flow of ideas, values, and practices southwards over the Mediterranean Sea. Whereas a number of these practices and values have been adopted in Tunisia over the decades, democracy has not been one of these. This suggests once more that there is deliberate resistance within the Tunisian elite to democratising their system of government; a resistance that seems unlikely to change in the context of current relations with the EU. It is particularly interesting to note that despite socialisation, this study identified no major coalitions between disaffected

members of the elite, as required by transition theory explanations for democratisation processes. Thus, the Tunisian elite remain fairly united in their reluctance to advocate democracy within their own society. The theoretical literature suggests that in such a situation of intransigence, socialisation can be encouraged by integrating a system of rewards and punishments into the institutional frameworks. The thesis suggested that in conditionality, the EU possesses such a system, yet one it is unwilling to use. Thus, EU attempts at 'top-down' democratisation in Tunisia have achieved very little since the launch of the Barcelona Process.

'Bottom-up' strategies have fared little better. EU support for CSOs in Tunisia, as indeed in the Mediterranean in general, was slow to develop under the EMP. However, as argued in Chapter Five, such restrictive conditions exist in Tunisia that any international support for its CSOs is essentially fruitless. Tunisian government restrictions on CSO activity in effect prevent any sort of organised behaviour from occurring, and transnational civil society actors have also been frustrated by the Tunisian regime. Indeed, CSO initiatives in the Mediterranean that are supported by the EU, such as the Non-Governmental Platform, can have little substantive effect in a state in which member organisations of such initiatives find it almost impossible to conduct their daily affairs.

One area where EU support for reform has been strong, however, has been in economic reforms. Whilst not political reforms *per se*, Chapters One and Four argued that such reforms could, over time, be expected to lead to democratisation. This might occur either by achieving developmental benchmarks, as outlined in modernisation theory, or by familiarising a population to the practices of democracy by reforming the governance of the economic sector. Whilst a number of reforms have been initiated, including significant economic liberalisation since 1995, this study failed to identify any subsidiary effects on the democratisation process. Conversely, the thesis developed on other recent studies which have suggested that economic liberalisation is actually reconstructing authoritarian structures in Tunisia by creating new patronage networks tied to individuals close to upper echelons of the Tunisian government. This study developed this literature further by highlighting growing discontent in Tunisia and elsewhere over the increasing perception of corruption within its economy. The government faces a difficult task to reverse this change in perception, and particularly if it is to maintain high levels of foreign investment in the newly privatised industries. Doing so, however, would entail possible conflict with this new capitalist elite, whose support is increasingly essential as their stake in the country's economic resources continues to grow. In sum, EU attempts to promote 'bottom-up' democratisation in Tunisia have fared little better than other strategies targeting the elite.

When considering why strategies of democracy promotion are having such little effect in Tunisia, it is worth noting the incredibly entrenched nature of the regime itself. Indeed, this thesis has contested that one of the regime's greatest 'achievements' has been the near total eradication of organised political opposition from Tunisian politics. Different periods in Tunisia's post-independence history have seen the rise and fall of individuals, political parties, an entire trade unions movement, and the Islamist movement as effective sources of political opposition. It was argued here that each overcoming challenger has demanded different responses or sets of responses. These have typically ranged from violence (both on a personal and a wide-scale level), harassment, mass imprisonment, and the almost whole-scale rigging of the political and judicial systems to favour the incumbent administration. As was argued in Chapter Five, civil society actors have been some of the most recent groups to feel the pressure of the regime's tactics. Their harassment by the authorities is illustrative of the Tunisian state's continuing ability to permeate every level of society, denying the slightest whiff of space within which dissent may flourish. Yet, their case also includes examples of the regime's use of methods honed in its earlier encounters with opposition groups, such as using the FSN and 'official' CSOs to counter the influence of 'illegal' CSOs and opposition movements.

Yet, over the decades, the regime has also been able to maintain a degree of legitimacy amongst the population significant enough to deny opposition movements the support of a large enough percentage of the population to trigger change at the top of the state. Both Chapters Two and Six, for example, highlighted the role of a nationalist-revolutionary discourse that aids in the regime's claims of legitimacy. This discourse has constructed the regime as the only political force capable of maintaining Tunisia's successful socio-economic development. This discourse has also been highly divisive, constructing opponents to the regime as unpatriotic and as being in opposition to the 'universal' or 'civilised' values promoted by the government. On this point, the government's discourse bears striking similarities to claims by the EU that it too stands for such values. Chapter Two also highlighted the stable and steady socio-economic climate achieved under Bin Ali, whilst Chapter Six identified the way in which one of the more successful opposition movements in terms of popular support, the Islamists, were securitised to the extent that the population have been willing to tolerate the state's use of violence against them. In short, the Tunisian political system remains as undemocratic as ever, with the regime having almost perfected the art of balancing a lack of political freedoms with maintaining sufficient levels of popular support to avoid any wide-scale opposition or pressures for democratisation amongst the people.

In terms of the study's weaknesses, the author recognises that a different study might be able to draw from a much wider range of primary sources. This author, however, was limited to this regard by three factors: research conditions in Tunisia, the time available for fieldwork during the PhD, and linguistic problems.

Firstly, the research environment in Tunisia is very restrictive, particularly with regard to studies of democratisation. Officially, researchers are required to obtain a research permit from the interior ministry before conducting his or her research. However, obtaining this permit involves being resident in Tunisia for some months during the bureaucratic process, requires the research to be sponsored by a recognised Tunisian institution, and demands that a copy of the finished research is submitted to the interior ministry. This naturally places significant methodological and practical constraints on the researcher, and indeed mirrors some of the challenges facing Tunisian CSOs that were outlined in Chapter Five. Unregistered research, meanwhile, must be conducted by drawing the minimum possible attention to the researcher, and many methods (such as surveys) and sources (human and textual) are consequently inaccessible. That said, the author was able to conduct some interviews with Tunisian officials, representatives of Tunisian CSOs, and with other members of the Tunisian population without being registered. For ethical reasons, however, the interviewees are only identified in the thesis by their occupation or affiliation.

A possible solution would be to employ ethnographic research methods that would involve long periods of fieldwork in Tunisia. King's work, for example, saw the author spend a number of years conducting fieldwork in Tebourba, resulting in an excellent study of the political economy of that part of Tunisia.⁷⁹⁸ Such a methodology was, alas, impossible within the framework of this study as the author was limited to conducting fieldwork during the Easter and summer holiday periods in the British university calendar. A future study would involve a single prolonged period of some months in Tunisia rather than the number of shorter periods involved during this thesis. The author also recognises that sectors of Tunisian society potentially crucial to a 'bottom-up' democratisation process, such as Islamists and workers in less-affluent parts of Tunisia, are not covered by the work. This is due both to a lack of fluency in Arabic on the author's behalf and to the difficult research conditions within Tunisia itself. Again, a more ethnographic approach would prove useful to address this issue, allowing the author to develop the necessary levels of trust to allow access to more outspoken critics of the Tunisian regime. In fact, the Tunisian government's treatment of the Islamists and the way in which they have been

⁷⁹⁸ King, 2003.

securitised in regime discourse again highlights the convergence of the discourse of EU and Tunisian officials.

The study has established that security concerns remain at the top of both Tunisia and the EU's policy agendas, sometimes to the detriment of other issues such as democracy. Thus, EU foreign policy-makers retain a rationalist streak despite their tendencies to believe in constructivist understandings of the role of socialisation and norm-transfer in international relations. By emphasising this realist turn in EU foreign policy, this study is a contribution to the expanding body of studies that consider the nature of the EU as an international actor. Its greatest contribution, however, is that it represents the first detailed English-language analysis of the state of Tunisian democracy for some years. It has thus updated the existing body of literature on Tunisia and crucially by scrutinising the effect of EU policy on Tunisian domestic politics. The thesis demonstrated that the regime has proved as able in rejecting pressure for democratisation from the outside by the EU as it has been in rejecting internal pressure from various actors over the years. Thus it has raised important questions regarding the future politics of a state which is arguably the Union's longest-established and most European-focused neighbour, and a state which has been at the centre of decades of EU policy in the Mediterranean.

Appendices

Appendix 1



Statue of the sun rising on the figure '7', commemorating Bin Ali's takeover on 7 November 1987. Monastir, Tunisia. Author's photograph.

Appendix 2



Poster, common throughout Tunisia, of Bin Ali before three workers reaching forward under the Tunisian flag. Sousse, Tunisia. Author's photograph.

Glossary of Arabic terms

<i>Afaqi</i>	population of traditional rural areas of Tunisia
<i>baldi</i>	urban guilds/merchant and handicraft classes in Tunisia
<i>islah</i>	reform
<i>mansaf</i>	a Bedouin banquet. Also meaning a ‘reward’ or ‘enticement’ offered in exchange for political allegiance
<i>Sahel</i>	eastern costal region of Tunisia; origin of many from the Tunisian industrial middle class
<i>saif</i>	‘sword’. Also a reference to strong-arm tactics by a government to force part of its society to conform to its will
<i>thawra</i>	revolution
<i>tharwa</i>	wealth
<i>zā‘im</i>	‘leader’, with particularly charismatic, nationalist, and religious connotations

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