

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

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

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## **Abstract**

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

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

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