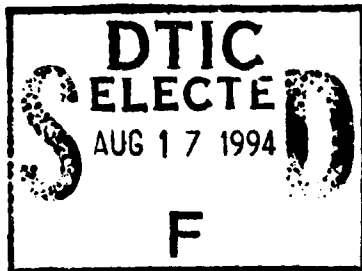


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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS

DEMOCRACY AND TUNISIA:  
A CASE STUDY

By  
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June 1994

Thesis Advisor:

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by

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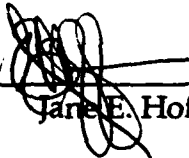
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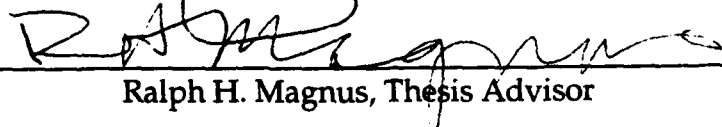
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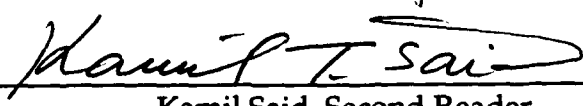


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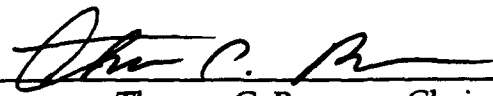
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### ABSTRACT

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the former Soviet Union, the promotion of global democracy and free markets along with the principles of human rights have become paramount to U.S. interests and foreign policy. The significance of attaining global democracy has been fueled by the proposal that liberal states do not go to war with other liberal states which in the post-Cold War environment suggests a correlation between democracy and world peace.

This thesis will support the hypothesis, using Tunisia as an example, that U.S. foreign policy for global democratization will elicit the use of democracy as a window dressing in order for a country to foster and enhance foreign investment rather than to move toward democratic reform.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the post Cold War environment the four basic concepts of security, bipolarity, bipolar rivalry and superpower alliances no longer completely define U.S. international relations and external issues. The previous alliance system to support superpower objectives has been replaced by the factors of global economic competition where the dollar has become the basis for all transactions and political stability has become the attraction of international investment. Democratic declarations are viewed as a means by which political stability can be assured. However, such declarations are not necessarily reflective of the actual practices within a country.

Economically, Tunisia is as dependent on Europe as Mexico is on the U.S. Tunisia's high level of unemployment, lack of education and although not a direct factor, high ratio of imports has contributed to Tunisia's dependence on European and Western trade and investment which is paramount to the country's livelihood. Both Huntington and Rueschemeyer propose that economic democracy or a market economy are the



most promising means to achieve formal democracy. Although free markets are perceived to foster democracy, democracy is a political system rather than a social and economic system. Economic growth alone, as suggested by Huntington, will not lead to the success of democracy.

Tunisia cannot risk a perception from the U.S. or Europe that it is an unreliable ally which would break the confidence barrier needed to foster foreign investment. President Ben Ali, having personally experienced the challenges of Bourguiba as Minister of Interior, elected to gamble on the proclamations of democracy to legitimize his rule and to foster foreign investment and economic aid. This proclamation of democracy would give an illusion of political stability and a means by which his regime can survive and foster legitimacy and thereby not allow an economic crisis to be an opening for a revived Islamic movement and governmental overthrow as was the case of Bourguiba. In other words, a healthy growing economy would in essence reduce the appeal of extremist Islamic movements which would challenge the government.

Every political system rests on a culture system and every culture system rests on that society's experiences and values. It is the people themselves who will determine whether

democratic systems will be established and whether they will survive. Tunisia's importance to the U.S. is that of political stability. Tunisia does represent a unique opportunity for the creation of a democratic Islamic government should Ben Ali recognize that democracy is a political mechanism to foster government accountability and individual rights rather than representative of participation in collective enterprises. Although the recent political unrest of the Islamic movement in Algeria makes this possibility all the more unlikely, movement on a true democratic path regardless of economic progress will not occur until such political factors are addressed.

In the post Cold War environment where the issue of human rights has become a U.S. interest, perhaps the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy should be that of good governmental practices which recognize individual freedoms rather than democratic reform. This in turn would preclude the use of democracy as window dressing, project clear U.S. policy intentions and deter the perception of Western imperialism.

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War the four basic concepts of security, bipolarity, bipolar rivalry and superpower alliances defined U.S. international relations and external issues. Military capability was dominate at the center of international security issues motivated primarily by U.S. global economic initiatives. World order was based on bipolarity and consequently the international environment was defined by the existence of and relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Along with bipolarity was the ideological rivalry between democracy and capitalism on the one hand and totalitarian politics and command economics on the other. With such rivalry came an alliance system to support each superpowers objectives such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The goals of the alliance system were simple in that each superpower sought to align as many countries as possible regardless of a country's government system or practices. The main objective, from the U.S. standpoint, was the containment of communism. [Ref 1, pg. 3]

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and demise of the former Soviet Union, democracy and capitalism have surfaced as the "winning" ideological dimension and as a result, global constitutional democracy with the key elements of human rights and respect for minority rights is being viewed, in many circles, as the only legitimate form of government. The significance of democracy as the only legitimate form of government has been fueled by the proposals of Immanuel Kant and Michael Doyle who argue that liberal states do not go to war with other liberal states which in the post-Cold War environment suggests a correlation between democracy and world peace. [Ref 2, pp. 65-67] The seriousness of global democratization is reflective in President Clinton's announcement to nominate Morton Halperin as the assistant secretary of defense for democracy and human rights. This position however which was never filled, was abolished by Defense Secretary William Perry during his efforts to reshape the bureaucracy. The issue of humanitarian responsibilities was shifted to that of assistant secretary Holmes under special operations and low intensity conflict. [Ref 3]

The demise of the former Soviet Union has also caused a shift in U.S. interests and foreign policy which is being

shaped by an external environment driven by economics. As the Cold War alliance system supported bipolar military superpowers, the new world order suggests the possibility of major multipolar economic rivalries. To this end and having proven its military superiority on a global level, the U.S. surfaces as a country retaining the Cold War ideology of democracy and capitalism that is seeking economic alliances to retain the title of a global superpower. The linkage therefore between democracy, capitalism and international trade and investment has become the centerpiece of U.S. interests, foreign policy and alliances.

The molding of this new world order alliance however creates conflict between the triad objectives of U.S. interests and foreign policy by countries which are dependent on an alliance with the U.S. such as third world countries. This thesis will argue, using Tunisia as an example, that U.S. foreign policy for global democratization will elicit the use of democracy as a window dressing in order for a country to foster and enhance foreign investment. As a resource poor Muslim country, Tunisia is dependent on foreign investment for its livelihood which therefore solicits proclamations of democracy when in fact there are major differences between the

democracy that is proclaimed and governmental practices that are occurring. This is not to imply that the intent of President Ben Ali's proclamations of democracy are not to eventually achieve democratic reform but rather to suggest that true democracy implies the distribution of power and recognition of individual freedoms including governmental opposition as well as the recognition of human rights. Perhaps, in keeping with the right of self-determination, emphasis should be placed on "good" government practices rather than democratic proclamations.

## II. DEMOCRACY

### A. DEMOCRACY DEFINED

Democracy is viewed as a mechanism through which governments can respect the dignity of the individual and meet the needs of prosperity, the need of national identity and the need for politics that generate legitimacy and authority to cope with the fundamental social and technological changes [Ref 4, pg. 206].

Samuel P. Huntington defines democracy to mean a political system in which the:

...most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote. [Ref. 5, pg. 195]

Dietrich Rueschemeyer proposes that democracy is "above all a matter of power" [Ref. 6, pg. 5]. He defines democracy in terms of the state's responsibility to the parliament. To this end he proposes that the three dimensions to the concept of democracy are:

...regular, free and fair elections of representatives with universal and equal suffrage, second, responsibility of the state apparatus to the

elected parliament...and third, the freedoms of expression and association as well as the protection of individual rights against arbitrary state action. [Ref 6, pg. 43]

Bruce Russett defines democracy as "a set of institutions and norm for peaceful resolution of conflict" [Ref. 7, pg. 124]. To this end, Zartman suggests that democracy contains two elements to prevent conflict. Democracy:

...1) elects officials according to the interests and demands of the citizenry at any given time, so that current issues are on the table and the governors are chosen in the light of their apparent competence and concern for these issues; and 2) it holds those governors responsible for living up to their promises and therefore accountable in case of weakness. [Ref 8, pg 327]

Robert Dahl envisions democracy in terms of polyarchy: a political system where there is extensive competition among individuals and organized groups and a high level of political participation and where there is a meaningful level of civil and political liberties. To this end, democracy requires two elements - that of contestation and participation. [Ref 9, pp. 1-21]

As the world's premier democratic country, the concept of global democratization has fostered numerous misconceptions and elicited numerous classifications. Democracy is an ideal that is supported by governmental institutions and a political



system rather than an economic or social system. Democracy is not a set of complex formulas for governance and political participation but rather a set of processes and social forces that culminate into individual freedoms and choices. It is a political system which assumes the separation of church and state and as a result conflicts with world-wide applicability particularly with an Islamic state where the Quran is the constitution and the Shari'a is the legal system. Huntington states that the extent to which political systems are democratic can be determined by whether or not a political system denies voting participation to part of its society. If a political system does not practice universal suffrage, it is considered to be undemocratic. [Ref 10, pg. 7]

Malcolm Churchill states:

...the ballot box has come to stand as the symbol of democracy for people around the world. Americans are among those who accept this symbol and who have encouraged its spread. Regrettably, preoccupation with the act of voting has diverted attention from the institutional dynamics of the divergent governing processes encompassed in the term democracy. [Ref 11, pg. 111]

The classification of democracy into categories such as radical, guided, liberal, socialist and consociational democracy to name a few, has allowed authoritarian regimes,

dictatorships and other forms of non-democratic governments to continue to exist under new titles in order to be politically correct in the new world order and mask their practices.

Robert Pinkney states that:

The classification of democracies is as old as political science itself, and we have an embarrassment of typologies to offer the aspiring Third World Country. [Ref 12, pg. 5]

#### **B. DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY**

Every political system rests on a culture system and every culture system rests on that societies experiences and values. Accordingly, it is the people themselves who will determine whether democratic systems will be established and whether they will survive. Our principles of democracy make sense to us however these same principles are not necessarily applicable to other countries.

Early theorists on the development of Western democracy such as Barrington Moore suggest that the two conditions necessary for the development of democracy were 1) the development of a balance of power to avoid too strong a crown or too independent a landed aristocracy and, 2) a turn toward an appropriate form of agriculture either by the peasantry or by the landed aristocracy [Ref 13, pp. 430-431].

As to the development of democracy today, Dankwart Rustow identifies the key elements of democracy as the free flow of information and expression; competitive parties and electoral approval; equal representation; control of governmental representatives and periodic changes in the composition of the governing. [Ref 14, pg. 94] Rueschemeyer on the other hand states that:

...it is power relations that most importantly determine whether democracy can emerge, stabilize, and then maintain itself even in the face of adverse conditions. [Ref 6, pg. 5]

Rueschemeyer, focusing on the power and balance of the class structures proposes three conditions which shape the development of democracy. Class power, as the first condition, according to Rueschemeyer is related to the density of civil society. Civil society in this sense is comprised of social institutions and associations that are not governmental nor production related which strengthen the organizational capabilities of the working and middle classes. This class of power then acts as a counter balance to state power which is significant to the development of democracy. [Ref 6, pp. 6-7] If democracy is compatible with the Middle East, perhaps it may be of benefit to reevaluate Islamic fundamentalism as

a vehicle to promote democracy rather than to view these movements as aggression and terrorism. Mansour Farhang states:

There is a significant middle class with a modern education and a secular political orientation in every Middle Eastern country. Many members of this class are at the forefront of the struggle for political and economic reform, but they have yet to develop the capacity to build functional alliances with the urban poor or lower-middle classes. [Ref 15, pg. 3]

The second condition proposed by Rueschemeyer is the relationship of the state apparatus to other concentrations of power in society. The state is not only the structure from which enforcement and implementation is accomplished but is often times the area where "binding collective decisions" are arrived at. The states ability to act with other power concentrations then is relative to the development of democracy. The third condition is the interaction of external actors to the country. In this respect, Rueschemeyer is referring to the external economic and political interests that transcend borders and which enter into the balance of power within a country affecting the development of democracy. [Ref. 6, pp. 6-7]

Rueschemeyer also addresses the relationship between capitalism and democracy stating:

...capitalist development is associated with democracy because it transforms the class structure, strengthening the working and middle classes and weakening the landed upper class. It was not the capitalist market nor capitalists as the new dominant force, but rather the contradictions of capitalism that advanced the cause of democracy. [Ref. 6, pg. 7]

Samuel Huntington on the other hand, identifies several preconditions for democracy of which a market economy is the only precondition that is an absolute. These preconditions include:

...higher levels of economic well-being; the absence of extreme inequalities in wealth and income; greater social pluralism, including particularly a strong and autonomous bourgeoisie; a more market-oriented economy; greater influence vis-a-vis the society of existing democratic states; and a culture that is less monistic and more tolerant of diversity and compromise. [Ref 5, pg 214]

### **C. CRITERIA FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Dahl points out that many of the present democratic regimes were instituted either as countries became independent from foreign rule or instituted during the periods of foreign rule [Ref 9, pg. 197]. With reference to the Middle East however, the implants of Western democracy did not take root and can be attributed to either the imperialistic notions associated with colonialism, the unwillingness to distribute power or simply that any change from an existing government

must be wanted before it can be achieved. Huntington states that "democracies are created not by causes but by causers" [Ref 10, pg. 107].

Huntington suggests four causes that foster transitions to democracy and three ways in which to effect the transition to democracy. The first cause suggested to foster a transition to democracy is an increase in economic conditions. This increase is anticipated to lead not only to higher levels of education and literacy but to the development of a larger middle class which in turn would foster the development of attitudes and values which would support democracy. The second cause is a more involved and aggressive role of the leadership of the Catholic Church to oppose authoritarian regimes, strengthen civil society and support efforts for democracy. In support of this cause, Huntington quotes Pope John Paul II who refers to the church as the guardian of freedom, human rights and democracy. Huntington's third cause refers to the role of external actors such as the U.S. and the European Community whose policies support democratic development. Lastly Huntington attributes the media, the ability of television and other means of communications, who transmit the downfall of countries such as the former Soviet

Union and which in turn strengthens moves toward democracy in other countries. [Ref 10, pp. 59-106]

The three means suggested by Huntington to effect a transition to democracy are 1) initiatives taken by reformers within an authoritarian regime who believe that a transition to democracy is needed and desired, 2) the overthrow of authoritarian regimes and, 3) negotiations or compromise between reformers and authoritarian regimes for democratic change. [Ref 10, pp. 124-163] Farhang states that:

...Islamic fundamentalists represent the best organized challengers of the entrenched ruling elite. Their ability to articulate popular discontent in the form of religious and cultural idioms has a powerful appeal to the populace. [Ref 15, pg. 3]

Rueschemeyer on the other hand, simply put, states that "economic democracy" is the most promising avenue to achieve formal democracy. By reducing social and economic inequality and allowing private ownership over the means of production, an "institutional separation of the economy from the polity" would be achieved. The criteria for a successful democracy in other words, is based overall on the distribution of power. [Ref 6, pp. 41-300]

## **D. OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRACY**

### **1. Economic Growth**

Rueschemeyer has argued that "economic democracy" is the most promising means to achieve formal democracy. Huntington suggests on one hand that a market economy is an absolute precondition to democracy but on the other hand suggests that economic growth alone has also lead to the failure of democracy. To this end, he states that in situations where economic growth alone has occurred:

The leading roles have been played by the state and by multinational enterprises. As a result, economic development runs ahead of the development of a bourgeoisie. [Ref 5, pg. 204]

Accordingly, it seems apparent that the development of an autonomous, indigenous bourgeoisie which limits state power along with economic growth is a prerequisite to the transition to democracy. Perhaps democracy that is not linked to capitalism will not succeed because democracy also implies the freedom to take risks which is fundamental to a capitalistic society.

### **2. Contestation**

In the Middle East and North Africa, the concept of democracy is understood to be that of participation in a



collective enterprise rather than a political mechanism to foster government accountability or guarantee individual rights [Ref 16, pg 260]. Contestation appears to be one of the major barriers to democracy in the Middle East. Lisa Anderson suggests that the difficulty of contestation may be attributed to either the:

...strong egalitarian traditions of Islamic political theory, to the imperatives of the nationalist struggle against European imperialism or to the demands of nation-building and the creation of citizenship after independence. [Ref 16, pg 259]

### **3. Political Culture**

Political culture can be said to be the product of the culture content of a particular country. As previously addressed, Rueschemeyer maintains that power relations, the interaction of power sources and interests, determine the success of democracy. It can then be assumed that political culture, which is rooted in the culture of society involving beliefs, values and relations between members is a major determinant of the power sources and their interests. Policies therefore are a product of a country's culture. Huntington states that:

A political culture that values highly hierarchical relationships and extreme deference to authority presumably is less fertile ground for

democracy than one that does not. Similarly, a culture in which there is a high degree of mutual trust among members of the society is likely to be more favorable to democracy than one in which interpersonal relationships are more generally characterized by suspicion, hostility, and distrust. A willingness to tolerate diversity and conflict among groups and to recognize the legitimacy of compromise also should be helpful to democratic development. [Ref 5, pg. 209]

In essence, the nature of democracy is a co-partnership among equals that can only function through compromise. The main objective of political culture as an obstacle to democracy is that societies with a political culture where national unity is lacking and power is hoarded rather than used to accommodate are more resistant to the development of a democratic political culture. Democracy therefore is perceived as a threat. Simply put, democracy requires an open mindedness of the society to foster an ability to accept change, a society which recognizes inequality as a law of nature and a government that is willing to invest power in the people and recognize and accept individuals and opposition into the decision making process.

#### 4. Desirability

Under any conditions, before democratization can proceed, first and foremost is the desire for true democratic reform. Referring to the development and criteria for democratic reform as previously addressed, the overthrow of authoritarian regimes, the distribution of power, economic growth that fosters an autonomous, indigenous bourgeoisie, limitations to state power, privatization of the economy and the recognition of individual rights can only be accomplished when a society willingly accepts a democratic concept. Without such a commitment, situations such as recently experienced by Algeria where it appears that everyone was for democratic reform provided the government was assured victory or that of Iraq where Saddam Hussein is still in power, no transition will occur.

For the purposes of this thesis, the theories of Huntington and Rueschemeyer as previously addressed will be used as criteria for the evaluation of Tunisia in support of the hypothesis that democratic reform can be used as window dressing in order to foster and enhance foreign investment rather than to move toward democratic reform.

### III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TUNISIA

#### A. BOURGUIBA

Like Nasser of Egypt and Idris of Libya, Bourguiba sought to rid Tunisia of feudalism and foreign control. A highly nationalistic individual, Bourguiba who had been imprisoned on several occasions due to his anti-colonial aggression found the Neo-Destour Party as his vehicle to liberation. The Neo-Destour Party, originally formed by Dr. Mahmoud Materi as president and Habib Bourguiba as secretary general, emerged as a separate organization from the nationalistic Destour Party in 1934 as a result of unreconcilable differences within the Party on how to free Tunisia from French colonial rule. Final separation of the Neo-Destour Party from the Destour Party however did not occur until 1937. While Materi is said to have given the party dignity and prestige, it was Bourguiba who formulated the party's program and ideas insisting that only constant and persistent pressure could make France release Tunisia. [Ref, 17, pg. 119] The Neo-Destourian Party was reportedly:

...committed to the struggle in the street to obtain the independence of Tunisia by opposing French imperialism and colonization which was responsible for the misery into which the country is plunged. [Ref 17, pg. 120]

Due to the withdrawal of Dr. Materi from the Neo-Destourian party, the exile of Moncef Bey, the Tunisian monarch who was accused of collaborating with the Axis Powers during the occupation of World War II and the death of the Old Destour party leader, Bourguiba became the undisputed leader of the nationalist cause. [Ref 17, pp. 121-126] Bourguiba realized that the Islamic personality of Tunisia was entrenched in society and he used Islam as a legitimizing factor for the mobilization of the masses which allowed him to harness the support of the population and bring the country to independence in 1956. Lisa Anderson writes: "among the few things that virtually all Tunisians shared was Islam" [Ref 18, pg. 175]. To this end, Bourguiba offered himself to Tunisia as a "modernist reformer of Islam." [Ref 19, pg. 592]

After independence however Bourguiba's focus on Islam faded. Bourguiba's main objective was to eliminate underdevelopment in Tunisia and in doing so his political posture of internal and external manipulation began to unfold creating a history of dependency on the West and Europe for

the country's livelihood. Bourguiba was said to take a "logical and dispassionate view of all issues" implementing a strategy of "advancing step by step from one prepared position to another" which was coined 'Bourguibisme'. [Ref 20, pg. 487]

Bourguiba viewed the world as being divided into three spheres; the West, the East and the Arab region. He saw the United States as a liberal country which was reconstructing an autonomous Western Europe. He saw the Soviet Union as a totalitarian country struggling for survival and he "snubbed" the Arab region as being "hopelessly poor, backward, and politically misguided." [Ref 21, pg. 116] As a result Bourguiba considered the West, including France, as the vehicle to meet his internal objectives and consequently instituted political institutions and a foreign policy which focused on liberal modernization. Bourguiba, in 1957, stated:

We are orienting ourselves toward a regime which assures a minimum of stability at the head of the state. It is for this reason that we prefer to go toward an American regime, but our constitution will not be a copy of the American Constitution. [Ref 17, pg. 190]

From the U.S. standpoint, Bourguiba provided the political quality desired to contain the advance of communism and to

quell anti-American sentiments in North Africa [Ref 21, pg. 116]. To this end Bourguiba, inspired to achieve involvement with the West and to maintain a good standing, took a moderate stance toward Middle East issues which often defied the political aspirations of the region. Bourguiba saw pan-Arabism as an impractical policy. He was also among the first to suggest that peace should be made between the Arab world and Israel as a solution to the Palestinian question [Ref 22].

Bourguiba's strategy was somewhat successful as during the period 1957-1963 Tunisia received aid in the form of loans, grants and food from the U.S. in an amount which exceeded \$350 million and which equalled approximately \$12 per year for every Tunisian. Additionally, grants and loans from other countries accounted for 50 percent of the Tunisian capital budget. [Ref 17, pg. 209]

#### **B. POLITICAL CONTENT**

The Tunisian Constitution according to Vandewalle is:

based on liberal principles that centralized political and governmental activities and of a political ideology that encouraged the secularization of daily life. [Ref 23, pg. 604]

The Tunisian Constitution under Bourguiba did contain some provisions which suggest democratic ideals such as the establishment of executive and legislative powers that would be independent yet equally powerful [Ref 17, pg. 189]. But in practice the Tunisian constitution seems to have been a paper constitution which enabled Bourguiba and his party, the Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD), to gain control of the country in the name of liberal modernization. Addressing the characteristics of the Tunisian constitution George Sfeir writes:

In the new states of Asia and Africa which have adopted modern constitutions, one finds the letter of the constitution providing ample securities of individual rights, whereas in the body politic these rights and securities are in fact still being striven for, and the institutions groping for roots. It represents an anomalous situation in which constitutional forms often exist side by side with arbitrary rule, a situation often inviting resort to extra-legal acts in order, truly or allegedly, to reassert constitutional rights and promote more liberal institutions. [Ref 24, pg. 446]

Clement Moore describes Tunisia under Bourguiba as a "modern administrative dictatorship" where the PSD party elites dominated virtually all aspects of social and political life in Tunisia [Ref 25, pg. 108]. Because of Bourguiba's justified dictatorship one is tempted to view his reforms for



liberalized modernization as measures to crush any opposition; mainly the religious authorities as will be addressed.

### C. SECULAR MODERNIZATION

To further his objective against underdevelopment and to advance secular modernization, Bourguiba and the PSD attempted to radically restructure the role of Islam in Tunisia through several reforms.

Bourguiba launched, through American and French aid programs, an ambitious educational program as a means to overcome a 72 percent illiteracy rate. This program however, in effect alienated the role of the ulema in Tunisian society [Ref 17, pg. 219]. The educational program had two objectives: that of the enrollment of all children in primary school and the unification of the education system. As a result, religious schools were eliminated through integration and religious education, which was controlled by the state, was drastically reduced. [Ref 19, pg. 592]

The Personal Status Code of 1956 was aimed at improving women's social conditions by reforming laws governing divorce and marriage as well as outlawing the wearing of the hijab in

the classroom and elsewhere [Ref 19, pg. 593]. Bourguiba reportedly stated:

If we understand...that the middle-aged women are reticent about abandoning a old habit we can only deplore the stubbornness of parents who continue to oblige their children to wear a veil in school. We even see civil servants going to work in that odious rag. It has nothing to do with religion. [Ref 19, pg. 593]

Believing that the observation of Ramadan hindered economic development, in 1960 Bourguiba reportedly argued that:

...the struggle against underdevelopment was so important that it was a modern form of holy war or jihad and therefore should take precedence over fasting, which made people sluggish and unable to work to capacity...the economic crisis warranted Qur'anic exceptions on fasting...In order for Africa to attain the level of power, of culture and prosperity of Europe or America, it is necessary for you to work, to conquer apprehensions, superstitions and social constraint. [Ref 17, pp. 212-213]

In many respects however Bourguiba's secular modernization efforts promoted an image of himself as being anti-Islamic and pro-Western. Bourguiba realized that in order to build a strong economy with limited resources, a reliance on assistance from other nations was required. While economic conditions temporarily improved due largely to Bourguiba's foreign policies, the Tunisian population was politically

unorganized and although offended by his assault on Islamic institutions, accepted his efforts for reform until 1961 when demonstrations acquired a violent tone and lead to his eventual removal [Ref 19, pg. 594].

#### **D. ISLAMIC MOVEMENT**

Disillusionment of Bourguiba's short lived reforms in providing social and economic prosperity offered fertile ground for the nurturing of a revived Islam as the solution to societies various ills. Bourguiba quickly came to realize that the force which allowed him to harness the support of the population at the time of independence could also cause the demise of his regime. Accordingly, rather than dealing with the economic, social and political ills, Bourguiba elected to try and contain the forces of Islam in an effort to protect his regime, the ruling party and the secular society he tried to create.

As in most countries of the Middle East, the rise of an Islamic movement in Tunisia was not associated with the ulama and a discredited religious establishment [Ref 23, pg. 608]. In Tunisia it began with widespread support for the labor union, Union Generale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), who

questioned the economic and political policies of the regime.

The labor union:

...opposed the continued foreign influence in the economy and society, decried the reliance on tourism - the country's major earner of foreign exchange - and objected to the secularization policies associated with Bourguiba since his early battles with Ben Youssef. [Ref 18, pg. 245]

In a first attempt to head-off major Islamic sentiment during the 1970's, Bourguiba published editorials and special articles on Islamic topics and the Koran in an effort to reaffirm the governments commitment toward Islam. These attempts however failed. [Ref 19, pg. 601]

By the end of the 1970's Tunisia had several Islamic organizations; the Islamic Shura Party, the Islamic Progressive Tendency, the Islamic Vanguard, the Islamic Liberation Party and the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI). [Ref 19, pg. 608]. Membership in the MTI reflects individuals of whom 48 percent came from families where the parents were illiterate and 46 percent had parents who were either laborers in the agriculture sector or the industrial sector [Ref 26].

The MTI, headed by Rashid Ghannouchi, was the only Islamic organization with a political content. Again concerned with the power of Islamic mobility, Bourguiba agreed with his Prime

Minister, Muhammad Mzali, to enact political democratization [Ref 18, pg. 246]. As a result, in 1981 the MTI declared itself a political party whose objectives were:

(1) the renewal of the Tunisian Islamic personality, (2) the revival of Islamic thought and principles in order to conduct the battle against centuries of societal decadence; (3) the reorganisation of economic life along humanitarian guidelines; (4) the return of legitimate rights and freedoms to the masses, and (5) the revival of Islam's political identity at local, North African and global levels. [Ref 19, pg 604]

But Bourguiba saw the MTI as a threat to his regime fueled by an article in the Le Monde newspaper that "the integristes' were taking over the organisation and using it as a tool against the PSD" [Ref 19, pg. 602]. Lisa Anderson suggests that Bourguiba's compromise with the MTI allowed his government to weaken its opposition by "removing one of the major political grievances against the regime" and thereby allowing the regime, before the elections, to take action against its major opponent the MTI [Ref 18, pg. 247]. The end result however was governmental crackdown on the Islamic fundamentalists and the MTI was banned from association. [Ref 19, pg. 602]

By cutting off an avenue of opposition toward the regime through the banning of association of the MTI, Bourguiba

doubled his problems by creating a political vacuum for Islamic fundamentalism as well as the already existing economic opening.

#### IV. TUNISIA PRESENT

##### A. FROM BOURGUIBA TO BEN ALI

The transition from Bourguiba to Ben Ali occurred on November 7, 1987 when then Prime Minister Ben Ali assembled a group of doctors who proclaimed that Bourguiba's mental and physical health had deteriorated to the point that he could no longer meet the obligations of the office of presidency. Ben Ali subsequently invoked Article 57 of the Tunisian Constitution which provided that in the event of the incapacity of the head of state to fulfill his duties, the prime minister would be immediately invested with the functions of presidency for the remainder of the term of the national legislature.

The accession of Ben Ali was based largely on two factors:

1) Bourguiba's deteriorating physical and mental health lead to frequent reversals of administrative appointments and accusations of those around him of lying and trickery. 2) Bourguiba's handling of the trial of the Islamic fundamentalists, banned members of the Movement of the Islamic Way (MTI) who were viewed as challengers to his legitimacy,

coupled by the uncovering of an MTI plot to assassinate top political figures including Ben Ali, only undermined the extent of his instability. Bourguiba's fate was brought to a head with the condemnation to death in absentia of accused Islamists, demands for retrials of other fundamentalists who received sentences less than death and the imprisonment without trial of seventy-three members of the attempted assassination plot for two years. [Ref 27, pg. 13]

Additionally, the economic unrest associated with the lack of jobs remained a constant source of pressure on the Bourguiba government. Economic conditions had festered since the 1970's:

...agriculture was neglected; the decline of European affluence made the Tunisian tourist market unreliable; the Tunisian petroleum industry was depressed as oil prices slid precipitously in the wake of the global market glut of the early 1980's; and the minimum agricultural and industrial wage was not permitted to rise commensurate with the level of inflation. In addition, the population was growing at a rate whereby currently 60 percent of Tunisia's 7.5 million inhabitants are less than 30 years of age and...more than 25 percent of them are unemployed. Moreover, Bourguiba's heavy emphasis on public education raised the socioeconomic aspirations of the nation's youth, which the country was unable to satisfy. [Ref 28, pg. 589]



## B. BEN ALI

In comparison to Bourguiba, Ben Ali has been described as opposite in character. Ben Ali is described as:

...an unassuming not a galvanizing speaker; a listener, not an autocrat; a bureaucrat from military intelligence, not a founding father of a party; and a man with a sense of the separation of state and party and of civil liberties for citizens. [Ref 27, pg. 13]

Born on 3 September 1936 in the small town of Hammam-Sousse on the Mediterranean coast, Ben Ali began an association with the Neo-Destour party at an early age. During his secondary education he was expelled from all schools in Tunisia due to his activism against French colonial rule where he acted as the liaison between the regional structure of the Neo-Destour and the armed resistance forces. As a result, he was sent to France by the Destourian party where he was among the first who formed the nucleus of the future national security army. He subsequently completed training at the Inter-Arms School of Saint-Cyr, the Artillery School at Chalons-Sur-Marne France, the Senior Intelligence School at Fort Holabird Maryland and the School For Field and Anti-Aircraft Artillery at Fort Bliss Texas. [Ref 29]

In 1974 he was appointed Defense, Military, Naval and Air Attache in Morocco and Spain, and in 1977, he was appointed

Director-General of National Security where he coordinated the police and military response during the UGTT labor crisis of 1978. In 1980 he was appointed Ambassador to Poland but was recalled to Tunisia in the aftermath of the infamous bread riots and promoted to the rank of brigadier general. In January of 1984 he was appointed Head of National Security. Ten months later, out of fear that strong measures might be required to counter disaffection of bad harvests, creeping inflation and growing unemployment, he was appointed Secretary of State for National Security and Defense and then in October 1985 he was appointed Minister of the Interior. [Ref 28, pp. 593-594] In October 1987 he was named Prime Minister while retaining the responsibilities of Ministry of the Interior [Ref 29].

Ben Ali attributes his American experience with helping shape his sense of democracy:

I listen, I think, I act but I don't like to talk. I learned that in the United States...You learn about analysis, and how to use analysis in political situations. [Ref 30]

### **C. NATIONAL PACT**

The National Pact of 1988, which was reportedly widely applauded by both Tunisians and foreign observers allowed Ben

Ali, as Bourguiba in his early years, enormous popularity from all of the Tunisian populace including the Tunisian intelligentsia. The National Pact was seen by many as a democratic opening but realistically it only provided limited guidance for political actions. The National Pact was intended to establish the guiding principles for a new, more democratic political regime addressing the four general areas of national identity, political life, economic development and foreign relations. The National Pact basically proclaimed Tunisia's commitment to democracy and human rights; emphasized the importance of women's rights and equality; reaffirmed the country's Islamic identity; and guaranteed certain basic political freedoms. [Ref 31, pg. 88]

As the Personal Code under Bourguiba was to promote secular modernization by targeting the Islamists, the National Pact of Ben Ali targeted the Islamists too and provided a device to promote his vision of society and politics by allowing selected opposition toward his policies to articulate a common vision and to pledge their allegiance to the country. [Ref 16, pg. 252] In essence, the National Pact is a symbolic gesture which allowed Ben Ali to bring his selected opposition into his political fold and thereby be under his

control. The Pact moved up the parliamentary elections scheduled for 1991 to April 1989 and by doing so did not allow political participation by organizations that had not yet received legal recognition such as the Al-Nahda and prevented a number of prominent opposition figures from engaging in political activity as they had not yet regained their political rights. [Ref 31, pg. 89]

If it had been an interest of Ben Ali to extend civil and political liberties to foster legitimacy, the National Pact was also an astute political strategy to make allies of his new governments critics - specifically the Islamists and human rights activists. As the Minister of Interior and person administratively responsible for the security forces engagement in torture and ill-treatment under Bourguiba, Ben Ali had frequently been the target of criticism. [Ref 32, pg. 37] The text of the National Pact reflects a proclamation that:

Human rights imply safeguarding the security of the individual and guaranteeing his freedom and dignity. This means banning torture and physical punishment, prohibiting all forms of arbitrary behaviour to be practised neither by the state nor by organizations or individuals. They also imply guaranteeing the freedom of thought and expression, the freedom of the press and printing and the freedom of worship. [Ref 33, pg. 14]

#### D. BEN ALI'S DEMOCRACY

As delineated in the National Pact, democracy is described on the basis of:

...a multiplicity of thought and organization. It caters for the needs of competition for power and implies a care for the people's will, expressed in periodic elections, free and correctly held, where the majority draws its legitimacy in exercising power, and must respect alternative opinions and the rights of minorities. [Ref 33, pg. 14]

From this description of democracy it is apparent that the basis of the electoral law is the majority system rather than proportional representation which in essence allows the government's party to retain effective control over the so called democratic opening of Tunisia. When asked whether or not the one party domination of the Tunisian parliament casts a shadow over the processes of democracy in Tunisia, Ben Ali responded:

It is not our fault that the Chamber of Deputies contains only one party. We have made great efforts to ensure that this is not the case, because we are convinced that the presence of a political party in that chamber is essential for democracy. [Ref 34]

Clearly the transition from a single-party to a multi-party regime requires a clear-cut distinction between the nation state and the ruling party. As Lisa Anderson suggests, perhaps Ben Ali's strategy is to maintain close ties to the

country's security apparatus, the Interior Ministry administration and the ruling party until the foundations of his new era have been well laid. The National Pact therefore serves as a symbolic representation of the nation state and a broader perspective than the ruling party and at the same time introduces the legitimate right to differ while maintaining the old regime for stabilization. [Ref 16, pp. 258-259]

#### **E. ISLAMIC MOVEMENT**

The al-Nahda Islamic movement, originally called the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI), is claimed by the government to be an extremist group that is willing to use violence to install a repressive theocracy. The al-Nahda in contrast claims that it is committed to using only democratic, nonviolent means to achieve a tolerant Islamic state. [Ref 35, pg. 344] Ghannouchi stated:

The al-Nahda movement is an Islamic politico-ideological movement that calls on the people to return to Islam, the true identity of the Tunisian people, and also to adopt Arabic as the official language for administrative and educational purposes. We consider democracy and political means a solution for resolving politico-ideological differences in social life. We strive for cooperation and unity among all the oppressed nations and the Islamic ummah. [Ref 36]

Legislation passed by the parliament in April 1988 and reemphasized in the National Pact of November 1988 established criteria and guidelines for the recognition and conduct of political parties. In order to be legally recognized as a political party, parties are required to uphold the Constitution which includes the provisions against violence, discrimination and fanaticism; parties are forbidden to receive support from abroad; forbidden to pursue religious, racial, linguistic or regional objectives; and cannot be headed by individuals who have been convicted of certain political offenses. Political parties once recognized also require permission of the government prior to holding any large public gathering. [Ref 31, pp. 87-88] Additional criteria expressed verbally by Ben Ali specifically for opposition parties includes:

-All parties should respect the laws of democracy and its requirements, and accept the results of honest competition, because this constitutes respect for the people's will.

-The opposition must not attack the electoral law or use it as a pretext to justify their failure, especially since there are no legal justifications, which usually appear in the form of violations before or after the elections.

-The opposition parties should acquire long experience in political action that would guarantee their presence in the national arena and that would enable them to enrich our political system. [Ref 37]

The seven recognized political parties are as listed in Appendix A. Middle East Watch views the criteria and conduct established for political parties as a violation of the right of free association. The rights of free association which were promulgated in 1992 prohibits an individual from holding a leadership position in a political party and an association simultaneously and prohibits organizations from refusing membership to any person who claims to accept its principles. Because of this criteria the Tunisian League for Human Rights was dissolved. [Ref 35, pg. 345]

When Ben Ali assumed the presidency in 1987 he:

...promised that the political freedoms he was enacting would be extended to the MTI as soon as it met the official criteria for recognition as a political party. The MTI responded by calling Ben Ali's accession to power a divine act meant to save the country from civil war. Its leaders lavishly praised Ben Ali's reforms, declared that they would uphold the Constitution and accept the other criteria for recognition, and renamed the MTI the Hezb al-Nahda in order to deemphasize its Islamist orientation. [Ref 31, pg. 91]

In many respects Ben Ali's promises raised false hopes that the al-Nahda would be recognized as a political party. Ben Ali may have hoped that the prospects of recognition would foster moderate views and opinions within the al-Nahda or he may have feared that official recognition would threaten his



reforms for democracy. Whatever his motivation, the al-Nahda has not been recognized as a political party. Most recently Ben Ali reasons that:

    Their intention was clear, it has always been to create an Islamic state. These men are intolerant and undemocratic. I broke off dialogue with them when I became aware of their double-talk.... [Ref 34]

#### **F. DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IN PRACTICE**

Although the National Pact decreed the freedom of thought and expression, the freedom of the press and printing, the freedom of religion and the recognition of human rights, in practice the freedoms are not so easily recognized. The government reportedly controls the radio and television media and closely monitors the press which forces journalists to practice self-censorship. In one instance the weekly newspaper of the Communist Workers' Party was reportedly seized due to articles that were deemed by the government to harm relations between Tunisia and friendly countries. [Ref 38] In another instance when the contents of an article published in the official newspaper of the Social-Democrat Movement criticized the pace of democratic reform in Tunisia and the ruling party for refusing to relinquish or share

power, the secret police were dispatched to buy all the issues of the newspaper from the stands. [Ref 39, pg. 2]

When al-Nahda was directed by the Prime Minister in 1989 to submit two applications; one for a political party and one for a newspaper, the newspaper application was accepted provided there was a three week waiting period. During that time reportedly the Minister of Interior contacted and directed all the publishing houses not to print the newspaper while at the same time threatened to revoke the licenses of any distributor who distributed the newspaper. [Ref 39, pg. 2]

With reference to free elections, reportedly the government instituted measures of reprisal and punishment to anyone who voted for or participated in the campaigns of the independent candidates. The resulting actions were that:

Privately owned businesses such as bookstores, milk shops and taxi drivers had their licenses revoked and public and private sector workers, university professors and ten imams were fired from their jobs. [Ref 39, pg. 2]

While the UGTT was the focal point of the Islamic movement under Bourguiba, labor union activity under Ben Ali reportedly remains restricted as meetings at the place of work are outlawed and the right to strike is limited. The state also

reportedly exercises control over the country's mosques by appointing and paying all prayer leaders. [Ref 31, pg. 89]

Violations of human rights has been as issue dominated by the governments crackdown on the al-Nahda, its main opposition and whose trial is reminiscent of the mass trials of the Islamists that took place under Bourguiba. Numerous cases of death by torture and widespread incidence of rape inflicted on the wives of arrested Islamic party militants reportedly never reached official publications because the official body assigned to investigate the allegations was composed of individuals appointed directly by Ben Ali [Ref 40].

Ghannouchi accused the government of exploiting the Gulf War to liquidate the Islamic movement in Tunisia. Specifically he stated that the Gulf War allowed Ben Ali:

to proceed with his security measures to liquidate the movement, and finish the process that former President Bourguiba began but was unable to finish. Seven young members of the Movement had been killed, and 1200 people detained - among whom were the leaders of the Movement - while the world was still occupied by the Gulf War, the biggest news at that time. Once the Gulf war ended, pain and suffering returned to the people of Tunisia; freedoms were tightened; and the country's real problems returned to the fore. [Ref 41]

During 1992, 279 suspected al-Nahda members who were arrested in 1990 and 1991 were tried by two military courts

accused of plotting to overthrow the government and assassinate the president in order to establish an Islamic Republic [Ref 35, pg. 344]. Amnesty International claims that between 1990 and 1992 more than 9,000 Islamists had been detained. Torture was described as:

...systematic abuses in police and National Guard stations and in the Ministry of Interior headquarters in Tunis. Amnesty documented several deaths in detention in 1991 that were apparently due to torture and found that the evidence that violations are condoned at the highest level is compelling. [Ref 35, pg. 344]

During an interview regarding the abuses within Tunisia and the objectives of the Islamic movement Ghannouchi stated:

The movement's greatest demand in the face of the ruling regime's violence and brutality is for freedom of political activity for political parties. To achieve this objective we entered the arena by mobilizing the nation's offspring to participate in marches so that we could make the government realize that we demand our lawful rights. One of the distinctive and obvious traits of political life in Tunis has been the great difference between the word and deed of its ruling parties. While the regime proclaims itself the supporter of human rights and adherent of freedom and democracy, facts and figures prove the situation to be otherwise. [Ref 36]

In defense, Ben Ali has stated:

Tunisia has every right to be proud of its human rights record. We unreservedly subscribed to the international convention against torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. I am personally working to ensure respect for the provisions of that convention.

But, in this sphere, it is impossible to be vigilant  
enough. [Ref 34]

## V. TUNISIAN ECONOMY AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

### A. ECONOMIC PLANS

The proclamation of democracy by the Western-trained President Ben Ali is indicative of Tunisia's need for international acceptance, confidence and recognition as a friendly and politically stable country worthy of the benefits of international investment. Two economic plans have been instituted under President Ben Ali and although both have been hopeful, neither has allowed Tunisia to develop an infrastructure capable of sustaining self-sufficiency. The seventh five year economic plan (1987-1991) in fact inspired hope that Tunisia may "replace Lebanon as a key financial link between the Arab World and Europe." [Ref 42]

Although Tunisia has moved away from state socialism toward an open economy by taking measures to ease restrictions on foreign investments and by becoming a contracting member of GATT in 1990 as a means to join the world economy, Tunisia's major barriers to economic growth appear to be unemployment, lack of education and although not a direct factor, a high level of imports which has discouraged production from within.

In 1990, 300,000 persons or 13 percent of Tunisia's workforce were reportedly unemployed [Ref 43]. In 1993, unemployment was reportedly 15 percent [Ref 44, pg. 15]. Adding to this already high level was concern that in 1990 nearly 60 percent of Tunisia's estimated eight million citizens were under the age of 24 which meant that within the next decade more than two million additional persons would enter the local job market [Ref 45].

The objectives of the 1987-1991 plan which included the devaluation of the dinar to stimulate exports and help tourism, envisioned an annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 4 percent compared to a 6 percent estimated figure for the period 1982-1986 which was actually 3 percent. The 1987-1991 plan targeted job creation for 240,000 persons, 30,000 less than the targeted 1982-1986 plan, and actually only totalled 200,000. [Ref 46, pg. 901] Accordingly, unemployment can be considered a serious threat to Tunisia's economic growth as either economic stagnation or slow development and growth can cause social unrest and economic and political instability.

The eighth five year economic plan (1992-1996) with a target to reduce the budget deficit to 1.2 percent of GDP,

appears to focus more on broad policy objectives such as the creation of jobs and decentralization than the 1987-1991 plan. The plan also includes goals to increase direct investments and to make the Tunisian economy more market oriented [Ref 47]. Specifically the plan envisions:

...the creation of 320,000 new jobs. Public expenditure will be focused on health, education, housing and services, with priority for investment in transport and communications, and emphasis will also be placed on regional development, particularly in western Tunisia. Also planned are further reduction in subsidies on consumer and other products...; the disposal of all state assets except in strategic sectors such as electricity generation; the elimination of price controls on manufactured goods; and the introduction for the first time, of selective charges for health, education and other services. [Ref 48, pg. 842]

Privatization as a goal however worthy creates complications also. As pointed out by Moffett, privatization will also mean that Tunisian companies will have to release some employees in order to compete in the private sector which means that more people will then be unemployed [Ref 42]. Privatization then will also create higher social costs to the government and probable unrest due to the planned cuts in subsidies.

When representatives from Tunisia met with officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in May



1993 to discuss Tunisia's financial requirements for implementation of the eighth five year program, the IMF and World Bank called for investment of approximately 14 percent of total GDP to be provided by the private sector. Tunisian officials response was that the private sector "could not generate all of this investment" and Tunisian therefore would need "foreign loans on preferential terms." [Ref 46, pg. 20] Attempts by the government to allow some privatization in 1991 were not successful as reportedly "the private sector's appetite for buying state assets was poor" [Ref 43, pg. 135].

It is clear that if Tunisia's attempts for privatization are to be successful, Tunisia must simultaneously and aggressively pursue this plans emphasis for education, eliminating the illiteracy rates of 19 percent for males aged 15-29 and 30 percent for women of the same age group, in order to motivate, develop and enable the population to realize their full potential in economic management and develop an infrastructure capable of self-sufficiency. [Ref 49, pg. 9] One hinderance to this tasking may be the ideals of Islamic thought where the concepts of individual and state capitalism are rejected [Ref 50, pp. 271-272].

## **B. BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY**

With a major focus on external support and indicative of Tunisia's proclamations of democracy, Tunisia and the U.S. signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) in January 1993 which solidified Tunisia's commitment to the promotion of economic growth and development through foreign investment as a means to attract capital, new technology and marketing expertise. Corey Wright of the Office of the Near East, U.S. Department of Commerce states that the U.S. in 1992 was the fourth largest supplier to the Tunisian market [Ref 51, pg. 40].

The Bilateral Investment Treaty guarantees American investors:

- The right to establish investments on a basis no less favorable than that accorded to investors of third countries, and subject to existing laws, on a basis no less favorable than that accorded to domestic investors;
- Treatment of investment that is no less favorable than that accorded to domestic investments or to investors of nationals of any third country, whichever is more favorable;
- International Law Standards for expropriation and compensation;
- Free transfers of capital...and
- The right to submit disputes to international arbitration through the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes. [Ref 48, pg 24]

Reciprocal in nature, this bilateral treaty is one of a two track economic and foreign investment strategy. The intent of this treaty is to promote the idea of Tunisia as a platform from which non-European Community countries can enter the European Community through Tunisia's associative status and benefits. In essence, U.S. investors would bring capital and technology into Tunisia which would generate manufactured goods that would enter the European Community as Tunisian products. [Ref 52, pg. 237]

On the other hand, this strategy is intended to encourage other partnerships through treaties where Tunisian enterprises would benefit from outside investment and technology for the joint production of goods to be sold in the European Community and elsewhere. [Ref 52, pg. 238]

### **C. EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

Tunisia's relationship with the European Community stems from Tunisia's economic dependence on trade relationships. As a resource poor country, Tunisia is dependent for both raw materials and products. Due to its close proximity to the European market, Tunisia was able early on to benefit from tourism, labeled the single largest source of income in 1990,

where in 1993, British tourists rose by 21 percent and French tourists rose by 24 percent compared to overall tourism in 1992 [Ref 49, pg. 18].

In 1976 Tunisia entered into agreement with the European Community where Tunisian industrial exports could enter the European Community provided they were manufactured in Tunisia. Voluntary restraining agreements were accepted by Tunisia with regard to the textile sector which limited cotton fabrics in certain European markets while agriculture products were subject to restrictions. [Ref 52, pg. 232-233]

Today, Tunisia's export and trade practices are heavily oriented toward the European Community with France, Italy and Germany respectively as the leading trading partners. Figures for 1993 reflect that 80 percent of Tunisian exports were to Europe and that Europe provided 71 percent of Tunisia's imports. Conversely, Tunisia's trade deficit has continued to widen where in 1992 Tunisia's trade deficit with France rose 26 percent, 163 percent with Italy and 55 percent with Germany. [Ref 49, pp. 19-20] Tunisia is as commercially dependent on Europe as Mexico is on the U.S. [Ref 53]. To this end, President Ben Ali has been seeking a partnership

agreement with the European Community. His hopes for this agreement include:

- increased quotas for agricultural exports to the EC..., new products added to the list, and an EC credit line to encourage European investment in Tunisian agriculture;

- a free-trade zone with the EC. Tunisia proposed the rapid dismantling of EC barriers to Tunisian exports, especially textiles and food; in return Tunisia would gradually dismantle its own tariffs on imports of European agricultural and industrial products, covering 35% of imports within six years and 100% in 12 years;

- closer cooperation in industrial development, and a special line of credit to encourage European investment in Tunisian industry;

- financial cooperation to recycle Tunisia's debt repayments, support for the structural adjustment programme, including access to the European Development Bank, and the creation of a Europe-Maghreb Bank; and

- cooperation in technical training, and in science and technology. [Ref 46, pp. 20-21]

Continued trade dependence between Tunisia and Europe however comes under question with the changing economic trade zones on a global level. Other regions in the world are close to Europe too and this lends possibility to the fact that competition for Tunisian trade, particularly in the area of high-tech electronic component assembly, could exist with Southeast Asia.

To this end, President Ben Ali continues to strive to present Tunisia as a stable environment worthy of European and

Western investment - a condition which was upset by Tunisia's sympathetic support for Iraq during the Gulf War.

#### D. IMF AND THE WORLD BANK

The IMF and the World Bank have operated under what Callaghy refers to as an "unwritten contract" where third world countries enter into agreement that if they successfully reform their economies in a neoclassical manner, modified now as the new neoclassical model which stresses education and human capital formation, with the direction of the IMF and the World Bank, then new voluntary international loans and foreign investment will be available to sustain their economic reforms [Ref 54, pp. 173-174]. Supposedly the loans or aid from the IMF and the World Bank are not linked to political reforms however other sources of credit seem to be influenced politically by the interests of the developed capitalist countries.

Tunisia entered the IMF program in 1986 under President Bourguiba when the Tunisian economy was near collapse. A loan for \$259 million was entered into as a means to reduce Tunisia's deficits and public spending [Ref 42]. In 1988, one year after the Western oriented President Ben Ali took

over, the IMF approved a three year extended fund of \$270.6 million and the World Bank committed to providing \$1.5 billion for the period 1987-1991. At the same time reportedly an African Development Bank offered a \$79 million credit line to finance tourism and industrial projects, England's Midland Bank financed \$27 million and the Italian government provided \$500 million in loans and grants for a five year period. [Ref 55, pg. 17]

The IMF sponsored economic reform program of 1988 attempted to reduce the deficit through measures which liberalized external trade, promoted privatization of state enterprises and implemented various tax reforms. These measures proved somewhat successful as Tunisia requested a reduction in credit available in the three year extended fund facility although this request was subsequently withdrawn at the end of the Gulf War. [Ref 47, pg. 841]

Prior to the Gulf War Tunisia's deficit in 1990 was estimated to be \$549 million principally as a result of ecological factors such as drought and floods. The impact of the Gulf War greatly effected Tunisia's tourism and export sectors, particularly with the loss of Iraqi trade, and the revised deficit was estimated at \$800 million. [Ref 43, pg.

134] As a result, the government attempted to reduce the deficit by:

...imposing a freeze on capital spending, rises in taxes on cigarettes, alcohol and petrol and a 5 percent exceptional import duty. Five days' pay was also docked from all employees in the formal sector and the government announced another blitz on subsidies the bill for which had been growing at nearly 25 percent a year. [Ref 43, pg. 134]

Indicative of Tunisia's dependence on foreign trade which had fallen overall by 30 percent as a result of the Gulf War, Tunisia requested restoration of full IMF credit. The World Bank was also reportedly considering a \$150 million loan for rural planning and development at the time. [Ref 47]

The unified investment code, which was introduced in December 1993, was one stipulation placed upon Tunisia for loans from the IMF and World Bank. The intent of the code is to offer tax incentives to investments which would create jobs, boost exports, involve the transfer of technology and assist in environmental protection and regional development. [Ref 56, pg. 4] There has been opposition to the code however by local businessmen who fear that the code would eliminate tax breaks to which they were already entitled and that the code would favor foreign and export companies over local entrepreneurs [Ref 46, pg. 19].



The World Bank also agreed to provide \$120 million to Tunisian banks in support of banking system reforms which are intended to foster more efficient management practices and to increase competition between Tunisian banks [Ref 46, pg. 29].

#### **E. MAGHREB**

In keeping with the economic strategy of Tunisia as previously addressed, President Ben Ali's attempts to expand and diversify Tunisia's economic relations includes the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), established in 1989, comprising the five nations of Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco. Since its establishment Tunisian imports from the member countries has risen by 2 percent and Tunisian exports to the member countries has risen by 2.7 percent for a total of 7.9 percent in 1992. [Ref 46, pg. 28]

Holding the position of rotating presidency of the Union during 1993, President Ben Ali attempted to build a relationship between the AMU and the European Community. Tunisian Prime Minister Hamed Karoui identified the importance of the AMU during an interview stating that the AMU is:

...a vital and historic necessity in view of the developments and changes the world is experiencing and the emergence of groupings and blocs. [Ref 57]

President Ben Ali, stressing the need for the protection of the rights of the AMU countries in Europe, has reportedly stated that:

By complementing each others' initiatives, we can eradicate the causes of extremism, fanaticism and racism on both sides [of the Mediterranean] and build strong relations based upon cooperation and understanding. [Ref 46, pg. 10]

Unfortunately however not only has the membership within the AMU lost its appeal as evidenced by the lack of attendance at the AMU summit in 1992 where only three of the five heads of state attended but the dialogue between the AMU and the European Community experienced similar difficulties [Ref 58, pg. 13]. Political turmoil in Algeria over the Islamic Front and the UN imposed sanctions against Libya over the Lockerbie affair have distanced any progress toward economic union and in fact blocked the 1993 so-called 5+5 dialogue between the European countries of Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Malta and the AMU [Ref 59, pg. 5]. President Ben Ali, determined to establish a relationship between the AMU and the European Community has reportedly stated that:

...the EC had offered Eastern Europe money, possibilities and partnership in order to prepare it for a market economy and for democracy. Similar offers to the countries of the Maghreb...could help further those same goals there. [Ref 46, pg. 10-11]

Although President Ben Ali has been trying to act as the negotiator between the Western states and Libya to resolve the Lockerbie affair, a meeting of the AMU foreign ministers in early 1993 ended in agreement by those who attended to temporarily cease attempts to build an economic union. Morocco's foreign minister reportedly stated that none of the accords originally signed at the establishment of the AMU had been implemented nor would they be as each member country had "a different economic orientation." [Ref 59, pg. 13]

In keeping with the intent of the established economic strategy of Tunisia, it can be assumed that a prosperous dialogue between the AMU and European community would reduce tensions and promote a more favorable economic environment through the redirection of resources which promote economic development and the exchange of technologies. Tunisia, seemingly the most active member of the Union, could provide the needed interface and balance between the two communities. But Ben Ali's attempts to increase cooperation among the Maghreb states can also be reflective of a growing and common concern of an economic threat from the West and the challenge of the unification of Europe's market. [Ref 52, pg. 222]

In a world where regional trading blocks are developing however, the AMU is an example of how the poorer countries will have a more difficult task of integration and shared economic growth as regional neighbors because their previous economic prosperity has been linked to either the West or Europe [Ref 60].

#### **F. FOREIGN AID**

As dependent as Tunisia is on European trade so to is Tunisia dependent on foreign economic and military aid. For 1991 Tunisia's foreign debt was reportedly \$8,296 million, an increase of \$4,770 million from 1980, and an external debt of 66.2 percent of the gross national product (GNP) which is a 7.7 percent decrease from 1987 [Ref 47, pp. 843-844]. A summarized total of U.S. aid to Tunisia, inclusive of military supplies and services and credits extended to private entities, is a listed in Appendix B. These totals reflect extensive military aid to Tunisia during the Libyan adventurism in the 1980's and a large increase in 1989 presumable as a result of the constitutional coup and Ben Ali's declarations of democracy.

Overall, foreign aid has allowed Tunisia the capability of stimulating economic development and growth as well as modernizing their armed forces.

#### **1. Economic Aid**

The major sources of economic aid to Tunisia have been the Western countries. France has been Tunisia's largest bilateral donor providing annual credits followed by the U.S. and the Gulf Arab states. The major multilateral donors of economic aid have been the World Bank Group. [Ref 47, pg. 843] Indicative of Tunisia's reliance on foreign aid is the quickness with which Tunisia's new foreign minister Habib Ben Yahia gave reassurance to the U.S. of its position which being questionable, resulted in the reduction of Tunisia's aid during the Gulf War [Ref 43, pg. 134].

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a total contribution of \$100 million to help fund projects which were initiated from 1983 including programs to improve Tunisian housing and to advance agriculture development [Ref 46, pg. 29]. USAID also agreed to provide an additional \$50 million in 1993 for projects to improve Tunisian infrastructures such as road construction, drainage and even drinking water supplies [Ref 49, pg. 21].

One of the major concerns with regard to foreign aid is whether or not the aid is used for the project specified or rather as a means to maintain the status quo. Tunisia received U.S. food aid in the amount \$107 million in 1987 and this amount increased to \$135 million during 1990 [Ref 61, pg. 969]. As the majority of aid through principal can be directed somewhat through the IMF and World Bank, it appears that Tunisia may not be an exception to the misuse of aid. As a result of the heavy rains and floods which devastated Tunisia in 1990, much of the relief aid is said to have been "distributed by the ruling party in an attempt to buy the votes of the recipients" rather than provide relief to the victims [Ref 39, pg. 8].

## **2. Military Aid**

Tunisia's geographical location can be considered of strategic importance in the Mediterranean. Additionally, Tunisia is surrounded by, in comparison, the more powerful countries of Algeria and Libya. As demonstrated during the 1980's, Tunisia has been vulnerable to the adventurism of Libya as well as attacks to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) headquartered in Tunis. These actions have in turn threatened regional stability and in essence U.S.

interests. As a result, the U.S. has provided foreign military financing/sales (FMF/FMS), international military education and training (IMET) and military assistance to Tunisia of approximately \$1 billion. In 1985 alone it is estimated that the U.S provided \$36 million in military assistance, negotiated \$22.5 million in arms agreements with Tunisia and Tunisia received loans directly from the U.S. in the amount of \$50 million. [Ref 62, pp. 306-307]

The FMF/FMS programs have allowed Tunisia to modernize their armed forces through the procurement and maintenance of numerous tanks, aircraft and artillery without having to divert resources from their economic development while the IMET and military assistance programs have provided flight and technical training. The most current information for Tunisia's defense expenditures, 1987, reflects \$289 million or 9 percent of GNP [Ref 61, pg. 970].

In the post Cold War environment the need for continued U.S. military support to Tunisia remains because of the continued possibility of Libyan adventurism and the revival of Islamic movements which may threaten the stability of the region. In that Tunisia's military weaknesses have been identified in the areas of long-range radar detection

capabilities and air defenses, Tunisia has continued to look to the U.S. for support in the modernization of its defense program [Ref 61, pg. 969]. Relying not only on the U.S. for support, reportedly in 1990 Tunisia signed a joint cooperation agreement with Turkey and entered into discussions with ship builders in Great Britain for the procurement of ships and France for the acquisition of jet aircraft [Ref 61, pg. 969]. As a means to foster good relations and support, Tunisia has taken part in a number of peace-keeping operations including Somalia, Cambodia and Yugoslavia [Ref 63, pg. 3].

Without U.S. and European military aid, it seems apparent that Tunisia could not maintain its present armed forces readiness in both personnel and equipment nor could Tunisia continue its defense modernization program.



## VI. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

### A. U.S. INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

U.S. vital and major interests in the Middle East and North Africa include oil access, security of Israel and the promotion of democracy and free markets to enhance political stability.

#### 1. Oil Access

The vital interest and heart of strategic interest of the U.S. in the Middle East is access to oil. The U.S. is one of the largest consumers of oil importing half of its oil supply [Ref 64, pg. 24].

Gulf oil originally became linked to U.S. military security by former President Eisenhower in 1957 but was declared "vital" to U.S. interests by former President Carter in the wake of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan [Ref 65, pg. 2]. Throughout the Cold War, the ultimate concern of the U.S. and gulf oil was the threat of Soviet control over that oil which could critically alter the strategic balance. This interest also increased the strategic importance of the North African region as the Maghreb not only

flanked the access route in the Mediterranean to the Middle East but was also the southern flank of NATO.

Due to the large dependency on Gulf oil, particularly from Saudi Arabia, the demise of the Soviet Union has not decreased U.S. interests. Accordingly, any challenge to Gulf oil access would be quickly met as is evidenced by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. With the end of the Cold War where surely economic competition, ethnic rivalries and regional conflicts will mount, until an alternate energy source is found, oil will remain the strategic commodity that is critical to international politics and national strategies [Ref 64, pg 25].

## 2. Security Of Israel

American thinking prior to the Johnson administration tended to see Israel as:

...a diplomatic liability, frustrating American efforts to organize the Arab world in The Cold War alliance arrangements. [Ref 66, pg 27]

The June 1967 War, along with the ethnic favoritism of former President Johnson for the Jewish community over the Arab community, resulted in a shift in American thinking where Israel was labeled as a strategic asset and considered to be an ally of the U.S. against the former Soviet Union. [Ref 66,

pg. 27] Since the end of the Cold War, Israel has remained a U.S. interest as a result of a strong pro-Israeli lobby in the U.S. Israel is also seen as a "stable friend" of the U.S. providing forward bases, intelligence and military cooperation against any regional threats to U.S. interests.

### **3. Democracy And Free Markets**

#### **a. Promotion Of Democracy**

The promotion of democracy has been considered a means of securing political stability, a means to prevent the domination of the region by a hostile power and a means by which security cooperation can be promoted throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

The promotion of democracy has been considered by many as necessary because it "worked" for the U.S. But theorists and policy makers must recognize that modern international relations requires cross culture interpretation as values of one society can clash with the values of another. Cultural bias' as differences do exist between Western and Muslim cultures and although democracy may be proven, it may not be compatible with Middle East and North African countries. Larry Diamond states:

Promoting democracy does not mean exporting it....Nor can Americans impose a preference for democracy where it does not exist. Rather, promoting democracy means offering moral, political, diplomatic, and financial support to individuals and organizations that are struggling to open up authoritarian regimes.... [Ref 67, pg. 27]

As the former Soviet Union was viewed as the "evil empire," so to have the Muslims, in particular the Islamic fundamentalists, been closely identified with terrorism and global unrest. Farhang states that:

During the cold war Washington tended to see pro-Soviet conspirators as the only serious challenge to the traditional regimes in the Middle East. The Iranian revolution shattered this view and produced the temptation to make Islamic fundamentalism rather than communism the principal threat to Western interests in the region. [Ref 15, pg. 1]

The Muslim world has not had the solid foundation that the U.S. has had to foster governmental institutions and is often times considered to be antidemocratic due to their lack of support for the political liberalization of the West. On the other hand, this perception can be considered reflective of the lack of understanding by the West of the cultural differences which is contrary to the principle of open mindedness as the essence of democracy. But yet, as pointed out by James Schlesinger, the one Islamic state that has had the most successful process toward democracy is Iran.

But the U.S. has not held Iran in higher regard or entered into closer U.S./Iranian relations than any of the other states in the region. [Ref 68, pg. 20]

**b. Promotion Of Free Markets**

The promotion of free markets is viewed as a mechanism through which the U.S. can encourage other countries to open their economies and expand the opportunities for trade, bring stabilization to the region, improve the quality of life and create new trade markets for the U.S. The attributes of free markets are free trade and free flows of investment. Charles Schotta states:

Free investment flows complement and reinforce free-trade because comparative advantage can be financed from a larger pool of savings. Capital is a critically important factor of production and is scarce. If free to move to be utilized where it makes its greatest contribution to output, ...economic output will be maximized for a given amount of capital. When capital is not free, total global output inevitably will be lower than it could otherwise be. [Ref 69, pg 56]

Economic liberation through free markets is thought to be a means by which democracy, through increased economic development and trade exchange, enables a break-down of ethnic barriers and opens borders to trade. Market-oriented economies therefore imply the fostering of democracy.

## **B. HUMAN RIGHTS**

The promotion of democracy is predicated on the notion that democracies are more likely to view conflicts with compromise and accommodation and that democracies answer to their own citizens. Recognition of human rights then can be considered a precondition to and a principle of democracy.

The technology of television has brought pictures of battling factions and starving Somalis, victims of the ethnic cleansing and genocide of Bosnia, the plight of the Kurds during the Gulf War and other peoples drive for self-determination and sovereignty such as the Palestinians into every household propelling the issue of human rights into the arena of U.S. policy. Still as horrible and absurd are the incidents which have not received "CNN coverage" such as the thousands of political prisoners that Syrian President Asad has killed or the entire city and population of over 30 thousand people that were completely destroyed. [Ref 70, pp. 76-105]

During the Cold War the U.S. seemed ready to collaborate with any regime that accommodated it, regardless of how the regime ruled or treated its own people as containment of the Soviet Union was the priority. As evidenced by the ethnic

violence and human rights abuses which have tainted the present world order, it is apparent that a lack of respect for and recognition of human rights exists and that such negligence directly contributes to post Cold War unrest. This lack of recognition therefore elevates the responsibility of human rights as a U.S. interest to the level of the Department of Defense because of probably political consequences where, particularly in the Middle East, repression has become an alternative to Islamic fundamentalism. Human rights therefore has become a new part of the status quo of U.S. foreign policy. Farhang states that:

Dictatorship is at the root of instability and violence in the Middle East...The most obvious and urgent place to begin a departure from the past practices is in the area of human rights. [Ref 15, pg. 4]

With national borders becoming less constraining however, as suggested by Robert Cullen, the U.S. needs to redefine collective rights, that is the right of self-determination and non-interference by external actors and that of individual freedoms and choices. The former Soviet republics have demonstrated that the U.S. position to promote democracy can also exacerbate claims to collective rights while at the same time foster abuses in individual rights. [Ref 71, pg.80]

This awkward situation can also be seen in Iraq where U.S. support for Kurdish self-determination was highlighted by blatant violations of individual human rights while U.S. actions can be interpreted as having "turned cheek." This type of action, as does the continuance of economic and military aid to countries with reported human rights violations, tends to send conflicting messages to non-democratic countries of the intent of U.S. foreign policy causing a loss in creditability of the U.S. and negates any pro-democratic potential. Just as human rights have been propelled into U.S. foreign policy as a result of mass media and public awareness, so to do inconsistencies in diplomacy create symbols of double standards which negate the potential for transitions to democracy.

### **C. RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS**

As Doyle suggests that democratic societies are less likely to go to war with each other, it would then seem reasonable that non-democratic countries would pose the greatest concern to U.S. interests in the post Cold War environment as suggested by Huntington [Ref 5, pg. 194].



In the Middle East authority is based on "intimidation, subjugation and cooptation" and it can be reasoned that aggression by authoritarian governments against others, if given the opportunity and power, is expected. Therefore regional conflicts will be ever present in the post-Cold War environment. [Ref 72, pg. 14]

Justified by the Cold War ideology, overt and often times covert interventions were engaged and rationalized as legitimate due to concern that non-democratic countries would ally with the Soviet Union as the major adversary. The post Cold World environment however can allow for an authoritarian rulers principles to turn against themselves as a result of the attributes of global media coverage, the role of external actors whose policies support democratic development and the need for increased economic conditions. A desire for democratic reform from within seems to be paramount to the success of democracy.

A defense posture for democratic countries toward non-democratic countries therefore requires readiness by all democratic states and multilateral agreements which share responsibly for global order focusing on a consistent program of foreign aid as a tool of intervention to foster human

rights and good governmental practices. Covert involvement should be avoided as this type of action allows for blame to be placed on external actors when things go wrong. People's frustrations are then turned against a perceived external enemy thereby bolstering the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime rather than allowing the focus of their attention to be directed at the source of their conflict which in fact is the authoritarian regime.

#### **D. FOREIGN AID PROGRAM**

U.S. foreign aid can be a powerful political tool if used effectively. From past experience, foreign aid can be viewed as an interventionist tool because not only has it been used to promote economic growth and provide humanitarian relief but it also has promoted regional economic, social and political stability. During the Cold War foreign aid was viewed as a means of stabilizing social unrest by strengthening incumbent regimes, preventing insurgency and Soviet expansion thereby advancing U.S. security interests. Most importantly, foreign aid programs have been used to gain political influence for the U.S. as a less intrusive means of reshaping global order.

[Ref 73, pp. 80-82]

The issue as to whether or not foreign aid is useful is without challenge but whether or not foreign aid is used appropriately appears paramount in the post Cold War era. U.S. interests not only include the promotion of democracy, free markets, human rights and political stability but the international environment has also changed to include common interests such as the need to restart economic growth in developing countries, to eliminate poverty worldwide, to sustain the earth's environment and to promote open political systems. [Ref 74, pp. 182]

What appears wasteful and hypocritical to U.S. foreign aid program is what appears to be favoritism toward some countries and the continuance of foreign aid, in any form, to corrupt and abusive regimes whose governments cling to authoritarianism and boost of democratic reform. Examples of such oversight include Israel and Egypt. Israel claims to be democratic for Jews but appears not to be committed to holding the same freedoms of democracy to the Arabs. Egypt, as the second largest recipient of U.S. economic and military aid, is reported to have resorted to physical and psychological torture during the timeframe that security and political suspects were being held in incommunicado detention [Ref 75].

This type of practice not only fosters images of the U.S. as being imperialist and a country which practices double standards, but it also hinders acceptance of democracy as a political institution.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In the post Cold War environment the four basic concepts of security, bipolarity, bipolar rivalry and superpower alliances no longer completely define U.S. international relations and external issues. The previous alliance system to support superpower objectives has been replaced by the factors of global economic competition where the dollar has become the basis for all transactions and political stability has become the attraction of international investment. Democratic declarations are viewed as a means by which political stability can be assured. However, such declarations are not necessarily reflective of the actual practices within a country. The two factors of contestation and economic development provide insight to the extent of democratic reform within Tunisia under Ben Ali and support the hypothesis that democracy can be used as window dressing.

The government of President Ben Ali closely parallels that of Bourguiba in that both governments had/have a proclaimed democratic content; both have used the Islamic sentiment of the country to initially harness popular support; both have

instituted measures to restructure the role of Islam in Tunisia through the Personal Status Code and The National Pact; both have tried to deal with the rise of Islamic sentiment as a solution to the economic and political ills of the country and both have denied political recognition of the Islamic movement. Both government's, despite some political and economic reforms, have in essence simply replaced the former colonial powers and both have had their legitimacy challenged economically and politically. In many respects these challenges have caused a catch 22 in that either economically or politically their regimes lose legitimacy based on their performance which is the only justification for holding power.

Bourguiba's government has been described as a modern administrative dictatorship where the ruling party has dominated virtually all aspects of social and political life in Tunisia. Ben Ali's government in comparison, where simply the name of the ruling party was changed, can be described as an authoritarian regime in practice due to the limited and controlled pluralism of political thinking, expression, organization and action that is allowed within the country [Ref 76, pg. 229]. Ben Ali boasts of a multiparty legislature

and political pluralism although in practice this seems unlikely simply due to the governments criteria for and control over the political parties. Huntington states:

...a system is undemocratic to the extent that no opposition is permitted in elections, or that the opposition is curbed or harassed in what it can do, or that opposition newspapers are censored or closed down, or that votes are manipulated or miscounted. [Ref 10, pp. 7-8]

Although the National Pact established criteria of and conduct for political parties and multi-party political participation is proclaimed, as suggested by Lisa Anderson, it is not participation that underlines democracy but rather contestation [Ref 16, pg. 259]. Ben Ali may have changed the constitution to delete the provision of the presidency for life but with the ruling party in control of the country, he is assured reelection to the maximum three five year consecutive terms as president. Huntington states:

The probability of stable democracy emerging will be enhanced to the extent that the transition can be a gradual one, that the introduction of contestation precedes the expansion of political participation, and that the role of violence in the transition is minimized. The probability of democratization decreases sharply to the extent that political life in a society becomes highly polarized and involves violent conflict between social forces. [Ref 5, pp. 214-215]

The violence, social unrest and non-recognition of the Islamic movement as a political party of both governments underlines the lack of government contestation. If democracy is a matter of power distribution as suggested by Rueschemeyer and if a strong middle class is needed to foster democracy, the monopoly of the ruling party needs to be broken. During the 1980's, the Tunisian Islamic movement was comprised mainly of the lower classes and the secular opposition groups were comprised largely of the middle and upper-middle classes [Ref 31, pg. 90]. Although the middle classes prospered under Bourguiba, they were reportedly unhappy with the absence of a fully democratic regime [Ref 31, pg. 90]. If, as suggested by Farhang, a functional alliance existed between the middle classes and the urban poor or lower-middle classes, the strength of the middle class would in essence lie within the al-Nahda and this combined force could bring about the avenue toward true democratic reform. [Ref 15, pg. 3]

As apparent in Ben Ali's interpretation of democracy which is based on majority representation rather than proportional representation, democracy is understood as collective participation rather than a political mechanism to allow for individual liberties and political rights of belief,



expression and dissent. [Ref 16, pp. 259-260] Government contestation can be considered a true reflection of a democratic government with the ideal of government of the people, for the people and by the people. Democracy cannot occur without separation of power. Lack of contestation is also the definitive of an authoritarian government.

Economically, Tunisia's high level of unemployment, lack of education and although not a direct factor, high ratio of imports has contributed to Tunisia's dependence on European and Western trade and investment which is paramount to the country's livelihood. Both Huntington and Rueschemeyer propose that economic democracy or a market economy are the most promising means to achieve formal democracy. Although free markets are perceived to foster democracy, democracy is a political system rather than a social and economic system. Huntington cautions that free markets do not guarantee democracy. Specifically:

...economic development produces a phase in a nation's history where political elites and the prevailing political values can shape choices that decisively determine the nation's future evolution... Economic development compels the modification or abandonment of traditional political institutions; it does not determine what political system will replace them. [Ref 5, pp. 201-202]

Tunisia cannot risk a perception from the U.S. or Europe that it is an unreliable ally which would break the confidence barrier needed to foster foreign investment. Accordingly, the proclamation of democracy by President Ben Ali is in the best interests of the country as a means to gain good standings both politically and economically with Western nations, the IMF and the World Bank to ensure continued economic investment and not to be left behind in the changing global environment. The AMU is a prime example of this concern as in a world where regional trading blocks are developing, poorer countries will have a more difficult task of integration and shared economic growth with regional neighbors because their previous economic prosperity has been linked to either the West or Europe [Ref 60].

In essence Ben Ali, having personally experienced the challenges of Bourguiba, elected to gamble on the proclamations of democracy to legitimize his rule and to foster foreign investment and economic aid. This proclamation of democracy would give an illusion of political stability and a means by which his regime can survive and foster legitimacy and thereby not allow an economic crisis to be an opening for a revived Islamic movement and governmental overthrow as was

the case of Bourguiba. In other words, a healthy growing economy would in essence reduce the appeal of extremist groups; the Islamic movement in Tunisia as seen by Ben Ali. The importance however is that, as suggested by Huntington, economic growth alone will not lead to the success of democracy.

The political declarations of Ben Ali presents U.S. policy makers with several challenges. 1) Countries that are dependent on foreign investment make it difficult to effectively use the policy tool of economic sanctions. Not all investing countries will electively support sanctions as not only does it effect the country against which sanctions are imposed but it also hinders the economic lines of those investing countries. 2) If the goal of U.S. policy toward Tunisia is to maintain stability, then support of Ben Ali's government regardless of its practices is in keeping with this goal. This in turn creates the image of double standards in U.S. foreign policy and promotes the concept of Western imperialism. 3) If the promotion of democracy in principle is the objective, then true democratic practices risk the possibility of intolerant, anti-American government assuming power. As previously addressed, democracy is not complex

formulas for governance and political participation but rather a set of processes and social forces that culminate into individual freedoms and choices. The concept of Western individual freedoms owes much to the American Bill of Rights where such freedoms as the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech and press, and the freedom of discrimination on the basis of race creed or sex have become the pillars of American democracy. If the Western concept of individual freedoms is applied to the Middle East then it stands to reason that the freedoms and choices include the freedom to be pro-Islamic, anti-American and even anti-democratic with preference to political culture. It also implies the respect for the fundamental principles of freedom from torture and arbitrary arrest, the right to due process of law and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

Every political system rests on a culture system and every culture system rests on that societies experiences and values. It is the people themselves who will determine whether democratic systems will be established and whether they will survive. Tunisia's importance to the U.S. is that of political stability. Tunisia represents a unique opportunity for the creation of a democratic Islamic government should Ben

Ali give the Islamic movement a recognized political voice. Although the recent unrest in Algeria makes this possibility all the more unlikely, movement on a true democratic path regardless of economic progress will not occur until such political factors are addressed.

In the post Cold War environment where the issue of human rights has become a U.S. interest, perhaps the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy should be that of good governmental practices which recognize individual freedoms rather than democratic reform. This in turn would preclude the use of democracy as window dressing, project clear U.S. policy intentions and deter the perception of Western imperialism.

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## APPENDIX A - RECOGNIZED AND BANNED POLITICAL PARTIES

Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique (RCD) or Democratic Constitutional Rally. A moderate left-wing republican party. Formerly the Destourian Socialist Party. Founded June 3, 1920. President Ben Ali is the chairman.

Mouvement des Democratres Socialistes (MDS) or Movement of Socialist Democrats. Supports pluralism. Founded June 10, 1978. President is Mohamed Moada.

Mouvement de l'Unite' Populaire (MUP). Supports radical reform. Split into two factions. Coordinator is Brahim Hayder.

Parti de l'Union Populaire (PUP) or Popular Unity Party. Broke away from the MUP. Secretary General is Mohamed Belhaj Amor.

Mouvement Ettajdid or Ettajdid Movement. Formerly the Tunisian Communist Party. Renamed April 23, 1993. Secretary General is Mohamed Harmel.

Union Democratique Unioniste (UDU) or Unionist Democratic Union. Supports Arab unity. Secretary General is Abderrahmane Tlili.

Rassemblement Socialiste Progressiste (RSP) or Progressive Socialist Rally. A left-wing party. Founded December 13, 1983. Secretary General is Ahmed Nejib Chebbi.

Parti Social Liberal (PSL) or Liberal Social Party. Secretary General is Mounir Beji.

Parti de la Renaissance or al-Nahda. Formerly the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI). Banned in 1981. Leader is Rached Ghannouchi.

Rassemblement National Arabe. Banned in 1981. Leader is Bashir Assad.

(Sources: Tunisia Digest, January-February 1994; The Middle East And North Africa 1994, Europa Publication)

**APPENDIX B - LISTING OF U.S. AID TO TUNISIA**

1992	16,000,000.00
1991	5,000,000.00
1990	38,000,000.00
1989	176,000,000.00
1988	7,000,000.00
1987	3,000,000.00
1986	40,000,000.00
1985	111,000,000.00
1984	118,000,000.00
1983	116,000,000.00
1982	25,000,000.00
1981	50,000,000.00
1980	10,000,000.00

(Source: The World Almanac And Book Of Facts 1981 through 1994, Funk & Wagnalls Corporation)

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