Mind Over Matter: Democratic Transitions In Ideological States

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Michael J. Koplow, JD

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MIND OVER MATTER: DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN IDEOLOGICAL STATES

Michael J. Koplow, JD

Thesis Advisor: Marc M. Howard, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In seeking to explain why and when democratic transitions occur or do not occur, political science has treated all types of states similarly without regard to a state’s ideological character despite ideology being a critical variable for a significant subset of states. Does political ideology matter when it comes to democratic transitions? What roles does political ideology play in hindering or altogether preventing successful transitions to democracy? This dissertation argues that ideological conflict over first-order political principles between authoritarian regimes and opposition groups acts as a structural constraint on democratic transitions, and that until the conflict over political ideology is resolved, states will not transition to democracy.

Through typological theorizing, statistical analysis of ideological states in the second half of the 20th century, and case studies of Turkey and Tunisia, this dissertation demonstrates why ideological conflict prevents a successful transition process and process traces the manner in which ideological conflict between regimes and opposition groups presents a barrier to democratization and how this barrier is overcome. Since ideological regimes vet their political opponents on the basis of ideology, they are unwilling to open up the political system without guarantees from the opposition that the regime ideology will outlast their own rule. This dissertation argues that ideological regimes place the survival of their hegemonic ideology above their own survival in power, and once an ideological regime has been assured that its ideology will survive a transfer of power, transitions are allowed to proceed apace. By explaining why and
how ideology can impact transitions, this dissertation enhances our understanding of political
development and the motivations and interests of an important subset of authoritarian states.
This dissertation would have not have been written without the help and advice of a number of people and institutions. Thanks to the Georgetown Government Department for providing a travel grant that allowed me to spend time researching in Turkey, and to the extremely helpful library staff at Boğaziçi University and the American Research Institute in Turkey Istanbul Center.

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Many thanks,

Michael J. Koplow
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“A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without
death.”

- President John F. Kennedy

**Introduction**

Over the course of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a bevy of states successfully transitioned to
democracy. These transitions encompassed states in nearly every region of the world, and
included states with diverse sets of backgrounds and political histories. All manner of states,
whether they were formerly Communist, military dictatorships, colonial territories, or garden
variety authoritarian, were able to undergo orderly transitions to elected governments and
democratic rule. The spread of democracy around the globe led to a wealth of new research and
scholarship on the causal mechanisms and structural forces behind democratic transitions, but
not nearly as much attention on the factors that can hinder successful transitions. While
understanding how democracies emerge is critically important for mapping the larger terrain of
political development, so too is it important to examine the factors that prevent democracy from
emerging. The question this dissertation asks and attempts to adequately answer is, what role
does political ideology play in hindering or altogether preventing successful transitions to
democracy?

I argue that ideology plays a crucial role in determining whether a state transitions to
democracy by acting as a structural constraint on a successful democratic transition. When
conflict in an ideological state exists between an authoritarian regime and the primary opposition
and the opposition is unwilling to accept the regime’s political ideology, a democratic transition
will not take place until the conflict has been resolved. Ideological states are governed according to a set of first-order principles from which they derive their legitimacy, and they allow these principles to bind them and constrain their range of actions. Since political ideology is taken seriously and guides regimes’ views on the nature and purpose of the state, they seek to protect it at all costs and will not willingly turn over power to a party or group that will endanger that ideology’s hegemony. Much in the way that democratic transitions are frequently marked by pacts in which outgoing regimes attempt to protect their economic interests and privileged place in society, ideological regimes attempt to safeguard their ideological interests as well and ensure that their favored ideology survives a transfer of power.

In the context of democratic transitions, ideology should be viewed as a significant obstacle that must be overcome in order for the elite bargaining and negotiating process to take place. Regime elites who have been steeped in a brew of ideological tenets and have expended significant time and effort in order to protect and advance those ideological principles will not drop them so easily. Democratization is a difficult process and democratic transitions require a confluence of events, conditions, and timing that all must break in a certain direction simultaneously. When the added variable of ideological conflict is introduced into this mix, it presents a barrier that halts the process in its tracks. Ideological regimes vet their political opponents on the basis of ideology, and they are unwilling to open up the political system absent guarantees from the opposition that the regime ideology will live on. In essence, I demonstrate over the course of this dissertation that ideological regimes prioritize the survival of their ideology over their own continuation in power.
It is this ranking of priorities with ideology at the very top that makes ideological conflict so difficult to overcome in the context of democratic transitions. An authoritarian regime facing the prospect of a transition to democracy is dealing with a high degree of uncertainty, and if its primary concern over ideology is not addressed, it is unlikely to trust that any of its other interests will be protected in the aftermath of a transition. An opposition that espouses a political ideology different from that espoused by the ruling party creates a heightened threat perception on the regime’s part, and makes a peaceful transition impossible. Only once the regime is satisfied that its political ideology will remain in place following a potential transfer of power will it allow the transition process to proceed.

Treating ideology as a powerful force in political development appears to be out of vogue. In a much heralded and still debated article,¹ Francis Fukuyama famously declared the world to be entering “the end of history” in the sense that the era of ideological evolution was, in his view, over. According to Fukuyama, liberal democracy as an ideology had conquered rival ideologies such as Communism and fascism, and it was thus destined to survive as a form of government in a way that previous models did not because it was bereft of internal ideological contradictions. Whether Fukuyama was correct or not is an interesting debate in and of itself, but his declaration of an end to vast ideological struggles as it pertains to how states organize themselves seems to have been echoed in the field of comparative politics. Whereas the existence of a Communist bloc or a wave of secular Arab nationalism underscored the importance of ideology and its impact on states and institutions, the third wave of democracy and the related fall of Communism and dissolution of the Soviet Union pushed ideology to the periphery. If the tug of war between Western democracy and Soviet Communism was viewed as

a great ideological struggle, the post-Cold War movements from authoritarianism to democracy and back have not been viewed in the same light. The political science literature on transitions, which developed in earnest as the Cold War was ending and took off over the subsequent two decades, paints a portrait of functional concerns and constraints in which ideology plays no role. That this academic scholarship was written during a time in which the ideological battles that marked much of the 20th century were coming to a close is not, to my mind, a coincidence. If authoritarian regimes were no longer viewed as basing their legitimacy on a set of clearly laid out ideological principles, then it would be only natural to remove ideology from the equation and delve into other variables that would matter to regimes facing pressures of democratization and threats to their survival. Much as ideology receded to the background in world events, so too was the case in the political science literature dealing with political development.

Understanding the intersection of ideology and democratic transitions deserves a degree of salience that it has not been accorded. As will be outlined below, the literature on democratic transitions is silent on the question of ideology, with many words devoted to structural requisites and the detailed mechanics of the transition process itself, but how political ideology factors into this equation, or if it indeed matters at all, has not been explored. Given the importance that political science has placed upon ideology in explaining issues such as interstate war, alliance patterns, and voting behavior, to name but a handful, it stands to reason that ideology has a place in explaining regime outcomes as well in certain situations. Furthermore, no distinction

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2 See review of relevant literature below.
has been made in the academic literature on transitions between states that are organized around central ideological principles and states that are not. Inasmuch as ideology plays a role in determining the way in which some states act in their interactions with other states and with their own citizens, it is logical to conclude that ideology factors into regime decisions on whether to liberalize, negotiate with opposition parties, and initiate a transition to a different type of political system.

Yet, political science theorizing has not addressed this topic, and rather has generally “blackboxed” transitional regimes as going through similar processes irrespective of their ideological commitments. There is a developed literature on the way that institutional legacies constrain transitions, in which potential barriers to successful transitions to democracy can include, for example, pacts during the transition process that freeze undemocratic practices in place; a lack of institutionalized politics that leaves no arena for bargaining or formal apparatus for negotiating between regimes and oppositions; legacies of popular authoritarianism that make economic reforms suicidal and thus preclude true democratic bargains; and the mode of transition itself, which shapes the post-transition regime by affecting future patterns of competition and institutional rules. New institutional scholarship has not, however, applied the paradigm of institutional legacies to examining regime ideologies and whether a deep ideological commitment to a set of first order political principles can shape a transition process and affect its

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9 Gerardo L. Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, “Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective” in *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (April 1997): 343-62.
success. There is no reason to assume that something as deeply entrenched as a state ideology, which has roots throughout a state’s political and bureaucratic institutions, should have any less of an impact on a transition than a regime’s military character or history of patronage politics. Nevertheless, ideological legacies and their impact on transitional politics is a subject area that is under-theorized and not well understood. While the niche in comparative politics colloquially known as transitology seems to have been taken to its logical conclusion in many ways, there is much room remaining for a set of mid-range theories on ideology and ideological conflict.

Ideology remained and still remains a crucial variable in a subset of cases in which ideology matters to the parties involved in a transition, namely regimes and opposition groups. Even if Fukuyama was right that ideological evolution is at an end, it does not mean that ideology is no longer important. Ideological commitment may not be a feature of as many regimes as it once was, but ideology is still a salient factor for the regimes that maintain a core political ideology. In addition, the literature on democratic transitions reflects the era in which it was written, when ideology seemed increasingly less important than it had once been, but this should not alter the fact that transitions that occurred in the prior decades may have been influenced by ideology in a greater way.

In addition to the academic rationale for writing on ideology and democratic transitions, there is a policy rationale as well. The topic of ideology and its relationship to political transitions has lately dominated current events in the Middle East. Popular uprisings, armed conflicts, and military-led coups have led to regime upheaval across the region since early 2011 and ushered in transitional governments in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen, while the governments of Syria and Jordan have faced differing varieties and levels of pressure as well. In
many of these cases, issues of ideology have come to the forefront as secular nationalist regimes have been challenged and overtaken by Islamist parties, leading to questions of how and when issues of ideological conflict can be successfully overcome, and whether ideology is a causal factor in these transitions or simply a coincidental or ancillary variable. Particularly following the fall of Communism, the Middle East is in some ways the last bastion of true political ideology, and understanding how ideology plays a role in these nascent transitions themselves, and not only in the struggles over governance following the replacement of old regimes, has become crucial from a policy perspective as well as an academic one.

This dissertation will develop a theory of democratic transitions in ideological states and posit that ideological conflict between regimes and opposition groups acts as a constraint on successful transitions, and moreover that a transition from authoritarianism to democracy will not occur until the ideological conflict has been resolved. I propose to conceive of ideological conflict in a unique way, which is as a structural constraint on the transitions process, and to analyze its effects in a similar manner to the way in which any other political or socioeconomic structural variable is utilized. In doing so, I hope to reintroduce ideology back into the pool of factors under consideration when studying political transitions, and to establish a structural theory of ideological conflict that can be applied to explain any relevant cases. Ultimately, I shall make an overall argument that ideological conflict is a decisive factor for democratic transitions in a set of cases in which other political and socioeconomic variables would suggest conditions ripe for a transition. While ideology is one factor among many, its potency as a causal variable should not be overlooked.
Chapter I

When it comes to the subject of democratic transitions, the scholarly literature encompasses a wide range of viewpoints. There is disagreement over how to approach the subject, and whether it makes sense to take a wider view and examine the structural causes of and constraints on transitions, or whether a more fruitful approach is to focus on the mechanism of the transition itself. Scholars have outlined a number of general conditions that are generally present in successful transitions to democracy, but there is disagreement over this as well, with some insisting that only one or a few factors are sufficient – or sometimes no outside conditions deemed to be necessary at all – and others suggesting a more complex overall picture. Nevertheless, attempts to describe the political trajectories of democratic transitions inevitably break down into two camps. The first hones in on structural factors that promote or inhibit the chances of a successful transition and attempts to describe the ideal conditions for democracy to flourish. In contrast, the second school of thought does not look at things on a macro structural level, but instead focuses on the process of the transition from one political system to another, with a specific spotlight on elite agency and the divisions between hardliners and softliners that cause a rupture in the regime. Some approaches focus exclusively on one or the other of these two broad categories while some combine the two, but an examination of the major works on transitions theory reveals the way in which this dichotomy has shaped the thinking on transitions. A review of this literature also reveals why ideology has been an under-theorized, if not almost entirely ignored, element in the scholarship on democratic transitions.
The field of transitology was foreshadowed by Dankwart Rustow, who incorporated elements of both approaches in his seminal 1970 article. Rustow argues that democracy can thrive in nearly any environment without a surfeit of preconditions, and that transitions are even possible in situations where conditions make democracy unlikely to emerge. Rustow describes transitions going through three phases, with the initial phase being an inconclusive political struggle that mobilizes the participants and pits different social classes against each other. This gives way to the next phase compromising the actual transition where elites decides to adopt democracy and the sides bargain with each other and negotiate compromises. Finally, the third phase is what later political scientists described as consolidation, in which the rules and procedures of democracy become habituated following repetition over time. Rustow believes that the actual process of the transition is decisive rather than structural factors such as wealth, political culture, or civil society, which appears to put him squarely in the camp that favors looking at elite action and prioritizes agency in the transition process. Nevertheless, Rustow maintains that one single background condition is necessary for a transition, which is national unity. By national unity, Rustow means that the majority of citizens are unwavering in their sense of belonging to a particular political community, and he singles out Arab states as not meeting this criterion due to their aspirations in some instances to merge. While Rustow does not state this outright, the logical implication that follows is that a sense of cohesive political community is more easily attained when there is ethnic and cultural unity, which increases the

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11 Ibid., 350-52. Rustow may have been overstating the point when it came to identifying Arab states as prone to merge into larger political units; the only instance of modern Arab states merging was the 1958 formation by Syria and Egypt of the United Arab Republic, an experiment which was ended a mere three years later. While pan-Arabism certainly loomed large at the time Rustow was writing, his observation about Arab populations seems exaggerated in light of the absence of supporting evidence of mergers along with the prevalence of nationalist leaders in many Arab countries at the time.
likelihood of political unity and a sense of shared political and civic identity. Indeed, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan note that conflicts between democratization policies and nation-state policies are likely to emerge if there are multiple nations within a state or if there are high levels of cultural diversity. Furthermore, the more a population of a state is composed of different national, lingual, religious, or cultural societies, the more difficult an agreement will be on the fundamentals of what democracy in that state should look like. Thus, while Rustow has been claimed by the agency camp as one of their own, in reality his work on transitions makes him a more complicated figure to characterize in absolutes than has been generally accepted.

Rustow’s main arguments lead to a number of interesting conclusions that can be inferred from his work. First, it implies that any state can become democratic assuming that there is acceptance of the political boundaries of the state. Second, because Rustow describes three phases and believes that it is the process itself that would control the success or failure of a transition, if one stage of the process is skipped, then theoretically democracy will not take hold. This lends credence to the idea that the mode of transition is important, since democracy that emerges without a protracted political and class struggle – as occurred, for instance, during Turkey’s transition immediately after WWII – is doomed to fail. Third, democracy does not require actual committed democrats, but rather requires people to adopt democracy as a way of ending conflict rather than out of some deeply held philosophical belief in democracy; commitment to democratic principles comes later after they have been implemented in practice. Finally, the decisive group for Rustow is very clearly elites rather than the public.

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These lessons from Rustow’s early work on transitions very logically led to Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter’s writings on the subject. O’Donnell and Schmitter’s *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule* is often the jumping off point for anyone studying democratic transitions, and the book is indeed a concise crystallization of what are viewed as the factors most germane to a successful transition away from authoritarianism. While their work acknowledges that ideological constraints on the international level can affect actors’ perceptions about a regime’s long-term viability, their roadmap for how transitions can be expected to play out does not consider ideology at the domestic level as a variable or even as a structural constraint. In O’Donnell and Schmitter’s view, transitions begin with a split between hardliners and softliners, leading to liberalization and a limited political opening, which in turn prompts a cycle of opposition mobilization and eventually a negotiated pact. The focus is on agency and the strategic behavior of relevant actors, and while regime attitudes toward electoral legitimation determine the split between hardliners and softliners, there is no discussion of differences in political ideology within the regime, or more crucially, between the regime and the various opposition movements; the conflict with the opposition is over the rules of the game, not over the very basis of the state.\(^{14}\)

Like Rustow, O’Donnell and Schmitter believe that a transition goes through distinct stages. Not only does a transition begin with a regime split, which is then followed by liberalization first and a political opening second, but the split itself goes through three phases of mobilization, in which regime hardliners and softliners try to recruit fence sitters to their respective sides and determine whether or not there is a high enough degree of cohesion within


\(^{14}\) Ibid., 15-47.
the regime to order a repressive crackdown. Similarly, the resurrection of civil society and restructuring of public space is contingent upon prior elite action in which the softliners prevail, guarantee rights of political contestation, and negotiate with regime opponents, and only after these steps occur will the public begin to mobilize. The emphasis on a roadmap of sorts in which one set step must logically be preceded by other set steps creates a presumption of rational calculation by elite actors who are not necessarily looking to implement democracy, but are trying to contain damaging fallout and preserve their positions of power. This rationalist approach assumes that democracy is a second-best solution, as the regime split and the opposition mobilization combine to create an intractable political stalemate, which is resolved by holding elections and instituting democracy, thereby preserving the principle of uncertainty. Such an approach generally examines the various incentive structures, and how assumptions about best and worst case scenarios lead to democracy as an unintended consequence.

In O’Donnell and Schmitter’s formulation, the split between regime hardliners and softliners and the decision to open up the political system does not hinge on the ideological nature of the opposition, but on the desire for electoral legitimation and the confluence of internal domestic factors, such as the degree of regime success and the existence of pre-

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16 Ibid., 48.
authoritarian representative institutions, signals of an imminent political crisis and social unrest, a decrease in coercive capacity combined with prolonged economic stagnation, or deteriorating economic performance leading to the defection of private sector groups.

Somewhat ironically given its general belief that democracy is not brought about by democrats and that democracy results from a stalemate rather than from being an ideal preference, the rationalist approach is actually optimistic about the possibility of democracy’s emergence since there are fewer limitations that might prevent a transition from occurring. When rationalist scholars look at the transitional moment, ideological conflict between the regime and the opposition is not considered because it does not fit into the game theoretic paradigm. As Adam Przeworski puts it when discussing the theory that a loss of legitimacy – which is often tied into ideology – leads to the collapse of authoritarian regimes, “The entire problem of legitimacy is in my view incorrectly posed. What matters for the stability of any regime is not the legitimacy of this particular system of domination but the presence or absence of preferable alternatives.”

Because a game theoretic rational choice approach looks at the cold set of choices made by regime elites at each juncture in the process, ideology is not a variable that can be easily problematized or quantified. In seeking to explain causal outcomes, the focus is on a more narrowly defined set of material interests that drive decision making, and preserving a regime’s ideology does not fit neatly inside the rationalist box.

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18 O’Donnell and Schmitter, 17-23.
19 Przeworski, Democracy and the Market, 57.
20 Linz and Stepan, 76-81.
While this agency-centered approach is the dominant one when it comes to democratic transitions, it is not without its detractors. Daniel Levine was an early critic of O’Donnell and Schmitter, taking exception to their laser-like focus on elites to the exclusion of other factors in writing, “Leaders and followers cannot be examined in isolation, but must be grasped through the construction of organized social and political relationships….we are left with reified social forces moving at one level, and leaders interacting at another.”²³ For Levine, the notion that elites make decisions and drive the process divorced from other actors such as political parties – which make no appearance in O’Donnell and Schmitter’s “Little Green Book” – or civil society was a misnomer and one not borne out by the actual history of transitions.

A more wide-ranging and influential critique comes from Thomas Carothers, who disparages what he dubs the “transitions paradigm” that emerged from rationalist agency-centered scholarship on transitions. Carothers challenges five major assumptions endemic to the universal approach suggested by O’Donnell and Schmitter, among others, which are that: any movement away from authoritarianism is a movement toward democracy; a set sequence of teleological stages exists; elections are the most important element in a transition; any country can be democratic irrespective of economics, history, institutions, ethnic makeup, society, or culture; democracy-building and state-building are mutually reinforcing. Carothers wants to see more attention paid to structure and historical legacies rather than assuming that any country can transition no matter what and that every transition will unfold along a set path as it goes through the same sequence of steps.²⁴ While Carothers was writing primarily for democracy activists in a call to improve democracy promotion efforts, his exhortation to reject the principle that “a

country’s chances for successfully democratizing depend primarily on the political intentions and actions of its political elites without significant influence from underlying economic, social, and institutional conditions and legacies”

was rightly influential among transitions scholars. The concentration on agency and the universalizing approach are intimately linked, and for scholars inclined to look at structural factors, a very different way of looking at transitions emerged.

This second school of thought on transitions looks at structure rather than agency, and because structural factors by definition change across different cases, this camp is far more sensitive to variations among transition types and across states. The structural school in many ways has its genesis in modernization theory, and like the agency school with Rustow can be traced back to an early article, in this case written by Seymour Martin Lipset. Looking at factors that he viewed as preconditions for successful democracy, Lipset posits a link between economic development and regime type, contending that increased wealth is causally related to the development of democracy for a variety of reasons including urbanization, increased receptivity to democratic norms, the creation of a middle class, increased education, and the development of civil society.

Lipset also writes that a successful democracy must maintain legitimacy, which he ties to a government’s effectiveness in satisfying society’s expectations and granting all major groups access to the political system. In addition, Lipset emphasizes the importance of cross-cutting cleavages in society, which will moderate the effects of partisanship and reduce political conflict. Thus, objectively measured factors such as economic well-being are crucial to Lipset’s view of what will help democracies emerge and endure, but so are more nebulous

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25 Ibid., 17.
27 Ibid., 86-97.
concepts such as political culture and bridging social capital. The important takeaway is that rather than focusing on elite behavior and bargaining within regimes and between regimes and opponents, Lipset is more concerned with looking at outside structural factors, with an implicit assumption that any transition process will be easier when certain variables are present and more difficult when they are absent.

Picking up this approach three decades later of looking at transitions from a more structural and less rationalist point of view, Samuel Huntington examines the wide range of independent variables thought to cause democratization and transitions, concluding that no single factor can explain the occurrence of democracy but that it results from a combination of causes.\(^{28}\) In looking at third wave transitions, he singles out economic development, changes in Catholicism, a new focus on democracy promotion by Western states, and demonstration effects as being particularly salient.\(^{29}\) While Huntington stresses that “[t]he emergence of social, economic, and external conditions favorable to democracy is never enough to produce democracy” and that people – not trends – create democracy, his emphasis is not on elite bargaining or game theoretical calculations of rational actors, but on structural conditions; “Political leaders cannot through will and skill create democracy where preconditions are absent.”\(^{30}\) Like Lipset, Huntington hones in on the economic angle in particular, drawing an

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 40-106.
explicit connection between economic well-being and democracy, pointing out that wealthy
countries tend to be democracies while poor countries tend to be authoritarian and that the
movement of countries into upper-middle income levels promotes democratization.31 Similarly,
David Epstein and his colleagues found that high levels of GDP correlate with transitions toward
democracy in that high per capita income increases the likelihood of a state moving away from
authoritarianism and decreases the likelihood of a state moving away from democracy.32 While
there is debate among structuralists over whether high GDP drives democratic transitions or
whether it only helps to consolidate democracies,33 there is broad agreement among
transitologists that economic well-being is both an indicator and a driver of democracy.

Scholars of the structural school turn to other factors as well to explain what drives
transitions or makes them more likely to take place. An increasingly common variable that
comes up is a vibrant civil society, which has been traditionally overlooked by the scholarly
literature when it comes to effecting transitions but has been the focus of more recent work.34 In
many of the third wave transitions, protests and strikes by trade unions, students, and average
citizens were the impetus for transition by destabilizing incumbent authoritarian governments
and creating elite divisions. Oftentimes, the call for political change emanates from a mobilized
civil society that voices its discontent with the ruling regime, and the growth of civil society can

31 Huntington, 59-72.
33 See Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, Democracy and
Press, 2000) for the position that economic development does not generate democracy, but does increase the
likelihood that democracies will remain as such.
34 See e.g. Marc Morjé Howard, The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2003); Larry Diamond, Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins
University Press, 1999), 218-60; Michael Bernhard, “Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central
lead to an increase in resistance and a rise in the costs of repression for the state.\textsuperscript{35} While early transitions scholarship focused almost exclusively on elites as the drivers of civil society,\textsuperscript{36} transitions in former Eastern bloc countries such as Czechoslovakia and earlier third wave transitions in countries such as Spain and South Korea highlight the role that the public and civil society organizations can play in effecting transition from below rather than from above. Civil society as a structural condition for a successful transition is not seen as being as important as socioeconomic well-being, but it is still viewed as germane for mobilizing publics and placing pressure on regimes to implement liberalizing reforms.

Unlike the agency school, the structural school does not ignore ideology entirely, although it never approaches treating ideology as a full-fledged structural variable. Whereas there is no room for ideology in a rationalist approach, a structural approach can theoretically incorporate ideology as a causal variable that will have consequences for a transition’s outcome. When discussing factors that might reduce political conflict, Lipset does not mention ideology – which should have been a logical area to explore in relation to whether citizens view a government as legitimate – although he does briefly mention symbolism and values as factoring into the legitimacy equation.\textsuperscript{37} The one instance in which Lipset approaches something resembling a discussion of ideology is in his discussion of secular political culture as a test of a state’s legitimacy. He notes that while the U.S. has a common secular political culture based on veneration of the Founding Fathers and later presidents such as Lincoln and the principles that they espoused, this is not a feature common to all Western democracies. As an example, he

\textsuperscript{35} Diamond, Developing Democracy, 233-39.
\textsuperscript{36} See O’Donnell & Schmitter, who maintain that civil society only plays a role after elite divisions have been exploited by softliners and the process of liberalization has begun.
\textsuperscript{37} Lipset, 87.
chalks up battles over the use of political symbols in France to the lack of a unifying political culture that would create a common heritage.\(^\text{38}\) In this way, without making the direct and explicit connection, Lipset is acknowledging that ideology is not only tied into the creation of regime legitimacy, but also that a uniformly accepted ideology can tamp down potentially divisive political battles. Extrapolating from Lipset and taking his thought to its logical conclusion, it is reasonable to assume that contesting ideology will potentially lead to conflict, and that just as ideology can be a calming force, it can also cause upheaval if there is disagreement over its acceptance or its parameters.

Huntington briefly hints at the role that ideology plays in mentioning that ideological problems needed to be overcome in certain single party non-military regimes where the nature and purpose of the state were intertwined with the party ideology,\(^\text{39}\) yet does not explore this process any further or even mention ideology in his discussion of how and why transitions occur. He obviously recognizes that ideology can present a problem for regimes whose legitimacy is wrapped up in an ideological veneer, but does not pursue the subsequent path of reasoning, which is to develop a theory of how ideology affects transitions and in what instances ideology can be overcome. In examining why authoritarian states ultimately decide to liberalize, democratize, and finally transition, Huntington and other structuralists relegate the role of ideology and ideological conflict to the sidelines.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 89.
\(^{39}\) Huntington, 118-19.
Ideology’s Absence

There are two primary reasons why ideology has been ignored in the transitions debate, one definitional and one methodological. The first is a result of Juan Linz’s famously articulated distinctions between different types of regimes. In constructing his typology of non-democracies, Linz delineates a bright line between totalitarian states and authoritarian states. Totalitarian regimes, according to Linz, are characterized by the simultaneous presence of a single mass party, power that is concentrated in an individual or a small group, and an ideology. These three factors must all be present and must maintain a certain baseline of strength in order for the nature of the system to be totalitarian, although degrees of difference lead to a variety of totalitarian types and outcomes. These three factors combine to create conditions that we associate with totalitarian regimes, and other characteristics that may mark totalitarian regimes are neither necessary nor sufficient, and are derivative of these three basic dimensions.

More specifically, Linz classifies a system as totalitarian if it contains a single center of power that grants legitimacy to any institutions or groups that exist; an elaborate, exclusive, and autonomous ideology that provides meaning, purpose, and interpretation of social reality, while also being used as a basis for policies; and a single party that encourages participation and mobilizes the masses for political and social tasks. For Linz, the ideological commitments are the glue that holds the entire system together, as they shape the totalitarian regime’s actions and provide a guide for what type of mass political participation will be allowed. Linz differentiates totalitarian leaders from other types of non-democratic leaders by their sense of mission, which legitimizes specific policies and gives them an overarching worldview. According to Linz, there

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41 Ibid., 69-70.
42 Ibid., 70.
is a wide spectrum of complexity when examining political ideology, with Marxism more intellectually elaborate and heterogenous than fascism, but no matter the level of ideological development, the commitment to an ideology imposes constraints and limits the range of acceptable policies. Totalitarian ideologies can be selectively interpreted or manipulated, particularly by second generation leaders, but only the absolute abandonment of the ideology in the form of pragmatic policies and ideas that explicitly conflict the regime’s ideology will lead to the end of the totalitarian system in place.43

Because this notion of ideological commitment is so important, Linz characterizes regimes differently once the ideological components become more cosmetic or begin to disappear. In Linz’s view, the absence of ideology is one of the factors that transform a totalitarian regime into an authoritarian regime, with the marker of authoritarian regimes being mentalities rather than ideologies. In addition to possessing “distinctive mentalities” rather than “elaborate and guiding ideology,” authoritarian regimes are defined by having political systems with limited pluralism, political mobilization that is neither extensive nor intensive, and power that is exercised by a leader or small group of oligarchs within ill-defined but predictable limits.44 Linz hones in on the element of pluralism as being the most distinctive feature of authoritarian regimes, with a wide variation between degrees of pluralism in authoritarian regimes, but spends the most time attempting to flesh out the difference between ideology and mentality.

In outlining the distinctions between ideologies and mentalities, Linz writes, “Mentality is intellectual attitude, ideology is intellectual content. Mentality is psychic predisposition,

43 Ibid., 76-78.
44 Ibid., 159.
ideology is reflection, self-interpretation; mentality is previous, ideology later; mentality is formless, fluctuating – ideology, however, is firmly formed…. Let us admit that the distinction is and cannot be clear-cut but reflects two extreme poles with a large gray area in between.”

He contends that ideologies and mentalities differ in form, coherence, articulation, comprehensiveness, explicitness, intellectual elaboration, and normativeness, and that these differences are not inconsequential since mentalities are less binding and are not enforced by regimes with coercive measures. In other words, the stakes are much lower over mentalities as compared to ideologies since mentalities are not as elaborate and regimes do not place a high level of importance on developing them or imposing them on the populace. As Linz writes about mentalities just before admitting that the distinction between mentalities and ideologies is not and cannot be clear-cut, “Their constraining power to legitimize and delegitimate actions are very different.”

The difficulty of coming up with a hard bright line definition of political ideology is evident from Linz’s efforts to explain how ideology differs from mentality. He asserts that the two categories diverge along a spectrum of features, yet never states explicitly how, and in the end is resigned to throwing up his hands in admitting that the space between ideology and mentality is murky. He wants to express a clear sense that an ideology and a mentality are different concepts altogether, but takes a pass on trying to do so in a comprehensive or theoretically sound manner. This is not because Linz is not up to the task, but because he is attempting to turn a distinction without a difference into an actual measurable difference and then use that alleged difference to separate regime types. Linz actually does hit upon the real key

46 Ibid., 163.
to unlocking what separates ideology from mentality, which is that the former is used to legitimate and constrain state action while the latter is not, but where he stumbles is in then trying to superimpose this difference on totalitarian regimes versus authoritarian regimes. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, authoritarian regimes can indeed adopt and promote ideologies that they use to legitimate their rule and constrain their own range of action, but if one looks at those ideologies and attempts to characterize them differently not because of the ideologies themselves but because of the type of regime that wields them, the exercise is destined to break down. Linz is correct that there is a large gray area that encompasses both ideology and mentality, with ideal types of each occupying the poles on the boundaries, but he also relied too heavily on an assumption that they could be neatly classified by regime type.

Despite some obvious flaws – most glaringly, no real attempt to actually define ideology or mentality, but only to describe their effects – Linz’s regime typology, in which authoritarian states are classified as non-ideological, has been widely accepted. This, more than anything else, has pushed the study of transitions away from considering questions of ideology. Linz’s work influences the transitions literature in the sense that since the demise of Soviet totalitarianism, few states are viewed as ideological; it is assumed that authoritarian regimes, which have been the focus of transitions outside of Eastern Europe, do not have dominant and elaborate political ideologies. If this assumption is taken as fact, there is little purpose for scholars of transitions to study ideology and ideological conflict, as the dominant paradigm of an authoritarian state suggests that ideological considerations are never paramount. For structuralists, taking the vague category of mentalities into account is not only complicated due to definitional and methodological problems but also largely unnecessary, as mentalities are, according to Linz,
lacking the causal force required to constrain or legitimate. If transitions are subject to a variety of social, political, and economic forces that create an environment for transitions to succeed or fail, authoritarian mentalities as described by Linz do not belong in this set of variables.

The second reason that ideology is absent from the transitions literature is related to the first and flows from the problems that Linz has coming up with an adequate definition. For different respective reasons, the emphasis on prerequisites in the structural literature and on agent-based liberalization and bargaining in the rationalist literature leaves little place for ideology to be considered. For those who subscribe to structural arguments, ideology is not a factor because it has no bearing on economic and social variables, and cannot easily be quantified or reduced to a measurable factor. It is relatively easy to look at GDP per capita and come up with a number below which transitions are unlikely, but it is far more difficult to do so for ideology. To begin with, ideology is hard to define. Even once a definition has been agreed upon, it is hard to measure in a scientific sense. Are some ideologies stronger than others? Do different ideologies have different impacts? Is ideology an independent variable, an intervening variable, or an interacting variable? Ideology is nebulous in nearly every sense, and thus complicated to integrate into a structural argument about transitions.

For those who focus on the agency process, the tendency (as seen above) is to study the regime elites and their behavior that is both a cause and a consequence of elite divisions without attention to the effects of ideological legacies. The rationalist school views transitions as following a more sequential and universal path, and the presence or absence of ideology does not, in this view, affect regime elites’ calculus. This is all the more so given the post-Linz consensus that authoritarian regimes are not ideological. In addition, the approach that focuses
on regime elites’ behavior can also lead to game theoretic models that examine the incentives of hardliners and softliners and how their assumptions about best and worst case scenarios lead to the unintended consequence of a transition to democracy.\textsuperscript{47} Inserting ideology into any of these approaches seems either extraneous or unnecessary.

This is not to say that ideology has been ignored entirely in discussions of authoritarian durability and democratic transitions. A number of scholars have focused on the institutional legacies, ideological or otherwise, that inhibit transitions to democracy or retard the quality of the democracy that emerges. This is particularly true of works that analyze Middle Eastern states, which for a variety of reasons are susceptible to a new institutionalist analysis that takes such legacies into account. For instance, Daniel Brumberg has explained authoritarian political development in the Arab Middle East by looking at the legacies of populist authoritarianism, which have allowed regime elites to circumvent enacting reforms during times of crisis by utilizing survival strategies that increased participation without allowing real challenges to incumbents. The success of these efforts hinges on the degree of populism upon which the regimes built their authority, with regimes that have embraced a wide spectrum of social groups in their ruling coalitions more successful than those that have relied on a narrow base of support.\textsuperscript{48} While this explanation does not take ideology specifically into account, it opens the door for the consideration of the way in which institutional elements of the authoritarian regime

\textsuperscript{47} For this type of approach, see especially Przeworski, \textit{Democracy and the Market}.

can determine how enduring authoritarian rule will be, and how these legacies can shape the degree to which a state chooses to open up the political system to contestation.

Similarly, Michele Angrist’s work on Middle Eastern political parties broaches the issue of ideology by arguing that the type of regime that eventually emerged in Middle Eastern states was dependent on the number of parties that existed immediately post-independence, the asymmetry in mobilizational capabilities between those parties, and the level of polarization between those parties as defined by the absence or presence of policies advocated by a party that threatens the political elite’s ability to reproduce that elite status over time.\textsuperscript{49} Polarization can exist across a range of issues, such as economics (property right and land reform), foreign allegiances and alliances, or the character of the regime itself. This last example, which involves existential ideological conflict, was one of the factors in delayed bipartism in Turkey, as the ruling Republican People’s Party was not willing to hold democratic elections until the opposition was sufficiently committed to upholding the secular Kemalist ideology on which the state had been founded.\textsuperscript{50} The implication of Angrist’s work, which does not focus solely on ideology or ideological conflict but takes philosophical polarization as one of a set of relevant variables, is that ideology can play a role in determining when a transition might occur if it rises to the level of being an existential concern of the regime and it appears to be threatened by a transfer of power.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 158-87.
Methodology

In sum, the literature on democratic transitions is largely silent on the role that ideology might play. The effects of ideology on the transitions process have gone unexplored, and no theory on the behavior of ideological states versus non-ideological states exists. As evidenced by Linz’s emphasis of ideology’s central role in maintaining the legitimacy of totalitarian states, ideology is quite clearly a potent force in political development. This dissertation will address this critical gap in the existing scholarship by developing a midrange theory on how ideology impacts democratic transitions in authoritarian states that are governed by a central political ideology, and then test that theory on a dataset of democratic transitions in the second half of the 20th century. I will then explore the process by which ideological conflict between regimes and opposition groups hinders transitions to democracy by delving into cases of Turkey and Tunisia, both states in which ideology played a central role in their modern political development and caused varying degrees of success during attempts to transition to democratic political systems.

Turkey and Tunisia are ideal cases for studying ideological conflict’s effects on transitions. First, both states are in the Middle East, a region that has been resistant to democratization and in which ideological battles have long been at the fore of politics. In selecting Middle Eastern cases, I hope to illuminate trends and processes that will account for developments in the region at large rather than only in these two states. Second, Turkey and Tunisia are states where ideology has been particularly important to political and institutional development. As the case studies will demonstrate, the regime ideologies in both cases were developed in conjunction with the post-independence states, and thus the ideology and the state building process were intertwined. Turkey and Tunisia are as close as one can get to “pure”
cases of ideological states in terms of the ideology’s importance to the regime and its functional use as a tool for state legitimacy. Finally, Turkey is a case in which ideological conflict prevented challengers from emerging for decades but was eventually overcome and a successful transition occurred. In contrast, Tunisia’s first attempt at a transition was aborted once it was apparent that ideological conflict existed. The two cases contrast with each other in demonstrating how ideological conflict can be overcome to lead to a successful transition, and how ideological conflict’s persistence can lead to a failed transition. In addition, each case contains an interesting postscript that adds to our understanding of how ideological conflict’s effects can persist after the transitional event in question. In Turkey, the remaining legacy of ideological conflict contributed to the first military coup, while in Tunisia a perception that ideological conflict had finally been overcome led to the decision to remove Ben Ali from power. In sum, these cases share the variable of ideological conflict but demonstrate how it can affect states in different ways, and combine to illustrate a range of outcomes and processes.

I use a mixed research design for two reasons. First, doing so allows me to establish that ideological conflict is indeed a significant causal variable in accounting for democratic transitions in a subset of ideological states, and to then provide a rich detailed account of how ideological conflict acts as a structural constraint on transitions. The case studies form the essence of my research, but since a debate exists over whether a limited case study comparison can establish causation, using a large-N variable-based analysis up front will alleviate concerns over whether the scope of the study is sufficient. Second, using a mixed methods approach will facilitate applying a theory of ideological conflict that seems to fit the Middle East – where ideological battles between secularists and Islamists have raged for decades – to other regions of
world by testing it on cross-national and cross-regional data, furthering a secondary goal of debunking the notion of Middle Eastern exceptionalism with regard to political development and demonstrating that the study of Middle Eastern politics fits well within the larger discipline of comparative politics. Rather than limit the study to two Middle Eastern states, this research design will allow me not only to integrate the study of the Middle East into the broader field, but to use lessons gleaned from Middle Eastern states to explain political development in the world at large, which has been difficult for political scientists to accomplish given the structural features of Middle Eastern regimes that are in many ways unique to the region.

A Roadmap For Integrating Ideology

In Chapter 2, I will review the varying approaches to defining political ideology and synthesize them to create a definition of political ideology, and then more importantly define the category of ideological states. Ideological states are the central actor in this theory of ideology and democratic transitions, as it is only in these types of states that ideology will be a first-order

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51 In referring to Middle Eastern exceptionalism, I refer not to the lack of democracy in the region, which is indeed exceptional when viewed in comparative perspective (see e.g. Marsha Pripstein Posusney, “The Middle East’s Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective,” in Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance, eds. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 1-18), but to the idea that there is something inherent in Middle Eastern society or culture, rather than structural features of Middle Eastern regimes, that makes the region inhospitable to democracy. See e.g. Elie Kedourie, Democracy and Arab Political Culture (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992); Waterbury; James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, Politics in the Middle East (New York: Harper Collins, 1990); Sanford A. Lakoff, “The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism,” in Journal of Democracy 15 no. 4 (October 2004): 133-39.

52 The most prominent example is the prevalence of rentier states, which exist in far larger proportion in the Middle East than in other regions of the world. See e.g. Giacomo Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework,” in The Arab State, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 65-84; Hazem Beblawi, “The Rentier State in the Arab World,” in Luciani, 85-98; Alan Richards and John Waterbury, A Political Economy of the Middle East (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 44-57. More recent scholarship, however, has focused on other unique structural features such as the strength of coercive institutions (Eva Bellin, “Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders,” in Posusney & Angrist, 21-42), the combination of regime penetration of society and the absence of external pressures (Jason Brownlee, “Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia,” in Posusney & Angrist, 43-62), and the absence of autonomous social forces (Holger Albrecht and Oliver Schlumberger, “‘Waiting for Godot’: Regime Change Without Democratization in the Middle East,” in International Political Science Review 25, no. 4 (October 2004): 371-92.).
priority of authoritarian regimes. I will then create a typology of political ideologies in an effort to set out a more specific and detailed theory of ideological conflict and transitions. Not all ideological states are identical, and the type of ideology that a state espouses will influence the degree to which that state views competing ideologies as threatening. Constructing this typology allows for a more nuanced and fine-grained understanding of how ideological states behave, and accounts for variation across cases. Next, I will advance a theory of precisely how and why ideology operates as a constraint on democratic transitions, and why regimes with first or second-generation rulers are more apt to take the regime ideology seriously and act to neutralize any political actors that threaten it. I will then conclude by testing this theory on a dataset of cases of successful transitions between 1945 and 2000 to determine what effect ideological conflict has on the timing and success of transitions. The statistical analysis will confirm that not only is there a strong reverse correlation between ideological conflict and democracy in ideological states, but that ideological conflict is a statistically significant variable in explaining the transition to democracy in these cases. Finally, for the purposes of avoiding the pitfall of selecting on the dependent variable, I will look at cases of failed transitions, defined as cases in which states met a certain economic threshold and also went through sustained periods of liberalization but did not ultimately transition to democracy. In these cases as well, ideological conflict was present in all but one instance. Thus, the combination of theorizing and hypothesis testing will reveal that ideology does indeed play a role in a subset of transitions, and that it is a factor that the literature on democracy should not have overlooked.

In Chapter 3 I will trace the way in which ideological conflict has impacted the decision to democratize in Turkey during various stages from the late Ottoman period through the
founding of the Turkish Republic, the initial transition to a two party system and democratic
elections, and the first military coup in 1960. This case study covers over five decades of
Turkish political development, and Turkey is a particularly apt case for applying theories of
ideology and transitions given the dominance of Kemalism as Turkey’s governing ideology since
the early days of the Republic. Not only were Turkish political institutions designed in concert
with Kemalism in an effort to spread and promote it, but as the case study will demonstrate,
political challengers were evaluated first and foremost by their ideological fealty rather than their
likelihood of winning elections and unseating the ruling party. I will outline the major tenets of
Kemalism and analyze how Kemalism affected all aspects of the Turkish state, and then examine
the multiple times when it was used as a litmus test for new political parties. The crux of the
case study will break down the transition to a multiparty system in 1946 and how the ideological
alignment of the opposition Democrat Party with the Kemalist ruling party was the key factor in
the regime allowing them to take power after their 1950 election, and how the DP’s betrayal of
Kemalism contributed to the political crisis in the latter part of the decade and eventually the
military coup in 1960. Turkey is an example of the way in which ideological conflict can delay a
transition until the source of conflict is resolved, and demonstrates how ideology can even
contribute to a reverse transition back to an authoritarian system.

When combining the approaches of the structural school and the agency school, a
transitions model emerges in which a state with a certain set of circumstances might be expected
to transition to democracy under the right conditions. Per Rustow, national unity appears to be a
prerequisite, the absence of which cannot be overcome. If the citizens of a state cannot agree on
the boundaries of a political community and grant their allegiance to a political body governing a
defined set of territory, then even the rationalist school would concede that the emergence of
democracy is theoretically impossible.

Similarly, while poor democracies exist, the literature on wealth and democracy is in
universal agreement that some link exists. Whether it is a causal link or simply a correlation, and
whether socioeconomic wealth matters more to the transition or to the consolidation and
maintenance of democracy is a matter for debate beyond the scope of this dissertation, but
certainly a certain level of economic development will create favorable conditions for a
democratic political system.

While the same cannot be said about civil society in an absolute sense, there is wide
agreement that it is an important factor in transitions. Its absence in a given situation is not
necessarily fatal for democratic governance but its presence will make a transition easier and
more likely. That civil society is important to the actual transition process, and not only later on
when it comes to consolidating democracy, was borne out in the post-Communist transitions,
where the most successful transitions to democracy occurred in states in which mass
mobilization of the public, which is intimately linked to a strong civil society, kicked off the
transition process rather than the public following the lead of elites, as predicted by the
O’Donnell and Schmitter model.53

A fourth factor is the process of liberalization that precedes the transition to democracy.
This takes place due to a division among elites where the softliners recognize that electoral
legitimatization and/or the introduction of limited freedoms are necessary in order to co-opt
domestic opposition and international public opinion, and they are able to prevail over the

53 Valerie Bunce, “Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience,” in World
Democracy 16, no. 3 (July 2005): 5-19.
hardliners who want to keep the status quo.\textsuperscript{54} Liberalization may lead to transition because reformers believe that democracy is necessary for material reasons or ethical reasons,\textsuperscript{55} or because of mistaken assumptions on the part of both hardliners and softliners,\textsuperscript{56} but it is widely accepted that liberalization is an elite-driven process. The importance of liberalization can also not be overstated, as it has been contended that all transitions begin with a division between hardline and softline elements in the regime.\textsuperscript{57}

A final factor is the process of elite bargaining and pact-making. Pacts between political actors attempt to set rules for the exercise of power based on mutual promises and guarantees among different sides. They generally emerge out of the desire to end a political gridlock and hence represent a second-best solution to which all parties can agree. Even when there is no balance of power between parties, a sense of disenchantment or institutional decay coupled with policy disagreements within the ruling elites can also prompt pact-making to occur as different factions within the same group attempt to ally with outsiders.\textsuperscript{58} Transition pacts that reduce regime members’ risks and thereby make it more palatable for them to give up power have been highlighted as a particularly promising possibility for democracy in the Middle East, where such pacts would eliminate the chances of violent revolutions and guarantee soft landings for authoritarian leaders.\textsuperscript{59}

While this is not an exhaustive list by any means, the five factors laid out above represent a synthesis of the dominant views as to what should be present in order for a transition to

\textsuperscript{54} O’Donnell and Schmitter, 15-17.
\textsuperscript{55} Huntington, 128-29.
\textsuperscript{56} Przeworski, Democracy and the Market, 62-64.
\textsuperscript{57} O’Donnell and Schmitter, 19.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 37-43.
democracy to occur. Not all of these factors may be necessary, and the presence of all five does not mean that a country will automatically undergo a transition, but they all make a transition to democracy both easier and more likely. Yet, there are cases in which it seems as if a state with all of these favorable variables is on the verge of a successful transition that ends up turning into a failed transition. Tunisia in the late 1980s is such an example, and in Tunisia’s case, which will be explored in Chapter 4, it was a dispute over the regime’s ideology that ultimately caused Tunisia to remain an unquestionably authoritarian state. Chapter 4 will trace the creation of Tunisia’s brand of Westernizing secular nationalism, elements of which were common to other Arab regimes but were not synthesized and adopted as a central governing ideology anywhere else to the extent it occurred in Tunisia under Habib Bourguiba. I will then show how Bourguiba instituted a program to thoroughly Westernize and secularize Tunisia according to the tenets of Bourgibism, and how a clash over fundamental Bourguibist principles led to the first internecine clashes within the ruling Neo-Destour party. Finally, I will trace the liberalizing reforms and opening of the political system carried out by Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali once he took over the presidency from Bourguiba, and show how Tunisia’s nascent democratic transition came to a crashing halt once it became clear to Ben Ali that democratic politics would mean the end of the regime ideology at the hands of the competing ideology of Islamism.

In Chapter 5, I will revisit Tunisia in late 2010 and early 2011 as the removal of Ben Ali kicked off the regional movement known as the Arab Spring and Tunisia became the first Arab state to go through a successful democratic transition. I argue that Tunisia’s transition was made possible by a crucial calculation made by elements of the regime and the military that the elimination of Ben Ali from the political scene would not endanger Bourguibism’s place as
central to Tunisia’s governance. While this assumption turned out to be incorrect, the key is not that the regime made an error in judgment but that its perception was that the regime’s ideology would be safe despite a transfer of power. Ben Ali’s decades of repression against Islamists shaped an environment in which the army’s threat perception toward competing ideologies was much lower than it would otherwise have been.

Finally, I will outline some policy lessons that emerge from the evidence presented in this dissertation and present a roadmap for how the U.S. should approach democracy promotion in light of the Arab Spring, and suggest areas for further research. I will also sum up some big picture observations on the intersection of ideology and political development. Political science has presented an incomplete picture of democratic transitions by relegating ideology to the sidelines, and incorporating ideology as an explanatory variable enriches our understanding of certain outcomes.

This dissertation will address a crucially neglected aspect of democratic transitions and contribute to the literature on transitions as well as political ideology. By filling what has been a noticeable gap in academic scholarship on democracy, my hope is that the theory and research contained herein will expand understanding of why some transitions succeed and others fail, and ultimately bring ideology back into the equation of political development.
Chapter II

Ideology is a driving force behind much political behavior, but it can be a difficult concept to define and to quantify. Intuitively, it makes sense that ideas can have a heavy influence on politics, but how important do ideas have to be and to what level must fidelity be paid to them before they qualify as a bona fide ideology? Furthermore, how does one determine whether a state should be deemed ideological or not? While many states have some sort of ideological veneer to them, there is obviously a difference between those that have an ascertainable philosophy and those that are organized and governed by a set of ideological principles.

Defining Ideology and Ideological States

Defining ideology and categorizing states as ideological or non-ideological in a precise and conceptually consistent manner is a difficult task. It is tempting to borrow from Justice Potter Stewart’s famous dictum about pornography and declare that we know ideology when we see it; the Soviet Union and China are clearly ideological states, Britain and Brazil are clearly not. While easy to apply, such an approach obviously cannot be used as it is methodologically inappropriate, subjectively arbitrary, and it also leaves much to be desired when it comes to cases that do not fall clearly on either side of the divide. For instance, Communist states fit neatly into the ideological category, but harder to pass the Stewart test are states organized around the principle of anti-Communism, such as Greece in the 1950s and 1960s or Estado Novo-era Portugal. Such states are substantively different from the inherently non-ideological liberal democracies of Western Europe, but do not rise to the level of totalitarian states such as the
Soviet Union and present-day North Korea, or strongly ideological autocracies such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. In order to successfully categorize states, we need to begin with a clear and ascertainable definition of political ideology.

Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, in their comprehensive review of political ideologies and how they manifest themselves, define political ideology as “a relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought, focusing on the problems of human nature, the process of history, and socio-political arrangements….Political ideologies are essentially the product of collective thought. They are ‘ideal types,’ not to be confused with specific movements, parties or regimes which may bear their name.”  

This definition of Eatwell and Wright’s separates the ideological element from the system of government itself, making a distinction between ideas that drive a set of cohesive goals and ideas about how best to run a state politically. It also logically follows, as Eatwell and Wright point out, that democracy is not an ideology – and by extension, capitalist democracies are not inherently ideological – but is rather a system that can be conceived and ordered in different ways. Ideologies always involve a programmatic element, and formal politics such as democracy are thus ruled out as being ideological because they are means-centered rather than ends-centered; ideology has an overt or implicit set of empirical and normative views which are goal-oriented about human nature, the process of history, and socio-political structure.

While Eatwell and Wright’s definition of political ideology is a good start, it is overly broad, as a wide range of human thought focuses on human nature and history but would not be classified as political, or even always as ideological in a political sense. Furthermore, their

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60 Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, eds., Contemporary Political Ideologies (London: Pinter, 1999), 17.
61 Ibid., 13-15.
definition allows for a nebulous typology, in which any regime can be shoehorned into the ideological category if it confirms the study’s assumptions since most – if not all – states maintain some coherent set of beliefs, even if that set of beliefs does not rise to the level of an all-encompassing political ideology. Taking this foundation into account but looking for a more bounded definition, a more constructive take on ideology is that of Malcolm Hamilton’s, who views ideology as “a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue or maintain.” The benefit to this definition is that it explicitly incorporates the use of ideology both as a foundational roadmap of sorts and as a tool for legitimization of policies. Hamilton acknowledges the circular logic of political ideologies, which make claims about the nature of state and society and then use those claims to validate approved state policies while invalidating other policies that run afoul of the same claims, all the while treating the underlying ideology as exogenous. It is the use of ideology to formulate and defend state action that makes a state an ideological one.

Similarly, Mark Haas defines political ideology as “the principles upon which a particular leadership group attempts to legitimate its claim to rule and the primary institutional, economic, and social goals to which it swears allegiance.” In Haas’s view, ideologies provide a paradigm for structuring politics, and ideological differences are the main driver of conflict and division between parties. Because Haas posits that political ideologies act as a structural force on a regime’s policies, his definition incorporates the idea that dominant ideologies are not just

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63 Haas, 5-6.
something to which states pay lip service, but are taken seriously by political actors that seek to formulate and justify their actions on an ideological basis. Ideology frames regime behavior, acting both as a guide and a constraint.

These definitions take into account not only the content of the ideology itself, but also the inherently functional aspect that seeks to use ideology as a justification for specific actions and patterns of conduct. This latter point is what makes ideological regimes distinctive, and helps explain why ideology can be constraining when it comes to transitions to democracy. Political ideology offers a criticism of existing society contrasted with a vision of a “good” society and proposes the means by which attainment of a “good” society will be achieved. The programmatic element of ideology is what lies at the heart of its definition, and it thus must simultaneously inform and justify state decisions. With this in mind, I define an ideological state as one that references explicitly ideological claims or a programmatic mission in justifying political action and allows those claims or mission to constrain its range of actions.

Is Democracy An Ideology?

Eatwell and Wright’s insistence that ideology must be programmatic in some way is crucial to understanding what constitutes an ideological state, and is the key to understanding why democracy is exclusively a system of government and not an ideology. There is an important distinction to be made between process and substance when considering a state’s source of legitimacy. Democracy does not rise to the level of ideology because it is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. There is no program to which democracy must adhere, and

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democracies can have aims as varied as the number of democracies that exist. The various definitions scholars have come up with for democracy, ranging from the minimalist – a system in which parties lose elections\textsuperscript{65} – to the maximalist – a democratic system in which liberties are protected and that contains autonomous spheres of private and civil society outside of state control\textsuperscript{66} – do not incorporate any substantive principles or goals. A form of government and an ideology are two distinct concepts, and democracy is the former. To be sure, democracies hold their democratic status in high esteem to the point of it being sacrosanct, and adherence to democratic principles trumps all other considerations. Nevertheless, this adherence is to a process rather than to a substantive political program or worldview, and thus it does not meet the threshold to be considered an ideology.

It is also rare that a democratic state is an ideological one. Democracies claim their legitimacy through the process of voting by which the government is selected, not through whatever program it is they are attempting to implement. Action taken by a democratic government is not justified through any type of ideological commitment, but by the fact that the government has been chosen by the people in free and fair elections. Any state action in a democracy is viewed as inherently legitimate, provided that it conforms to said state’s constitution and laws. While ideology may provide the impetus for certain policies and in some cases even constrain state action, it is not used as a means of legitimacy or justification.

Furthermore, democracies tend to be more ideologically flexible and are able to shift course more easily rather than remaining in a condition of ideological or philosophical stasis. Since one of the hallmarks of democracy is its ability to absorb new ideas, the idea of a

\textsuperscript{65} Przeworski, Democracy and the Market, 10.
\textsuperscript{66} Diamond, Developing Democracy, 3.
democracy having a fixed and inalterable ideology is somewhat anachronistic. Liberal democracies adopted Keynesian economics and built enormous bureaucratic welfare states in response to the Great Depression, then abandoned Keynesian economics in the 1970s and 1980s, and are now restoring Keynesian policies yet again, but their stability, legitimacy, and status as liberal democracies have not been threatened during this process. This ability to shift course in incorporating new ideas makes sustaining a rigid ideology a nearly impossible feat, and thus democracies generally prioritize maintaining democratic rule rather than adhering to an ideologically informed program.

This is not to say that democracy and ideology are mutually exclusive. While democracies may be less ideologically rigid and hence less likely to be classified as ideological states, there are some democracies that would fall into the ideological category. The United States during the Cold War can be classified as ideological according to the definition I have used above. The thrust of American foreign policy in the post WWII era up until the fall of the Soviet Union was to contain the spread of communism, and this mission was used to justify all manner of actions from the Korean and Vietnam wars to the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings. This anti-communist mission also imposed constraints on aspects of American policy, most prominently by forcing policies that were arguably harmful or counterproductive such as the lack of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China until 1979 and the continuing trade embargo with Cuba despite the evaporation of any measurable Cuban threat toward the United States. While the United States did not use its ideological mission as a means for gaining legitimacy, it nevertheless exhibited the behavior that one would expect from an ideologically driven state.

67 Owen IV, 59.
Another example of a democratic ideological state is Israel, which was founded on the principles of Zionism and formulates its policies according to Zionist dictates. The idea that there should be a Jewish homeland informs everything from immigration and citizenship policies to social regulations, and past foreign policy decisions such as the push to allow Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel or the patriation of Ethiopians of Jewish descent emanate entirely from the Zionist programmatic mission. Ideology also colors Israeli threat perception, explaining the airstrikes that took out nuclear reactors under construction in Iraq in 1981 and in Syria in 2007, as Israeli defense doctrine is attuned to the notion of preventing another Holocaust, ignoring traditional precepts on nuclear deterrence. While Israel often touts its democratic bona fides, it also relies on its status as a Jewish homeland as a source of legitimacy, making the argument that the history of Jewish persecution requires a state to which Jews can always turn.

Thus, the key to identifying ideological states is looking at whether or not they are mission states (to borrow a term used by John Waterbury)\(^ {68}\) and to what extent they are attempting to carry out an ideological program. An ideological state will have a set of ideal aims, and its actions and rationale are not isolated but are woven into a broader fabric and set of goals.\(^ {69}\) There must be a set of beliefs that are acted upon, and action must be repeatedly rationalized by referencing a central ideological doctrine or programmatic mission. Democracy is not itself an ideology, but democratic states may in some circumstances be ideological ones.

\(^{68}\) Waterbury, 24-47.  
A Typology of Ideologies

Given the wide array of political ideologies that exist, it is useful to construct a typology of different ideologies. While ideology is a powerful driver of state action, it does not have a uniform effect across all situations. If ideology is to be conceived as a structural force, then a more specific classification is helpful to understanding how ideology operates and under what circumstances it operates as a structural constraint on a successful transition to democracy.

The universe of political ideologies can be classified according to a 2x2 matrix. Ideologies fall along two axes: the extent to which they are inclusive or exclusionary, and the extent to which they are revolutionary or status quo. The type of ideology matters in transitions because it determines how the regime will respond to various types of challenges. Some regimes will only feel threatened by a conflicting ideology, and some will feel the need to protect their ideological hegemony irrespective of whether the opposition is ideological in nature or not.

An inclusive ideology is one that anyone can adopt and that does not abrogate rights based on something other than adherence to the ideology. The ideology may privilege one class of people over another, but to the extent that it does so it is entirely on the basis of acceptance of the ideology and its principles rather than on some other immutable quality, such as race or religion. An inclusive ideology views people as being part of one universal category rather than as part of different subgroups, and does not position its adherents in relation to members of different groups.

In contrast, an exclusive ideology is meant for a specific category of people and is not universal in the sense of being adoptable by just anyone. An exclusive ideology binds itself to a particular group and becomes inseparable from the group itself, and being a part of that group is
a prerequisite for adopting the ideology. The ideology creates a clear dividing line by positioning its adherents in relation to everyone who is outside the group, and it privileges its favored class of people not because they have accepted the ideology but because they belong to the in-group. Because an exclusive ideology positions itself relative to other ideas or groups of people, it has a heightened sense of threat and will view any challenge to its hegemony as fatal.

A revolutionary ideology is one that seeks to upend some type of established status quo. A regime that holds power may still be one that adheres to a revolutionary ideology if it actively seeks to export that ideology outside its own borders in an effort to change the political order in other states or societies. At the opposite end of this axis is a status quo ideology, which seeks to protect an already established order. Status quo ideologies are not concerned with exporting an ideological vision abroad or proselytizing to the unconverted, but rather focus on maintaining their current position and hold on power. Much like exclusive ideologies, status quo ideologies are more likely to perceive any challenge as threatening whether or not the challenge is ideological in nature.

This creates a universe of four broad ideal types of ideologies: inclusive-revolutionary, inclusive-status quo, exclusive-revolutionary, exclusive-status quo.
As seen in the figure above, the x-axis moves left to right from inclusive to exclusive and the y-axis moves down to up from status quo to revolutionary. The examples each fit into one of the broad categories and illustrate what ideal types look like. This is not to say that each example is a perfect fit along both dimensions; Islamism, for example, in some cases does not fit into the exclusive-revolutionary quadrant, as discussed below. For the purposes of fleshing out these categories, however, these examples are useful and get at the basic differences between contrasting forms of ideology.

Kemalism is inclusive in the sense that anyone can ascribe to it irrespective of race, religion, gender, or any other immutable marker of identity, and it does not explicitly privilege one group of people over another. Kemalism simply proscribes a set of principles that its followers accept, and anyone who is willing to accept them can automatically enter the club. Some people will be excluded from Kemalism because they are unwilling to adhere to one of the
six arrows of Kemalism, such as secularism or statism, but this does not make Kemalism an exclusive ideology as ideologies by definition lay down markers or draw boundaries of some sort. The key is that Kemalism itself draws no boundaries outside of acceptance of its principles, and thus is not exclusive by favoring one class of people over another. Kemalism is also concerned with protecting the established status quo rather than upsetting an existing order, and thus is not a revolutionary ideology. Kemalism has traditionally sought to aggressively protect its status quo position as Turkey’s official state ideology, but being an inclusive ideology that can be embraced by anyone, the guardians of Kemalism have historically sought guarantees that political actors will maintain Kemalism’s tenets rather than only allowing true believers into the political arena.

Communism is also inclusive, but it differs from Kemalism by being a revolutionary, rather than status quo, ideology. Marx and Engels, and later Trotsky and Lenin, conceived communism as a movement that would supersede states, and despite eventually being championed by a world superpower, it remained a revolutionary movement that looked to expand well beyond the borders of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc nations and reshape geopolitics and society itself. Being more concerned with expansion and achieving utopian ends than protecting entrenched interests, communism does not view threats the same way that a status quo ideology does, and being an inclusive ideology also lessens its general threat perception. While the end of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is obviously a complicated phenomenon well outside the scope of this dissertation, it should be noted that communist parties and regimes did not generally fight to maintain communism at all costs once

70 Revolutionism is one of the six arrows of Kemalism, but in that context it refers to reform and self-renewal and continuing the modernization project rather than a move to change the political order.
it became clear that they were going to be replaced. As a revolutionary ideology, the prospect of a fatal blow was lessened since communism was not going to die with the end of the status quo political order, and indeed communism and communist governments survived in Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and other places.

Islamism is complicated as it is marked by diversity, spread across a wide spectrum of groups and definitions with Turkey’s AKP on one pole and the Iranian veleyat e faqih on the other. No matter the iteration, however, Islamism (or political Islam) is dedicated at a minimum to the concept of using Islam as a basis for political and social order.\(^7\)

The Muslim Brotherhood, which is many ways the founding body of Islamism, has always advocated for an Islamic state run according to Islamic law, but even parties like Tunisia’s Ennahda, which do not go as far in advocating for the complete Islamization of the state, advocate for Islam as the basis of an ideal society. Islamism originated as a protest movement against the secular modernism of Arab states, and sought to overturn the political and social order and replace it wholesale. In this way, it was certainly born as a revolutionary movement. Much like communism, Islamism has remained a revolutionary movement despite coming to power at different times in Iran, Sudan, Turkey, and currently commanding parliamentary pluralities in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. An influential book on Islamism is subtitled “Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?”\(^7\) which captures the general dynamic of political Islam as an ideology – no matter the answer to the question posed by the book’s subtitle, Islamism is concerned most of all with change and dismantling the status quo. Islamism is also exclusive in that it favors Muslims over other groups of people by its very nature, and it is difficult to envision non-Muslims taking up the

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\(^7\) John L. Esposito, ed., Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform? (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997).
mantle of Islamism – a movement designed to specifically mobilize Muslims – despite arguments to the contrary that Islamism makes for a natural global protest movement.73 While Islamism’s revolutionary nature makes it somewhat less attuned to ideological challenges, its exclusivity makes challenges more high stakes as any challenge to Islamism’s ideological hegemony also constitutes a challenge to the specific group in power.

Apartheid is both exclusive and status quo, and thus prone to seeing any challenge at all, whether overtly ideological in nature or not, as fatally threatening. Apartheid existed to benefit a tightly defined group of white South Africans who sustained their power through apartheid and claimed legitimacy to rule exclusively through apartheid’s principles. It was thus the ultimate exclusive ideology, and it did not seek to overturn the existing political order but only to sustain the status quo. This combination created an environment in which any challenge to apartheid had to be suppressed, since any type of political philosophy that did not acknowledge apartheid’s claims meant the inherent end of apartheid’s existence. Unlike an inclusive-status quo ideology that can afford to let other ideological actors into the arena as long as they agree to uphold the status quo ideology, an exclusive-status quo ideology cannot afford to be as cavalier with challengers since non-members of the group can never be co-opted by an ideology that rejects their equal status. Therefore, because the stakes are so high, exclusive-status quo ideologies will never abide any political opposition unless they come from within-group challengers.

A Theory of Ideology as a Constraint on Transitions

While ideological political actors may act differently depending on the type of ideology to which they subscribe, the focus of this dissertation is on transitions to democracy and the way in which ideological conflict acts as a structural constraint on successful transitions. The effect of ideology is particularly isolated at the point of transition, because if the ruling ideology is threatened, then regime actors must make an acute choice whether or not to abandon the ideology. If sustaining the ideology is a secondary factor that takes a back seat to other interests, then letting the official regime ideology be replaced or discarded will not be a barrier to a transition. If, however, the regime’s commitment to its official ideology is an ironclad first order concern, then the survival of the ideology past the replacement of the regime will be a high priority, and a successful transition will not occur absent guarantees that the ideology will be maintained by the new government.

As discussed above, ideology is a powerful political force that has a number of different functions for regimes. One is that ideology is used as a source of regime legitimacy, and so fealty to the state ideology is crucial for the regime to maintain its rule. According to Bruce Gilley, “a state is more legitimate the more that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power.”74 When a regime or ruling party is so closely connected with a defined set of ideological principles, it is logical that its legitimacy will be tied to the acceptance level of the ideology among the population. In developing his typology of non-democratic regimes, Juan Linz argues that ideology is so important to totalitarian regimes that the acceptance of ideas that explicitly conflict with the central state ideology – and only acceptance

of these ideas – leads to the end of the totalitarian model.\textsuperscript{75} Writing with Alfred Stepan, he notes that the weakening of ideology that leads a totalitarian state to become a post-totalitarian state also affects the state’s legitimacy, as states that base the foundation of their legitimacy on appeals to ideology face a crisis once that ideology is discredited, discarded, or weakened. As a result, post-totalitarian states turn to measures of performance as a source of legitimacy, and when a state’s performance suffers, this gap between ideological legitimacy and efficacy-based legitimacy is a main source of post-totalitarian weakness. A weakened ideology makes the ruling party vulnerable to challenge, both from the state’s citizens and from opposition parties.\textsuperscript{76}

In Linz’s view, the importance of ideology in totalitarian regimes cannot be overstated. Because ideology is the primary source of legitimacy as well as the inspiration or motivating force for nearly every state action, anything that challenges or weakens the regime ideology becomes a fatal threat. When ideology is so completely intertwined with the state itself, then the two become inseparable and a challenge to one constitutes a challenge to the other. While Linz’s typology assigned only “mentalities” rather than ideologies to non-democratic non-totalitarian states, the same logic applies to any state that can be classified as ideological. If a state elevates an ideology to a hegemonic belief – so that it becomes “part of the presumptive background of thought and action”\textsuperscript{77} – it is reasonable to assume that the state will treat the preservation of the ideology as a matter of the highest importance. To the extent that the ideology is institutionalized, its protection becomes vital, as a blow to the ideology is a blow to the state’s legitimacy among its citizens. The ideology also becomes the most important feature of the

\textsuperscript{75} Linz, 77.
\textsuperscript{76} Linz and Stepan, 48-49.
regime’s legacy, and no true guardians of the state ideology want to be responsible for its
downfall or delegitimization.

Ideology is an important factor within domestic politics because it acts as a binding force
for elites who share similar views on how political life should be structured, and competition for
political power is often ideological in nature. This is magnified in authoritarian regimes
inasmuch as ideological considerations in part shape the function and purpose of the state and
constrain the political and social arena by determining who can and cannot participate. Linz’s
notion of authoritarian mentalities does not adequately capture the role that ideological
considerations play in Middle Eastern states in particular; a region in which, as Waterbury notes,
state rhetoric is ends-oriented and the sacredness of the mission that the state is pushing cuts off
all contrary debate as subversive or blasphemous, as authoritarianism itself is justified in the
name of the mission. Some authoritarian regimes not only incorporate ideological
considerations into their mode and method of governance, but view ideology as being of high
importance. It is therefore logical to infer that an authoritarian regime that is shaped by
ideological concerns will take those concerns into account when determining whether or not to
open up the political arena to contestation, as the state ideology might in some situations be
fatally threatened by a transition to democracy depending on the nature of the opposition
movement most likely to gain power.

Ideological conflict becomes relevant in a variety of transition situations. As outlined in
the typology above, exclusive-status quo regimes are never able to separate the ideology from
their political power, as the legitimacy of the latter is entirely derived from the former, and thus

78 Haas, 6.
79 Waterbury, 26.
any political challenger is going to be seen as a de facto ideological threat. In contrast, inclusive-revolutionary regimes are the least likely to view any ideological challenges as fatally threatening since the nature of ideology makes it likely to survive the end of the regime itself, and thus challenges will not be viewed through a solely ideological prism. This is not to say that an inclusive-revolutionary regime cannot be paranoid and completely closed to political competition; certainly Communist regimes were sensitive to perceived enemies and threats to their rule. As totalitarian regimes, however, they were not sensitive to ideological threats so much as they were sensitive to any type of opposition at all, ideological or otherwise. Once it became apparent that Communist regimes were going to fall, they went relatively quietly and the ideological nature of their specific challengers in different states did not have any impact. There was no variation in the responses of Communist regimes to political challenges based on the nature of the opposition; they were not more likely to fight to the death against rightwing parties over leftwing parties or capitalists over socialists. Evaluation of challengers and threats to their rule were not influenced by ideological considerations.

   The scenarios that present the most flux are those involving inclusive-status quo and exclusive-revolutionary regimes as their responses to democratic challengers are going to hinge on the ideological makeup of the opposition parties. In these instances, I argue that an ideological regime that is prepared to allow a transition to democracy is going to look to protect the ideology itself so that it outlives the regime. Opponents will be evaluated solely along ideological lines, and only those who do not present an ideological conflict will be allowed to replace the regime following the transition. If a transition will place the regime’s ideology in
danger, then the regime will not allow the transition to take place. In essence, the regime places the survival of the ideology above its own survival.\(^{80}\)

The reasons behind this are varied and depend on the particulars of each situation. Ideology is a powerful force, and those steeped in an ideology can come to exude a level of commitment that transcends other interests.\(^{81}\) Ideology is the sum of first order values and beliefs held by the most influential members of society that are imposed upon the masses, and ideology causes its followers to act in order for those beliefs to be realized.\(^{82}\) The guardians and enforcers of state political ideologies who have built a political order upon an ideological foundation should not be expected to simply let their ideology, which they have fought to impose and which has guided their decisions, lapse once a new government takes over. This is particularly so for the first or second generation of rulers, as they can be expected to have a deeper and more personal connection to the ideology than successive generations of leaders who have had the ideology instilled in them but were not present at the creation.

Linz’s work on post-totalitarian regimes is instructive in this regard in two respects. First, he highlights the institutional legacy of ideology in arguing that while there is a gap between official ideological claims and reality, the ideology lives on as official canon that can be neither ignored nor even officially questioned, and is an integral part of social reality. The

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\(^{80}\) This claim may seem counterintuitive, but it is not unsupported. The idea that regimes prioritize certain elements above regime survival itself has been noted by Barbara Geddes in her observation that military regimes are more willing to give up power and often initiate transitions because “most officers value the unity and capacity of the military institution more than they value holding office.” Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?” in *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 140. If this observation is correct, then it is logical to infer that a regime with a strong hegemonic ideology that it has developed and spread throughout the organs of the state and society might care more about the growth and survival of its ideological legacy than it does about maintaining *de jure* power.

\(^{81}\) To view firsthand a recent acute example of ideology’s power one only needs to watch footage of North Koreans wailing and flinging themselves on the ground upon the news of Kim Jong Il’s death, accessed August 12, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSN6Qj98Iw&feature=share

ideology that was the powerful hallmark of the totalitarian regime still shapes civil and political society, the organs of the state, and the economy, even if the ranks of apostates, dissenters, and civil society challengers have grown.  This is a useful observation in thinking about the ideological states that I have described above, as they too maintain powerful ideological legacies. Whereas their ideologies are not as pervasive and all-encompassing as those in totalitarian states, regime elites are going to protect their ideologies and guarantee their survival in a post-transition polity because the ideologies exert a powerful influence. Indeed, post-totalitarian states are influenced by ideology after it has been weakened or discredited, yet authoritarian ideological states have not yet begun to cast aside their ideologies, and thus the power of the ideology on regime actors might even be more acute. While Linz envisioned the power of ideology as applying only to totalitarian regimes, this is certainly not a universally unchallenged position, even if it is a dominant one. Others have argued that the ideologies of the West, such as socialism, nationalism, and even racism, indoctrinate their followers to engage in both private and public behavior that reinforces and exhibits fealty to these ideologies.

Second, Linz posits that one of the factors in moving a state from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism is the replacement of the original group of leaders with a new generation that may not have the zeal or intellectual commitment of the founders. This ultimately leads to a weakening of the ideology as the next generation will be more concerned with building an organizational base than with creating an elaborate ideology, and in time might lead the totalitarian system to post-totalitarianism or another form of authoritarianism.

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83 Linz and Stepan, 48.
85 Linz, 76-78.
dynamic occurs in ideological authoritarian states, where the founding generation that articulated and installed the regime ideology will be less willing to allow a transition to take place without ironclad guarantees that the opposition will maintain the regime ideology, whereas successive generations of leadership may be accepting of more fluid or ambiguous situations.86

Ideology exerts such a powerful influence because it imbues a regime’s actions with spiritual or existential authority in addition to secular authority.87 Both leaders and citizens make themselves over in the image of the ideology, creating no space for dissent from ideological norms. The process is designed to penetrate individual consciousness and alter perception so that a situation where the ideology does not reign supreme is unimaginable. Political ideologies cannot tolerate the notion that some individuals might not subscribe to their program or have doubts about the ideologies’ fundamental correctness.88 Given this power, an ideological regime is going to necessarily evaluate the ideological status of opposition movements and parties before a transition occurs. If the opposition is opposed only to the continued political power of the authoritarian regime, then ideological considerations do not come into play. If, however, the differences between the regime and its opponents are also ideological in nature, then ideological conflict will act as a structural constraint upon a non-violent democratic transition. In a situation where the structural elements necessary for a successful transition are in place, the process of elite bargaining will not be successful if the regime is ideological in character and the primary opposition holds a competing ideology. In this way, ideology should be viewed as a structural

86 Compare the reactions of the Kemalist leadership under Atatürk and İnönü to the Progressive Republicans and Democrats with the Kemalist establishment’s reaction to the AKP electoral victory in 2002, or Bourguiba’s response to Islamist challengers with that of Ben Ali’s coterie, as seen in the chapters below.
87 Spiritual here does not necessarily have a religious connotation, as ideologies do not have to be based on religion. Kemalism, communism, secular Arab nationalism, and Zionism are all ideologies that are in some degree based on opposition to religious belief.
88 Pranger, 19-24.
variable much like any other. Just as political scientists have long recognized weak economies or ethnic fractionalization as structural variables that make democracy more difficult to emerge and maintain, ideological conflict can be thought of in a similar manner. This theory for certain situations begins to provide an answer to the question of why, in the words of Przeworski and his colleagues, “there are countries in which dictatorships persist when all the observable conditions indicate they should not,” along with positing an explanation for the dilemma as to why “[s]everal countries have waited much longer to make the transit to democracy than their conditions would predict.”

Testing Ideological Conflict’s Effect on Democracy

To ascertain whether this hypothesis about ideological conflict is generally correct, it is useful to examine a number of data points concerning states that have successfully transitioned to democracy in the second half of the 20th century. The post-WWII era is a logical starting point primarily for two reasons. First, in laying out his theory of waves of democratization followed by counter-waves of authoritarian retrenchment, Huntington identified the second wave of democratization beginning with the end of WWII, and it represents a period of rapid democratization in contrast to the gradual dynamic of the century-long first wave. Given the relatively quick pace at which states moved from authoritarianism to democracy, the effects of ideological conflict during the third wave are easier to track than during the first wave since ideologies were less fluid and the cessation of ideological conflict resulted in quick changes. Second, WWII is an appropriate starting point due to the role that ideology played in that conflict

89 Przeworski et al., 87-88.
90 Huntington, 18-19.
and the resulting post-war recognition of the importance of ideology for maintaining political order. The Cold War and the struggle over differing sources of legitimacy created a discernible change in the intellectual environment of political activity.\textsuperscript{91} It is therefore not surprising that ideology would take on increasing significance and be more of a concern to regimes of all types, but particularly to authoritarian regimes whose legitimacy was derived not from democratic elections but from appeals to ideological principles. Using the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century as an end point allows the study to be bounded for measurement purposes, and allows for a decade after the end of the Cold War in order to capture the transitions of former Communist regimes and integrate them into this study.

Using this time frame as the period under review, 39 states underwent successful peaceful democratic transitions between 1945 and 2000. I define a peaceful transition as one in which there was no civil war or outside intervention directly causing the transition to occur, and I define success as maintaining democratic rule for at least 5 years. In measuring whether a transition occurred, I use a Polity score of 7 as a cutoff point in defining democracy.\textsuperscript{92} Of these 39 cases of transition, 12 of them occurred in states that can be defined as ideological according to the criteria laid out above. I coded states as ideological if they justified policies or actions...

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{92} There is some ambiguity as to what Polity score constitutes a democracy. On the Polity IV homepage it states, “The Polity scores can also be converted to regime categories: we recommend a three-part categorization of "autocracies" (-10 to -6), "anocracies" (-5 to +5 and the three special values: -66, -77, and -88), and "democracies" (+6 to +10); accessed August 12, 2013, http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm. Yet, in the Polity IV Dataset Users Manual, it states in the section defining regime transitions that a "'democratic transition' is defined as at least a three-point POLITY value change in three years or less from autocracy (i.e., a negative or zero POLITY score) to a partial democracy (POLITY values +1 to +6) or full democracy (POLITY values +7 to +10).” Accessed August 12, 2013, http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4manualv2010.pdf. The decision to use a score of 6 as the cutoff rather than a 7 would add five more states to the list: Bangladesh in 1991, Benin in 1991, Guyana in 1992, Malawi in 1994, and Mozambique in 1994. Since none of these cases, however, are ones in which ideology played a significant factor, and because the Polity manual was in all likelihood a more carefully researched, written, and thought out project than the one paragraph “Brief Description” on the Polity website, I have chosen to use a score of 7 as the cutoff for determining democracy in the interests of avoiding Sartori’s conceptual stretching.
based on appeals to explicitly ideological claims or a programmatic mission and allowed those claims or mission to constrain their actions. In coding the variable for conflict with the opposition, I first determined whether or not there was an organized political opposition movement, and then whether the opposition was ideological in nature. Since opposition movements and parties do not carry out policies in the way that states do, ascertaining whether their ideologies constrain their actions is impossible, but the first part of the two-part test – whether they justify their policies through appeals to ideological grounds – is routinely discoverable. The final step was determining whether an ideological opposition movement or party adopts an ideology different from the one adopted by the regime.

Table 1 – Democratic Transitions, 1945-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Transition Year</th>
<th>Ideological Regime</th>
<th>Ideological Type</th>
<th>Conflict With Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>inclusive-revolutionary</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>inclusive-revolutionary</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>inclusive-status quo</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>inclusive-</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 1, in 9 of the 12 ideological states there was a conflict with the opposition that was ideological in nature before the transition occurred. The three states in which there was no conflict were coded that way either because there was no significant
organized political opposition or because the primary opposition was non-ideological or multideological to the point of incoherence. The absence of an ideological challenge let the regime manage the transition in a more orderly fashion in Hungary. The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia was an organic one driven by civil society and thus, much like events in Tunisia two decades later, the regime was able to step aside either blind or willfully naïve to the nature of the opposition. In Romania, there was so little organized opposition that in June 1989 it had only two independent organizations in the entire country – neither of which had publicly known leaders – and it was the only communist country to undergo a transition in which not one samizdat publication ever appeared.

In Hungary, the opposition at first consisted primarily of civil society groups rather than a political party with a developed platform or ideology. Once the various groups formed an Opposition Round Table to negotiate with the government, they agreed that the goal was not to develop social policies but solely to work out the details of free elections. Furthermore, the Hungarian Democratic Forum was actually supported and encouraged by reform-minded regime figures within the Hungarian Communist Party, and the opposition was not focused on the ideological character of the regime – as opposed to the simple non-democratic character of the regime – to such an extent that opinion polling indicated the Communists would win the a plurality in the first round of elections. Ideology was not a factor in Hungary’s transition because neither the regime nor the opposition considered ideology to be a stumbling block or a point of contention in the negotiations leading to a transition. Partially this was because of the inclusive-revolutionary nature of communism, partially it can be attributed to the reformist status

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93 See Chapter 5.
94 Linz and Stepan, 352-53.
95 Ibid, 296-308.
of many Hungarian Communist Party leaders, and partially it was due to the opposition not having a unitary ideology that conflicted with the regime’s ideology. These factors all combined to relegate ideology to the back burner during Hungary’s transition.

In Czechoslovakia, the opposition was far more disorganized and minimal than in Hungary. Linz and Stepan write that the Czechoslovakian dissident community could not be considered an organized opposition but rather as distinct civil society protest groups, and that “[i]n comparison to Poland they were only, of course, a minute fraction of the population…In comparison to the social movements in Hungary, which turned into political parties by late 1988, they were small, unorganized, and anti-political.”96 The Czechoslovakian regime collapsed in the span of a few short weeks following mass defections from the party and opposition from communist subgroups such as the Communist Party Youth Union along with large public demonstrations. The regime did not have a handle on the ideological nature of the political opposition because there were no significant organized groups that had emerged as challengers to the regime. In addition, given the various defections from communist party organs, it would have been reasonable for the regime hardliners to conclude that their main opposition consisted of communist reformers, and thus the level of ideological conflict would have been minimal at best. A communist regime concerned about the ideology of its potential replacement would perceive far less of a threat if its main opponents were also communists but of a different stripe, and thus would be willing to step aside with the knowledge that the state ideology was not in danger of being eradicated. As was the case with Hungary as well, Czechoslovakia was governed by an inclusive-revolutionary ideology, and that also served to further lessen the threat of an ideological challenge.

96 Ibid, 321.
With the remaining nine ideological states to have an ideological conflict between the regime and the primary opposition we can begin to isolate the effects of conflict on a successful transition to democracy. Looking at country years for each state going backward ten years before the transition and forward ten years post-transition, the correlation between democracy and ideological conflict over 212 observations is -0.7989, confirming that there is a robust reverse correlation between the existence of ideological conflict and democracy in ideological states that were ultimately able to successfully transition. In addition, in seven of the nine cases the state transitioned to democracy within three years of the source of ideological conflict being eliminated. The two exceptions were Portugal, where it took four years – two of which were a military-led regime – for the transition to take place, and Bulgaria, where ideological conflict persisted for one year after the transition. These results are not surprising in light of what I have hypothesized about the desire of ideological regimes to protect their ideological legacies, and how the elimination of the source of conflict – whether because the nature of the opposition changes or because the regime drops its ideological commitments – will smooth the way for a transition to occur.

Looking at correlation is not enough, however, as many other factors aside from ideology influence a state’s democratic status. The interests of parsimony and avoiding too much statistical noise dictate consciously limiting the number of independent variables, and thus I keep to the spirit of Achen’s Rule of Three, which states that a statistical study with more than three explanatory variables is meaningless, as a greater number of controls means that there is too much going in the sample for reliable inference. Rather than using every possible observation
and dozens of control variables, researchers should be more careful in their choice of samples and constrain their choice of estimators, which will lead to more reliable generalizations.\(^97\)

In addition to the methodological reasons, I keep to the spirit of Achen’s Rule of Three for philosophical reasons as well. The statistical study here is not intended to be the core of this dissertation, and my intent in using statistics in this instance is to frame my overall argument and confirm it on a very basic level. I want to establish that ideological conflict as a variable in democratic transitions has been overlooked, and that overlooking it is a mistake because it has a measurable causal effect on political development. I do not, however, intend to try and discover to the most specific degree possible precisely how much of an effect ideological conflict has as compared to the entire universe of possible causal variables. The specific journey is more interesting and useful than the final destination; in other words, the cases tracing exactly how ideological conflict can muddle transitions are the heart of this study rather than statistics that might place an ironclad value on ideological conflict’s causal strength. The statistics are meant to serve as a useful background to the cases, and thus do not include too many control variables or more complicated statistical models.

In light of these reasons for limiting the scope of the regression, the independent variables aside from ideological conflict that I use fall into two broad categories: development and social fractionalization.\(^98\) The connection between development and democracy occupies well-tread ground within comparative politics. Seymour Martin Lipset first posited a link between economic development and regime type, contending that increased wealth is causally related to the development of democracy due to its effects on urbanization, increased receptivity

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\(^98\) For more information about the sources and coding of variables, see Appendix A.
to democratic norms, the creation of a middle class, increased education, and the development of civil society, all of which cause citizens of authoritarian states to demand greater political participation. In Lipset’s view, socioeconomic prosperity made it more likely that a state would become democratic and also stay democratic, making his theory important to both the study of transitions and consolidation. Writing three decades later and with the benefit of hindsight and a larger dataset of democratic states, Samuel Huntington highlighted economic development and high levels of overall wealth in discussing the causes of the third wave of democracy, pointing out that wealthy countries tend to be democracies while poor countries tend to be authoritarian and that the movement of countries into upper-middle income levels promotes democratization. Huntington specifically emphasized transitions, arguing that reaching a benchmark in terms of broad-based – rather than rent-based – economic development provided an economic basis for democracy by requiring governments to become more representative in order to tax their populations. Huntington also adopted many of Lipset’s points in positing that economic growth shapes democratic values, increases education levels, opens up society, and promotes the expansion of the middle class, all of which work in conjunction to level inequalities and convince disparate social groups that they can advance their interests through the mechanisms of elections and representative democracy.

Not all scholars concede the link between socioeconomic growth and democratic transitions. Przeworski et al. found that economic development does not itself generate democracy, but rather only increases the likelihood that democracies will remain as such, and

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99 Lipset, 75-85.
100 Huntington, 59-72.
that the traditional view that wealth causes democracy is unfounded.\textsuperscript{101} In contrast, Epstein et al. challenged those findings and maintained that high levels of GDP correlate with transitions toward democracy in that high per capita income increases the likelihood of a state moving away from authoritarianism and decreases the likelihood of a state moving away from democracy. According to them, Przeworski et al. made a number of methodological errors related to incorrect estimation of standard errors, and they state that using a trichotomous classification of regimes that adds partial democracies as a category confirms the causal relationship of economic development promoting transitions to democracy.\textsuperscript{102} Arbitrating what is at heart a methodological dispute over statistical methods is beyond the scope of both my expertise and this dissertation, so I will not attempt to do so, but I would note the following observation; while there is debate over whether development drives democratic transitions or whether it only helps to consolidate democracies, there is broad agreement that economic well-being is both an indicator and a driver of democracy. Furthermore, the preponderance of scholarly evidence comes down on the side of socioeconomic well-being not merely being correlated with the presence of democracy, but actually driving transitions to democracy,\textsuperscript{103} and using variables that fall under the broad category of development for controls while testing for the effects of ideology is therefore appropriate. The variables I use for measuring a state’s level of development are GDP in 2005 dollars, population size, and urbanization.

\textsuperscript{101} Przeworski et al., 78-137.
\textsuperscript{103} With the exception of rentier states.
Like economic development, a state’s level of fractionalization in different social planes has also been connected to regime type.\textsuperscript{104} Rustow emphasized the idea that a cohesive state is more likely to be democratic in his seminal article that inaugurated the field of transitology. As outlined in the previous chapter, Rustow argued that democracy can thrive in nearly any environment without a surfeit of preconditions, and that transitions are even possible in situations where conditions make democracy unlikely to emerge. Nevertheless, Rustow maintained that one single background condition was necessary, which was national unity. By national unity, Rustow meant that the majority of citizens were unwavering in their sense of belonging to a particular political community.\textsuperscript{105} While Rustow did not make any explicit claims regarding sociolinguistic factors, the logical implication that follows is that a sense of cohesive political community is more easily attained when there is ethnic and cultural unity, which increases the likelihood of political unity and a sense of shared political and civic identity. Indeed, Linz and Stepan note that conflicts between democratization policies and nation-state policies are likely to emerge if there are multiple nations within a state or if there are high levels of cultural diversity since this increases the likelihood that large swaths of the population will question the state’s legitimacy. Furthermore, they asserted that the more a population of a state is composed of different national, lingual, religious, or cultural societies, the more difficult an agreement will be on the fundamentals of what democracy in that state should look like. A population that does not grant its obedience to the dictates of the state and that does not want to live under the auspices of that state will present an enormous problem for democratic transition, and pluralism of national, 


\textsuperscript{105}Rustow, 350-52.
linguistic, religious, or cultural societies makes it difficult to reach an agreement on the fundamental structure, nature, and mechanics of democracy. Ultimately, transitions to democracy are made easier by a country with an ethnically, culturally, and religiously homogenous population, and fractionalization is a good control variable given its role in ushering in or hindering democracy. The variables used to measure this are ethnic fractionalization, linguistic fractionalization, and religious fractionalization.

Table 2 – Democracy and Conflict, Development, and Fractionalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>independent variables</th>
<th>(1) conflict</th>
<th>(2) development</th>
<th>(3) fractionalization</th>
<th>(4) conflict + development</th>
<th>(5) conflict + fractionaliz.</th>
<th>(6) development + fractionaliz.</th>
<th>(7) full model</th>
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<td>-0.815***</td>
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<td>-0.802***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.0423)</td>
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<td>(0.0448)</td>
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<td>gdp2005</td>
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<td>7.94e-06*</td>
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<td>9.59e-06</td>
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<td>(6.87e-06)</td>
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<td>1.110***</td>
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<td>(0.219)</td>
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<td>(0.172)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.224)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
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<td>0.518***</td>
<td>0.763***</td>
<td>0.854***</td>
<td>0.0386</td>
<td>0.770***</td>
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<td>(0.0625)</td>
<td>(0.0695)</td>
<td>(0.0454)</td>
<td>(0.0450)</td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.0882)</td>
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<td>212</td>
<td>212</td>
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<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
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<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.652</td>
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</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

106 Linz and Stepan, 24-33.
The results seen in Table 2 are revealing. In the four models that include ideological conflict as a variable and running a two-tailed test, ideological conflict is statistically significant in all four instances at the p<0.01 level and the absolute range over the four models for the 95% confidence interval is -.9027 to -.6983. When looking at the first model, which has ideological conflict as the only independent variable, every unit increase in ideological conflict corresponds to a .82 decrease in a state’s democracy variable. This obviously does not provide a full picture of the interplay between democracy and ideological conflict as it includes no control variables, but it does establish at the outset that a causal relationship exists and that the correlation between the two variables is not coincidental.

Moving to the other three models that include ideological conflict yields a more complete story. Model 4, which tests for the effects of conflict and the three development variables, shows a decrease of .80 in democracy for every unit increase in ideological conflict. Model 5, which looks at conflict and fractionalization, shows a similar effect, with a .82 decrease in democracy for each unit increase of conflict. Finally, model 7 includes all seven variables in the regression, and each unit increase of conflict causes a .80 decrease in democracy. The results of the regressions are remarkably stable across all four models that test for ideological conflict as a variable, with a unit increase in conflict always leading to a roughly .80 decrease in a state’s democratic status at a p<0.01 level of statistical significance no matter what combination of control variables is used. This suggests that ideological conflict is harmful to democracy irrespective of whatever other background conditions exist, and also that ideological conflict’s corrosive influence is extremely stable in terms of the degree to which is affects states.
In addition, the R-squared is robust only in the four models that include conflict as a variable. This is in some ways misleading as the sample size includes only ideological states that have transitioned to democracy and not all states that have transitioned, but it does confirm that ideology takes on outsized importance in this sample of states. The overall results leave little doubt that ideological conflict has a negative effect on democracy in ideological states that have successfully transitioned.

Looking beyond ideological conflict to the other variables, the relationship between wealth and democracy appears to be confirmed by the regressions, although at what level depends on which other variables are included. In model 2, GDP is statistically significant at the p<0.01 level, which is to be expected as this model tests only for development variables. When juxtaposed against the fractionalization variables but without taking ideological conflict into account, GDP is again statistically significant at the p<0.01 level. GDP’s effects are less clear, however, when ideological conflict is introduced into the equation. In model 4, which tests for conflict and the development variables, GDP is significant at the p<0.1 level, but even that low level of statistical significance drops away in the full model when all seven variables are included. Population size and urbanization level are not statistically significant at any level in any of the models, including in the model that measures the effect on democracy of the development variables alone.

The significance of the fractionalization variables jumps around depending on the model that is run. In model 5, when conflict is included but the development variables are excluded, ethnic and linguistic fractionalization are significant at the p<0.1 level, but in model 6 when conflict is removed and development is added, ethnic and religious fractionalization are
significant at the p<0.01 level while linguistic fractionalization is not significant at any level. In the full model, linguistic fractionalization is significant at the p<0.1 level but the other two measures of fractionalization are not significant. Somewhat surprisingly, none of the fractionalization variables are significant at any level when they are the only ones included in the regression in model 3.

In sum, GDP appears to be an important variable when looking at this group of ideological democracies, and the three measures of fractionalization retain a limited degree of importance depending on which model is run. Ideological conflict, however, overshadows all of the development and fractionalization variables and based on these results is the primary determinant of whether or not an ideological regime transitions successfully to democracy. Ideological conflict is statistically significant at the highest level in every model in which it is included, and its effect on democracy as measured by Polity scores is unfailingly and consistently detrimental.

**Ideological Conflict and Failed Transitions**

Looking at transitions in ideological states is not enough, however, because it only reveals one side of the coin, namely how resolving ideological conflict paves the way for democracy. The other side is how ideological conflict prevents democracy from emerging in states where the conditions are otherwise favorable. In other words, if removing ideological conflict from the political arena can lead to a successful transition, it logically follows that the presence of ideological conflict in an authoritarian state that might be expected to be democratic can lead to a failed or aborted transition. It is also important to take failed transitions into
account so as not to figuratively select on the dependent variable by only looking at ideological conflict’s impact on states that were ultimately successful in overcoming the constraints that it imposed.

Assessing what constitutes a failed transition is both tricky and potentially dangerous from a theoretical standpoint. Determining which countries “should” be democratic and when they should transition opens up a Pandora’s Box of issues related to the questions of preconditions and the respective roles of structure and agency. Various arguments have been made over the course of decades that a certain level of economic wealth is a necessary condition for developing and sustaining democracy, or that only countries with a suitable political culture can become democratic. The transition paradigm inaugurated by O’Donnell and Schmitter’s work was in large part a repudiation of these views, and argued that it was the process, rather than the structural substance, that was more important. This is not the place to re-litigate these arguments as it could fill up the contents of numerous dissertations. One must consider the fact that, as mentioned above, the evidence for connecting democracy to a baseline level of wealth is manifest, and also that raising such evidence to the level of arguing for absolute preconditions cannot account for extremely poor democracies such as India, Benin, Senegal, or Indonesia.

Being all too aware of Thomas Carothers’s criticisms of the transition paradigm, in considering failed transitions I do not mean to imply that a teleological progression exists that inevitably leads from authoritarianism to democracy, nor to suggest that any move away from authoritarianism necessarily signifies a democratic breakthrough. Rather, as has been noted by Przeworski, Huntington, and others, there are factors the presence of which make it more likely than not that a state will be a democracy, and it is therefore not unreasonable to search for a

107 Carothers, 5-21.
broad theory that may account for outliers. While no social science theory is expected to achieve perfect universal application, particularly when studying a concept such as political development that is influenced by unique historical and social legacies specific to each individual state, it is nevertheless possible to develop a theory that accounts for anomalies in expected outcomes.

That being said, there must be some necessary cut off used to distinguish a failed transition from other authoritarian states, since otherwise one runs the risk of opening up the universe to cases that do not fit within the scope of what is being analyzed. It is preferable to err on the side of caution in this instance and end up with fewer cases of failed transitions than it is to include cases that are not robust examples. I thus define a failed transition as one in which a state’s Polity score rises at least three points in one year and the increase is sustained for at least three years, and where the state has a minimum GDP per capita of $5000 in 2005 dollars throughout the period of liberalization. This definition means that a failed transition as I define it can only take place in a state that is structurally suited for democracy and that actually went through a liberalization and democratization process. This of course is not meant to imply that these states would have ultimately transitioned in each case, but that they were excellent cases for transition having a baseline level of development and having taken steps down a transitional path in at least some regard.

I use GDP as a cutoff given that wealth is generally a better predictor of democracy than any other variable, and because of its significance in the regressions run above on successful transitions in ideological states. Huntington defined the transition zone as being between $1000 and $3000 in the mid-1970s, and 75% of the states in this GDP band in 1976 had either
significantly liberalized or democratized by 1989.\textsuperscript{108} Since 25% of the states in this economic zone did not show any movement away from authoritarianism and because Huntington includes “significant liberalization” in this group, using a cutoff of $1750 in 1976 dollars translates to $5000 in 2005 dollars. Each state in the group of failed transitions thus has to pass two tests: it must reach a basic development baseline in order to ensure that it could reasonably be expected to be democratic and therefore be labeled as a democratic underachiever; and it must have actually demonstrated significant liberalization, which is a precursor of democratization and a means of identifying a particular moment of a failed or aborted transition.

Using the standard I have laid out, there are five states that can be categorized as having undergone aborted transitions between 1945 and 2000 – Algeria, Gabon, Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia. In all but Gabon, ideological conflict existed between the authoritarian regime and the opposition, and in each of these cases the period of liberalization was followed by authoritarian retrenchment or civil war. It does not escape notice that Algeria, Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia are all Middle Eastern states, a region in which ideology has long been paramount to the way in which regimes legitimize their rule. The patterns of ideological conflict differ in these cases. In Algeria, the conflict was between secularists and Islamists where the mantle of nationalism was counterintuitively claimed by the Islamists. In Iran, it was between different visions of Islamism in which the core ideological dispute was over the role of religious authority in the political realm. In Lebanon, it was both ideological and sectarian and pitted Muslims and Arab nationalism on one side versus Christians and unitary Lebanese nationalism on the other. In Tunisia, the nature of the conflict was both religious and nationalist, as an aggressively secular

\textsuperscript{108} Huntington, 62-63.
nationalist state was threatened by an Islamist opposition that pushed the regime on questions of religion and pan-Muslim unity.

Table 3 – Failed Transitions in Ideological States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>-9</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>$7152.63</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$13674.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>$5263.72</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It does not escape notice that the four ideological states in the table above all started and ended in very different places when looking at their Polity scores before and after the failed transition. Algeria, Iran, and Tunisia were all firmly in the authoritarian category with strongly negative scores, but in this group only Iran moved into positive territory. Lebanon ended up with the highest Polity score of the four, but was also the only state starting in positive territory to begin with. The increase in Polity scores as measured by liberalization also varies, with Lebanon increasing by three points, Tunisia by five, Algeria by seven, and Iran by nine. One might argue that only Lebanon and Iran went through failed transitions in this group since they ended up with positive Polity scores while Algeria and Tunisia did not, or that only Iran belongs on this list since it alone has the distinction of moving from negative to positive Polity territory.
In my view, all four cases belong in the failed transition category irrespective of the variance in their starting and ending points and the scope of their liberalizing measures. The fact that a state starts off with a negative Polity score does not preclude a jump straight to democracy; Bolivia went from -7 in 1981 to 8 in 1982, Brazil from -3 in 1984 to 7 in 1985, Bulgaria from -7 in 1989 to 8 in 1990, to take three examples at the very beginning of the alphabet. A low starting Polity score does not have to be a barrier to a jump straight from authoritarianism to democracy, and the fact that three of the states in this group began with low scores should not impact the question of whether or not they went through failed transitions. Furthermore, the fact that Algeria and Tunisia did not ultimately move into positive territory is the entire point of this exercise; as I have contended and as I will demonstrate in Chapter 4 with Tunisia specifically, ideological conflict can lead not only to delayed transitions but to failed transitions altogether. I will argue that absent an ideological threat to the regime, Tunisia would have likely ended up transitioning to democracy, and so the seeming lack of progress in this case is not a sign that it does not belong in the failed transition category, but that some external factor contributed to making it a failed transition rather than a successful one. Finally, it is not a coincidence that of the five cases of failed transitions, four of them took place in ideological states. Glossing over these cases because they did not make sufficient progress on the path toward a transition or, as in Lebanon’s case, started off in positive territory risks missing the negative effects that ideological conflict can have.

In each of these cases, the state in question can be described as a democratic underachiever that took significant steps toward democracy in the form of liberalizing and/or of holding elections. None of these states ultimately transitioned to democracy under the auspices
of the liberalizing authoritarian regime despite real steps in that direction. In looking at other factors, Tunisia is remarkably ethnically, religiously, and linguistically homogenous, while Algeria and Iran have low levels of religious fractionalization and Lebanon low levels of ethnic and linguistic fractionalization. There existed in all four states a reasonable expectation of democracy at the time of their failed transitions, and yet democracy did not emerge out of the liberalization process. Ideological conflict played a substantial role in these outcomes by heightening each regime’s threat perception vis-à-vis the opposition and making it impossible for an authoritarian government committed to a strong ideology to trust that its ideology would remain in place in the event of a transition. Ideological conflict acted as a structural constraint on a successful democratic transition, and served not just to leave each country in a state of suspended animation, but also to actually contribute to liberalization measures being rolled back following the initial political opening.

**Connecting the Dots**

Ideological states deserve to be considered as a distinct category in which the direction of political development will be affected by regime ideologies. States that base their legitimacy on upholding a set of ideological principles take threats to their ideologies seriously, and will do what is necessary to protect their ideological legacies. In looking at authoritarian ideological states that have transitioned to democracy, the transition has been influenced by whether or not there is ideological conflict with the opposition; when such conflict was present, transitions did not take place until the conflict was eliminated. Furthermore, ideological conflict is statistically significant in preventing democracy in countries that have transitioned, and in the five identified
cases of failed transitions, ideological conflict was present in four of them. While ideological conflict has not been considered as a factor in the literature on democratic transitions, the research presented here strongly suggests that this is a gap that needs to be corrected.

With ideological conflict’s importance established, the necessary question to be asked is how regimes behave when ideological conflict is present in the face of a democratic transition. As argued above, ideological states all prioritize ideology but different types of ideological states will view ideological challenges as more threatening or less threatening depending on the specific nature of the state’s ideology. The remainder of this dissertation will examine the specific way in which ideological conflict shaped regime behavior in two such states – Turkey and Tunisia – during periods when both regimes were logical candidates for a transition. In Turkey’s case, the authoritarian regime rejected opposition challengers for decades based on their ideological incompatibility with Turkey’s ruling ideology, and when finally faced with an opposition party that accepted the tenets of Kemalism, inaugurated the era of multi-party politics. When the new government’s fealty to Kemalism was called into question ten years after it assumed power, the military instigated a coup to protect the state ideology and ensure its survival.

In Tunisia, the authoritarian regime decided to open Tunisia’s political system to competition for the first time since becoming independent, assuming that any viable opposition parties all accepted the basic framework of Tunisia’s ruling ideology. Following elections, however, it emerged that the dominant opponents of the regime were Islamists, who espoused a political ideology that presented an existential threat to Tunisia’s Bourguibism. While the Islamists did not do nearly well enough to threaten the regime’s power, the ideological threat
they posed led to a swift and furious crackdown that fated Tunisia to another two decades of authoritarian rule. When street protests in 2011 succeeded in dislodging Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali from power, the decision that the military took to abandon Ben Ali only came following a mistaken calculation that Bourguibism would be safe no matter who took over since the Islamists were perceived to be too weak to once again be a threat.

In both of these cases, the trigger to prevent a transition was an acute threat perception of an ideological, rather than a political, nature. In Turkey, the regime transitioned to democracy and gave up power after being satisfied that Kemalism’s position was assured, and the evidence strongly suggests that the same would have eventually occurred in Tunisia in the early 1990s had the Ben Ali regime been similarly confident of Bourguibism’s safety. In both situations, ideological conflict was the critical variable explaining the actions taken by authoritarian regimes, and their primary concern was the ideologies’ survival rather than the regimes’ survival. As each case will demonstrate, perceptions of ideological threats are a powerful driver of regime decision making in ideological states, and ideological conflict has the ability to act as a structural constraint on successful democratic transitions.
Chapter III

Turkey’s political development during the first four decades following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 is a testament to the role that ideological conflict plays in the transition process. In many ways, Turkey is the perfect test case for this theory of ideological conflict as a structural constraint. When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded Turkey out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, he did so with clearly thought out ideas about how his new state should be organized and what goals it should seek to attain. Furthermore, unlike in other states where an ideology may be adopted after the institutions of the state are already in place, Atatürk built Turkey’s political and social institutions at the same time that he was installing Kemalism as the state’s official ideology. This enabled him to create structures and rules that were explicitly designed to strengthen and enable Kemalism, meaning that any challenge to the state would unmistakably be a challenge to Kemalism as well. Kemalism was so entrenched and well articulated that its tenets were explicitly written out and incorporated into the ruling party’s flag so that there was no ambiguity about which theories and actions comported with Kemalism and which did not.

For the purposes of theory testing, this makes Turkey a particularly useful case. Potential opponents of the regime could not skirt the issue of ideology because they needed to declare their ideological leanings and views of Kemalism from the start. In addition, it is easy to ascertain when the regime was batting down challengers simply because they were challengers, and when it was placing pressure on opposition groups for explicitly ideological reasons. To be sure, Turkey was founded as a single party authoritarian state with no intention of transitioning to a system that modern political science would deem to be democratic, but as Turkey’s economic
and social development progressed, so did calls for the development of opposition parties and competitive politics. As will be seen below, the Turkish state immediately turned to ideological justifications when it sought to suppress opposition before it was actually ready to open up the system to competition, and then once the determination was made that the era of competitive politics should begin, the state evaluated parties’ suitability exclusively based on their fealty to Kemalism.

Since ideology was so wrapped up and intertwined with the state itself, it meant that Turkey was unable to convert first order battles over ideology into a lower grade conflict even after the first successful transition to democracy after WWII. Any ideological wobble away from Kemalism precipitated a crisis, particularly given the fact that the most important and powerful state institution – the military – saw itself as the ultimate guardian of Kemalism irrespective of which party was in power. Thus, ideological conflict in this case not only acted as a structural constraint on a successful transition, but also continued to ensure post-transition that once ideological fights erupted into the open, the system was unable to successfully manage them. The initial resolution of ideological conflict allowed for a transition, but the fact that ideological issues still lingered in what was a strongly ideological state hampered Turkey’s political development for decades, leading to a cycle of military intervention and return to civilian government.

As an inclusive-status quo ideology, Kemalism was not engaged in tests of ideological purity. The Kemalist elite that founded and governed Turkey during its first quarter century were not intent on allowing only true believers into the political system. Rather, they demanded a promise of baseline allegiance to Kemalism by political actors so as to uphold its hegemonic
status as the only acceptable game in town. This meant that Kemalism’s adherents had a very acute sense of protecting the ideology’s status, but were not as sensitive to any and all types of ideological threats because anyone could theoretically be converted to their side; being a Kemalist was not dependent on belonging to a specific group, class, or ethnicity. While this allowed the regime some leeway on deciding who would be allowed to participate in formal politics by gambling that those who paid lip-service to Kemalism would not break their word once in power, it also created a new set of problems. Kemalism’s actual importance far outstripped the threat perception of the Kemalist regime, so that when actors entered the system and then abandoned their Kemalist façade, rather than letting the issue slide the Kemalist order was forced to hit back hard in order to maintain its ideological hegemony. Thus Turkey experienced a gap between Kemalism’s status and Kemalism’s ex-ante defense, leading to political instability after a transition had occurred. In some ways, Turkey might have been better served were Kemalism an exclusive-status quo ideology, as the founding generation would have been more zealous in its determination not to let any potentially ideologically threatening actors into the system, which in turn would have delayed Turkish democracy but given the system time to mature.

Turkey’s first decade as a democracy is an instructive period of time to examine because it also demonstrates that regimes have a much easier time policing the ideological discourse before a transition occurs than they do afterwards. Even in Turkey, where the army was able to intervene in civilian politics seemingly at will and launch coups in three consecutive decades beginning in the 1960s, the military guardians of Kemalism had a difficult time enforcing absolute ideological fealty once the anti-Kemalist forces had been allowed to participate in
politics, and had in fact actually run the state. When Kemalism was challenged by the first opposition party to come to power in Turkey’s history and it took the military a few years before electing to step in, it broke the proverbial seal and made it that much harder for Kemalism’s hegemony to be maintained. This reinforces what should be a fairly obvious but necessary point, which is that one of the reasons ideological regimes are so reluctant to hand over power to opposition groups that have conflicting ideologies is that there is no going back once the transition occurs. Turkey is a rare case in that the military was able to roll things back and start again when it did not like the ideological direction that democratic politics wrought, but the military then faced even more ideologically intransigent parties down the road, culminating in the failed e-memorandum of April 27, 2007, that unsuccessfully attempted to rein in the ruling AK Party over perceived violations of Kemalism. In some ways, the history of the Turkish Republic can be broken down into two phases: the successful effort to impose Kemalist supremacy right through Turkey’s first democratic elections in 1950, and the progressively more difficult and losing battle to maintain its dominance once Kemalism had been formally challenged by the ruling Democrat Party. The Turkish case shows the way in which ideological states view challenges through an ideological prism, and why such regimes – in their effort to enforce ideological hegemony after they are gone – are correct to think twice before handing over the reins of power to challengers whose ideological commitments to the regime’s ideology might be more wobbly and less ironclad than assumed. Ultimately, an ideological authoritarian regime can only trust in its opponents good intentions after it has turned over power, which makes the actual decision to do so such a high stakes moment and important to trace through the case studies that follow.
**Ideology in the Late Ottoman Empire**

The importance of ideology at the highest levels of the Turkish state is not a phenomenon first seen in the age of Atatürk and Kemalism. Turkey has a history of established state ideologies dating back to the Ottoman Empire, which recognized the importance of ideas in legitimating authority and viewed ideas as independent entities to be protected. After Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II was congratulated by his officers who were pleased with the weakening of a major adversary, but the sultan’s reply was that this was not a matter to be celebrated as it also weakened the principle of legitimate autocracy. Like his Kemalist successors only two short decades later, Abdulhamid recognized that ideological legitimacy was important to maintain but that ideological principles were paramount in and of themselves, and that protecting an idea could at times take precedence over other more easily identifiable aims.

In understanding why the modern Turkish state has been so zealous in guarding the twin principles of secularism and nationalism that are the foundation of Kemalist ideology, it is useful to examine the legacy of ideological primacy bequeathed to Turkey by the Ottoman Empire. Institutional legacies are oftentimes a driving force in politics and can have a lasting impact, and this is well illustrated in Turkey’s case. The Kemalists learned an important lesson in this respect from Ottoman rule, namely that a state formed around a central ideology is stronger than one that is not. While the Ottomans never elevated ideology to the near-religious status that Atatürk and his successors did, ideology nevertheless played a vital role in their thinking and approach to power.

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The central ideological mission of the Ottoman state in the late 19th century was the fusion of the sultan with Islam, stressing the sultan’s role as caliph and protector of the holy places but also introducing imperial language and imagery into traditionally religious events. Because the symbols of Islam had been familiar and universally accepted for centuries, it was only natural for the sultan to associate himself and his rule with Islamic imagery and adopt an official ideology connecting his rule with the most stable force in Ottoman society.\textsuperscript{110} This project took on greater urgency under the reign of Abdulhamid II as a response to the growing threat of nationalism and stirring Arab discontent with Ottoman rule. Hanefi jurisprudence, which viewed a strong ruler as the legitimate caliph irrespective of genealogy, was transformed into the official state ideology. Furthermore, Islam was marshaled in the service of Ottoman nationalism and Ottoman identity through the abolition of local religious courts and replacing them with Ottoman courts, allowing the Qur’an to be printed only at the official Ottoman press, and prohibiting gifts to the holy places by any rulers other than the sultan.\textsuperscript{111} The result of these efforts was that the Ottomans were able to successfully inculcate a form of Ottoman nationalism that was based on Islam and legitimate their rule through an appeal to centuries-old Islamic principles. The irony is that the use of Islamic ideology in this case led to its ultimate downfall, as the generation of Turks educated in Ottoman schools and indoctrinated with Ottoman nationalism through its religious tenets became the Kemalists who transformed Ottoman nationalism into Turkish nationalism while simultaneously secularizing the state.

The late Ottoman Empire cannot be deemed an ideological state, but it still provides a useful lesson on how states use ideology as a means of legitimacy and then act to protect the

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 46-57.
ideology itself. The Ottomans deployed ideology selectively and in a haphazard manner, grabbing onto whatever they could to justify their rule, but even so it was an effective tool. Kemalism, which was created from the ground up by the founders of the Turkish Republic, was that much more powerful and inculcated a greater attachment among those who were indoctrinated into its ranks. Kemalists as a group persist to this very day, far outliving Mustfa Kemal himself, and while Kemalism does not have the same hold on the Turkish state as it once did, it is still a vibrant force within Turkish life that permeates nearly every aspect of politics and society. In order to break away from the restrictive bounds of Kemalism, the current ruling AK Party has figuratively declared war on the military, imprisoning 20% of Turkey’s active and retired generals, and even so it is unclear whether the AKP is willing to actually challenge Kemalism to a real extent. Despite a clear discomfort with the extent to which Kemalism is still able to set bounds for what is considered to be appropriate political behavior, the AKP has been more wary of challenging Kemalism itself than it has of challenging Kemalism’s adherents. Turkey is a prototypical example of an ideological state in which the state ideology attained such a hegemonic level that even governments that are not strictly Kemalist in nature are wary of breaking down the state’s ideological structures.

**Kemalism in Action**

A Turkish scholar in 1969 characterized Turkish politics since the revolution of 1920 as “a struggle between ideologies,”\(^{113}\) which captures the contemporary acknowledgement of the importance of ideology as a first order principle in Turkey’s political development. The original motivating factor behind Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s embrace of an all-encompassing ideology was to complete the program of nationalism instituted by the late Ottoman empire and produce in Turkey a thoroughly Turkish, rather than Muslim, identity. The vehicle for doing so was Kemalism, which has six defining principles: republicanism, nationalism, populism, revolutionism, secularism, and statism. Symbolized by six arrows on the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, henceforth CHP) emblem, these six principles formed the core philosophy of Kemalist ideology, and Turkish state doctrine was built around their advancement.\(^{114}\)

Republicanism meant popular sovereignty, freedom, and legal equality, and stood in stark opposition to the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate. While Atatürk’s idea of republicanism was based on the French model, the pre-democratic reality of Turkish republicanism was a paternalistic dictatorship containing aspects of liberal rule.\(^{115}\) Republicanism in this sense meant sovereignty of the people as the basis of the state rather than sovereignty of the sultan, and the idea that the state existed to further the advancement of its citizens rather than the glory of a royal dynasty.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{113}\) Suna Kili, *Kemalism* (Istanbul: School of Business Administration and Economics, Robert College, 1969), 2.


\(^{115}\) Ibid., 28.

Nationalism was meant to stress Turkish, rather than Ottoman, nationalism and citizenship. It was not associated with the Turkish race but with notions of civic citizenship and patriotism, using the ideals and aims of the Turkish nation as a way to measure one’s Turkishness. Kemalist nationalism also carried with it implicit anti-imperial sentiment, rejecting pan-Islamic nationalism and also respecting the right of all nations to an independent state.117 This right, of course, only extended so far, as nationalism in this context was also meant as a safeguard against separatist movements threatening the territorial unity of Turkey emanating from ethnic groups that Atatürk considered part of the Turkish nation. Hence, the emphasis on civic, rather than racial or ethnic, notions of citizenship and nationhood was meant to foreclose nationalist hopes for groups like the Kurds, since a cultural or linguistic definition of a nation created the possibility of assimilating various ethnic groups through a process of Turkification.118 Perhaps most importantly, nationalism meant modernization since only through modernizing could Turkey remain an independent nation.119 The emphasis on Turkish nationalism was designed to create a Turkish nation that would not simply exist independently but be a strong and modern state on the world stage.

Populism was the idea that the Turkish people should be mobilized in the name of social progress and modernity, but also encapsulated the goal of inculcating a sense of solidarity among disparate societal or professional groups.120 Unity was essential in Atatürk’s mind to building a modern state, and he believed that only through popular unity and solidarity had Turkey achieved its independence. Populism was operationalized in a way that would ensure unity

117 Ibid., 82-83.
118 Dumont, 29.
119 Kili, Kemalism, 84.
120 Dumont, 31.
among different groups and eliminate class conflict by enacting socioeconomic and educational reforms meant to achieve equality and social mobility. This tied into republicanism, since equality and unity required the rejection of the Ottoman sultanate as it privileged a ruling class above the people.\textsuperscript{121} It was also a response to Marxism and the concept of revolutionary class struggle, and was meant to forestall any such possibility in Turkey. Throughout the 1930s, populism was used to push off dealing with potentially disruptive social issues by repeating that there were no class or social fissures in Turkey, and among the six principles of Kemalism this was the one that gained the most widespread acceptance prior to WWII.\textsuperscript{122}

Revolutionism, or reformism, symbolized a commitment to sudden radical change in the established order when necessary to effect meaningful social and political transformation. It required a dedication to furthering modernization and development, and it encompassed measures such as emulation of the West, adherence to science and logical inquiry, embrace of technology, and guarding against superstitious ignorance. In many ways, this prong of Kemalism was a continuation of the \textit{tanzimat} reforms undertaken by the Ottomans in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{123} It recognized that revolutionary action had been taken to bring Turkey to where it was in terms of casting off traditional society, and that further radical moves would be necessary to further the modernization project. Revolutionism embraced self-renewal in the name of maintaining Turkey’s modern state, recognizing that Ottoman decline was in part due to the failure to keep abreast of new developments and technologies. Revolutionary action was a

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\textsuperscript{121} Kili, \textit{Kemalism}, 85-93.
\textsuperscript{122} Dumont, 33.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 34-35.
\end{flushleft}
bulwark protecting Turkey’s immediate past and safeguarding its future by fighting stagnation and self-satisfied inaction.¹²⁴

Secularism has become the component of Kemalist ideology most widely identified with the Turkish state as a result of Turkey’s political history in the second half of the 20th century. It referred to the absolute separation of church and state, and was carried out primarily by removing state institutions from the religious sphere and lessening the influence of religion over society. Abolishing the caliphate in 1924 was the most prominent early secularization measure, and ultimately the Kemalists did not untangle the state from religious institutions so much as take them over and supervise them in the way they saw fit. The Directorate of Religious Affairs, created after the abolishment of the caliphate and headed by the prime minister, had jurisdiction over all mosques and religious lodges and appointed all religious officials including imams, effectively exerting a greater degree of control over daily religious life than the caliphate had.¹²⁵ Among other specific reforms instituted by the regime were making family names compulsory; secularizing the educational system and abolishing the religious colleges run by the ulama; restricting religious attire to be worn only in mosques and making Sunday, rather than Friday, the official day of rest; replacing the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet and replacing the Arabic call to prayer with a Turkish version; and suppressing the dervish orders (tarikats) that were the guardians and shapers of popular religion.¹²⁶

Nevertheless, secularism did not mean the entire absence of religion but rather anticlericalism and a reduced role for religion, confining it to a limited role and keeping it out of politics and the public sphere. Temporal matters were viewed as being within the province of

¹²⁴ Kili, Kemalism, 108-09.
¹²⁵ Dumont, 36-38.
science and technology as dictated by the modern world, and hence a secular state was viewed as going hand in hand with modernization and progress. The determination to suppress a broader role for religious institutions stemmed partly from religion’s historical opposition to modernization in Turkey and the religious establishment’s active hostility toward Nationalist forces in 1920. Despite this, secularism did not entail persecution of religious groups or people, but rather confining religion to what the Kemalists viewed as its proper place, and promoting independence and rational calculation at the expense of traditional religious authority and traditional society.\textsuperscript{127}

The final component of Kemalist ideology was statism. This referred generally to state penetration in social, cultural, and economic realms, and specifically to an economic policy that viewed the state as a prime mover of economic activity due to the weakness of private enterprise and a dearth of private capital. Turkish state policies were viewed as necessary to rebuild the economy following independence and the world economic depression, and statism proved to be both effective and popular.\textsuperscript{128} While it became one of the pillars of Kemalism, statism was born out of necessity rather than out of a deep ideological commitment to state intervention in the economy. It did not mean the abolishment of private property or transfers of wealth as were advocated by Marxism, but simply gave the state the right to interfere with the economy and assigned it the primary role in economic development. Much like the other components of Kemalism, statism was meant to further Turkey’s modernization project and bring about necessary change from above.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127} Kili, Kemalism, 103-08.
\textsuperscript{128} Dumont, 39-41.
\textsuperscript{129} Kili, Kemalism, 101-02.
Because some of the components of Kemalism, particularly nationalism and secularism, presented a challenge to traditional religious authority and Muslim solidarity, it is not surprising that the state viewed religious power as a threat nor that the early challenges to Kemalism took on a religious undertone. The new Turkish national identity so carefully encouraged and built by the Kemalists was intended to supersede the role of religion in society. Kemalist ideology was used as a basis for indoctrination in education and the media, and was described as Turkish religion.\(^\text{130}\) Aside from typical measures meant to build national identity and pride, such as the singing of the national anthem and official state parades, the Turkish state also put much effort into undermining the role of religion and specifically Islam, viewing it as an existential threat to the newly modernizing Turkey. Turkish textbooks on Islam deemphasized the sacred in favor of the utilitarian or mundane, portraying overtly religious rituals such as purification and fasting as ways to avoid illness or practice good hygiene.\(^\text{131}\) Allegiance to Islam was dropped as official policy, and whereas the Ottomans had stressed the principles of Ottomanism and Islamism, Turkey now put an emphasis on nationalism and secularism as a way of achieving a political, cultural, nationalist, and social revolution.\(^\text{132}\) Over the course of a decade, Kemalist reforms were directed at secularizing the state and removing any remaining public vestiges of Islam, all in an effort to create a new Turkish identity shaped by Kemalist ideology. Despite the fact that Kemalist ideology was not one of extremist practices and was not as comprehensive as the all-encompassing ideologies found in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, the regime’s policies still

\(^{130}\) Zürcher, *Turkey*, 181-82.


emanated directly from its ideological principles, which dictated the program of secular indoctrination.\textsuperscript{133}

What is striking about Kemalist ideology is that it transcended its natural boundaries to the point where allegiance to Kemalism became equally as important as allegiance to the state itself. Ideological commitment was a sine qua non not only for political participation, but also in some ways for full participation as a citizen of Turkey, and fealty to Kemalism was so ingrained among the military and political class that relaxing its terms was unthinkable. Kemalism’s power and endurance stemmed from the fact that it was not simply an ideology utilized by the ruling elites to maintain power. Kemalism was constructed for the distinct purpose of turning Turkey into a modern nation-state and eliminating traditional society, and it was predicated on the notion that Turkish society itself could be changed.\textsuperscript{134} The Turkish national project and Kemalism were two sides of the same coin, and thereby an environment was constructed in which to betray the principles of Kemalist ideology was to betray Turkey herself. Given the prime importance placed on modernization, and the manner in which Kemalism was constructed precisely to achieve this goal, the link between the state – rather than the regime – and the ideology could not, in the eyes of the Kemalists, ever be severed. Atatürk and his cadre of revolutionaries ensured that Kemalism was unbreakably intertwined not just with the official organs of the Turkish state but also with the very idea of Turkey as a nation and a modern state on the world stage.

Kemalist ideology was institutionalized to such a large extent that it became the paramount feature of the new Turkish republic. Recognizing that Kemalism was the key for

\textsuperscript{133} Huri Türsan, \textit{Democratisation in Turkey: The Role of Political Parties} (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004), 39-42.  
\textsuperscript{134} Kili, \textit{Kemalism}, 40-45, 57.
transforming Turkish political culture and political allegiance, Atatürk constructed an apparatus for political education that would indoctrinate the population with Kemalist principles through the educational system, media, the Turkish Historical Society, the Turkish Language Society, and branches of the CHP. Informal political education was paramount as well and was carried out through the use of parades, singing of the national anthem, flag saluting, and spreading patriotic songs and poems.\textsuperscript{135} New histories and textbooks were written in order to emphasize the importance of Kemalist ideology. The first officially written history textbook on the republic issued in 1931 contained 374 pages of text, 114 of which were devoted to the history and policy prescriptions of Kemalism under such chapter headings as “Separation of Religion from the State,” “The Abolition of Superstitious Traditions,” and “Revolutionary and Reformist Currents in Economics and Finance.”\textsuperscript{136} Kemalism was an entity unto itself, simultaneously serving as an ideology, a roadmap for policy, and an aspirational guide for the revolutionary elite and the Turkish masses. “The ideology of Kemalism…comprised both the definition of the national identity of the new Turkey as well as Turkey’s national aspirations.”\textsuperscript{137}

\textbf{The First Use of Kemalism as a Litmus Test: The TCF}

Kemalism by its very nature excluded from the political realm any party or individual that did not embrace its dictates and prescriptions for state building and modernity. Kemalism’s place at the center of the Turkish state dictated that potential political challengers would be evaluated first and foremost on the basis of their acceptance of the ideological framework

\textsuperscript{135} Suna Kili, “The Impact of State Power Changes on the Structure of Political Education in Turkey,” (Boğaziçi University Institute of Social Sciences research paper, 1985), 15.
\textsuperscript{136} Büşra Ersanlı Behar, “The Turkish History Thesis: A Cultural Dimension of the Kemalist Revolution (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 1989), 140.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 128.
established by the regime. The ideological component of Atatürk’s development and modernization program was important not just for the way it was going to transform Turkey, but for guarding against creeping political and cultural imperialism emanating from other states and was thereby key to maintaining Turkish independence. In order to ensure that Turkish nationalism and the modernization program would take hold, strict ideological homogeneity among the Turkish elite was enforced by eliminating any groups that opposed Kemalism on any grounds. The strategy involved not only elimination but also co-optation as the Kemalists attempted at times to assimilate religious, liberal, and socialist opponents into a broader revolutionary statism. The strategy was a successful one as it was able to eliminate nearly all threatening ideological challenges, and assimilating or eliminating challenges to Kemalism became a national mission of sorts. Preserving Kemalist ideology was paramount because it was the vanguard against all sorts of perceived threats to the Turkish state and Turkish character, making the ideology more important even than the CHP and other institutions of the single party regime. This became clear with the advent of the first major political challenge to the CHP, which came from the establishment of the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası, henceforth TCF) in November 1924, an opposition party founded by disaffected CHP members of parliament.

The TCF did not present a true ideological challenge to Kemalism. This is clear from the party’s manifesto and program, both laid out in conjunction with the party’s founding. The manifesto justified the formation of a competing political party by turning to the principle of republicanism and explaining that the people’s sovereignty would be threatened in the absence of

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138 Ibid., 131.
139 Behar, 111-12.
competition since there would be no opportunity for the people to express their will. Where the platform differed from Kemalist philosophy was in its veiled desire for incremental, rather than revolutionary, change. Furthermore, the party’s economic program was not as statist as the CHP’s, putting more emphasis on free enterprise and attracting sources of foreign capital.

While these contradicted two of the six tenets of Kemalism, they did not present an existential challenge by any means as the party platform was in almost complete accordance with the nationalist secular program to modernize Turkey. In fact, Atatürk himself had mixed feelings about statism from the outset and was never an enthusiastic supporter of the policy, eventually arriving at the conclusion that statist policies had kept Turkey from reaching its full economic potential. The overall stance of the party can be accurately described as being opposed not to Kemalism itself but to the dictatorial and drastic tendencies of the regime. It was not looking to reverse the radical constitutional changes carried out by the Kemalists – after all, the party was made up of Kemalists – but rather believed in more classical liberal notions of incrementalism and separation of powers. “Ideologically, both wings [Kemalists and Progressives being the two wings of the nationalist movement] belonged to the same essentially middle-class positivist, nationalist and liberal movement.”

 Atatürk’s initial reaction to this challenge was not to ban the party outright, but to take a conciliatory approach and publicly endorse the idea of competing political parties, stating, “In countries which are based on the principle of national sovereignty and especially in those which

141 Kili, *Kemalism*, 119.
143 Zürcher, *Political Opposition*, 98, 106-08.
144 Ibid., 109.
have acquired a republican administration, the existence of political parties is a natural phenomenon.”

It is unclear whether this sentiment was sincere or simply good strategy; Atatürk had given a speech three months earlier in which he had expressed the viewpoint that conditions were not yet right for more than one party since the country needed further strengthening and consolidation. The more likely scenario is that the initial response was a gambit to keep political tensions low since Atatürk genuinely believed at this early stage that Turkey would not benefit from a competitive multiparty system.

Initially, there was no major conflict between the two parties. Issues with which the TCF differed with or voted against the government primarily involved such mundane administrative issues as delegating greater power to the Interior Ministry, creating a separate Naval Ministry rather than a naval staff independent of the army general staff, requests for expert commissions on the budget and general welfare, and newspaper closures. The general theme seemed to be the TCF’s desire to check the state’s power and mitigate increasing authoritarian behavior, which was obviously an annoyance and a potential threat to the CHP’s power, but certainly not an existential threat to the regime’s political ideology. The TCF was not objecting to any of the central tenets of Kemalism; if anything, it was demonstrating a zeal for protecting the commitment to republicanism that it believed the CHP was lacking.

The TCF’s demise began, however, during a Kurdish revolt that combined Kurdish nationalism with an assault against secularism in calling for the restoration of the caliphate and Islamic law. TCF members in the Eastern provinces were accused of spreading religious

145 Ibid., 58-60.
146 Ibid., 43.
147 Ibid., 60-61.
148 Ibid., 74-79.
propaganda in support of the revolt, and branches of the party were shut down. The regime then used this opportunity to pass legislation in March 1925 granting the government broad emergency powers, and on June 3, 1925, the cabinet outlawed the TCF for, among other reasons, subversion through the political use of religion and stimulating reactionary incitement through the call for respecting religious beliefs.\footnote{149} The respect for religious beliefs and convictions contained in Article Six of the TCF manifesto was not itself declared treasonous, but the clause was deemed to have been used by some TCF members to justify political use of religion and illegal and treasonous activity.\footnote{150}

It seems clear that while not the only factor under consideration, the challenge to Kemalism played a significant role in the decision to ban and dissolve the TCF. This break with the official state ideology led to allegations that the party’s allegiance was not to the republic and that it contained religious reactionaries,\footnote{151} and even to the extent that the reference to violating Kemalist principles was an excuse to maintain an authoritarian single party state, it is still instructive that the official reasoning and justification for banning the TCF was upholding the principles of Kemalism rather than protecting the security of the state or the authority of the ruling party. Contemporary observers of authoritarian regimes, particularly in the Middle East, will note that modern day repression of opposition movements is nearly always structured around the premise of a security threat, with the opposition accused of being in league with, or being themselves, violent extremists. In this case, the initial shuttering of TCF branches was attributed to providing support to Kurdish separatists, but the justification for the larger move

\footnote{149} Ibid., 80-91; Text of Cabinet Decision to Dissolve the Progressive Republican Party, in Zürcher, \textit{Political Opposition}, 160-62.  
\footnote{150} Zürcher, \textit{Political Opposition}, 91.  
\footnote{151} Angrist, 169.
making the party illegal focused first and foremost on the use of religion for political purposes, which in and of itself was threatening only to the extent that it went against the philosophy enshrined in Kemalism that religion was the foe of progress and modernization. The TCF at this point, not even seven months into its existence, was clearly no real challenge to the CHP’s political hegemony and could not be considered to be much more than token opposition. It held no important state or local offices, was not large enough to prevent any legislation from passing, and even came from the same group of revolutionary nationalists that comprised the ruling party.

The Kemalist response to the TCF is illuminating both in its very occurrence and in the path that it took. That the regime viewed the TCF—the existence of which should have been useful as a means to further legitimate state action by bestowing upon it the imprimatur of democratic legislation—as an entity that had to be immediately dispensed with despite the TCF’s failure in derailing any CHP legislation during its brief duration or gaining much popularity indicates that early on the Kemalists had a hair trigger for ideological threats. From the start, guarding their ideological hegemony and protecting the ideology of the state was central to their mission. If even the slightest ideological threat, which is a generous interpretation of that actually presented in this situation, was enough to make the Kemalists nervous, it demonstrates the genuine importance of Kemalism as an ideology rather than as a means to gain and maintain power. Furthermore, the fact that the regime, which was not yet willing to open up the political system to allow genuine competition, immediately turned to the ideological component of the threat presented by the TCF is instructive in demonstrating how important Kemalism was even at this early stage in its development. Whether or not the Kemalists viewed the ideological challenge as genuine, even paying lip service to the principle that the ideology was of utmost
importance indicates that they wanted to protect the ideology at all costs and that they realized how resonant the ideological component of their program was among the Turkish public. It is therefore unsurprising that the role of ideology would only continue to grow in the minds of the Kemalists, setting up the next crisis which again illuminated how important Kemalism as an ideology was to the regime.

The Second Use of Kemalism as a Litmus Test: The Free Party

In 1930, Atatürk made the determination that a “loyal” opposition party was needed in order to channel discontent and provide some healthy competition for the CHP, which he felt was stagnating due to its unchallenged position. To this end, he asked Fethi Okyar, who had recently been highly critical of the government while serving as the Turkish ambassador to France, to lead a new party, with his sole demand being that it not challenge the Kemalist ideals of secularism and republicanism. Fethi agreed to these demands, but the newly established Free Party ended up challenging the regime on two other elements of Kemalism, statism and revolutionism. This stance on private enterprise, along with the Free Party’s criticism of repressive government policies that made it a worthy successor to the TCF, won the party an early following in the business community, and it even managed to win 30 out of 502 local council elections in October 1930. While the difference of opinion on the subject of statism was planned, with the Free Party adopting a more free market position – no surprise given Atatürk’s ambivalence toward statist policies – the Free Party’s counter-revolutionary stance was

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152 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 178.
153 Kili, *Kemalism*, 120.
not. Fethi criticized “government interference in every sphere over a period of many years,” implying that not only was statism a bad policy but that the state was overreaching in its conviction that it could radically alter Turkish society through forceful action. In addition, while the Free Party was founded on the basis of criticizing the economic policy of the regime, the Free Party never progressed beyond issuing general broadsides against the CHP and condemning the underlying basis of the government’s policies to formulating an alternative economic platform, which left the impression that the Free Party was challenging the nationalist revolution itself; “In short, then, in the view of observers at many levels of Turkish society and at many points on the Turkish political spectrum, the Free Party by the time of its demise had become counter-revolutionary.”\(^{155}\) That demise did not take long to emerge, as the Free Party’s lifespan lasted only from August 1930 until it dissolved under state pressure on November 16 that same year.

The six tenets of Kemalism were not institutionalized together in the CHP platform until 1931, and it very well may be that this was a direct response to the ideological challenge presented by the Free Party, creating a rising need to have all six elements of Kemalism formally spelled out. The Free Party’s challenge to revolutionism should not be played down; it has been described as the most important of the six Kemalist prongs due to its role as a method for implementing the other five programmatic elements.\(^{156}\) It is tempting to assume that the party’s immediate popularity and defeat of CHP candidates in local elections a mere two months after its founding presented such a threat to the regime’s grip on power that the Free Party had to be neutralized, and that the party’s short lifespan was a direct result of the CHP being unprepared to

\(^{156}\) Ibid., 253-54.
take on a serious challenger rather than due to ideological differences. This reading of history, however, is inaccurate for two reasons.

First, while it might be argued that Atatürk encouraged the establishment of the Free Party in order to smoke out potential rivals and have them neutralized, Atatürk’s actions and a general relaxation of the authoritarian clamp on Turkey in the years preceding the Free Party’s formation indicate that the Free Party was meant to be a legitimate and enduring actor in Turkish politics. The emergency laws that had been passed in 1925 in the aftermath of the Kurdish uprising and renewed in 1927 were specifically not renewed in 1929, which was followed by the government allowing an openly anti-government newspaper to operate and attack the regime with impunity. Furthermore, Atatürk purposely asked Fethi, who was one of his oldest and most trusted confidants, a nationalist revolutionary, and two-time prime minister, to lead the party, which indicates that he wanted and expected it to be a legitimate alternative to the CHP over time.\footnote{Ibid.} Even if Atatürk was not quite ready for fully open elections, he recognized that people needed outlets to express their political preferences and that not all politics could be channeled through the CHP. The Free Party was intended to be the first step toward a more pluralistic political system.

Second, the Free Party was perhaps even less of a genuine threat to CHP dominance than the TCF had been. Only 15 CHP representatives switched parties to join the Free Party despite Atatürk’s blessing and his own sister becoming a member.\footnote{Zürcher, Turkey, 178.} The party’s organizational capacity and administrative competence were also far from robust. In the October local elections, the Free Party listed candidates on their party slate in a number of cities and then had

\footnotetext{\footnote{Ibid., 55-57.} \footnote{Zürcher, Turkey, 178.}}
to publicly withdraw some of them as they had not actually contacted the individuals and received their permission to do so. In the supposed Free Party strongholds of Istanbul and Izmir, the CHP routed the new opposition, and while there were reports of vote suppression and irregularities, the Free Party’s performance was still a massive disappointment. While the Free Party may have eventually approached the CHP’s popularity and matched its grass roots organization, it was certainly nowhere close to doing so in 1930 and could not be rationally viewed as a hindrance to the regime’s stranglehold on the reins of power.

The Free Party incident demonstrates the manner in which Kemalist ideology was growing in importance to the point that it was well on its way to gaining an untouchable quality in Turkish political discourse. The Free Party was far too weak to be viewed as a potential competitor on equal footing with the CHP, and given Atatürk’s role in its founding and his personal involvement in recruiting a close friend to lead it, the only viable explanation for its demise is that it went too far in challenging Kemalism. While the Free Party was not an electoral threat, it was certainly an ideological threat given its immediate popularity in urban areas and with the emerging merchant middle class, and the prospect of large segments of the population adopting a worldview at odds with the tenets of the official state ideology was too much for the regime to bear. The fact that the Free Party was not yet a political threat did not mean that it was not an ideological threat, as it had the ability to directly challenge Kemalism’s unquestioned dominance even if it could not yet translate its philosophical popularity into votes. Even at this early point, Kemalism’s ideological hegemony was deemed necessary to protect at any cost, not as a means to maintaining the party’s power but as a means to maintain the party’s ideology itself. Perpetuation of the Kemalist ideology, a priority throughout Turkey’s single party

159 Weiker, 111-16.
authoritarian period, would continue to be the regime’s primary goal even once it made the
decision to open up the political system to democratic elections and governance.

Turkey’s Transition

Turkey’s transition to democracy began with the formation of the Democrat Party
(Demokrat Partisi, henceforth DP) in 1946. Various explanations have been given for why
Turkey underwent a peaceful reform transition initiated by the regime at this point in the state’s
political development, and a brief rundown of the major theories is in order. Some scholars have
emphasized the change at the top from Atatürk to İsmet İnönü, the prominent general and former
prime minister who became president of Turkey and head of the CHP upon Atatürk’s death in
1938. Atatürk was such a strong and charismatic leader around whom there was a cult of
personality that he was easily able to bend the country to his will, which did not necessarily
involve democratic politics. In contrast, İnönü was said to have a strong personal commitment
to democracy and to the principle of competitive party politics, and he personally intervened on a
number of occasions to calm tensions between the CHP leadership and the DP. He was not
committed to authoritarianism out of principle but out of what he viewed at times as necessity,
and generally supported freedom of the press before Turkey’s democratic transition.

Another contributing factor was the change in the international system following WWII
and Turkey’s subsequent quest for stability. The aftermath of the war left Turkey in a position

160 Frederick W. Frey, The Turkish Political Elite (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press,
1965), 349.
161 Ergun Özbudun, “Development of Democratic Government in Turkey: Crises, Interruptions, and
Reequilibrations,” in Perspectives on Democracy in Turkey, ed. Ergun Özbudun, Üstün Ergüder, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu
and İlter Turan (Ankara: Turkish Political Science Association, 1988), 15; Selcuk Ersin Onulduran, “Political
162 Metin Heper, “İsmet İnönü: A Rationalistic Democrat,” in Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey, ed. Metin
where its interests lay in a closer relationship with the West, but achieving this meant embracing liberal democratic governance and ending one-party rule. Turkey’s quest for aid from the United States and its signature on the United Nations Declaration made democracy imperative to implement, as Adnan Menderes (the future DP prime minister) publicly noted that the UN Charter called for free voting and political and civil rights and that Turkey needed to be in compliance with the obligations it had agreed to undertake. Furthermore, the distancing from the Soviet Union and the increasing contacts with the U.S. lessened the appeal for many Turks of Soviet-style authoritarianism, which was far different from the Turkish political system but seemed like a newly emerging threat. While Turkey had a close relationship with the Soviet Union during the first two decades of the republic, the Soviets demanded a readjustment of the Soviet-Turkish border following WWII and Turkey’s only recourse for protection against Soviet encroachment was to turn to the U.S. and other Western states. In order to take full advantage of U.S. concern over communism as embodied by the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, it was plainly in Turkey’s best interests to democratize.

Turkish political culture had also changed since the establishment of the republic in 1923. Whereas most Turks were content to live under an authoritarian system while the Kemalists carried out their program of modernization, democratic convictions had spread over time, particularly with the growth of a professional and commercial elite. Turkey’s economic situation also dictated the loosening of the regime’s authoritarian grip. As social differentiation in Turkey increased as a result of government development and modernization policies, newly

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164 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 208-09.
165 Frey, 349.
empowered groups demanded measures from the state to improve and defend their status and interests. Heavy-handed government involvement in all spheres, such as restrictions on investments or on organizing trade unions, became resented and more and more people began to call for democratic reforms.\textsuperscript{166} WWII had badly ravaged Turkey’s economy, and in a similar vein to authoritarian states everywhere when the authoritarian bargain breaks down, Turkey needed to liberalize its political system in order to channel social discontent.

More than two decades of Kemalist rule also had the effect of fulfilling Rustow’s sole condition for a successful transition to democracy, national unity. The population of Turkey was more homogenous in every sense than that of the Ottoman Empire, and the policies of Kemalism had reduced politically significant cleavages in the population by fostering a strong sense of national identity and unity centered around a national project. The disestablishment of Islam and the disempowerment of the religious institutions had the effect of eliminating a source for competing loyalties to the state, and political allegiance was now aimed in only one direction.\textsuperscript{167} In the Rustowian sense of the majority of citizens being unwavering in their sense of belonging to a particular political community, by the end of WWII Turkey had accomplished this goal, as the Kemalists had successfully fostered a sense of Turkish nationalism and eliminated the traditional competitors – the caliphate and other Islamic institutions – to the state’s political authority and hegemony.

It is no coincidence, however, that İnönü’s experiment in liberalization did not result in a full transition until the advent of the DP. When he became president of Turkey in 1938, İnönü had loosened some of the more restrictive measures that had been instituted by Atatürk and taken

\textsuperscript{166} Karpat, 130-31.
\textsuperscript{167} İlter Turan, “Stages of Political Development in the Turkish Republic,” in Özbudun, et al., 64-65.
small steps toward democratization, including forming an independent group of parliamentarians expected to criticize government policies and making CHP candidate selection procedures more democratic, but genuine opposition parties were still restricted.\(^{168}\) It was not until an ideologically acceptable party came along that İnönü was willing to open up Turkey’s political system to free and fair elections, despite the fact that he was by many accounts committed to democracy. Even a personal commitment to democracy was not sufficient to override concerns about a challenge to Kemalism’s ideological hegemony, a legacy that İnönü was careful to protect.

The Democrat Party and Ideological Alignment

The DP was formed on January 7, 1946, by four former members of the CHP – Adnan Menderes, Celâl Bayar, Refik Koraltan, and Fuat Köprülü – all of whom had been ousted or had resigned from the party for various heterodox positions and for criticizing the government’s policies in areas such as land redistribution. Bayar, himself a former prime minister, consulted closely with İnönü during the preparations for the DP’s founding, and there was no question that the DP was going to hew to the Kemalist line with respect to secularism and the other fundamental tenets of Kemalist ideology.\(^{169}\) The DP adopted all six principles, although it placed lesser emphasis on some of them, such as statism. In fact, the DP’s philosophy and platform were so indistinguishable from those of the CHP that it began to work to the DP’s detriment, as the CHP effectively portrayed the DP as having no independent positions of its

\(^{168}\) Heper, 36.
\(^{169}\) Zürcher, *Turkey*, 209-212.
own. The flip side to this was that there was absolutely no question as to whether the DP presented an existential threat to Kemalism, as it adopted Kemalist principles into its program wholesale without any of the backtracking that had characterized the TCF or the Free Party, and it was founded by four prominent members of the CHP, all of whom had extensive Kemalist credentials and whose differences with the ruling party were procedural rather than substantive. To wit, the DP program listed achievement of democracy as its chief goal, meaning free and fair elections and an end to state authoritarian practices, specifically curbing government action and expanding personal freedoms, and it subscribed to liberal statism, meaning state ownership of certain industries should eventually be transferred to the private sector. Challenging Kemalism was not, however, on the agenda; Bayar was up front about the DP’s agenda of replacing the authoritarian, heavy handed bureaucratic state built by the CHP with a democratic one rather than replacing the substance of Kemalism, and the founding DP members promised İnönü that the party would respect the principles established by Atatürk.

It wasn’t only opposition parties comprised of former CHP members that were allowed to form. The first opposition party to form was actually not the DP, but the National Resurgence Party (Milli Kalkınma), which was founded with the permission of the government on July 18, 1945. The party’s founder, Nuri Demirağ, was a wealthy businessman, and the party did not have an extensive policy platform, which meant that it was by default in harmony with Kemalist principles. Nevertheless, its existence is testament to the fact that Turkey was indeed serious

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173 Karpat, 148-49.
about transitioning to democracy, and that as long as the opposition was willing to maintain Kemalism’s hegemony, the regime was willing to risk giving up power.

The DP’s pledge not to violate the red line of Kemalism and its incorporation of the six Kemalist tenets into its program are important in assessing the willingness of the CHP regime to open up the political system to legitimate competition. Clearly, the newly established DP was different from the TCF and Free Party in that it presented a serious challenge to continued CHP dominance. There was little question by the end of 1945 as to the high level of discontent with the government and CHP rule. There was widespread unhappiness in the countryside villages with a perceived lack of improvement in standard of living, and resentment toward the overbearing hand of the state, as personified by the perpetual presence of the gendarmes and tax collectors in rural areas. Price controls and taxation on excessive profits in an inflationary environment also caused grumbling with the civil service class as it led to a steep decrease in their purchasing power, in some cases as high as 66%. Large landowners, already upset at a policy of price controls on produce and high taxes on agricultural products, were furious with the introduction in January 1945 of a land redistribution bill, which is what had prompted Menderes to speak out against the government.¹⁷⁴ Beginning in 1943, the press began to openly challenge the regime, publishing critical editorials and slamming government policies when reporting on economic problems.¹⁷⁵ The Kemalist elite had a monopoly over the civil and military administration and ran a bureaucratic regime, whereas the DP looked to capitalize on a populist anti-bureaucratic alliance made up of urban and rural workers and commercial bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁶ It

¹⁷⁴ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 206-08.
¹⁷⁵ VanderLippe, 105-07.
was evident that there was a bubbling surge of dissatisfaction within Turkish society, and any new party, particularly one headed by a well-known figure such as Bayar, was guaranteed to garner instant popularity.

Indeed, the first contested elections bore out this conclusion. Alarmed at the growing popularity and strength of the DP, the CHP adopted a number of liberalizing measures including direct elections (rather than the old system of indirect elections) and a looser press law, and the government moved up national elections from July 1947 to July 1946 in the hopes of catching the DP off-guard before it was able to thoroughly organize itself and prepare for a national campaign.\textsuperscript{177} Menderes cried foul, alleging that the only reason to move up elections a full year was to sabotage the DP, but the government insisted that elections had to be held as soon as possible in order to gauge the effectiveness of the new voting system and to give the electorate the opportunity to express their preferences.\textsuperscript{178} The CHP won an overwhelming victory, taking 395 out of 465 seats in the assembly, with the DP garnering 66 seats from the 273 that it contested. While this did not seem like a particularly effective showing from the DP, the reality was that there had been enormous electoral fraud, so much so that it prompted a public outcry, and newspapers defied a government prohibition against criticizing the election by publishing Bayar’s statement alleging that the DP’s actual percentage of the vote was much higher and that “wickedness” had prevailed.\textsuperscript{179}

The upshot of all this was to confirm that the CHP’s hold on power was no longer guaranteed, and that the DP presented the first genuine challenge to the regime’s long term survival. This was not a token opposition party by any means, and years of combined

\textsuperscript{177} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey}, 212.  
\textsuperscript{178} Ahmad, \textit{Turkish Experiment}, 14-15.  
\textsuperscript{179} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey}, 212.
government policies had taken their toll on the CHP’s grassroots support. Submitting to a free and fair election, unmarred by fraud and vote-rigging, appeared as if it would be an increasingly risky proposition. Yet, the CHP did not respond by cracking down on the DP and rolling back its liberalization program, even though there were clear warning signs that its days in power were numbered despite the illusion of an overwhelming electoral win.

The reason the CHP was open to the possibility of an electoral loss is because it was more concerned with protecting its ideological legacy and ensuring the continuity of Kemalism than it was with maintaining its power over the organs of the state. Turkey was prepared to transition to democracy, but only within a confined set of ideological parameters that needed to be upheld as a prerequisite for any transfer of power. Once the decision was made to transition away from authoritarianism and toward democracy, the CHP needed to ensure that ideological contaminants such as fundamentalist religion and ethnic nationalism would continue to be excluded from Turkish politics, that conflict and disagreement would be centered around political economy rather than ideological or cultural issues, and that a segment of the state would be outside of representative politics and would be devoted to guarding and preserving the secular and nationalist status of Turkey. İlke Sunar argues that the story of Turkish politics after 1950 is one of a struggle between two conflicting goals: republican consolidation on the one hand and democratic inclusion on the other. Consolidation entailed preventing traditional social forces from having any influence on the modern state and political community created by Atatürk and the ruling Kemalist elite. Inclusion entailed opening the political system to participation by unofficial sectors of society rather than continuing to exclude them from the

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180 İlke Sunar, *State, Society, and Democracy in Turkey* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Faculty of Management, 2004), 103.
decision-making process. Democratic participation needed to fit into the boundaries of the ideological constraints the regime imposed upon itself.\footnote{Ibid., 98-103.}

This insight nicely captures the central dynamic exhibited by the Kemalists from their creation of the Turkish republic through their reacquisition of power with the military coup in 1960. Republican consolidation was the goal from the very beginning, which is why Kemalism was developed and so thoroughly integrated into the fabric of Turkish society by the institutions of the state. Nevertheless, as events combined to make greater democratic inclusion necessary, the regime struggled to come up with some sort of balance whereby its core interest – protecting Kemalism in order to maintain Turkey as a modern state – would not be placed in danger in the event that the CHP was voted out of office by the electorate. Ultimately, the ideological struggle, rather than the political struggle, was dispositive in determining the CHP’s and the military’s actions between 1946 and 1960. Because consolidation was the Kemalists’ core interest, they allowed the new policy of inclusion to overtake them, since actually governing was important but still a secondary concern. An opposition party that was willing to bind itself to the tenets of Kemalism was preferable to gambling on maintaining an authoritarian state but eventually being replaced unwillingly by a party that would throw out Kemalist principles and start from scratch, since this latter scenario was an unacceptable risk. In this case, the calculation was made that the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t.

Thus, the regime was willing to open itself up to a bargain whereby any party that agreed to accept and abide by the constraints of Kemalist ideology and confine its opposition to purely political and economic rather than ideological grounds was deemed acceptable and allowed to form. Despite the DP’s strength and the writing on the wall about the prospects of continued
CHP rule, the DP was deemed to be an acceptable opponent by the Kemalist elite because of its stance on Kemalism, which was just as unwavering as that of the ruling party. In fact, when it came to secularism, the most visible and easily quantified aspect of Kemalist ideology, the DP was so publicly supportive of official state policy that it was the subject of attacks from the more ardently religious segment of the population and regularly scorned by the Islamic journal Sebilürreşat. Islamists were so upset at the lack of daylight between the ruling party and the opposition on religious matters after waiting decades for the prospect of change that they began to form more radical opposition parties to challenge the government, such as the Nation Party (Millet Partisi). The source of hegemonic ideological conflict that had been presented by earlier party challengers had been eliminated with the DP’s ascendance, and therefore the regime elites were prepared for the possibility of giving up power in a peaceful transition, content in their knowledge that their ideological legacy would outlive their own political power.

The Democrat Party In Power

On May 14, 1950, Turkey held parliamentary elections, which garnered an 80% turnout and resulted in a peaceful transition of power. The DP won overwhelmingly with 53.4% to the CHP’s 39.8%, which amounted to 408 DP seats and only 69 CHP seats. Despite an offer from the military to stage a coup and keep İnönü in power, he refused and assumed his role as leader of the new opposition. The DP had ridden a wave of massive discontent with the CHP, which had been in power uninterrupted for twenty-seven years and had been the target of many pent-up grievances, and was therefore supported by a large and disparate collection of social groups.

182 Zürcher, Turkey, 233.
183 Ibid., 217-18.
Large landowners were particularly incensed with CHP policies and the new land reform law, and they supported the DP in droves. Support also came from the newly empowered middle class, whose members were eager for a relaxation of statist policies that had been a hallmark of CHP rule. Also crucial was the support of the old religious class that had resented the forced secularization imposed by the Kemalists and whose leaders held great sway over the villagers of rural Turkey.\textsuperscript{184} Other smaller and less influential groups supported the DP not due to a set of specific policies, but because they blamed all societal ills or personal grievances on the CHP and were eager for any type of change. The peasantry was resentful toward the power of the state as represented by the gendarmerie posted in rural areas, religious minorities were upset about discrimination against non-Muslims, and there was general grumbling about the cost of basic goods and the standard of living.\textsuperscript{185}

Upon taking power, however, it slowly became apparent that the DP had other priorities than protecting Kemalism at any cost. Turkey’s population in 1950 was nearly 80% rural peasants, and in order to maintain their support, the DP began to institute some changes that ate away at the edges of Kemalist principles, many of which had never been popular with traditional elements of Turkish society. The Menderes government was particularly noteworthy for its approach to secularism and the role of religion in the public sphere. Rather than maintain the absolute wall between religion and state and confine religion to private life, Menderes exhibited a more tolerant attitude toward religion in public life, appropriating the symbols of Islam in constructing a version of Turkish nationalism that was more religious in character and tone.\textsuperscript{186} In

\textsuperscript{184} Bernard Lewis, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Turkey} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 315-17.
\textsuperscript{185} Bahrampour, 21.
\textsuperscript{186} Yüksel Taşkın, “Intellectuals and the State in Turkey: The Case of Nationalist Conservatism During and After the Cold War,” (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2001), 162.
this sense, the DP government was in some ways harking back to the Ottomans under Abdulhamid II, who had deliberately turned to Islam to foster a sense of nationalism that was tied together with religion. While Menderes certainly did not go as far as the Ottomans did in his use of religious imagery and language, the return to Ottoman-era tactics in using religion to mobilize the masses was destined to create a fundamental conflict with the Kemalist elite and the military over first-order political principles, and the resulting clash ended up being fatal to the DP’s survival (and literally fatal for Menderes himself).

The initial measures taken by the DP chipped away at the boundaries of secularism and nationalism. The Turkish constitution of 1924 was scrapped in favor of the pre-republic text, which was not written entirely in Turkish but contained some Arabic and Persian as well. In 1950, the Arabic call to prayer, which had been abolished by Atatürk in favor of a Turkish translation, was restored, and in 1951 religious instruction was restored to the regular school curriculum, although it was not compulsory. The recitation of the Qur’an was once again broadcast over state radio, and state officials and army officers returned to regular mosque attendance. Menderes in particular was viewed as being open to a greater role for Islam. The Islamist magazine Sebilürreşad wrote of Menderes that “after the long and dark nights, you were born like a star over Muslim hearts.” The moves to relax the Kemalist strictures against public displays of religion emboldened the traditionalist forces so much that they began to take more reactionary steps on their own, such as toppling statues of Atatürk that were ubiquitous in public

188 Paul Stirling, “Religious Change in Republican Turkey,” in Middle East Journal 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1958): 405.
places, forcing the government to step in and pass a law entitled “The Protection of Atatürk and his Revolution.”

Nevertheless, the DP was initially willing to go only so far with regards to the role of religion in public life, and despite flirting with a fuller embrace of religion in order to lock up the support of traditional voters, the government still largely kept to the letter of Kemalism when it came to official secularism. The traditionalists who had smashed the statues and busts of Atatürk were prosecuted, and the leader of the dervish order viewed as causing the most trouble, Kemal Pilavoglu, was imprisoned. The DP maintained the monopoly of the state over religious instruction and preaching, and imams were still state civil servants and accountable to the Directorate of Religious Affairs. In the early years of DP rule, the party attempted to pull off a balancing act of placating religious and traditional voters through largely symbolic measures while keeping in place the state bureaucratic apparatus that allowed government control and regulation of nearly all religious activity.

The reason for the DP’s initial lack of a fuller challenge to the tenets of Kemalist secularism was because its strategy for maintaining power rested on economic populism and patronage. The DP sought to build a broad-based coalition that would cement its status as a permanent ruling party and take advantage of the CHP’s years of ignoring large swathes of the population. CHP populism was exclusionary in that it claimed to represent the will of the people through rule by a set of bureaucratic elites, whereas the DP wanted to create an inclusionary populism that would mobilize alienated voters. The DP’s slight loosening of some of the more needlessly secular strictures, such as the ban on the Arabic call to prayer, can be seen in this light

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191 Sunar, State, Society and Democracy, 124-25.
as they were intended to appeal to religious Turks, particularly those living in rural villages, who placed outsized importance on traditional Islamic practices. This did not constitute any type of real challenge to official Kemalist ideology because the institutional secularism of the state was maintained and the actions taken by the DP were largely cosmetic, but they provided the DP with a real benefit as they carried a great deal of weight with Turkish villagers, who could now be counted on to be DP supporters based on religious values alone.

The DP saw no need, and did not have the desire, to mount a sustained challenge to Kemalist secularism because the brand of populism it sought to foster revolved not around religious issues but rather economic issues. Because the CHP had pushed aggressively for state-dominated enterprise, the DP emphasized private initiative in an effort to overcome the divide between public industry and commerce and private industry and commerce. In addition, the DP began to build an extensive patronage system, with benefits flowing to its clients, a strategy that worked well as long as economic growth was strong and there were state-owned resources to distribute.192

The First Signs of an Ideological Challenge

It became clear over time, as grumbling about the DP’s policies and growing anti-democratic behavior spread and the DP’s share of the vote decreased, that the party was losing popularity and needed to shift direction. Consequently, following the 1957 elections, the DP took a more populist turn that involved a strategy of directly appealing to religious sensibilities. During this period, the cleavage between secularism and religion became the primary division in Turkish politics, and attitudes toward Islam were the largest factor driving polarization between

the two parties.\textsuperscript{193} It is unsurprising in this light that the DP adopted an expansionary strategy that was designed to appeal directly to religious voters by emphasizing Islamic values and mounting a battle against state-sponsored secularism.

Menderes established the \textit{Vatan Cephesi}, or Motherland Front, which was a tool for mobilizing the masses through religious and nationalist symbols. During times of economic or political crisis, the DP took to broadcasting Islamic memorial services on the radio in order to capitalize on religious populist themes.\textsuperscript{194} A program was expanded that used public funds to construct mosques in rural areas, new publicly paid preacher positions were created, and DP leaders began to display more religious behavior in public.\textsuperscript{195} The DP also encouraged the rapid expansion of religious associations, lending state support to the growth of civil society in ways that would benefit the party. In 1950, Turkey had 7.3 religious associations per million inhabitants, which ballooned to 184 religious associations per million inhabitants by 1960, far outpacing any other type of community association.\textsuperscript{196} In 1958, a fistfight broke out between over a hundred legislators during the negotiations over the budget of the Religious Affairs ministry. A DP member of parliament accused CHP members of having a restless conscience over their past suppression of the Turkish people’s right to practice their religion, and the DP publicly emphasized the importance that they placed on religion’s role.\textsuperscript{197} In 1959, the government inaugurated new \textit{Vatan Cephesi} centers with public prayers, and DP newspapers began to accuse the CHP of not being sufficiently Islamic, prompting İnönü to warn that labeling

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{193} Türsan, 62-65.
\textsuperscript{194} Taşkınc, 164.
\textsuperscript{195} Turan, 80.
\textsuperscript{197} Sarp, 139-40.
\end{footnotesize}
the opposition and free press as atheists was a political attack that was going to cause trouble.\textsuperscript{198} That same year, Menderes survived a plane crash at Gatwick airport in London that killed fourteen members of his traveling party, and the government immediately rushed to present Menderes’ survival back home as a religious miracle and Menderes himself as a prophet chosen by God to lead Turkey.\textsuperscript{199} In late 1959 and early 1960, a controversy broke out over the DP’s relationship with Said Nursi, a prominent Islamic scholar and Qur’anic commentator who was the leader of the religious revivalist Nurcu movement. Nursi had instructed his followers to vote for the DP since its establishment, and after being visited by a group of DP deputies in Ankara in December 1959, he embarked on a nationwide tour at the same time that Menderes was traveling around the country, prompting accusations from the CHP that Menderes and the DP were actively looking to associate themselves with a prominent religious figure.\textsuperscript{200}

Given the nature of much of Turkish society, attempting to appeal to traditional religious villagers was a smart move politically. While many overt displays of religion had been driven underground outside Turkish cities during CHP rule, religious tradition had not been eradicated and was slowly moving back out into the open. In Turkish villages, explanations for certain behaviors or customs had remained centered around the Qur’an, and large numbers of villagers had objected throughout the years of Kemalist rule to measures such as the introduction of “infidel” script to replace the traditional Arabic script. Other unpopular reforms, such as the elimination of the Arabic call to prayer and the outlawing of wearing a fez, had been routinely ignored when state officials were not present.\textsuperscript{201} The Kemalist version of populism was an

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{199} Ahmad, \textit{Turkish Experiment}, 61.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 236-37.
\textsuperscript{201} Stirling, 400-05.
exclusionary one, but the DP attempted to create an inclusionary populism that would bring people into the fold who had heretofore felt alienated from politics and make them permanent DP supporters. In constructing this new form of populism, the DP deemphasized secularism and emphasized private, non-statist enterprise, in the hopes of appealing to the values of traditional society. Such a move, however, that specifically and consciously played down the secular character of the state, was bound to run afoul of the military, which viewed itself as the ultimate guardian of the Kemalist legacy. Secularism was wrapped up in the modernization project, which itself was an avenue toward establishing Turkey as an important and powerful state, and given that a move away from secularism placed this goal in jeopardy in the Kemalist view, once the DP went down this path its days were numbered.

A clash with the military had been building for a number of years. The DP made sure to keep the generals happy but generally ignored the junior officers and neglected the military’s upkeep, which was apparent to the officers when compared to Turkey’s fellow NATO allies. Officers were arrested for conspiring against the government, and the general atmosphere of military discontent led to constant rumors that the army was on the verge of overthrowing the government. Accordingly, on May 27, 1960, the army launched a coup against the civilian government and seized power, issuing a statement which justified the need for the army to step in due to “the crisis into which our democracy has fallen, and owing to the recent sad incidents and in order to prevent fratricide.”

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203 Ahmad, *Turkish Experiment*, 153-60.
The Effects of Ideological Conflict Post-Transition

Scholars and observers of Turkey’s politics have attributed the breakdown of Turkish democracy and the military coup of 1960 to a variety of factors other than ideological conflict. Explanations include the socialization of DP leaders into a single-party system and authoritarian tendencies, which created conflict with the military and the bureaucracy;\textsuperscript{205} inherent tensions with junior officers over DP neglect of the military;\textsuperscript{206} a belief that outlets for peaceful political expression were being quashed and that competitive elections were being endangered;\textsuperscript{207} the military blaming the DP for the weakened state of the Turkish economy and the various political crises that were erupting;\textsuperscript{208} and the mode of transition in 1946, which left the institutions and bureaucracy of the single-party authoritarian regime in place, preserving a legacy of state dominance and resistance to party politics that was quickly seized upon by the DP.\textsuperscript{209} While these accounts all capture part of the story, the ideological context and the decision-making process of the CHP to transition in the first place are crucial to understanding why the coup took place. After all, the DP’s authoritarian behavior was not new, nor was the dire economic situation. The timing of the military’s intercession into Turkish politics is important because it came after the increasing willingness of the DP following the 1957 election to flaunt the Kemalist principles by which it had guaranteed to abide. Only once the ideological legacy of the Kemalists was under attack did the military, the symbol of the formerly ruling Kemalist elite, step in and remove the DP from power.

\textsuperscript{205} Özbudun, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{206} Ahmad, \textit{Turkish Experiment}, 153-55.
\textsuperscript{207} Turan, 81.
Unlike the decision to shutter the Free Party, ideological conflict was not the proximate cause of the 1960 military coup. Army discontent amid creeping authoritarianism and economic malaise are what caused the officers to step in, rather than burning ideological fervor. The growing challenges to Kemalist orthodoxy from DP leaders were irksome, but they might not have been enough to cause an overthrow of the elected government had the DP maintained its democratic bonafides and been able to impose greater stability over political and social unrest. The difference in this case is that unlike with the Free Party, the transition to democracy had already taken place more than a decade prior, and so ideological issues still held importance but less so than they did pre-transition.

As noted earlier, once a transition occurs, policing ideological fealty becomes more difficult, and this is so primarily for two reasons that can both be seen in the Turkish case. First, once the regime has yielded to whichever group replaces it, enforcing its ideological view is no longer such an easy task. Any guarantees that the ideological regime extracted from the former opposition are only worth the extent to which the new government is willing to keep its promises. Turkey’s Kemalists held a wildcard that is not present in most cases, which was the willingness and ability of the army to interfere in civilian politics and enforce the dictates of Kemalism. In most cases, however, there is no powerful outside force that can reimpose the ex-ante ideological status quo should it break down or be replaced, which is why ideological regimes are so zealous in guarding their ideological legacies and unwilling to turn over the reins of power to opposition groups that do not share their ideological commitments. In Turkey, once the DP established its firm control over state institutions, it took the twin threats of destabilizing unrest and the elimination of Kemalism for the Turkish military to step in, and even then it took
three years before intervention occurred. Once the transition had taken place, ideological malfeasance on the DP’s part was not enough; there had to be an additional spur to action, since the costs of intervening were high once the founding Kemalist regime had lost elections and been turned out of government.

Second, once the ideological conflict variable is removed from politics – and this is precisely what happens once the regime yields to a similarly minded opposition group – the narrow minded salience of ideology is reduced. This does not mean that ideology is unimportant, but the singular focus on it is gone, and thus it fades into the background amidst a host of other issues. Not only is it harder to hold the line on the state ideology, it doesn’t seem to matter as much amid the cacophony of other concerns that appear with the first iteration of democratic politics. For the first time, there are genuine policy differences between parties that are fought over and debated, and ideology can become secondary. In the Turkish case, real policy differences emerged between the DP and the CHP, and eventually the DP’s threat to Turkey’s fragile democracy began to override all other issues, ironically prompting an undemocratic institution to intervene and eventually restore democratic rule. Ideological conflict factored into all of this, but in a more indirect way than it had in the pre-transition period.

This is not, however, to say that ideology was ancillary to the 1960 coup, or little more than a convenient excuse for the military to intervene in a naked attempt to protect its own interests. It is useful in this regard to consider whether the military would have staged a coup had it been the CHP, rather than the DP, that controlled the government. Under a CHP government that had the same ideological commitment to Kemalism as the military, it is highly unlikely that the military would have stepped in to overthrow Turkey’s elected civilian leaders.
The discontent that festered in the ranks during the mid and late 1950s was stirred by a sense that
the DP was eroding Turkey’s moral values and national character in the name of materialism,
and that the DP government had lost sight of the grand Kemalist goals and principles that had, in
their eyes, made Turkey a regional power.\textsuperscript{210} The National Unity Committee that took control of
Turkey in the wake of the coup had extensive ties to the CHP and was clearly sympathetic to the
party, and the army could have stepped in at any point during the 1950s were the sole aim to put
the CHP back into power or preserve its own interests. That it chose not to do so until the DP
started overtly backing away from Kemalism is telling.

Ideology might not have been the primary motivating force behind the coup, but it was
unmistakably a considered factor, albeit one whose significance was not as strong as it had been
before the original transition to democracy. It is not coincidental that before holding elections
and returning to the barracks, the military government forced all political parties to sign a pledge
in which they committed to four promises, two of which were to protect the reforms instituted by
Atatürk and not to exploit Islam for political gain.\textsuperscript{211} Despite the fact that the coup was largely
about protecting military interests, it still had an unmistakable ideological element in it, and
much like the period before the 1946 transition to a multi-party system, the regime – in this case
the army – was unwilling to roll the dice with democratic politics absent some assurances that
Kemalism would be maintained and protected. Because Kemalism is an inclusive-status quo
ideology, the military did not demand that political parties and politicians be true believers,
repeating the pattern that had been displayed decades before. Instead, it only required a
declaration that Kemalism would be upheld, thus ensuring that ideological battles would not be

\textsuperscript{211} Ahmad, \textit{Turkish Experiment}, 170-71.
settled and would instead continue to be fought and essentially paving the way for future military interventions in civilian politics to protect Kemalism from its detractors.

**Ideology’s Lingering Effects**

The first four decades of the Turkish Republic demonstrate the power of ideology to affect the timing and mode of a transition, and also highlight the limitations of ideological regimes to protect their ideology once the transition has occurred. The Turkish state did everything in its power to entrench Kemalism in state and societal institutions, and judging opposition parties on the sole basis of ideology created a situation in which Turkey crept up to the line of allowing multi-party elections a number of times before actually crossing the threshold. Yet, even with the hegemonic status that Kemalism achieved, it was ultimately unable to be completely protected once the founding Kemalists turned over the reins to the DP, and its maintenance required the extraordinary step of the military staging a coup and disbanding the elected government. This in itself illustrates why ideological states are so reluctant to give way if there is any hint that the opposition does not share their political ideology, and why regimes demand commitments to maintain the regime ideology after they themselves have ceded power.

The Turkey case shows that the ideological typology matters as well. The reason that İnönü, and then later the army, were willing to trust the opposition’s promises was because an inclusive-status quo ideology does not view ideological threats in the same life or death manner as an exclusive-status quo ideology does. The regime was willing to trust that the DP, whose professions of Kemalist adherence seemed to be particularly sincere give its founding members history in the CHP, would protect the Kemalist legacy. The problem with this is that stepping
down from power and yielding to a group whose ideological commitment to Kemalism was less than stellar institutionalized future ideological conflict, which in turn created a legacy of military domination of civilian politics. The military, which was the ultimate guardian of Kemalism, retained a pre-transition mindset of protecting the state’s ideology at all costs, and given its power and independence from elected civilian leaders that meant that the military would step in any time it felt Kemalism being threatened. Thus, not only did ideological conflict operate as a structural constraint on Turkey’s transition, it operated as a structural constraint on Turkey’s continuing democratic development and consolidation, as the military intervened in Turkish politics to protect Kemalism once each decade from the 1960s through the 1990s.

Despite conflict over the official state ideology, Turkey was ultimately able to come to grips with threats to Kemalism’s hegemony and transition to democracy in 1946, and despite subsequent bumps in the road consistently restored civilian government following military coups. This gradual success stemmed from the fact that the regime was able to find an acceptable opposition party that it trusted not to overturn Kemalism’s privileged position, and thus it allowed a transition to occur as the source of ideological conflict was resolved. In contrast, Tunisia under Habib Bourguiba and nearly a quarter century of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali was unable to effect a successful transition to democracy despite a genuine moment of democratization and liberal reform because, unlike Turkey’s Kemalists, the Tunisian regime faced an opposition movement that it viewed as an existential threat to Tunisia’s ideology of secular Westernizing modernization. As will be seen in the following chapter, Tunisia was unable to overcome the constraint of ideological conflict, and instead of a successful transition to
democracy in the late 1980s, ideological conflict between the regime and the opposition caused a failed transition.
Chapter IV

Much like in Turkey, the ideology of the post-independence Tunisian state was born out of a conscious effort to make Tunisia into a modern Western country. Indeed, the comparison does not end there, as the parallels with Turkey are remarkable. Both states were looking to construct new national identities following a long period of empire or colonialism, both states were founded and shaped by secular modernizers with autocratic personal and governing styles, both states were dominated by a coastal urban elite, and both states developed governing ideologies that attempted to supersede strong historical traditions and heritage. Yet, Turkey was able to successfully transition to democracy while Tunisia was not, leading to different trajectories of political development. In a similar set of circumstances to Turkey, the primacy of ideology and an emerging threat to that ideology’s survival played a large role in ensuring that Tunisia remained authoritarian despite what appeared to be a democratic opening, and demonstrating that ideological survival can be an important determinant of a transition’s path.

Habib Bourguiba inculcated a Tunisian form of nationalism that emphasized the necessity of secular Westernization for creating a modern and successful state in post-independence Tunisia. Bourguibism was not as fully fleshed out as Kemalism, but it was no less of a guiding principle for the Tunisian state and its political institutions. Ideology influenced everything from alliance formation to who would be allowed to participate in politics to the ease with which someone was able to be socially upwardly mobile. Bourguiba may have personally believed that Islam was the foe of secular modernity, but he was smart enough not to wage a direct war on Islam and instead try to confine and control it. In this way, Bourguiba employed a simultaneous strategy of advancing a logic of consequences and a logic of appropriateness,
actively eliminating elevated and imminent threats to Bourguibism but choosing to undermine ideological opponents by publicly appealing to a sense that Islam was holding Tunisia back.

Bourguiba’s prioritization of what were, in his view, ideological imperatives ensured that Bourguibism permeated the conscious of elites and institutions like the military but also of ordinary Tunisians so that its hegemony was assured. While a segment of Tunisians may have questioned Bourguibism’s utility and its very central principles, which in part led to the rise of Tunisia’s homegrown Islamist movement in the 1980s, its existence and dominance were taken for granted. This blanket assumption that all relevant political actors embraced Bourguibist principles set up the events of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali’s early years in power after he ousted Bourguiba in a constitutional coup.

Ben Ali’s early moves to liberalize and open up Tunisia’s political system included all of the political actors, including Islamists, but were predicated on the assumption that Islamists would not pose a real threat to Bourguibist political and ideological hegemony. Ben Ali’s motives have been hotly debated, and as this case study will demonstrate, the preponderance of the contemporary evidence suggests that his democratization program was well-intentioned and not simply a feint in order to consolidate Tunisia’s authoritarian system. Ben Ali did not assume that any of the Bourguibist opposition parties would be competent and organized enough to dislodge him from power immediately, but he was operating under the presumption that they would be his primary competition. He did not anticipate that the Islamists, after being subdued so effectively by Bourguiba and having the deck stacked against them under the new electoral rules, would emerge from the democratization and election process ascendant.
Once the Islamists not only outperformed expectations but outperformed all of the other opposition parties as well, the die was cast for Tunisia’s nascent transition to be cut off due to Ben Ali’s sense of an ideological threat. As an inclusive-status quo ideology, Bourguibism was able to accommodate ideological challengers wanting to enter the political system, but had a heightened threat perception when ideological challengers became more than token opponents. Islamist candidates’ share of the vote was not high enough to endanger Ben Ali’s political power in any meaningful way, but it signaled that Islamism as an idea was waxing, which endangered Bourguibism’s long term hegemonic status. Viewed through this prism of ideological conflict and threat perception, Ben Ali’s almost immediate crackdown and return to unquestionably authoritarian ways makes sense in contrast to his previous democratization program, and demonstrates the power of ideological conflict to halt emergent transitions to democracy. Ideological considerations were paramount in the case of Tunisia, and while the debate over whether Ben Ali was prepared to transfer power is still not settled, he was in no way prepared to risk eroding Bourguibism’s dominance and risk having the regime ideology expire with the regime.

Western Influences on Tunisia and Bourguiba

Tunisia had been part of the Ottoman Empire since 1574 and enjoyed autonomous rule under its own local bey beginning in 1705. The Tunisian bey had a large degree of power to run affairs as he saw fit, and Tunisian beys even negotiated independent treaties with European states outside of the Ottoman purview. Indeed, Tunisia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries had become a minor regional power due to its trade ties with other Mediterranean states and its use of
piracy to extort tributes from Europe.\textsuperscript{212} Its society had also by this time become nearly homogenous, both linguistically and religiously. Arabic had penetrated the countryside and supplanted Berber as the language of rural and inland Tunisians, and only a small Jewish population interrupted the dominance of Islam. Tunisia’s small size, history, and ethnic homogeneity gave it a natural unity that eluded nearly all other neighboring Muslim societies and territories.\textsuperscript{213}

France invaded Tunisia following the Ottoman Empire’s defeat by Russia, leading to its becoming a French protectorate in 1881 under the Treaty of Bardo. Unlike the situation in neighboring Algeria, the French were not seeking to incorporate Tunisia into France, but rather to keep it as a buffer against other European powers penetrating too close to its core interests in North Africa. France’s primary concerns in Tunisia were that the existing Tunisian government maintain order and collect taxes, and thus it took a hands-off approach to the daily intricacies of Tunisian administration. The bey remained in power and got to keep both his government and his army intact, and Tunisian schools, guilds, and courts were also left largely untouched. While the French Resident General was officially the bey’s superior and also served as the Tunisian foreign minister, sovereignty over most domestic matters remained in the hands of the bey and his court.\textsuperscript{214} Compared to the colonial experiences of Algeria and Morocco, the colonial period in Tunisia under its French overseers was relatively benign.

This less harsh colonial experience would have important implications for the later development of Tunisian political ideology, as Tunisian political elites in general and Bourguiba

\textsuperscript{214} Alexander, 19-20.
in particular were shaped by this relationship with France, which was adversarial but was also perceived to be beneficial. French colonial rule had a tremendous impact in transforming Tunisian society through creating a political and social elite that aspired to emulate French liberal values. The settler period in Tunisia brought about urbanization, a modern economy, an educational system superior and more developed than those in Algeria and Morocco, and the spread of new ideas and lifestyles, all during a colonial tenure lasting seventy-five years, which exceeded that of every other Mediterranean country save Algeria.\footnote{Moore, 15-16.} Given the large French settler population, the lack of heavy-handed tactics on the part of the French colonial overlords, and the sheer length of the French protectorate, it is not surprising that Tunisian political movements sought in some sense to emulate France, and that political elites adopted a set of values and principles that privileged the European tradition of liberal secularism.

The confluence of liberal French values and a strong sense of Tunisian nationalism were personified by Habib Bourguiba, the founding father of independent Tunisia. Bourguiba was born into a family of middle class servants in 1903, a little more than twenty years after the beginning of the French protectorate, and he was the youngest of eight children. Being the youngest actually served Bourguiba well, as several of his older siblings had the means to support him financially beyond what they themselves had received as children, enabling Bourguiba to eclipse his older brothers by traveling to France after high school in order to attend university and study law and political science. At Sadiki College in Tunis, an elite secondary school which was the first in the Arab world to combine European and Islamic educational traditions to create a synthesis of socio-political values, Bourguiba received a bilingual education.
in French and Arabic that was intended to bridge “traditional” and “modern” cultures, and he was trained to become an official interpreter.  

Bourguiba arrived in France in 1924 following his secondary school education, and was immediately exposed to the heady ideas of republicanism and national self-determination. He immersed himself in French culture, spending lots of time at the theater and favoring works by Corneille and Hugo. While in Paris, Bourguiba met a war widow named Mathilde Lefras, whom he impregnated and later married, cementing his ties to France and French culture even further. Despite courting Mathilde and spending his time watching plays at the Odéon, Bourguiba still managed to devote considerable time to his studies, and received a Certificate in Law and a Diploma in Political Science, finishing 17th out of 190 students in the Sorbonne. Bourguiba’s time in Paris afforded him firsthand insights into French politics and lifestyles, cementing his identity as a Francophile even while he desired Tunisia’s independence.  

A lengthy discourse on the life and times of Bourguiba is not the objective here; the key takeaway point is that unlike other leaders of anti-colonialist nationalist movements, Bourguiba was deeply influenced by France and the French in a positive way, and was able to compartmentalize his love of all things French in order to reconcile it with his desire to be free of French political rule. Bourguiba loved France but did not love being governed by France. He viewed France as a country to emulate, seeing it as a paragon of modern culture and advanced society, and thus it is no surprise that his political philosophy and the governing ideology he eventually formulated would reflect this view without a hint of anti-French sentiment.

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Bourguibism As An Ideology

Unsurprisingly in light of his background and personal predilections, Bourguiba became the most persistent champion of Westernization among Arab leaders, and the political ideology that he adopted while ruling Tunisia looked to Western secularism as a model. Unlike in Turkey, where Atatürk enshrined the six principles of Kemalism directly in the CHP’s platform (and represented them with six arrows on the CHP emblem), Bourguiba’s ideology was more fluid and was not as neatly bounded or defined. This is partially because Bourguiba himself was not as philosophically or personally rigid and doctrinaire as Atatürk, but partially due to his focus on tactics over doctrine. “Bourguibism” began with a political orientation informed by the French Republican ideas of liberty, fraternity, and equality, and then pivoted toward applying Western norms and ideals to a homogenously Muslim country. Bourguiba’s methods for doing so were more important in his view than the actual ideals qua ideals, since his focus was on the endpoint of Westernization and modernization rather than the precise journey. ²¹⁸ He was therefore more willing to take a looser stance at the expense of always behaving like a hardline enforcer, a path that would have been looked down upon by Atatürk and his Kemalist nationalists.

Nevertheless, political ideology in Tunisia under Bourguiba played a similar role as it did in Turkey in that it defined the state’s mission and limited the range of action available to the state, as well as determining which political actors would be allowed into the political arena primarily based on their ideological loyalties. Tunisia was, and remained through the end of Ben Ali’s tenure, a more authoritarian state than Turkey, and there is scant evidence to suggest that Bourguiba was a democrat in any way, or that he only sought to eliminate political opponents who presented an ideological threat to him. In fact, as will be discussed below, the one instance

²¹⁸ Moore, 43-44.
in which Bourguiba flirted with democratic elections and democratic governance, his ultimate refusal to cede ground was not a result of ideological differences but over a simple reluctance to give up power to anyone. Ideological conflict’s relevance for the question of democratic transitions in this case came later on under Ben Ali, but Tunisia’s political ideology was conceived and imposed by Bourguiba, and it was the system that he set up which later constrained the acceptable range of action on the part of the regime in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Bourguiba’s raison d’être was for Tunisia to achieve parity with the West and to ultimately become accepted culturally and politically by European states. At the time of Tunisian independence, this was a tall order indeed due to the state’s depressed traditional economy. In 1956, Tunisia’s 3.7 million people had a life expectancy of only 50, and annual per capita income was just over $100. Furthermore, the child education rate was a mere 23% and the entire country contained fewer than 550 doctors. In order to improve the Tunisian economy and create a viable state that could compete with Europe, Bourguiba believed that two things were necessary: modernization and secularization, which he saw as going hand in hand. To this end, he began by emphasizing Tunisia’s pre-Islamic heritage, explicitly linking Tunisia to the ancient kingdom of Carthage. Bourguiba’s intention was to deemphasize Islam and religion, and to instead reorient Tunisian identity along nationalist lines, while simultaneously suggesting that a turn toward secularism might restore the glory days of Carthaginian wealth and power. In order to build a modern society, Bourguiba firmly believed that the first step was to change public attitudes and mindsets. Once popular attitudes had been altered in favor of change, then

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economic planning, decolonization, and modernization could begin.\textsuperscript{221} Every action taken by Bourguiba under the guise of the Tunisian state was evaluated based on these twin goals of modernization and secularization, and actions or groups that conflicted with these aims were considered to be outside the sphere of acceptable political behavior.

Bourguiba did not attempt to eradicate Islam from the public sphere entirely as Atatürk had done. Despite his intense desire to be able to modernize Tunisia without Islam getting in his way, Bourguiba understood that disregarding religion completely would be impossible (despite a tendency to underestimate its power at crucial junctures); indeed, he observed to his son after visiting Turkey that Atatürk had bit off more than he could chew in trying to do too much in too short of a time.\textsuperscript{222} Rather, Bourguiba recognized that Islam was a potent force and too deeply ingrained in Tunisian society to be eliminated, and so he undertook a series of measures that would allow him to control and modernize Islam and bring it under the auspices of the state (and his own watchful eye). Those aspects of Islam deemed to be inimical to the workings of a modern society were to be discarded in the name of progress, and Bourguiba portrayed himself not as an enemy of Islam but as a Muslim reformer seeking to shape religion as a positive force. He emphasized free inquiry and knowledge and the role that Islam could play in creating a more enlightened and prosperous polity. Despite having no formal religious training, Bourguiba declared himself the mufti of Tunisia, tasked with officially interpreting religious law.\textsuperscript{223}

This was an obvious ploy to wrest power away from traditional religious leaders, but the ideological aspect of this should not be overlooked. Bourguiba was seeking to anchor the newly independent Tunisian state in an ideological foundation that emphasized secular modernization

\textsuperscript{221} Moore, 48-49.
\textsuperscript{222} Hopwood, 84.
\textsuperscript{223} Noyon, 97.
as the mission of the state. As an ardent Tunisian nationalist, he was establishing a goal of parity with the West that was no less sacred in his mind for its lack of religious basis, and the ideological component was a crucial aspect of eventually accomplishing this goal. Holding secularization aloft not just as a means to an end but as an important ideal in its own right conveyed the importance with which Bourguiba imbued it, and established a more relaxed view of Islam as an implicit test for participation in political life. Secularization became a social marker as well, with opportunity and upward mobility becoming synonymous with a secular outlook in the post-independence period; francophone education led to influence and social connections that a traditional Islamic education could not provide, something that had not necessarily been the case in Tunisian society during the French protectorate, and leading to a post-independence marginalization of Tunisians hailing from traditional Islamic backgrounds.\footnote{224 Ibid., 97.} Embracing secularism as the key to progress was increasingly required in order to be a full participant in Tunisian political and civic life.

The Secularization and Westernization of Tunisia

As mentioned above, Bourguiba initially set out to shape Islam to his own ends rather than to eradicate Islam from the public sphere. His first move in this regard was to bring religion under state control by abolishing the *habus* system of land administration. Land that had been set aside for or donated to mosques, religious schools, and other religious institutions had historically been managed by a religious council. This council, however, had become increasingly unpopular, as it had a history of collaborating with the French protectorate by
selling 2000 hectares of land annually to French settlers and was generally viewed as corrupt.\textsuperscript{225} In the spring of 1956, all *habus* lands were transferred to the control of the state. This was, in a sense, low hanging fruit, as the *habus* system had already been discredited by its cooperation with the French, and therefore eliminating it was an easy and logical first step for Bourguiba to take. It nonetheless established an important principle, which was that religion would be subordinate to the state and not vice versa.

The next set of reforms – which were far more controversial – designed to highlight religion’s reduced status and set Tunisia on a more secular and modern path involved the courts and the judicial system. First, in August 1956 the state judicial system absorbed the two *sharia* courts that had overseen affairs for the dominant Maliki and Hanafi sects of Sunni Islam. Each court had been composed of six judges, and they were the final word on all religious and legal issues pertaining to Muslim personal status.\textsuperscript{226} At the same time, Bourguiba removed the rector of the Zitouna mosque and university and installed Tahar Ben Achour as the new rector. Ben Achour was a moderate and far less conservative than many of his fellow old-guard sheikhs, and he could be counted upon to support (or at least not to vigorously oppose) the changes that Bourguiba was instituting.\textsuperscript{227}

The *sharia* courts and Zitouna were not Bourguiba’s primary targets, but rather an opening gambit designed to make his real goal easier to execute, which was a complete transformation of the Tunisian personal status code. Bourguiba’s sights were trained on traditional social practices and norms, which he saw as being antithetical to his mission of

\textsuperscript{225} Moore, 50.
\textsuperscript{227} Moore, 51.
creating a modern, secular, Westernized state. It is not surprising that Bourguiba chose to attack what he viewed as the problem at its root by attempting to change social practices from the bottom up. He had lived under French colonial rule and knew firsthand the limits of using cosmetic changes on the part of the state to change ingrained social habits, and understood that only a true overhaul of the educational system and laws governing personal behavior would be able to overturn decades, if not centuries, of traditional practices. Bourguiba’s program presented an interesting contrast to Atatürk’s reforms in Turkey, which sought to Turkify, control, and sometimes even eliminate religion itself, rather than modifying religious dictates so that they would better fit with his goal of secular modernization. Bourguiba did not attempt to eliminate religion from the public square wholesale, but instead embarked on a program of co-opting important religious institutions so that they would support his changes; rather than create enemies of the religious establishment or subsume it entirely under the auspices of the state, he placed religious figures who might otherwise have been thorns in his side in important positions.228

The changes that Bourguiba made in the personal status code were extensive and cut to the very heart of traditional practices concerning marriage, divorce, and gender relations. The new personal status code set a minimum age for women to be married; made polygamy, which had been a common practice among rural Tunisians, illegal from that point onwards; required a bride’s voluntary consent for any marriage contract to be considered valid; provided an avenue for women to leave their husbands by granting them the right to divorce; and expanded women’s

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228 To wit, when reorganizing the sharia courts, Bourguiba made sure to appoint the judges to new positions in the Tunisian legal system, and appointed other potential opponents of change to the Constituent Assembly or gave them honorary mufti positions. Moore, 52.
rights in areas of child custody and inheritance. While these measures were predictably controversial and garnered some popular opposition, Bourguiba had smartly co-opted many of the religious elites, and thus the voices that spoke out vigorously were largely lower level and less prominent Islamic scholars. Again, it should be noted that Bourguiba recognized the role of Islam in everyday Tunisian life, and he was not attempting to eradicate religion entirely in the style of Communist governments. Rather, the overhaul of the personal status code, which touched the daily lives of every Tunisian citizen in important and intimate ways, was the core early measure of a strategy to modernize the country and bring it in line with what Bourguiba viewed as Western progress. Ideology dictated that this was a necessary step to take, even if it was guaranteed to upset significant segments of the Tunisian population and the powerful religious elites. Bourguiba was constructing and implementing a hegemonic ideology that would set the course of Tunisian political behavior and determine what was and was not acceptable within the bounds of the state.

The official ideology of the state was not laid out in formal written principles as it was by Atatürk and the CHP in Turkey in the 1930s, but Bourguiba established a clear ideology of secular modernization in post-colonial Tunisia that guided his policies and oriented the state in a clear direction by providing a legitimating purpose and mission. Bourguiba viewed this mission as providing the only successful path forward for his newly independent state, and he pursued it with zeal. At times, his elevation of secular modern principles over traditional mores rankled ordinary Tunisians and appeared to be a step too far, as when he violated one of the five central pillars of Islam by launching a public campaign in 1960 to discourage Tunisians from fasting to

229 Alexander, 37; Perkins, 135.
230 Perkins, 137.
make the point that economic production should take precedence over religious precepts. As Bourguiba stated in a speech announcing a plan for full employment on government worksites, fasting during Ramadan that interfered with productivity was “an abusive interpretation of the religion…All practices of this religion are issues of logical intention. But when they become incompatible with the necessary struggles of this life, this religion must be amended.” 231 When the Grand Mufti and the rector of the Zitouna mosque did not support this hardline viewpoint, Bourguiba sacked them from their positions. Despite Bourguiba’s efforts to change societal behavior, such a radical position on one of the most hallowed Muslim traditions prompted blowback from religious leaders, riots in the towns of Kairouan and Sfax, and a realization on Bourguiba’s part that the majority of Tunisians were going to observe Ramadan by fasting during the daylight hours (although this did not prevent Bourguiba from publicly drinking a glass of orange juice on television during Ramadan in 1964 in an effort to get his point across).

Despite the enormous unpopularity of his Ramadan policy, Bourguiba was determined to push ahead with moves that fit in with his ideological mission, regardless of how they might appear to conflict with Tunisian societal values or cause discord in the streets, since the advancement of his political ideology was paramount. To wit, in March 1965 he advocated negotiations with Israel rather than threats of war and refusals to acknowledge its existence because of his belief that the Arab-Israeli conflict was damaging Arab states’ growth and modernization, a position that was deeply unpopular and that caused Tunisia to become isolated from other Arab states. Nevertheless, even on such an electric issue as Israel, Bourguiba’s instincts were to promote his ideological vision of secular modernization above everything else. Such devotion to ideological

231 Moore, 56-57.
principles would guide not only his actions, but also the actions of his successor Ben Ali during the failed transition to democracy in the late 1980s.

**Ideological Conflict and Internecine Struggles**

The importance of ideology in Tunisian political development can be seen during two distinct stages. While the desire to protect a particular ideological hegemony was a major factor in the failed transition during the first years of Ben Ali’s presidency, the salience of political ideology first emerged as a political tool to wield against opponents during the struggle between Bourguiba and Salah Ben Youssef over control of the Neo-Destour party, and this struggle elevated ideology to a place of primacy.

The internal politics of the Neo-Destour party in the 1950s were dominated by the rivalry, and eventual rift, between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef, who was for a time Bourguiba’s top aide and general secretary of the party. Much of the animosity between the two men was a simple result of clashing personalities and oversized ambitions, but the heart of their public differences was a fundamental ideological split over the direction that Tunisia should take. As opposed to the secular modernizing theology of Bourguiba, Ben Youssef was an outspoken advocate for what has been described as extreme Arab nationalism and Muslim intransigence. Whereas Bourguiba imagined a secular Tunisian future, Ben Youssef imagined an Islamic unitary North African future; thus secular nationalism was pitted against religiously inflected pan-Arabism. The majority of Neo-Destourians were committed Tunisian nationalists, but the

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232 Hopwood, 80.
Ben Youssef acolytes were largely Zeitouna student activists swept up in the emerging pan-Arab and pan-Muslim trends, and they coexisted uneasily with their more Tunisian nationalist peers.\footnote{Perkins, 116-17.}

Just as importantly, there was a grave difference of opinion over the degree to which Tunisia should be intertwined with the West, specifically represented in the level of cooperation and coordination with France. Even before Tunisia won its independence, Bourguiba had always intended to maintain a strong relationship with the French, writing in a policy statement in 1950 that Tunisian military weakness and strategic strength necessitated “the assistance of a great power. To the extent that it will admit the legitimacy of our demands, we want that power to be France, and we are fully prepared to cooperate with it on a footing of equality between our two people.”\footnote{Ibid., 118-19.} Bourguiba was committed to a process in which it had always largely been taken for granted by the Tunisian nationalist movement that independence would be gained through negotiations with France and a special relationship would be maintained with the former colonial power once independence was achieved. Bourguiba was not a radical wanting to bring on an armed confrontation with the French, nor did he believe that Tunisia should break off all ties with France and become part of a pan-Arab or North African confederation. Having spent time in France immersing himself in French culture, Bourguiba admired the French while at the same time wishing to be free of France’s grip. This dictated having a cordial, and even collaborative, relationship with France and a gradual move toward independence, as this would preserve France as a friendly ally. Naturally, being on good terms with France was also important to Bourguiba’s vision for a modern secular Tunisian state, as the French political and social model was one that he wanted to import to the fullest possible extent.

\footnote{233 Perkins, 116-17.} \footnote{234 Ibid., 118-19.}
Ben Youssef and those in his camp were much less enamored of following this path. They viewed the road to independence as a more confrontational one, and wanted to be part of a larger pan-Maghrebi movement that would chase France as the occupying colonial power out of North Africa, using militant means if required. Later adopting the slogan “the rifle instead of the ballot box,” the Youssefists held a far more radical and revolutionary philosophy than Bourguiba and the mainstream of the Neo-Destour. Ben Youssef did not want to maintain any type of special relationship with France, nor did he deem it necessary to placate the French during a gradual move toward independence. Ben Youssef was of the mind that independence would require armed revolt, and he wished to expel the French not only from Tunisia but also from the entirety of North Africa. Since he imagined a future Tunisia that embraced a more religious Islamic identity, he did not view a future alliance with France as beneficial in any way. In Ben Youssef’s view, France should leave Tunisia immediately, whether of its own volition or as a result of being expelled, and French control over all Tunisian affairs should cease without qualification.

Thus, behind the obvious power struggle between two men looking to control the drive for independence was a clear ideological struggle as well. Bourguiba and Ben Youssef, and by extension their supporters, had serious differences over first-order principles of how Tunisia should become independent and what an independent Tunisian state would look like. This was not a rift merely over tactics – armed struggle versus negotiation – but over whether Tunisia should become a secular state looking to join the West, or a more religious state looking to form a league of solidarity with other North African, Arab, or Muslim states. Each camp was

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235 Alexander, 31.
236 Ibid., 37.
committed to its vision, and these competing visions were in no way compatible. Norma Salem has pointed out that the struggle between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef was rooted in different ideological positions and different international alignments; Ben Youssef’s support came from the Arab world and the non-aligned bloc, and from Nasser in particular, who was the leader of the pan-Arab movement, whereas Bourguiba’s strength lay in his ability to work with the French.237

While the competing ideological principles at hand were a dividing issue between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef and their respective supporters within the Neo-Destour, the two men managed to coexist, albeit uneasily, made easier by the circumstance of both spending time either abroad or in prison and therefore separated by borders or the French authorities. Once Ben Youssef returned to Tunisia in September 1955, however, things were destined to come to a head, particularly given the new political environment. In April 1955, France and the Neo-Destour reached an agreement on Tunisia’s internal autonomy, in which France kept its control over Tunisian foreign and defense policy but acknowledged that it no longer had the power to rule the country, paving the way for the Neo-Destour to form a government. The deal also allowed French settlers to keep their property and retain their own court system while stripping them of their political rights, gave French language privileged status, and established close economic ties between France and Tunisia. Bourguiba, who publicly argued that the agreement represented an important step toward full Tunisian independence and was not a final status accord, backed it unreservedly.238 Predictably, however, the accord with France did not sit well with Ben Youssef, who could not abide such a close relationship with Tunisia’s occupying

237 Salem, 153-55.
colonial overlords, let alone officially granting the French control over Tunisia’s foreign relations. Ben Youssef had opposed a closer relationship with France for years, arguing that Tunisian nationalists had to take a harder, more confrontational tack, and the internal autonomy accords were the precise opposite of what he had envisioned. Ben Youssef was adamant in his position that Tunisian independence should be part of a multi-pronged approach linked to independence for Morocco and Algeria as well, and that pan-Maghrebi armed revolt would be the quickest and best path to achieving an independent state.\textsuperscript{239} The deal with France, however, represented the ultimate victory of the Bourguibist approach, solidifying the message that the path to Tunisian independence would be an incremental process involving negotiation and accommodation, and one that would be heavily dependent on French cooperation. It also left other North African states, which Ben Youssef viewed as vital partners and possibly even future confederates, out in the cold and left to fend for themselves. This went against the pan-Muslim and pan-regional tenets of Ben Youssef’s ideology in a fundamental way and contradicted the principles that he had been articulating for his vision of a future independent Tunisia.

The internal autonomy accords were more than Ben Youssef could abide given his views on Tunisia’s national character and the proper path to independence. The deal with France was such a blow to his worldview and his dream of leading an armed insurrection against French colonialism that Ben Youssef actually raised the stakes even further in this battle over a wider vision for Tunisia by using Bourguiba’s views to challenge his claim to legitimately lead the Tunisian nationalist movement. In a Friday sermon at the Zeitouna mosque on October 7, 1955, Ben Youssef stated that the accords were a step backwards as they implicitly made Tunisia a part of the French Union, and that the deal with France abrogated the legal and historical legitimacy

\textsuperscript{239} Alexander, 33.
of the Tunisian nationalist movement by fundamentally contradicting its Arab and Islamic
color.\textsuperscript{240} Such a message would have been inflammatory in any context, but it was
exacerbated by the venue. In choosing Zeitouna, which was both an important religious and
nationalist symbol and in many ways the heart of Tunisian society, Ben Youssef was
unmistakably throwing down the gauntlet and ensuring that his critique would be widely
disseminated and taken seriously. This was no longer a dispute behind the scenes, but an open
rebellion against Bourguiba and his acolytes over the direction in which they were taking
Tunisia.

Bourguiba responded immediately to Ben Youssef’s broadside against the accords, which
was an implicit critique of Bourguiba’s leadership and philosophy as well, by having him
removed the very next day by the Neo-Destour’s Bureau Politique as the party’s secretary-
general and expelling him from the party altogether. In addition, the party’s Congress was called
to convene on November 15 to reaffirm support for the internal autonomy accords and to give
Ben Youssef the opportunity to explain his attack on the Neo-Destour position. While Ben
Youssef declined the invitation, the Congress met anyway and officially affirmed that the
accords were a positive step (rather than the backwards step that Ben Youssef had dubbed them),
and also named Bourguiba as president of the Neo-Destour. In addition, the Congress resolved
to adopt a progressive social and economic agenda as the party’s top priority, which was seen as
a rebuke to Ben Youssef, who wanted a focus on pan-Arab issues.\textsuperscript{241} While the Congress was
meeting at Sfax, Ben Youssef held a rally in Tunis where he again attacked the accords and
called for Tunisia to affirm its Arab and Islamic character and move toward full and total

\textsuperscript{240} Salem, 153; Moore, 62.
\textsuperscript{241} Perkins, 128; Salem, 156-57.
independence, while his supporters in the crowd chanted for a jihad. Following this rally, guerrilla attacks carried out by Youssefists against Neo-Destour offices and members began to proliferate in the southwest of the country and brought Tunisia to the brink of civil war, leading to the January 1956 arrest of 70 Ben Youssef supporters and forcing Ben Youssef himself to flee the country to Egypt. The challenge to Bourguiba’s view of how Tunisia should proceed had been eliminated, and he moved forward in his negotiations with France, achieving full Tunisian independence in March 1956.

This episode is important to understanding the salience of ideology and its role in analyzing the political calculations made by actors. Tunisia at the dawn of independence was certainly not a democracy, and the struggles between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef did not take place in the shadow of a democratic transition. Nor would one expect Tunisia, impoverished and coming out of decades of colonialism, to be undergoing a transition at this point. Nonetheless, the stark ideological differences between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef, and Bourguiba’s response once Ben Youssef publicly challenged the Bourguibist view of the future independent Tunisia, demonstrate why ideological conflict is such a powerful force and how its presence serves to shape political decisions and outcomes.

Purging Ben Youssef following his Zeitouna speech was a risky move for Bourguiba to take on a number of levels and not necessarily the logical choice. To begin with, Ben Youssef was a popular figure in the Neo-Destour, with a sizable cadre of backers and supporters. His support was so extensive that following the January 1956 arrests of Youssefists, a special court was created to try them because the national judicial system was deemed too risky a forum due

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242 Perkins, 128-29; Salem, 158.
to suspicion of Youssefist sympathies. Taking an absolutist hardline position against Ben Youssef and his ideas was perilously uncertain, since while Bourguiba had a strong grip on the Neo-Destour party institutions, it was less clear that he commanded the same level of support among the party’s constituents. Expelling Ben Youssef and officially tarring his positions and ideas as unacceptable carried with it the real risk of fatally damaging Bourguiba’s long-term position within the party. Bourguiba has just returned from years spent outside the country, and did not have the deep populist street credibility of Ben Youssef, who drew 20,000 people to his Tunis rally during the Neo-Destour Congress in Sfax.

In addition, Bourguiba was placing the entire Tunisian nationalism project at risk by taking action that could have weakened the party tasked with midwifing Tunisian independence, or in the most pessimistic scenario causing a civil war. In fact, the aftermath of the November 1956 party Congress saw Tunisia come dangerously close to this latter path. The primary advantage Tunisia had in its quest to break away from France was a relatively cohesive homegrown anti-colonial opposition movement that was united on the surface, and expelling Ben Youssef from the party could have easily split the movement in two and allowed France to play each group off the other. Yet, Bourguiba and his ideological bedfellows were willing to take that chance, risking the bulk of their life’s work and endangering Tunisian nationalism, because their vision of what Tunisia should look like was more important to them than achieving independence at any cost. Bourguiba had been committed to Tunisian independence for decades, but it was critical in his mind and in the minds of his supporters that an independent Tunisia also be a modernizing, secular, westward looking Tunisia. This vision was inseparably tied up with Tunisian independence, so that the two went hand in hand. Ben Youssef was not just a

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243 Salem, 158.
challenger for power, but also the personification of an unacceptable outcome for Tunisia’s future.

It is clear after a close examination of this episode that conflict over first order ideological principles was the main factor prompting Bourguiba’s actions. Bourguiba and Ben Youssef had managed to work together and keep their differences out of the public sphere for years, and had the issue been nothing more than a power struggle at the top, it would have likely resolved itself much earlier. As Salem notes, “It is difficult to accept that personal competition for leadership of the Party, alone, could have led to the civil strife which Tunisia was to experience during the period.” 244 Ben Youssef had been in competition with Bourguiba for years, proclaiming at one point that he had no desire to ever be second to Bourguiba, 245 yet the two traveled the country appearing together immediately following Ben Youssef’s return to Tunisia in the autumn of 1955. It was only once Ben Youssef publicly denounced Bourguiba’s ideological vision that it became necessary for Bourguiba and his acolytes to make a move. Ben Youssef himself was certainly an annoyance, but his desire to lead the Neo-Destour was not an existential threat. His advocacy of an Islamic state established through war against the French, however, was an existential threat as it challenged the core of Bourguiba’s modernizing secular ideology, and thus he and his views became intolerable and ideologically dangerous to the moderates at the top of the Neo-Destour.

While Ben Youssef and his supporters were quickly neutralized, the effects of Ben Youssef’s challenge proved to be long lasting. The primary takeaway internalized by Bourguiba following the challenge by his former protege was that a movement that challenged Bourguiba’s

244 Ibid., 154.
245 Hopwood, 80.
philosophy of Westernization could not be tolerated under any circumstances. Not only did Ben Youssef demonstrate the relative fragility of Bourguibist ideology in Tunisian society at this point in time, he illustrated the power of ideological appeals to religion and pan-Arabism, either of which could easily shatter the Bourguibist project due to its lack of deep roots in Tunisian politics and society at this early stage.\textsuperscript{246} There was no denying Ben Youssef’s popularity or the support for his views, and so Bourguiba spent the next three decades doing his utmost best to socialize Tunisians into his ideological system of secularism and Westernization by developing a new secular identity and becoming the most aggressive Westernizing leader in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{247}

Part and parcel of this strategy was honing in on political Islam, which he saw as an existential threat following his experience with Ben Youssef. Bourguiba was unmistakably not a democrat and thus the opposition groups that were allowed to operate in Tunisia were subject to strict control and oversight, yet it is germane that all manner of leftist opposition groups were either deemed legal or tolerated within limits, yet Islamists of any stripe were not. In 1981, when Bourguiba decided to hold elections and allowed opposition parties to organize, the newly formed Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) was not recognized by the government and 61 of its members were arrested for forming an illegal organization.\textsuperscript{248} Bourguiba was not willing to accept a challenge from a religious movement, which ipso facto repudiated his core political ideology when involved in politics, and the charges against the arrested MTI members were that they were illegally mixing Islam with politics and could therefore not move outside of the social

\textsuperscript{246} Moore, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{247} Noyon, 96-7.
\textsuperscript{248} Alexander, 50.
Bourguiba and his inner circle continued to harbor hatred of the Tunisian Islamist movement, believing that its goal of promoting Islam in public life ran counter to everything that Bourguiba and his adherents stood for, namely a Western secular outlook. While the complete history of Bourguiba’s relationship with the MTI and other Tunisian Islamists is informative, it is not relevant to the main question of concern here, namely the effects of ideological conflict during transitions or potential transitions. Bourguiba established that Tunisia would be governed by a set of first order ideological principles, namely Westernization, secularism, and modernization, elevating these elements from a general mentality to a philosophical dogma. Yet at no time during Bourguiba’s tenure as ruler of Tunisia was the country close to becoming a democracy, and while the clash between Bourguiba and Ben Youssef illustrated the general importance of ideological principles in governing Tunisia, there was no opportunity to assess how the role of ideology would impact the dynamics of a transition. This changed a few years later, however, when Bourguiba was ousted as president by his prime minister of just one month, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, and Tunisian politics entered a new stage.

Ben Ali’s Flirtation With Democracy

On November 6, 1987, Bourguiba was deposed in a bloodless constitutional coup by his prime minister, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Kenneth Perkins has compared Bourguiba during this period to an aging sports legend still playing despite being past his prime and becoming a liability and an embarrassment to his teammates, and no doubt many Tunisians were relieved to

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250 Perkins, 174.
see him go. Ben Ali, who had served two stints as Director General of National Security – which was the title for the commander of the internal security forces – had been named prime minister after undertaking a successful campaign to crush the vestiges of the MTI and other Islamists. Bourguiba admired him precisely because of his anti-Islamist bona fides and believed that a strong figure was needed to ensure that the Islamist movement remained harried and forced underground. Ben Ali had also demonstrated his knack for strategic thinking in arguing that the death penalties imposed on MTI founder Rachid al-Ghannouchi and other members of the group would turn them into martyrs and imbue them with public sympathy, and that they should be imprisoned or exiled instead. Following his appointment as prime minister, he moved quickly to oust his patron Bourguiba, whose mental faculties were rapidly deteriorating.

It is tempting to view Ben Ali’s move as entirely self-serving given that he adeptly pushed Bourguiba out of power and seized the presidency for himself the first moment he was able. A few details, however, temper this view. To begin with, it was clear to many at the time that Bourguiba was legitimately unfit to continue in office and that someone needed to remove him, which is why Ben Ali’s actions went almost completely unchallenged. When Ben Ali was named prime minister on October 2, 1987, he was the third person Bourguiba had appointed to the office over a fifteen month span. On the same day that he elevated Ben Ali, Bourguiba fired a party director who had been in the post only three days, and named a new one in his place whom he then dismissed two weeks later. He also fired a number of other officials whom he

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251 Ibid., 185.
252 Hopwood, 103.
253 Perkins, 175.
accused of attempting to deceive and undermine him, and demanded retrials and harsher sentences for MTI members whom he believed the courts had not dealt with in a sufficiently harsh manner.²⁵⁵ Such paranoia and snap decisions created a sense of instability at the top of Tunisia’s governing institutions and were not the mark of a leader coping well with the strains of daily governance. In an interview given to Le Monde nearly a year after deposing Bourguiba, Ben Ali claimed that as early as 1984 Bourguiba forgot decisions that he had made the previous day and became confused over operations he had approved, and stated that “I understood that I had to save Bourguiba from himself, in spite of himself, against himself.”²⁵⁶ This is not to take Ben Ali at face value or suggest that his motives were entirely altruistic, but this was also not a brutal coup along the lines of Saddam Hussein taking power in Iraq, replete with executions and purges. Bourguiba was allowed to retire to a palace in his hometown of Monastir, and lived for another thirteen years until dying of natural causes at the age of ninety-seven. Ben Ali was obviously eager to be president, but it was equally as obvious that Bourguiba would have to be replaced by someone, and Ben Ali happened to find himself in the right place at the right time.

Interestingly, in taking over power, Ben Ali followed the dictates of the constitution in having the mentally deteriorating Bourguiba declared medically incapacitated from continuing to serve as president by a team of seven doctors, which was the only constitutional route to removing the president-for-life. The fact that Ben Ali observed the dictates of the Tunisian constitution and legal system in replacing Bourguiba – surprising in consideration of his security background that would have made it easy to launch a military or security forces coup – was intriguing and provided an optimistic start to his rule. Indeed, as already noted, Ben Ali did not

²⁵⁵ Alexander, 52.
²⁵⁶ Hopwood, 102-03.
have Bourguiba executed or exiled, nor did he enact a wholesale purge of Bourguiba’s top aides, choosing instead to retain a number of ministers and even install old guard party members as new cabinet members. The entire coup process was unusual in its tendencies of maintaining the rule of law and working within the existing legal and constitutional system. Tunisia in the post-colonial period did not have a legacy of democratic governance, and many of Bourguiba’s directives were arbitrarily issued and carried out, so certainly there was no expectation of Ben Ali sticking to the formal rules. That he did so, and that he had spent significant time studying in France and the United States, and in Europe as a military attaché and ambassador, provided a glimmer of hope that perhaps Tunisian politics would now shift in a more democratic direction.

Aside from working within a legal framework to depose Bourguiba, Ben Ali took a number of concrete steps to liberalize Tunisian society, which implied a further division between him and other regime softliners on one side and Bourguiba and regime hardliners on the other. Bourguiba had shown no inclination to open up Tunisia to liberal reforms, and in fact had appointed Ben Ali prime minister largely on the basis of the assumption that he would be brutally unrelenting against opposition figures perceived to be enemies of the regime, but Ben Ali’s first policy decisions were of an entirely different nature. Past and present opposition figures who had been exiled abroad were allowed to return to Tunisia, and many who returned in the face of pending or outstanding criminal charges were granted clemency. All political prisoners were released, as certified by the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights, and a general amnesty was granted that restored the former political prisoners’ civil rights. The security court was abolished, and capital sentences already handed down were commuted to life

imprisonment. In addition to amnesty and prisoner releases, the press code and laws requiring state authorization for forming associations were revised to allow for more open debate and pluralism of opinion within the political system, and Amnesty International was granted permission to open an office in Tunis.\textsuperscript{258} The state also rolled back the law authorizing preventive detentions, ratified the United Nations Convention on Torture, and announced a moratorium on the death penalty.\textsuperscript{259} Writing in 1991, the distinguished scholar and North Africa expert William Zartman dubbed the liberalization program initiated by Ben Ali as “not mere atmospherics; they were evidence of a basic change in the nature of the political system, opening it up to pluralism of opinion and debate without incrimination.”\textsuperscript{260}

Rather than confining himself to liberalization measures, Ben Ali also went ahead with a program to reform the political system and introduce real political contestation. In his first presidential address upon taking over, he declared, “The age in which we live can no longer permit either presidency-for-life, or automatic succession as head of state…Our people deserve a political development and organization which truly relies on the plurality of political parties and popular organizations.”\textsuperscript{261} In a speech to the National Assembly in July 1988, Ben Ali went even further, stating, “No power which does not rest on the sovereignty of the people, concretized by the free and direct election of its leaders, can claim legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{262} Within the first month of becoming president, he met with the leaders of the Movement of Social Democrats (MDS), the Tunisian Communist Party (PCT), and the Popular Unity Movement (PUP), which were the

\textsuperscript{259} Alexander, 53.
\textsuperscript{260} Zartman, 16.
\textsuperscript{261} Murphy, \textit{Economic and Political Change}, 167.
\textsuperscript{262} Zartman, 20.
main quasi-legal secular opposition parties. Ben Ali did not confine reform to the sphere of mere rhetoric, but actually carried out many of his promised changes. The National Assembly passed a law authorizing political parties, with authorization automatically granted within two months unless the government objected and stated its reasons for doing so. The one official limitation was the prohibition of parties based on religion, language, race, or region, and parties needed to accept the principles of human rights and the Tunisian personal status code enshrining female participation. While this was meant to prevent the automatic legalization of the MTI, the implication was that a moderate Islamic party would be able to meet these conditions.

Ben Ali also instigated a pacting process among Tunisian elites, culminating in the National Pact of November 7, 1988, one year to the day of Ben Ali’s constitutional coup. The pact itself was drafted by a committee elected by Ben Ali’s state party, the RCD, but opposition parties, trade unions, national organizations, and an MTI representative were all involved in the process. The pact emphasized the Arab and Islamic character of the state; guaranteed free elections, separation of powers, rule of law, the people’s sovereignty, and human right and basic liberties; openly criticized abuses of power and constitutional violations under Bourguiba; and generally emphasized political rights and responsibilities in an effort to appeal to as wide a swath of Tunisians as possible. The final document was signed by six political parties, professional and labor groups including the National Union of Tunisian Women and the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights, and an MTI representative. Indeed, the pact was so inclusive that

263 Alexander, 53.
264 Zartman, 21; Murphy, Economic and Political Change, 172-73. The MTI, rather than test the new regulations, did not initially apply for legal recognition, choosing instead to wait until June 1989, at which point it was rejected based on a technicality.
265 Murphy, Economic and Political Change, 173-76.
some members of the RCD rejected it on the grounds that it would endanger their own privileged position within the system.\(^{266}\)

In addition to enacting such a wide range of measures aimed at liberalization and democratization, Ben Ali also spoke like a genuine democrat. Christopher Alexander, who certainly betrays no sympathy or admiration for Ben Ali in his writings, points out the importance of comparing Ben Ali’s language during his first year to Bourguiba’s. He notes that when Bourguiba talked about democracy it was always under the guise of national unity, whereas Ben Ali used the terminology of liberal democrats, talking about the rule of law, individual liberties, and the right to express minority and anti-government opinions, in addition to the procedural aspect of multiparty competitive elections. Aside from the actions of the government, the language of the government suggested a genuine commitment to democracy, and it both generated enthusiasm and raised expectations.\(^{267}\)

Institutional legacies are inherently difficult to overcome, and to be sure, the state was not prepared to completely loosen the grip that it had established decades before. Alexander argues that Ben Ali – despite his rhetoric of liberal democracy – was trying to establish a consensual democracy rather than a competitive one, and laying the groundwork for reduced tensions and a more open public arena that would enable the state to rule more effectively rather than create a system of free and fair elections. After losing a municipal election in December 1987 to an independent list composed of Neo-Destourian breakaways, the ruling party allegedly rigged votes for parliamentary vacancies in January 1988, and while new newspapers and magazines

\(^{266}\) Tessler, 172.
\(^{267}\) Alexander, 53-54.
proliferated during Ben Ali’s first year, some issues of overly critical publications were confiscated.\textsuperscript{268}

There is also no question that the opposition was successfully co-opted by Ben Ali, as many opposition figures ending up either joining the RCD or lending Ben Ali and his party their support. The efforts to reform and restructure the RCD involved bringing former members back into the fold and absorbing adherents of other parties and civic associations as part of creating a big tent, but this plan worked so well that it left little space for other parties to operate or grow. Ordinary Tunisians viewed Ben Ali’s campaign to renew Tunisian politics in a positive light and joined the RCD, making other parties and organizations seem extraneous.\textsuperscript{269} Because Ben Ali was actually following through on the reforms that he had promised to implement, the opposition that for years had demanded greater freedom to organize and voice their opinions was happy to join the government that appeared to heed their wishes, but this outcome ended up defanging any strong opposition that might have existed.\textsuperscript{270}

**Emerging Transition or Retrenching Authoritarianism?**

Depending on how one views what unfolded, there are a few possible interpretations. The most commonly held stance is that Ben Ali never intended to turn Tunisia into a genuine democracy. Noted scholars of the Middle East have looked at this period during the late 1980s not as one of genuine liberalization and political opening but as authoritarian upgrading or liberalizing against democracy. According to this theory, the various moves made by Ben Ali were designed to give him a stronger grip on power by co-opting the opposition in creating

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 54-55.  
\textsuperscript{269} Zartman, 18.  
\textsuperscript{270} Alexander, 54.
nothing more than a democratic façade, but not an actual democracy. This gambit is familiar to even casual observers of the region, and the steps that authoritarian regimes take to buy themselves some breathing room without actually moving toward genuine democratization are well chronicled. Subscribers to this view argue that Ben Ali’s rhetoric was geared toward lulling the opposition and even international observers into a false sense of security, and that the moves toward liberalization were a classic misdirection in that they initially obscured the fact that Tunisia was still a one-party state without genuine free and fair elections. Undoubtedly, as will be seen below, subsequent actions taken by Ben Ali and the regime lend much credence to this interpretation of events. Tunisia did not ultimately transition to democracy under Ben Ali, and in fact became increasingly more authoritarian according to both the Freedom House and Polity scales. Ben Ali rolled back every liberal reform that had been instituted, and descended into Kim Jong Il territory by rigging presidential elections to give himself 94 percent of the vote in 2004 and 89 percent of the vote in 2009. Looking back with the benefit of knowing what transpired later on, Tunisia during the late 1980s looks like every other similarly situated case in the Arab world, where limited liberalization was no more than a feint. No serious observer can examine Ben Ali’s record and call him a democrat.

Nevertheless, despite the preponderance of evidence to the contrary, there are a number of reasons to believe that Ben Ali, even granting that he was no democrat, actually intended to shepherd Tunisia through a democratic transition during his first couple of years as president. To

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272 For two good examples focusing on the Arab world in particular, see Cook, *Ruling But Not Governing*, and Steven Heydemann, *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, Saban Center Analysis, Number 13, October 2007.
begin with, there is no denying that the scope of his reforms and actions was unusually broad, and certainly unique for the region. Ben Ali’s reforms cannot be so easily dismissed as window dressing because he went much farther than would have been necessary were he only trying to use liberalization as a release valve for the pressure built up in the political system. Releasing some political prisoners is a tried and true tactic, but Ben Ali immediately freed 2,487 prisoners along with all forced army conscripts, released another 2,044 prisoners in March 1988, another 32 in July, and finally released another 2,031 prisoners along with the remaining 88 political prisoners in November.273 In contrast, taking a recent example that is widely seen as not being genuine democratization, the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces initially released some political prisoners following Hosni Mubarak’s deposal, but has since continued to hold political prisoners and tried thousands of civilians in military courts.274 It also reactivated and further extended Egypt’s emergency laws on September 10, 2011, only seven months after taking over daily governance of the state and vowing to abolish the emergency laws permanently.275 The Egypt example is typical of the limited liberalization strategy that follows the standard script – a promise to liberalize accompanied by some window dressing modifications to laws limiting freedom of speech and assembly and the release of some prisoners at the outset, and then a crackdown and backslide on promised reforms before they ever materialize.

The crucial difference between present day Egypt and the Tunisian example is that Ben Ali did not release just some prisoners, but released all prisoners, and actually followed through

273 Zartman, 16.
on his promised reforms. Were all of Ben Ali’s actions during his first year a ploy, he would not have carried out liberal policies to the extent that he did, since doing so would have been unnecessary and made a later crackdown much harder to carry out. Stated simply, no rational leader whose intention is to feign liberalization in order to consolidate political strength would enact the amnesty program that Ben Ali did. He effectively released or invited back to the country every significant opponent of the regime, and then ensured their freedom of movement, organization, and expression by abolishing the security court, revising the press code, and subjecting his own actions to certification by domestic and international human rights organizations. Irrespective of what took place years and decades later, these are not the actions of a ruler seeking to consolidate authoritarian rule.

Furthermore, Tunisia in the late 1980s looked like a country that was ready to transition and that was taking the necessary steps to do so. One always wants to avoid falling into Carothers’ trap of teleological bias, but Tunisia combined the structural requisites for transition along with the beginnings of the regime split and negotiating process. As a small, homogenous country, with a high literacy rate and large middle class, not to mention various economic and social ties with the West at the same time that there were large democratic demonstration effects taking place throughout the world as a result of the fall of Communism, Tunisia was in a position that historically is favorable for the development of democracy. To begin with, Tunisia has a high level of national unity and a society that is remarkably homogenous. The country is 98% Arab and 98% Muslim, and unlike its other North African neighbors Morocco and Algeria, Tunisia’s population does not have a significant percentage of Berbers.\textsuperscript{276} Consequently, the

societal cleavages that characterize Egypt (Muslims and Copts), Lebanon (Muslims and Maronites), Iraq (Sunni Muslims and Shi’a Muslims), and other Arab states do not exist in Tunisia, putting it in a better position to avoid social conflict along sectarian lines.

Tunisia also fits the definition better than most Arab states of national unity described by Rustow as being unwavering in belonging to a particular political community. As far back as 1965, the leaders of the pan-Arab movement such as Nasser accused Habib Bourguiba of betraying the cause of pan-Arab nationalism, and Bourguiba in turn refused to participate in pan-Arab summits.\textsuperscript{277} Tunisia was also not historically involved in the more activist attempts to create pan-Arab confederations, such as the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan or the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria.\textsuperscript{278} Partially as a result of social homogeneity and partly as a result of the unifying nature of the anti-colonial struggle for independence from France, Tunisia’s citizens accepted themselves as belonging to a single political community.\textsuperscript{279} If Rustow was correct in identifying national unity as the only prerequisite for a successful transition, then Tunisia seems to be excepted from the problems that plague many other Middle Eastern states in this regard.

In addition to being a regional outlier in terms of national unity, Tunisia is also an economic outlier. Of the non-Gulf Arab countries in the region, Tunisia was second only to Libya in 2000 GDP per capita.\textsuperscript{280} This is all the more relevant when considering that Tunisia,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{278} The Arab Islamic Republic, a Libyan proposal to unite Libya and Tunisia, was rejected immediately by Bourguiba.
\bibitem{279} This can also be seen by looking at Tunisian Islamists, particularly the Nahda movement, which has historically avoided any talk of a pan-Muslim state but has emphasized a particularly Tunisian form of political Islam.
\end{thebibliography}
unlike Libya, does not derive a significant portion of its GDP from oil or natural gas exports, producing 86,210 barrels of oil per day in 2007 (ranked 54th in the world and behind states such as Italy, Germany, and Romania) to Libya’s 1.85 million barrels per day (ranked 19th), while at the same time importing more oil than it exports.\textsuperscript{281} Tunisia is perhaps the only Middle Eastern state with a viable non-rentier economy containing diverse sectors such as agriculture, tourism, textiles, and mining, making it an ideal candidate for transition as it is in the “transition zone” of upper-middle levels of economic development with a 2000 GDP per capita of just under $7000.\textsuperscript{282} Looking at GDP per capita and political freedom in 2000, Tunisia emerges as a global outlier as well. Of the eighty wealthiest countries, ten excluding Tunisia were rated by Freedom House as not free; seven are Middle Eastern oil-producing states, and the others are Belarus, which is an exporter of natural gas and sells discounted Russian oil at market prices; Turkmenistan, a large oil and gas exporter; and Swaziland, a country of just over 1 million people and thus not a relevant example when looking at per capita wealth.\textsuperscript{283} Looking at this group of countries, Tunisia stands out due to its status as a non-rentier state, and given its level of GDP and the political status of other similarly situated non-rentier states, one might reasonably expect Tunisia to be democratic since the relationship between wealth and freedom is strong.\textsuperscript{284}

In addition, Tunisia appeared to be following the O’Donnell and Schmitter playbook, with a break between regime hardliners and softliners, liberalization policies preceding democratization, and the beginning of pacting and negotiations between the regime and

\textsuperscript{281} CIA World Factbook, 2011.
\textsuperscript{282} Huntington, 311.
\textsuperscript{284} See e.g. Epstein et al., 551-69; Boix and Stokes, 517-49; Londregan and Poole, 1-30; Ross and Lewis-Beck, 903-10.
opposition groups. Bourguiba’s demand for a reconsideration of clemency for convicted
Islamists and reinstatement of their death sentences, certainly evidence of his general hardline
approach, was the final straw that led Ben Ali to carry out the coup. While Bourguiba’s
mental state would likely have made his removal necessary in any event, there is direct evidence
of a split between Bourguiba representing hardliners and Ben Ali and his circle representing
softliners. Ben Ali then quickly moved to liberalize the more onerous elements of the Tunisian
security apparatus, which tracks the transitions paradigm in its prediction that such a move is
necessary following a recognition that some form of electoral legitimation is likely to be
necessary in the future. The transitions paradigm also states that this will be done during a time
of regime success in the hopes that it will translate into popular support later on. In Ben Ali’s
case, there was a renewed sense of optimism stemming from his removal of Bourguiba, and his
actions that appeared to be geared toward reinvigorating Tunisian politics were very popular, so
this was an opportune time for him to carry out a program of liberalizing reforms. The
transitions paradigm has come under much attack over the past decade, but despite its many
flaws, it is still widely accepted that a regime split, liberalization, election reform, and pacting
might reasonably – although not always – lead to a successful democratic transition. Combined
with the extent of Ben Ali’s reforms and Tunisia’s structural advantages, Tunisia in the late
1980s appears different than other cases of liberalization at the ultimate expense of
democratization.

Finally, looking at contemporary observations is important, since it provides a picture of
what sophisticated observers believed was taking place at the time. With the hindsight of an

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285 Hopwood, 103-04.
286 O’Donnell and Schmitter, 15-16.
additional two decades of Ben Ali’s autocratic rule, it is easy to assume that he had no intention at all of giving up power or allowing free elections, and given the sum total of his record, this is certainly an understandable and eminently reasonable assumption to make. Nevertheless, it is crucial to focus on the period under review and not to be swayed by subsequent events, and there is no getting around the fact that Ben Ali’s intentions appeared to be genuine at the time. As noted above, Zartman believed that Tunisia was undergoing a transition away from autocratic rule. The opening two sentences of his first chapter in a 1991 edited volume on Tunisian political economy read, “Tunisia at the end of the 1980s represents a striking case of transition toward democracy. The opportunities, intentions, and decisions are all clear and present.”

After cataloguing the various social and political reforms, Zartman wrote, “Enhanced civil liberties, a pluralized political system, and competitive, non-violent elections were their undeniable result.” He cautioned that past progress did not guarantee future progress and that the temptation to return to a closed authoritarian system would increase as socioeconomic stagnation occurred and Ben Ali’s honeymoon phase came to a close, but that “[r]eforms do not leave the reformer unchanged” and that the vast unoccupied political space would potentially lead to vigorous multiparty politics outside the control of the RCD.

Zartman was far from alone in his assessment. Mark Tessler surveyed the Tunisian political scene in 1990 and opined that Ben Ali had ushered in the third period of independent Tunisia’s political development, and that this one was characterized by anticipation and hope because “Ben Ali has proclaimed a new beginning and made a transition to democracy his highest priority.” After summarizing the constitutional reforms, amnesties and pardons, and

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287 Zartman, 9.
important details of the national pact, Tessler identified a number of obstacles remaining if Tunisia were to make a complete transition, but determined that Tunisia had made “significant progress” along the path toward democracy.\textsuperscript{289}

Lisa Anderson, currently the president of the American University in Cairo, also gave Ben Ali the benefit of the doubt in her belief that Tunisia was undergoing a successful democratic transition when writing in 1991 after the first round of elections had been held. In discussing the pact struck between Ben Ali and the political opposition, Anderson wrote, “[a]s leader of the country and, more important, \emph{as an advocate of a pluralistic vision of society and politics}, he [Ben Ali] needed a device that would permit even those who opposed his policies to pledge their allegiance to the country and articulate a common vision of politics and society within which they might disagree on specific policies.”\textsuperscript{290} (emphasis mine) In discussing whether the pact was only rhetoric masking authoritarianism or a genuine effort to move Tunisia toward democracy, Anderson observed that “Ben Ali made it quite clear that he did not intend it to be merely empty words: in reshuffling his Cabinet the day after the elections he appointed the head of the Tunisian League of Human Rights – long a bane of the Bourguiba government – and a prominent former member of the executive committee of the MDS to important posts.”\textsuperscript{291} In summarizing the events of the previous few years, she concluded:

Far from introducing a conservative bias into subsequent political relations, this pact may be better understood as an effort to foster the tolerance of dissent and opposition which is a cornerstone of democratic politics. That the Pact itself is only a first tentative step in that direction should be apparent; there are many pitfalls in any transition of a regime.

\textsuperscript{289} Tessler, 169-72, 182-84.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 259.
What is significant is not necessarily how far the National Pact has taken the Tunisians, but the direction in which it points.²⁹²

While Anderson backtracked on her rosy assessment a few years later, the point is that when analyzing the beginning of the Ben Ali era contemporaneously, she viewed the regime as taking positive actions toward democracy while recognizing that it would not be a quick or easy path. She certainly did not view Ben Ali as a garden-variety secular Arab autocrat, which is significant in light of the fact that Anderson is considered to be one of the most sophisticated observers of the Arab world.

This view of Tunisia was not limited to the academy, but was held by journalists and foreign correspondents as well. An article in the New York Times on April 10, 1989, declared that “Tunisia is undergoing a transition from a one-man dictatorship to a much more open society with a sleight of hand that could furnish lessons for Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. In terms of tolerance and bitter scores that have so far been left unsettled, the Tunisian experience has been virtually unique in the third world.”²⁹³ That this view was widespread is understandable; as noted in multiple examples above, Ben Ali spoke and acted like a genuine democrat. That the man who had declared embracing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the best way to achieve national reconciliation and who had appointed the founder of the Tunisian League of Human Rights as his first health minister would be compared favorably to Gorbachev is not surprising.²⁹⁴ Significantly, following all of the talk about democracy and elections, Ben Ali followed through on his promises.

²⁹² Ibid., 260.
²⁹⁴ Perkins, 194.
On April 2, 1989, Tunisia held its first competitive non-violent multiparty elections, although the results ended up being skewed toward the ruling state party due to the winner-take-all system. The independent candidate lists, comprised mostly of Ennahda Movement (which was the MTI’s new name) members, won only 14.5% of the vote according to the official tally, and they later alleged fraud in the vote counting process. The rest of the opposition did not fare much better, with the MDS winning 4% and other parties combining for less than 1%. Ennahda also challenged the registration process for candidates, and the Constitutional Court ruled in its favor on two challenges to invalidated lists. While the results and allegations cast doubt as to the absolute level of freedom and fairness of the first national elections under Ben Ali, there is no denying that progress toward democracy had been made, even if it was incremental.295

Competitive elections had been held, and the inequitable results, while almost certainly influenced by some degree of fraud, were likely more attributable to institutional design in terms of first-past-the-post determinations of winners, along with the imbalance in resources between the newly formulated state party that had dominated Tunisian politics for decades and the independent lists that constituted the primary opposition in the first real election in modern Tunisian history.

This is not to imply that the elections were a perfectly bright shining example of democracy at work. While certainly coming close to, if not passing the threshold of, free and fair, they contained a number of substantial flaws. The Ennahda candidates were forced to run as independents as their party was still banned, and their being permitted to stand for election as independents did not negate the fact that a true democratic election would have included the party on the ballot. The timing of the elections was problematic as well, since it came right on

295 Zartman, 23-25.
the heels of the legalization of opposition parties and thus did not afford adequate time for regime opponents to organize and campaign in an effective manner. Five opposition parties aside from the Ennahda independents participated in the elections, yet only the MDS was able to field candidates in more than 25% of the legislative districts, meaning that an RCD landslide was in some ways preordained. The elections rules, which created 25 districts and awarded votes in a winner take all first-past-the-post system, also guaranteed that the RCD was going to amass a large victory after effectively being the only game in town for decades. Certainly the argument presented here about Ben Ali’s reforms and the legislative elections is not meant to be a paean to a glorious democratic moment that did not actually exist. Rather, without whitewashing or glossing over the various problems – intentional or otherwise – and imperfections in the initial moves taken by the Ben Ali regime, it is meant to highlight the abrupt change in tone and action coinciding with Ben Ali’s assumption of the Tunisian presidency. When assessing the actions actually taken and the extraordinary rhetoric of Ben Ali on democracy and human rights, the Tunisian Spring of the late 1980s is unquestionably unique in a regional context. No other Arab authoritarian state at that time had undergone such extensive liberalization, and no other Arab authoritarian state had held such free elections. Looking at the sum total of the evidence, there were many legitimate reasons for the contemporary optimism about Tunisian democratization and hopes for its growth and transformation into genuine democracy.

**Democracy Aborted**

The optimism, however, turned out to be misplaced. Tunisia under Ben Ali did not transition to democracy, and in fact became even more authoritarian than it had been under
Bourguiba. Immediately after the election, Ben Ali rejected the Ennahda’s request for formal legalization, saying that its leaders had served too much jail time to have their right to run for public office restored. After reform talks with the government broke down, the majority of the opposition parties boycotted the municipal elections in June 1990. In December, the government arrested hundreds of Ennahda activists, and then began a large-scale crackdown following an attack on an RCD office by Islamists who were not Ennahda members, using the action as a pretext to arrest over 8000 people between 1990 and 1992.²⁹⁶

The Islamists’ role in this crackdown was not benign. Tunisians were watching unrest unfolding in their next-door neighbor Algeria following the election of the Islamist Front Islamique du Salut and the uneasy response of the army and secular establishment, and it did not help Tunisians feel less uneasy about their own Islamist movement when Ghannouchi called for Tunisians to reenact the “splendid Algerian intifada.”²⁹⁷ The Persian Gulf War also cemented the regime’s view of the Islamists as a profound ideological threat, as Ghannouchi chose to back Iraq due his view that there should be no Western troops on Muslim soil, which was at odds with the official pro-West Bourguibist ideology. Ghannouchi famously asserted that any Muslim state housing Western troops could no longer be considered Muslim, and Islamist anti-Western rhetoric grew louder as the war progressed.²⁹⁸ Ghannouchi’s increasingly confrontational approach and his espousal of views that seemingly embraced pan-Muslim themes at the expense of all else alarmed many Tunisians, who welcomed the political stability and relative prosperity that they enjoyed and who did not want to duplicate the circumstances of their Algerian counterparts. Tunisian political culture has been characterized as being marked by a tendency to

²⁹⁶ Alexander, 58-60.
²⁹⁷ Murphy, Economic and Political Change, 195.
²⁹⁸ Ibid., 196-97.
seek consensus and gradualism along with conditional deference to political power when livelihood is threatened. The growing upheaval in Algeria along with the change in tone and rhetoric from Ennahda and other Islamists presented a sharp change in the status quo that went against these notions of gradual change, stability, and consensus in the political system. This new environment allowed Ben Ali to crack down even harder on the Islamists and limit freedoms further, a strategy that aligned well with the West’s increasing preoccupation with jihadist terrorism over the next two decades. Ben Ali was able to effectively leverage initial fears of upheaval to eliminate a bitter ideological foe, which in turn snowballed into a retrenchment of the state’s authoritarian institutions and stranglehold on power.

The evisceration of the Islamists had a profound effect on the secular opposition parties, which did not want to suffer a similar fate but also welcomed the elimination of their primary rival. This quiescent atmosphere allowed Ben Ali to stack the deck even further during the 1994 parliamentary elections by passing a law guaranteeing opposition parties twelve percent of the seats in the legislature, effectively incentivizing them to turn on each other in order to capture this small share as they had no chance of competing with the RCD and its 1.6 million members. Ben Ali ran unopposed in the 1994 presidential elections after disallowing Tunisian League of Human Rights head (and future Tunisian president) Moncef Marzouki’s candidacy, dashing any remaining glimmer of hope that Tunisia would successfully transition to democracy under the auspices of Ben Ali’s regime.

Not only were democratization measures curtailed, but the liberalization program was ended as well. Foreign journalists were expelled or banned, French newspapers that had been

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critical of the crackdown were not permitted to be sold or distributed, and Tunisian journalists were harassed, intimidated, and imprisoned. In one particularly notorious incident, uniformed security forces burned down the offices of the independent newspaper al-Anouar. Other newspapers and magazines were forced to shutter their doors after customers and advertisers fled in droves following critical reporting of the regime. On the human rights front, matters deteriorated rapidly as well. Executions of regime opponents resumed in October 1991, and the Law of Associations enacted in March 1992 severely restricted the actions and members of human rights groups, forbidding their leaders to also hold official positions in political parties and making it easier for regime infiltrators to join their ranks. Prominent leaders like Marzouki were arrested and restricted from leaving the country, and in some cases tried on bogus charges of revealing state secrets.300 Tunisia’s transition was over before it could move past the stages of infancy.

Ideology Rears Its Head

What made Ben Ali shift course so quickly? The answer lies in the ideological threat that was made clear only after the first round of elections, when it became evident that the Islamists, who would be the death knell for Tunisia’s secular modernizing ideology were they to come to power, were stronger than Ben Ali had anticipated. Ben Ali and his coterie of advisors had been concerned about the direction of the Tunisian electorate as there had been no polling conducted at all, and thus they had no way of gauging levels of support for various parties and opposition groups, the Islamists in particular. They finally decided in November 1988 that the elections in the spring would be for the entirety of the seats in parliament despite not having any public

300 Murphy, Economic and Political Change, 202-08.
opinion polling data, but elected not to use a proportional representation system. This was aimed squarely at keeping out “extremist parties,” codeword for Islamists and Ennahda. When the election actually occurred, the 14.5% won by Islamist independents was shockingly high in the eyes of Ben Ali and the RCD, who had assumed that the support would be lower for an underground group hounded by the regime for years.\[^{301}\]

In fact, the reason that Ben Ali had allowed the Islamists to participate at all under the guise of running as independents – rather than ban them outright – was to get a sense of their popularity and whether or not they had a reasonable chance at taking power. He could not take the chance of granting them full legal status given the complete lack of data on voter preferences, so instead he chose to let them participate in a roundabout manner and used the opportunity to see how firm and deep their support actually was.\[^{302}\] The results were alarming to Ben Ali and the Bourguibist establishment, as their assumption about Islamist weakness was proven incorrect. The combination of a segment of the population identifying with the Islamist message and the fact that the secular parties were either too brand new to register in people’s mind or seen as being complicit in Tunisian authoritarianism meant that there was a strong baseline of support for the Islamists that automatically propelled them into the regime’s chief opposition. While Ben Ali appeared to be ready for legitimate challengers coming from within the Bourguibist secular Westernizing consensus, he was not at all prepared to risk handing over power to Islamists and allow the regime’s hegemonic ideology to be discarded.

The challenge that the Islamists presented in Ben Ali’s mind was an existential one related to political ideology. Their potential power and support following the results of the

\[^{301}\] Zartman, 20-24.
\[^{302}\] Alexander, 57.
parliamentary elections was threatening not because Ben Ali did not want to cede power to anyone under any circumstances; it was threatening because the Islamists were determined to replace Bourguibist ideology with their own. Islamist strength provoked a crisis by challenging the social raison d’être of the Tunisian state in rejecting secularism and a close relationship with the West as a basis for governing legitimacy. The Tunisian state as envisioned by Bourguiba rested on the three foundations of secularism, Tunisian nationalism (rather than pan-Arab or pan-Muslim solidarity), and strong relations with and emulation of the West. The Islamists challenged all three of these to one degree or another, and halting Westernization was their primary goal. To be sure, Tunisian Islamism has always been distinct from its Arab counterparts and Tunisian Islamists view themselves as occupying a separate school of thought, one that incorporates Western views that are compatible with Islam (explaining Tunisian Islamism’s endorsement of democracy before other Islamist movements). Yet, its core tenets included making political decisions based on Islamic law and thought and it rejected secularism as a barrier against religion in politics, thus making a distinction between incorporating concepts like democracy and imitating the West wholesale. This was unacceptable to Ben Ali, who stated in a speech to UNESCO that Tunisian Islamism was “extremism [that] seeks to wipe out the achievements of modernity.” The threat to Bourguibism was too great since the Islamists could not be counted on to maintain Tunisia’s secular pro-Western orientation, an orientation emanating from a political philosophy that was viewed by the regime as intertwined with

303 Zartman, 27.
304 Hamdi, 135-56.
306 Hamdi, 123.
Tunisian sovereignty itself. This explains the whiplash-inducing turnaround by Ben Ali following the elections and the pivot to even more repressive authoritarian measures. Once the nature of the primary opposition was clear, Ben Ali and the Bourguibist establishment felt they had no choice but to eliminate any possibility of Islamists taking control of the government.

A helpful exercise in evaluating the role of ideology in driving Ben Ali’s decision making is to imagine the counterfactual scenario of a secular party such as the MDS gaining 15% of the vote in the parliamentary elections. While such historical imagination can sometimes get out of hand, counterfactuals are useful methodological techniques that allow political scientists to assess their hypotheses about the causes of historical outcomes.\(^\text{307}\) A counterfactual here allows us to imagine an alternate scenario and plot Ben Ali’s likely moves accordingly given the information we have at our disposal. Had this outcome occurred and a secular party had won a sizable percentage of the vote so that Ben Ali’s time in power continued but the prospect of an electoral loss down the road was possible, what path would Tunisia under Ben Ali been likely to take? Would the complete cessation of democratization and liberalization measures been instituted nonetheless, or would Tunisia have slowly continued to democratize until a true transition occurred?

The first party to consider in this counterfactual is the regime. As documented above, Ben Ali’s liberalization measures were genuine, and the rollback of liberalizing reforms did not begin until after the elections. In addition, the authoritarian crackdown was a direct response to the election results but not because Ben Ali had lost or was at risk of having to give up power immediately. As opposed to the response of the army and the FLN in Algeria to the FIS

electoral victory, Ben Ali was not looking at the prospect of losing his position as president or placing himself in any danger. What makes the situation in Tunisia so unusual is that Ben Ali won by a hefty margin, and still felt the need to eviscerate his Islamist opposition after previously taking a more open and liberal stance. This suggests not that he was afraid of opposition generally – as his actions before the elections would have communicated that message had it been the case – but that there was something inherent in Ennahda that triggered his rapid reversal of political and social reforms.

The same can be said for Ben Ali’s approach to liberalization in the first place, in which he seemed far more open to parties sharing his ideological views than he did to Islamists, who were part of the National Pact process but were then forced to run as independents. This may look at first blush like a classic Arab authoritarian strategy in which the regime creates different relationships between the state and the opposition and amongst various opposition groups by creating a divided structure of contestation that privileges some types of groups over others, with Islamists almost always being in the group that is deemed the illegal opposition. The effect is to make the legal opposition more compliant since it does not want to get lumped in with the illegal opposition and be subject to repression or exclusion from the system. While this is what Ben Ali ended up doing later on (see below), it was not what he did before the elections. The National Pact was signed by a representative from Ennahda, and all of its leaders were either let out of prison or allowed to return to Tunisia with full amnesty, which is not consistent with setting up a divided structure of contestation with an opposition that is clearly defined as illegal.

What it does reflect, however, is that Ben Ali initially was open to opposition and limited democratization, but that he specifically wanted to temper the role of Islamism given the threat it presented to Bourguibism. As illustrated in depth previously, Ben Ali’s reforms were too extensive to be swept aside as mere window dressing, which is why the argument that he was not willing to tolerate any opposition at all and that Tunisian liberalization was only a façade does not hold water. The evidence suggests that Ben Ali was open to opposition but was extremely wary of Islamists, which explains why he did not push them out of the political arena entirely but also could not overcome his inherent ideological bias and allow them to run completely unhindered. If the counterfactual had played out and the MDS or PUP had taken the largest share of the opposition vote, by this logic Ben Ali would not have instantly rolled back democratizing reforms but would instead have continued on the path that he appeared to be on since assuming the presidency, namely slowly reforming the system and opening it up to legitimate contestation. His authoritarian re-entrenchment was contingent on Islamists emerging as his primary opposition, thereby placing the state’s ruling Bourguibist ideology in danger, which is precisely what happened.

The other part of this equation is the secular Bourguibist opposition. There is no doubt that the non-Islamist parties were opposed to Ben Ali’s continued rule, and they welcomed the political and social reforms that he instituted as much as anyone. Parties like the MDS had been unsuccessfully trying to challenge the regime for years, and the immediate removal of restrictions on political speech and assembly must have been like drinking from an oasis after years of wandering in a political wasteland. Yet, these parties turned out to be just as opposed to the Islamists as were Ben Ali and the regime, which is unsurprising in light of the fact that the
secular opposition also bought into Bourguibism, having been led by men who came from the same Western Francophile secular background. The elections results were disheartening to them not only because they did not manage to gain much ground, but because the Islamists did. The MDS in particular, which was the only opposition party with much of an organization to speak of, had absolutely zero desire to risk operating in a Tunisia that was controlled by Islamists, but the Islamist success in the elections made that prospect a possibility down the road, even if it was a remote one.

Ben Ali’s crackdown against the Islamists was, if not quite cheered on by the rest of the opposition, tolerated by it. Only the Tunisian League of Human Rights, which was part of the opposition but not a political party, made any type of concerted effort to monitor what Ben Ali was doing and to document the arrests and human rights violations that were occurring. The secular opposition parties kept quiet in return for the regime neutralizing the “green threat” of Islamism. It was at this point that Ben Ali adopted a strategy of establishing a divided structure of contestation, which created an incentive for the tolerated legal opposition parties to keep their heads down and their mouths shut as the regime tortured and put hundreds of Islamists on trial while driving others out of the country once again. This strategy came back to haunt the other parties a few years later when Ben Ali extended his repression of Islamists to the rest of the opposition as well, turning LTDH and MDS stalwarts into political prisoners themselves.

It should be obvious though that the opposition’s compliance in the cessation of democratizing measures was a result of Islamist success in the elections, which played upon the secular opposition’s ideological fears. Much like Ben Ali appeared to be moving slowly toward democracy provided that the state’s ideology would not be endangered, the secular opposition

309 Perkins, 194.
parties – in other words, everyone save Ennahda – were also enthusiastic about democratic and liberal reforms with the catch that they did not want to see Islamists reap the benefits. The opposition’s Faustian bargain with the regime in 1990 came about because of the ideological threat presented by Ennahda. In the counterfactual in which the MDS wins 15% of the vote, even if Ben Ali had wanted to institute a crackdown he would have had a much more difficult time without the quiet acquiescence of the opposition parties, which would have been absent. The opposition’s shutting its eyes to the routing of the Islamists was not simply a case of sour grapes but a desire to see Bourguibism’s ideological hegemony maintained, and this desire was only heightened following Ghannouchi’s calls for an intifada and his polemics against Western interference in the Muslim world. The LTDH was not the only group at that point that had the resources to monitor and challenge illegal state detentions and trumped up trials; the political parties had spent over a year building up their resources and organizing with varying levels of success, and they were no longer the toothless empty shells that they had been. Had the initial crackdown been directed at them, they would have been unlikely to go quietly. That Ben Ali was able to so effectively tear down the Islamists and Ennahda was partially a function of there being no pushback against him from any other quarters. Once this authoritarian re-imposition occurred, it rapidly swung the pendulum farther away from democracy, and any pretense that Ben Ali might have had of being a reformer vanished entirely. By the time he was forced to flee in January 2011, Ben Ali was rightly viewed as being no different than any other Middle Eastern autocrat.
The Impact of Ideological Conflict on a Failed Transition

The Tunisian case is a salient example of the way in which ideological conflict can lead a state to abort a transition before it has a chance to get off the ground. Tunisia was an excellent candidate to transition to democracy in a variety of ways, from its secular and literate population without any discernible ethnic or religious cleavages to its viable non-rentier economy that created a sizable middle class. The switch from Bourguiba to Ben Ali provided Tunisia’s political system with an opportunity for a fresh start, and Ben Ali at first appeared to be genuinely interested in liberalizing reforms that would lead to open political contestation.

Tunisia in 1988 and 1989 was following the O’Donnell and Schmitter playbook as if it were the ultimate roadmap for successful political development: a split between hardliners (represented by Bourguiba and his unrelenting stance against the opposition) and softliners (represented by Ben Ali and his calls for caution and a softer touch), liberalization before democratization, reform coming from the regime itself rather than being driven by civil society, and a grand national pact involving all major factions that sought to reinvigorate Tunisian politics along a democratic path.

Looking at Tunisia while trying to set aside the benefit of nearly a quarter century of hindsight coloring one’s view of Ben Ali, what got in the way of a successful transition was ideology. Ben Ali was not a natural democrat, but he appeared to be legitimately trying to usher in a new era of competitive politics and political reforms with the caveat that Tunisia’s Bourguibist state ideology was not to be threatened. While the electoral rules put the ruling RCD at a distinct advantage, the non-Islamist political parties, civil society organizations, and NGOs were allowed to operate almost completely unfettered, which was a remarkable turnaround given Tunisia’s history of post-colonial authoritarian repression. The only group that
was restricted was the one that stated its intent to challenge secular Westernization, and even then Ben Ali allowed Ennahda to participate in the National Pact and run as independents.

Bourguibism was an inclusive-status quo ideology, which means that Ben Ali was going to aggressively seek to protect its hegemonic status but was not going to be completely intolerant toward any and every hint of an ideological threat as a matter of course. It was only once the ideological threat presented by Islamism appeared as a potential existential challenge following the elections that Ben Ali and the regime’s threat perception was heightened, leading to the crackdown on Islamists and then to the wider extinguishing of democratic hopes. Ben Ali was not initially fearful of political opposition; he was fearful of ideological political opposition. Ideological conflict in this case acted as a structural constraint on democratization by complicating the consequences of a transition and transfer of power at any point in the near term future. The specter of losing power was no longer the only consideration, or even the most important consideration, at hand, since the possibility of the state ideology being replaced became the paramount concern. Ben Ali and the RCD might have eventually acclimated themselves to the idea that they would have to turn over the government to one of the other Bourguibist parties one or two elections down the road, and the evidence indicates that they were laying the groundwork for that eventuality. What Ben Ali would never allow, however, would be the takeover by an Islamist party that was not wholly committed to Bourguibism as the other opposition parties were.

This is why the clash of ideological principles is so crucial to understanding Tunisia’s failed transition. It was not a simple case of liberalizing against democracy or upgrading authoritarianism. The ideological component was the key variable that doomed Tunisia’s
democratic prospects by creating an environment in which the dominant hegemonic ideology that was so intertwined with the regime itself was threatened for the first time in decades. Absent this ideological conflict, it is eminently plausible that Tunisia would have gone through a process of increasing liberalization and contestation in the political arena, eventually paving the way for competitive electoral democracy. As in other ideological states, the presence of ideology made the process of democratization in a traditionally authoritarian state, which always has heavy odds stacked against it to begin with, even more difficult.

As will be seen, however, two decades later Tunisia would go through another period of political upheaval under Ben Ali, but this time the result would be very different. The events in Tunisia in January 2011 that set off the entire Arab Spring are important to understanding ideological conflict’s effects on transitions not because ideological conflict no longer existed in Tunisia, but because the perception of ideological conflict no longer existed. This perception on the part of key regime elements that all viable remaining opponents were ideologically acceptable led to a much reduced threat assessment, and took ideological conflict out of the equation as a structural constraint. This in turn led to a different outcome that set Tunisia on the path to becoming the Arab world’s first viable democracy.
Chapter V

Tunisia under Ben Ali is a clear example of how ideological conflict can abort an emergent transition and cement authoritarian practices in place. Not only did Ben Ali not follow through on his early promises of and actions toward liberalization and democratization, his program to eradicate Islamism as a threat eventually morphed into a wider authoritarian agenda. Once he had gone down the rabbit hole of repression and violence against one group, it was far too easy for him to turn his sights on any and all political opponents irrespective of ideology. Tunisia under Ben Ali became a harsher authoritarian state than it had been under Bourguiba, with Ben Ali presiding over the growth of the security apparatus and a wider erosion of personal freedoms. After removing all vestiges of political Islam from the country, Ben Ali turned to eliminating the rest of the opposition as well. Ironically however, it was Ben Ali’s measures against Islamism that would eventually pave the way for its resurgence when the Tunisian military two decades later made the same miscalculation about Islamist political power as Ben Ali had. This perception of the absence of an Islamist ideological threat led the way to Tunisia’s nascent transition in 2011, and was only possible because of Ben Ali’s hyper-vigilance in eliminating Islamism in order to protect Bourguibism.

The Aftermath of Ben Ali’s Crackdown

Tunisia’s stalled, and ultimately completely reversed, transition to democracy under Ben Ali was a result of an ideological battle between Bourguibism and Islamism. The Tunisian regime, which had championed Bourguibism for decades as a source of its legitimacy and as an organizing political principle, was not prepared to allow Bourguibism to be replaced by the
political Islam espoused by Ennahda once the Islamists emerged as the central challengers to the regime following elections. While a transfer of power to another secular party would have been a slow process given the developmental immaturity of Tunisian political institutions and the RCD’s expectations of electoral dominance, the evidence suggests that a crackdown along the lines of what took place and an end to all liberalizing reforms would not have been implemented had one of the RCD’s secular Bourguibist competitors emerged from elections in a stronger position. It is difficult to look at the cycle of liberalization, political reforms, elections, and repression during Ben Ali’s first three years in power and conclude that Ben Ali was a true and committed democrat. Nevertheless, there is a convincing school of thought arguing that democracy does not require democrats, but rather that democratic attitudes take root following repetition of the democratic process, and the democratic process was unquestionably unfolding in Tunisia. Despite Ben Ali’s obvious authoritarian inclinations and his quick resort to repression in order to eliminate what he viewed as an Islamist threat, those skeptical that Ben Ali’s moves to open up Tunisia’s political system were anything more than a gambit to consolidate power and liberalize against democracy must contend with the inconvenient fact of just how far Ben Ali went down the path to a transition. Ultimately, the introduction of ideological conflict into the equation was the decisive factor that flipped the needle from democratization back to authoritarian repression.

After his initial moves against Islamists and other opponents of the crackdown, Ben Ali went to work transforming Tunisia into one of the most repressive and politically closed states in the Arab world. Finding itself without any political opposition or even any genuine political

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function, the ruling RCD became primarily a security apparatus rather than a political party as Tunisia turned into a police state. New political parties were kept waiting for years to have their legal status approved – nearly a decade in the case of the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberty, which was founded by former LTDH and MDS members – and the National Assembly contained only token numbers of opposition parliamentarians. In the truest indicator of what a sham Tunisian politics had become, Ben Ali faced two respected heads of opposition political parties in the 1999 presidential election, and walked away with a victory after an official tally declared that he had captured 99.44 percent of the vote. Any semblance of competitive politics that had quietly struggled to emerge under Bourguiba and had finally burst out into the open during Ben Ali’s first years in power had now been entirely eliminated. The absurd margin of victory of Ben Ali’s reelection was a hallmark of a political system that is completely closed to even token opposition. In effect, Ben Ali had done such a thorough job of getting rid of all political competition, Islamist and otherwise, that he was now staging election theater for no other reason than to demonstrate his complete dominance over Tunisia.

Just as striking as Ben Ali’s evisceration of any independent elements in Tunisia’s political system was his evisceration of any and all traces of Islamism in the country. It was not enough for him to declare Ennahda to be barred from politics; Ben Ali did not want there to be an Ennahda presence in Tunisia in any guise. Aside from the Ennahda members killed in clashes with the army and the police during the initial crackdown, eventually 30,000 Ennahda members were imprisoned by Ben Ali and over 1,000 were exiled. Ennahda was driven completely underground so that a new generation of Tunisi ans had no firsthand experience with political Islam. Unlike in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood was de jure illegal but de facto tolerated,

311 Perkins, 198, 201-02.
Ben Ali did not allow Ennahda to operate in any nebulous gray area. He eliminated any vestige of Islamists from the public sphere, and even warned Western governments about the risk of Islamism and used his anti-Islamist campaign to Tunisia’s advantage.\footnote{Ben Ali consistently played on Western fears of violent and/or unfriendly political Islam to secure foreign aid and assistance, although he was hardly alone. As Eva Bellin writes, “Authoritarian regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Algeria have received Western support, at times in very generous proportions, because of the belief (perhaps mistaken) among Western policymakers that these regimes would be most likely to deliver on Western security concerns, assuring regular oil and gas supplies to the West and containing the Islamist threat.” Bellin, “Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders,” in eds. Marsha Rripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, \textit{Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance} (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 33. Ben Ali was, however, unusually strident in his warnings about the dangers of Islamism and the zeal with which he went after Islamists.}

It is understandable that Ben Ali was hyper-vigilant about Ennahda given the violence that broke out in the early 1990s, with the discovery of plots to assassinate Ben Ali and the burning down of an RCD office in Tunis by Islamists in February 1991. Combined with the Islamist-led violence taking place in neighboring Algeria, Ben Ali had reason to worry, and his concern was shared by large segments of the Tunisian population. In drawing upon societal fears that Ennahda was a violent organization that would use any means necessary in order to gain power, Ben Ali’s program of repression and coercion was not without its support. Ben Ali seized upon Islamist violence of the early 1990s in order to present Ennahda as a grave security threat and used this as a hook to justify repression, torture, imprisonment, and exile of Islamists.

Yet, it was not only the notion of Islamism-as-terrorism that was driving Ben Ali’s behavior throughout the next two decades. The fault line in Tunisian society was not an ethnic one, as Tunisia was and is remarkably homogenous both ethnically and religiously. Rather, the essential divide was an ideological one between Bourguibism and Islamism, and this ideological divide seeped down into basic identity formation as well. Bouguiba’s belief that secularism and Westernization were the only viable paths to constructing a modern Tunisia and a better Tunisia
fundamentally clashed with the Islamist view that secularism (and to a lesser extent Westernization) were the opposite of what was needed to construct an ideal Tunisian state and society. This clash over fundamental principles and over the way in which these principles formed very different versions of Tunisian identity, and not just a simple contest for power, was behind Ben Ali’s program to thoroughly eliminate Islamists from the public sphere.  

Ben Ali’s Fall and the Beginning of the Arab Spring

That Ben Ali did not only make life harder for Ennahda and the Islamists but actively routed them from the country is a crucial point for understanding the dynamics of why Ben Ali was eventually removed from office on January 14, 2011. The lack of an Islamist presence in Tunisia and Ennahda being little more than a specter was important insofar as it shaped the ideological threat perception of the regime and the military once protests broke out. To gain a complete perspective on how the Arab Spring unfolded in Tunisia, it is necessary to appreciate the systematic way in which Ben Ali spent two decades ensured that all remaining actors in the Tunisian political system were thoroughly secular, thoroughly Westernized, and committed to Bourguibism as a fundamental principle of government and as central to the state’s functions.

In December 2010, Ben Ali’s position in Tunisia appeared to be completely secure. As noted earlier, Tunisia was a police state with an extensive internal security force – which, not coincidentally, had been led by Ben Ali before his promotion to vice president by Bourguiba – and it had successfully repressed any organized opposition to Ben Ali’s rule. Ben Ali privileged

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the security apparatus and grew it extensively during his time in power;\textsuperscript{314} according to one estimate, the internal security forces numbered 130,000 in a population of 10.5 million people, giving Tunisia the same number of police officers as France despite being six times less populated.\textsuperscript{315} The possibility of an organized group conspiring to overthrow Ben Ali was minute at best, and previous such plots had been rooted out with relative ease.

Aside from his control of a vast security state, Ben Ali’s political situation, as contrived as it was, added to this aura of permanence. Two million Tunisians were members of the RCD, ensuring that it had an unmatched organizational capacity and an albeit untested ability to mobilize large numbers of people. There was also no real political opposition, as the Islamists were either gone or too far underground to even be noticed while the secular opposition was feckless and dependent on Ben Ali’s good graces.\textsuperscript{316} Internationally, Ben Ali had political support as well, since Tunisia had long been a Western ally due to its links to France and Bourguiba’s thorough program of secular Westernization. In recent years, Ben Ali had positioned Tunisia to be a partner in the “War on Terror” as well with a hardline stance against jihadi groups and Islamists in general. In the ten years following the 9/11 attacks, Tunisia received $126.4 million in U.S. military aid, which was a result not only of Tunisia’s stance on al-Qaida but because Ben Ali fed the narrative of Tunisia providing stability in the region. Tunisia was viewed as a small but integral security partner, and between the combination of complete political control at home and a strong alliance with the West, Ben Ali had no reason to

\textsuperscript{316} As Ellen Lust-Okar has brilliantly noted, one of the main benefits to keeping one set of opponents officially outside the system while allowing another set of opponents to remain is that the legal opponents become too cowed to challenge the regime out of fear of being cast into illegal territory and losing the benefits that come from being the legal opposition. Lust-Okar, Structuring Conflict. In Tunisia’s case, because the Islamists had been locked out of participating in politics or public life, the secular opposition did not want to face a similar fate.
think that his tenure as president would end in any way other than his own death from natural
causes.

Events did not operate in Ben Ali’s favor, however, after Mohamed Bouazizi, a fruit
peddler whose cart was confiscated after Bouazizi was unable to produce a permit and whom
police then beat once he objected, self-immolated on December 17, 2010. Bouazizi’s extreme
act of defiance set off a chain of protests across the country that appeared to be driven largely by
corns over unemployment and patronage-driven corruption in the economy. As the protests
moved beyond the interior of the country and spread to more cities, they included calls for Ben
Ali to step down. Unsurprisingly given the nature of the Tunisian security state, the regime’s
forces responded to these protests with violence that was often fatal, and within ten days of
Bouazizi’s lighting himself on fire, demonstrations broke out in Tunis itself.

Open protests in the capital presented a serious challenge to Ben Ali and the regime, as
the image that Ben Ali had presented to the world was of a prosperous country with deep
connections to the West ruled by a popular and respected leader. Ben Ali pursued a double-
pronged strategy of warning that continued unrest would be dealt with in a harsh manner while
also taking steps to appease protesters by firing regional governors and dispensable cabinet
members. He also resorted to the familiar tactic of blaming foreign interests and alluding to
shadowy conspiracies, and promised to improve the economy by creating hundreds of thousands
of jobs for Tunisia’s unemployed.317 When that didn’t work and Tunisians responded by defying
a government curfew and continuing to demonstrate in the streets while braving state security
forces, Ben Ali gave another televised address in which he did not make any further threats to

317 David D. Kirkpatrick, “Amid Rioting, Tunisia Closes Universities and Schools,” *New York Times*, January 11,
2011, A4.
crack down on demonstrators and instead promised to step down at the end of his term, end
government censorship of the media, and cease to monitor Internet activity. He also referred
to demonstrations as “legitimate and peaceful” for the first time and stated that the government
accepted them, and claimed to have instructed the Interior Minister to cease using live
ammunition on protesters. Ben Ali then promised to set up an independent committee to
investigate the deaths that had occurred, and instead of blaming foreigners for rioting blamed his
advisers for Tunisia’s democracy deficit by misleading him and hiding the real facts from him.
He concluded by promising to work for democracy and pluralism, and exhorted all Tunisians to
come together in order to improve their country.

Ben Ali’s address – which turned out to be his last – was remarkable in a historical sense.
For him to admit mistakes, and to do so only days after giving an angry speech in which he
lash out at those trying to bring him down, was unprecedented. Ben Ali had constructed a
political space in which he was completely unchallenged and had encouraged a public cult of
personality centered on his likeness, and this speech was the functional equivalent of an
earthquake. While trying to blame it on regime functionaries, Ben Ali conceded that he had
fallen short on his past promises to uphold democracy, and he explicitly granted a degree of
legitimacy to the protests against his rule. Even more stunningly, the man who Tunisians all
widely assumed would be president for life publicly declared that he would be stepping down in
three years at the conclusion of his term in office. Viewed in a wider regional context, this too
was unprecedented. Arab presidents had not up until that point resigned or given up power

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willingly, and in the span of less than a month Ben Ali was raising that previously unthinkable possibility. Furthermore, he was doing so despite the absence of a threat from a strong political rival and in the face of disparate and decentralized protests. Given Ben Ali’s control of Tunisia’s political institutions and internal security apparatus, the fact that he was quickly backpedaling when confronted with leaderless street protests and no organized opposition was stunning to observe.

Despite his last ditch effort to remain in office by promising to eventually give it up, 24 hours after his speech Ben Ali was on a plane fleeing the country. After declaring a state of emergency and pledging to hold elections in six months, Ben Ali reportedly ordered the military to fire on protestors who were defying his decree banning gatherings of more than three people, and the army’s refusal to do so and its withdrawal from protecting regime installations signaled the end of Ben Ali’s rule. Unlike other Arab militaries, the Tunisian military was highly institutionalized and independent from the regime. Ben Ali had not relied on the army to guarantee his power, preferring instead to rely on the internal security forces that he had once controlled, and the army was not reliant on the regime for patronage or to protect its economic privileges as it was not integrated into the economy like other Arab militaries. Thus, when Ben Ali asked General Rachid Ammar, the army chief of staff, to crack down on demonstrators, the military did not feel beholden enough to Ben Ali to carry out his order.

The available evidence suggests that the army saw the handwriting on the wall, but was determined not to involve itself in politics beyond pushing Ben Ali out. Indeed, the army had no intention of entangling itself in the inevitable recriminations following Ben Ali’s ouster; Ammar

refused Ben Ali’s command to fire on protestors but also secured the airport from the
demonstrators in the streets in order to ensure Ben Ali’s safe exit from the country. While the
army was willing to do what was necessary to create as secure an environment as possible by
arresting Ali Seriati and other members of Ben Ali’s presidential guard and fighting armed
battles with remnants of the state security forces, it evinced no desire to take power for itself or
to shape the newly emergent political process.321 Ben Ali was gone, but the military did not
seem overly concerned with who or what would replace him.

The Tunisian Military’s Embrace of Bourguibism

Trying to assess the thinking and strategy of the Tunisian military in January 2011 as
events in Tunisia were coming to a head is a difficult task, to say the least. Arab militaries are
notoriously opaque and their internal workings are almost entirely hidden from public view, and
the impenetrability of an institution such as the Tunisian military is one of the reasons that the
Arab Spring took nearly all close observers of the region by surprise; after all, the widely held
assumption was that armies would intervene in political disputes in an effort to maintain the
status quo.322 In addition, Tunisian officers have not spoken about their thought process and why
they moved against Ben Ali, and events are still too fresh for there to have been much written on
the subject. A common theory of why the Tunisian military did not move to protect Ben Ali is
that, as noted above, the Tunisian military was uncommonly professional and was not
particularly invested in or beholden to Ben Ali, in addition to the army bearing resentment
toward Ben Ali for his privileging the Interior Ministry’s security forces over the military.

Because the army did not especially care whether or not Ben Ali survived the challenge to his rule and because its own position was never endangered, it had no reason to obey Ben Ali’s orders and ignite a war between itself and Tunisian civilian protestors.  

This is a plausible explanation, and as Ammar and other top generals in the Tunisian army have been almost completely silent about their role and motivations in ushering Ben Ali from power, this theory of events cannot be confirmed beyond a doubt but rings true in every respect. Nonetheless, while it explains why the military did not act to save Ben Ali, it does not explain the military’s extraordinary self-restraint in removing itself from any decision on what to do the day after. Despite the army’s reputation for independence, it was taking a big chance in light of the huge amount of uncertainty that existed. Nobody knew whether Ben Ali’s regime apparatus was going to evaporate once Ben Ali decamped to Saudi Arabia or if it would still control the state; what role the RCD with its 2 million members and lack of any organized party opponents would play in the next phase of Tunisian politics; who, if anyone, was controlling or backing the protestors and whether divisions would emerge in this group; and who actually had the legitimacy under the constitution and with the various political and social constituencies represented in Tunisia to form an interim government. Even granting a professional military that had never involved itself in politics before, the army was not a disinterested party here. Chaos or civil conflict emanating from political uncertainty in the aftermath of Ben Ali’s fall was a distinct possibility, and aside from policing the streets the army evinced no apparent desire to shape the transition in any way or any concern over how it would unfold. In short, the Tunisian

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323 Ibid., 27; Murphy, “The Tunisian Uprising,” 301-02; Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring,” in Comparative Politics 44, no. 2 (January 2012): 127-49.
military was happy to help in spilling the milk, but did not seem to care about who would be holding the mop at the other end.

The answer to this quandary lies in the ideological environment in which the army was operating. It is true that Bourguiba had kept the army at arm’s length out of his belief that it had no place in politics, not even permitting officers to be members of the RCD or other political parties, but the army was still part and parcel of the regime establishment. As such, along with the RCD and regime elites, the army was committed to the secular Westernizing principles of Bourguibism and has been described as being “unquestionably both subservient to, and the promoter of, Bourguibist ideals.”

During the 1980s when Tunisia’s Islamist movement first rose in the form of the MTI, it precipitated angst in the military as fears spread that the army would be infiltrated by Islamic fundamentalists. This was seen not primarily as a practical or logistical problem, but a problem of the proper values for the military and the state to espouse. A burgeoning Islamist cultural movement, with its rejection of secularism and direct challenge to Bourguibist principles, was viewed by the military as a threat to Bourguibism as the central tenet of Tunisian identity. As the military was the national institution that most thoroughly embraced the Bourguibist ideal, the rise of Islamism was an existential concern. An expert on the Tunisian army writing during this period predicted that Bourguibism as an ideology “will be maintained in perfect harmony by a military that will act forcefully against violent desacralization of Bourguibist values,” and that the speed with which the military would return to the barracks after a theoretical coup or

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325 Ibid., 28-30.
revolution would be inversely proportional to the level of social disintegration. In other words, Bourguism was held in such high esteem by the Tunisian military that protecting it in the event of chaos or a direct challenge would be the army’s highest priority. More contemporaneously, Ammar is anecdotally reported to enjoy Scotch and jest about being a bad Muslim, which is not in itself proof of attachment to Bourguibism but a good indicator that the military’s current leanings have not strayed from where they were.

In examining the military’s decision making on January 14, 2011, this ideological background is vitally important. The army as an institution was not committed to Ben Ali himself or even to Ben Ali’s regime, but it was highly committed to the regime ideology of Bourguibism. Its loyalty was to a principle rather than to a person or a government. In this way it resembled the Turkish military, which has historically presented itself as the guardian of Kemalism. It stands to reason that in a situation such as it faced in January 2011, the Tunisian military would be interested in safeguarding Bourguibism’s privileged place in the institutions of the state as its main priority along with ensuring that the state itself did not collapse. This latter concern explains why Ammar and the army determined that the time had come to stop protecting Ben Ali, but it is the former concern that explains the army’s actions after Ben Ali was gone.

Ibid., 38.

had so thoroughly penetrated all aspects of Tunisia’s political institutions that all of the remaining political opposition – as slight as it was – was committed to and organized around Bourguibist principles. At the time of Ben Ali’s removal, the most prominent opposition party was the Progressive Democratic Party (Parti Démocrate Progressiste), a center left party founded in 1983 that was one of three legally recognized opposition parties and that had been the most consistently vocal critic of the Ben Ali regime’s authoritarian abuses. Despite its grievances with Ben Ali, the PDP was firmly ensconced in the Bourguibist consensus of secular Western-oriented government and society, and in fact moved away from its original socialist orientation as the Tunisian state embraced more neoliberal economic policies. Were the PDP to come to power, it posed no threat to Bourguibism’s hegemony.

Similarly, Ettakatol was the second of the legal opposition parties under Ben Ali dating back to its establishment in 1994, and it too was a secular social democratic party. Ettakatol historically advocated for leftwing policies including human rights reform and redistributive economic policies, and like the PDP it was based on the Western secular elite consensus created by Bourguiba. Ettakatol took exception to the substance and implementation of Ben Ali’s policies, but not to the underlying ideology that underpinned the Tunisian state enterprise under Ben Ali.

Finally there was Ettajdid, which was founded in 1983 by dissidents from the Tunisian Communist movement as a socialist party. The party’s leader had run against Ben Ali in the 2009 presidential election, and unlike the PDP and Ettakatol, held seats in the National Assembly. The reason for this was because the PDP and Ettakatol had boycotted and been banned from the 2009 parliamentary elections, and so were viewed more credibly than Ettajdid.
Despite the credibility issue, Ettajdid was also a Bourguibist party, being committed to secularism and having broken away from its Communist roots partly over the issue of hostility to the West. The fact that it held seats in the assembly was itself proof of its embrace of Bourguibism, as non-Bourguibist parties were never allowed to contest parliamentary elections.

More important than which parties were on the scene and poised to fill the vacuum left by Ben Ali’s departure was which parties were not – specifically, Ennahda. Ben Ali’s multi-decade campaign to rid Tunisia of Islamist parties and organizations had been brutally effective, so much so that Ennahda no longer had a meaningful presence in Tunisia. Ennahda had not been involved in the protests that led to Ben Ali’s downfall, and had been operating in exile for twenty years. An entire generation of Tunisians had no experience with or memory of Ennahda, no exposure to Islamist ideas and thinking, and no motif of Ennahda being the primary opposition to Ben Ali. Six months after Ben Ali had been deposed and Ennahda had returned to the country in full campaign mode, Tunisia expert Emma Murphy wrote,

The wildcard is inevitably the Islamist an-Nahda party. Once the most significant, although banned, opposition to Ben Ali’s regime, Nahda was decimated by the former regime and it is difficult to know what vestiges of support it still has, or indeed what organizational capacity…. But no one yet knows whether Ben Ali’s repression has reduced political Islam to the motif of only an older generation, or whether Tunisians are sufficiently personally religious to respond to a renewed call to political arms.\(^{328}\)

Ennahda’s future was viewed as uncertain after months of organizing and openly public activity following two decades of dormancy; at the moment of Ammar’s decision to push out Ben Ali, Ennahda was not even on the radar screen.

The military’s commitment to Bourguibism combined with the perceived absence of a threat to Bourguibism are the key to understanding the army’s willing participation in removing

\(^{328}\) Murphy, “The Tunisian Uprising,” 304.
Ben Ali from power. As Bourguibism was an inclusive-status quo ideology, the military’s threat perception was shaped by its evaluation of the danger to the ideology rather than the danger to the regime, and this tendency was even stronger in Tunisia given the distance between the military and the regime. Irrespective of whether the military’s calculations ultimately turned out to be incorrect – and, in fact, Ennahda did emerge as a political force and the largest vote getter following elections – the point that is germane to this analysis is that the military did not perceive any threat to Bourguibism from Ennahda or other political Islamists at the time that the decision was made to remove Ben Ali from power. In looking around at Tunisia’s political scene and the social makeup of the demonstrations, the parties and organizations that were calling for Ben Ali to step down, and the entirely secular character of the protests, the army was reasonable in assuming that whomever replaced Ben Ali would come from the same Bourguibist background and be just as committed to keeping Tunisia on a secular and Westernizing path.

Adding to this is the fact that it was not at all clear that it would be a democratically elected government that replaced Ben Ali. Like the rest of the region, Tunisia did not have a history of democratic elections, and the economic genesis of the protests suggested that Tunisians might be satisfied with a more competent government to the exclusion of a more democratic one. Unemployment in Tunisia was 14%, 45% of college graduates were without jobs, the average household was spending 36% of its budget on home food consumption (compared to 7% in the United States), and economic corruption was rife and driven by Ben Ali’s family. While the protests had expanded to cover all manner of complaints about the government and demonstrators were actively calling for democracy, Tunisia’s history and the

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329 See Chapter 2 for a complete discussion of ideological types and their differing effects on regime behavior.
330 Schraeder and Redissi, 7-9.
difficulty of installing and maintaining democratic governance pointed to the likelihood that Tunisia would be led either by another member of Ben Ali’s circle or a group of competent Bourguibist technocrats. Indeed, Ben Ali was initially replaced by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi, and then one day later the constitutional court ruled that the speaker of the National Assembly, Fouad Mebazza, should assume the presidency until elections could be held. The army and ordinary Tunisians might have been forgiven for assuming that elections would either never be held, or would be tightly controlled by the RCD, of which Ghannouchi and Mebazza were both members.

In direct contrast to the early 1990s, when Ben Ali perceived an existential threat to Bourguibism from Ennahda’s brand of Islamism - which surprisingly to the regime proved to be a challenge following elections – the military did not perceive any threat to Bourguibism at the crucial decision making point in 2011. If Ben Ali’s fall did not mean the fall of the regime itself, then Bourguibism would be safe. Alternatively, if Ben Ali’s removal from office was going to herald elections and a newly democratic Tunisia, all of the parties on the scene and the entire tenor of the street protests pointed to a similarly inclined Bourguibist government. In evaluating the outstanding ideological threats, it was logical for the army to assume that no ideological conflict existed and that putting Ben Ali on a plane and spiriting him out of the country would be the best outcome for the state without endangering the state’s hegemonic ideology.

While “absence of ideological conflict” will not show up on a list of explanations for the Jasmine Revolution or Ben Ali’s political demise, and indeed is not a direct cause of the protests or the predicament in which Ben Ali found himself, without this factor there are legitimate reasons to doubt whether the military would have behaved in the manner that it did. A perceived
absence of ideological conflict on the part of the key decision makers allowed Ben Ali to be
replaced so rapidly and relatively painlessly. Ben Ali’s faithful adherence to Bourguibism and
his moves to protect it led to his own downfall, as had more of an Islamist opposition been
evident in Tunisia in January 2011, the military would have faced a far more difficult decision on
Ben Ali’s future. A complete understanding of how a preliminary democratic transition
succeeded in Tunisia after failing decades earlier under similarly favorable structural conditions
is only arrived at after looking at the ideological angle and how it affected decision making
mechanics.
Conclusion

Fitting Ideological Conflict Into The Picture

In looking at ideological conflict’s statistical significance in relation to democratic governance and the evidence presented in the case studies of Turkey and Tunisia, there should be little question remaining that ideological conflict is an important causal variable in the study of democratic transitions. Linz’s contention notwithstanding, authoritarian states with developed political ideologies do exist, and much as ideology is accepted as playing a critical role in political development in totalitarian states, the same holds true for ideological authoritarian states. Ideology is used to justify state policies and constrains state action, and this includes decisions to open up the political system to competition. An ideological authoritarian regime that has made the determination to go down a transitional path is still going to seek to protect its homegrown ideology against challengers, and it will weigh the decision to pursue a course of democratization against the prospects of its ideology surviving a transition. I have argued that ideological states will seek to protect the ideology’s survival above protecting their own continuation in power, and the case studies presented in this dissertation support that contention. The Kemalist founders of Turkey were prepared to step down after losing elections, and in fact did so, but only once they had assured themselves that Kemalism would survive their own loss of political power. Similarly, Ben Ali took significant steps toward a democratic transition in Tunisia on the assumption that Bourguibism would be upheld by any potential challengers, but immediately pulled back once Islamism emerged as the most powerful threat to Bourguibism’s ideological hegemony. Two decades after Ben Ali’s fateful decision, the Tunisian military
removed Ben Ali from power only because it calculated that Tunisia’s political scene was uniformly Bourguibist, and that Ben Ali’s demise would not mean the demise of Bourguibism itself.

In each case, ideological considerations were paramount in the decision-making process surrounding a potential transition, and the cases suggest ways that ideological conflict can be integrated into the existing literature and paradigms on democratic transitions. For the structural school that focuses on conditions that make democracy more likely or less likely, ideological conflict should be viewed as a structural condition whose presence is a barrier to a successful transition and that needs to be overcome depending on the type of ideological state in which it exists. Integrating ideological conflict into this approach is a fairly easy task once a definition of an ideological state has been adopted, and in this way ideology can be viewed structurally in the same way as economic and social variables. It allows for a macro-oriented approach to studying democratic transitions, and it can also go a long way toward partially explaining structural democratic deficits in a region like the Middle East.

The concept of ideological conflict as a constraint on transitions can also fit in with the rationalist agency school, but it requires revising the specific path that O’Donnell and Schmitter have laid out and more importantly conceiving of regime interests in a broader way. Rather than viewing the hardliner-softliner regime elite split as one solely centered on the best way to preserve a regime’s power, ideological conflict should be integrated into that approach. An ideological regime might calculate that liberalization and a political opening is the best path to take and the softliners might emerge victorious over the hardliners, but according to the theory I have laid out, this will only take place if the softliners are satisfied that the regime ideology will
survive this process. Material interests are not the only consideration driving the deliberations and the maneuvering between different regime factions, since ideological conflict will actually precede contemplation of other factors. This requires a thin view of rationality rather than a thick view of rationality, as guaranteeing the survival of an ideology is difficult to conceive in a narrower model of rational choice. Nevertheless, ideological conflict can still be incorporated into this school of thought, and as seen in the Turkey case – where the Turkish regime literally sought guarantees of fealty to Kemalism as embodied in party platforms before legalizing opposition partied – it should be viewed as a factor in the elite bargaining process.

Democracy Promotion and the Arab Spring

In light of the theory developed and the research presented in this dissertation, there are a number of suggestive lessons for U.S. democracy promotion efforts. The ways in which the U.S. attempts to assist states in transitioning to democracy have been critiqued across a wide spectrum of grievances, so this will add to the general cacophony bashing democracy promotion’s ineffectiveness but do so in a limited and hopefully constructive manner. Overall, this dissertation suggests that democracy promotion cannot be effective in all situations, including those in which underlying socioeconomic conditions are favorable. Before time, money, and effort are sunk into democracy assistance programs, there first needs to be an assessment of whether ideological conflict exists or has the potential to exist between the regime in question and the leading opposition parties, and whether it is the type of conflict that will prove fatal to a

successful transition. As the case studies of Turkey and Tunisia have demonstrated, battles over a political ideology that occupies a central place in a state’s raison d’être have the capacity to delay, hinder, and even reverse transitions to democracy. When a regime cares more about the ideology’s survival than it does about its own longevity, no amount of positive reinforcement, foreign aid, cajoling, or other carrot-type incentive is going to persuade an authoritarian regime to transfer power to an ideological foe.

Before earmarking any money for democracy promotion in a given country, the U.S. should first ask the following questions:

1) Does the state derive its legitimacy from a hegemonic political ideology that governs and constrains state action?

2) Is that ideology an exclusive ideology and/or a status quo ideology?

3) Does the primary opposition espouse a conflicting ideology?

4) Is the military invested or socialized in the regime’s political ideology, and is it likely to protect that ideology at any cost?

The answers to these questions should determine whether the U.S. pursues a policy of democracy promotion or not. If the state in question is an ideological state with an exclusive status-quo ideology, then a peaceful democratic transition is unlikely under any circumstances. If the state has an inclusive-status quo or exclusive-revolutionary ideology, the next step is to look at whether the political opposition has a conflicting ideology. Finally, the military must be taken into account given the role it has played in ensuring the regime’s survival in authoritarian states. In some cases the military and the regime will be inseparable, and in others the military will be a more independent institution, but the crucial factor is not the military’s allegiance to the regime
itself, but its allegiance to the regime ideology. Without such an inquiry, the U.S. is destined to chase impossible and unlikely outcomes.

To be sure, the subset of states to which such an inquiry will be relevant is not a large one, but it is not an insignificant one either. Furthermore, the region of the globe currently most susceptible to political ideology is the Middle East, which also happens to be the region in which U.S. democracy promotion efforts are heaviest and perceived to be the most crucial. To take a prominent example, the U.S. policy community has for decades engaged in a debate over whether to push for regime change in Iran and whether democracy promotion efforts can dislodge the Iranian regime. Yet, arguments for trying to spread democracy to Iran often discount the ideological angle entirely or maintain that Iran’s ideology is no longer relevant in the face of democratic values. Without delving into an extended discussion of politics in Iran, both of these positions dangerously ignore the fact that the Iranian revolutionary regime was established on the basis of a hegemonic ideology and that it derives its legitimacy from the maintenance of that ideology. Assuming that any combination of factors would entice the regime to peacefully give up power to a non-clerical government is, based on the theory expounded in this dissertation, a dubious line of thinking. Ideology should not be cast aside as little more than a functional concern rather than the actual first-order concern that it often constitutes.

In addition, the role that ideology will play in potential transitions in other Arab Spring states is still unsettled. The most interesting case is Egypt, where the army confounded initial

expectations by not only removing from office and arresting Hosni Mubarak but also allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to assume power following its victories in the first post-Mubarak era parliamentary and presidential elections. While the Egyptian regime - which was in many ways inseparable from the military and whose pre-Arab Spring presidents had all been military men – had long suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood for ostensibly ideological reasons, the picture was not quite so simple. The Brotherhood was officially banned but unofficially tolerated and allowed to run “independent” candidates for parliament, and the evidence suggests that the Egyptian regime was no longer an ideological state in a real sense after Anwar Sadat’s reorientation of Egypt’s direction away from Nasserism.334 Sadat and Mubarak had both accommodated the Muslim Brotherhood to one degree or another, and so by allowing the organization and its acolytes to take over the reins of power, the Egyptian military was following the path of rhetorically supporting secular nationalism while displaying lax standards for its protection when its interests lay in looking the other way.

Following the recent removal and arrest of President Mohamed Morsi and arrests of other prominent Muslim Brotherhood leaders, the question is whether the military is now acting due to an ideological imperative or to simply protect its material interests and privileged position. Given that the army allowed the Brotherhood into government in the first place and has not moved against more radical Salafi groups in conjunction with its crackdown on the Brotherhood, the answer is likely the latter. That does not, however, forestall the possibility that the uptick in nationalist rhetoric and the campaign to repress the Brotherhood and its supporters will reinvigorate a true belief in Nasserism and a virulent secular nationalism that is opposed to

Islamism in any form. If this turns out to be the case, it will only further complicate the already dim prospects for democracy in Egypt.

The upshot is that democracy promotion in the Arab world will often bump up against regimes with varying levels of ideological commitment. At times this commitment is genuine, as in Tunisia; at others it is murky, as in Egypt. An assumption that ideology poses no barriers across the region is bound to cause bad policy outcomes and wasted efforts. Views of the Arab Spring that started off so optimistic have become less rosy as the new government in Tunisia has struggled to be effective, Egypt has gone through two rounds of revolutions/military coups, Syria has degenerated into all-out civil war, and nascent protest movements have been quashed in Bahrain and Kuwait. Perhaps the initial optimism should have been tempered for a variety of reasons, not least among them the prospect of ideological conflict gumming up the works.

**Areas for Further Research**

This dissertation has advanced a theory of how ideological conflict affects democratic transitions in states whose regimes are deeply committed to a set of hegemonic first order ideological principles. Clearly ideology has a strong effect on political development in such states, influencing the possibility and timing of a transition to a new political system. There are implications from this finding for other areas of political science, with two immediately evident.

First, there is opportunity for deep qualitative research on how states rely on ideology across a spectrum of varying degrees of commitment. Turkey and Tunisia are in some sense low hanging ideological fruit as the regimes’ fealty to their respective ideologies was firm beyond a doubt, making them ideal case studies for examining how ideological states behave when faced
with existential ideological challenges. The logical follow-up question is how states with lesser ideological commitments deal with ideological competitors. When do states resort to ideological arguments out of a genuine desire to protect ideology, and when do they resort to ideological arguments as an excuse to protect more material interests? Secular autocracies in the Middle East reflexively fall back on the reliable tactic of sowing fears of Islamist bogeyman with the sole objective of cementing their hold on power, but it is conceivable that in some of these cases there exists a legitimate concern over ideological erosion.

Relatedly, there is a question whether political ideology for these purposes should be viewed as unfolding along a spectrum at all or as a dichotomous variable. For parsimony’s sake, I have treated it in Chapter 2 as dichotomous in order to aid in coding regimes and eliminate any false positive cases, but further theorizing on this issue would be helpful. Similar to the debate on whether democracy can exist in various shades or must be an all-or-nothing category, the answer to this question will impact how regimes are classified, our understanding of their behavior, and how fine-grained a degree of measurement and classification is desirable.

Second, an obvious area in which to extend this research is the study of political behavior in democracies. Ideological authoritarian regimes act to protect their political ideologies when those ideologies are threatened, but they have the advantage of having a larger toolbox of available measures than democracies do, as coercive measures and outright repression are features of authoritarian governance. How do ideological democracies respond when their political ideologies face a domestic or internal ideological rival? As it is the nature of

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democracies to let all willing players into the political system, do ideological democracies resign themselves to the possibility of their ideology being replaced, or do they resort to legal or extra-legal measures to keep ideological threats on the periphery?

Israel is intriguing as a potential case with which to explore these questions. Israel has been a democracy since its founding, and the state was constructed on the tenets of Zionism with every government in Israel’s history rock solid in its commitment to upholding Zionist principles and goals. In practice, Israel has allowed non-Zionist elements into the political system and permitted them to compete for power, as attested to by the presence of non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Arab parties in the Knesset. Yet these parties have never presented a genuine threat to Zionism given their low vote totals and relative political impotence, and indeed there has been an unspoken rule that Israeli ruling coalitions will never rely on Arab seats to get over the 61 seat threshold required to form a government. Can an ideological democracy like Israel contemplate an actual threat to the ruling ideology, and how would it deal with such an eventuality? Have other ideological democracies faced such a situation? Israel is an example of a democracy where ideology affects state behavior in obvious ways, and a good case in which to analyze ideology’s impact on political institutions outside the confines of a transition.

A Methodological Thought

Ideology is undoubtedly an important force in world politics with the capability of shaping all manner of outcomes. For a number of reasons, some of which are clearer than others, comparative politics has gone through a recent period in which ideology has been relegated to the back burner in favor of other causal explanations for events. This is likely partially due to
the field’s quantitative turn, as ideology is a difficult variable to operationalize, quantify, and measure; partially due to a preference for rational choice explanations that have little room for ideological considerations, and no room when a thick rationality approach is utilized; and partially because the age of ideology is allegedly behind us and ideological and cultural explanations have sometimes been seen as harkening back to a less sophisticated era of political science. My hope is that this dissertation can in some small measure contribute to a renewed focus on ideology in the subfield, and demonstrate that ideology and its effects can be studied in a rigorous manner quantitatively and qualitatively. Ideological explanations do not have to be culturally deterministic, and they often reveal a richer picture of political decision making than is otherwise immediately evident. Much as international relations has embraced the power of ideas in constructivist theory, comparative politics would do well to rediscover the same knowledge.

**Summing Up**

In Turkey in the immediate post-WWII period and in Tunisia during the first heady days of the Arab Spring, the perception of an ideologically compatible opposition made a transition possible under what were in many respects favorable conditions. Both cases present a number of clear lessons for democratic transitions and show that ideological states can overcome legacies of ideological conflict. Ideology is a powerful variable but one that is fluid, and the fact that it is malleable means that its power should not be underestimated but neither should its flexibility. Looking at the larger picture, there are four important wide-lense observations to make about the intersection of ideology and political development.
Ideology is not confined to totalitarian states. If there is one point that I hope this dissertation has established, it is that Linz was incorrect to make such a stark distinction between the ways that ideology matters in totalitarian states and the ways that it matters in authoritarian states. There is no question that ideology is an all-encompassing force that is wielded effectively by totalitarian regimes, but that does not mean that ideology is not deeply relevant in some authoritarian states as well. Linz’s attempt to create a dichotomy of ideology versus mentality and impose it upon entire classes of states does not correspond to what we observe in the real world, and there is little question that authoritarian regimes can and do adopt political ideologies that shape their legitimacy and guide their actions. Kemalism was just as impactful to Turkey’s political and societal development as Marxism was to the Soviet Union’s, and the notion that ideology stops at the boundaries of totalitarianism needs to be rethought.

Ideology is a material interest. Ideological political actors take their ideological commitments very seriously. The fact that ideology cannot be quantified or measured should not negate its importance. Just as it is taken for granted that regime actors seek to protect their economic interests and their own personal security when negotiating a transition, the same should be said for their ideological interests. There is no other way, for instance, to interpret Atatürk looking for explicit commitments from opposition parties that they will uphold Kemalism or base their platforms on certain Kemalist principles, and it explains Ben Ali’s about-face on Ennahda’s Islamists when faced with their show of strength. Treating ideology as an illusory factor that only serves to mask other interests risks missing what truly motivates a certain class of political actors. Until ideological commitments are assessed and a regime’s
concerns over ideological conflict are assuaged, seeking to work out agreements over other issues of process and substance will fall flat.

**Ideology matters, until it doesn’t.** As important as protecting the regime ideology might be to the elites ruling ideological states, the case studies here demonstrate that regime concerns regarding ideological conflict can be easily and almost instantly overcome. Ideological conflict is not a barrier that takes years to dismantle, and even though its effects can linger for decades following a transition, once a regime perceives that it no longer exists a transition can take place in a rapid manner. Ideological regimes that have made the decision to start moving toward a transition seem eager to be convinced that the opposition will maintain the regime ideology following a transfer of power. This might be because ideological regimes, having invested so much time and effort into spreading their ideological principles throughout society and making sure that they permeate state institutions, are overly confident of their favored ideology’s strength. If this theory is correct, regime elites may assume that serious political actors will all eventually come around to their own ideological position, and are thus willing to accept assurances of similar ideological commitment at face value. It does not escape notice that in Turkey, the regime miscalculated in its pre-transition assessment that the Democrat Party was sufficiently committed to Kemalism to never attempt to erode it, and that in both Tunisia cases the regime entirely misread the strength of its sole ideological opponent. While ideological conflict is an enormous obstacle to a transition while it exists, regimes seem to be remarkably lax in doing their due diligence to make sure that their perceptions of ideological compatibility are indeed correct. When a regime’s ideological threat persuasion is assuaged, ideological conflict ceases to be a problem almost immediately.
Once a transition happens, all bets are off. This is an obvious point, but one that needs emphasizing. It is easy to enforce ideological hegemony before a transition, but impossible to do so after a transition without resorting to drastic interventions in the normal political process, such as military coups or counter-revolutions. Before its transition, Turkey was able to experiment with legalizing opposition parties and then immediately shutting them down once their commitment to Kemalism became suspect. After the CHP had ceded power, however, the DP openly flouted its adherence to Kemalism for nearly half a decade before the military intervened and returned power to a sufficiently Kemalist CHP government. Policing ideological adherence after a transition is so difficult that it can lead to years of unstable politics as the lingering effects of ideological conflict hamper open and democratic political development, as Turkey demonstrates. Observing what is taking place today in Tunisia, the tension between what Ennahda promised before it assumed the reins of power in terms of upholding secularism and what its constituents now demand in terms of more openly Islamist policies is another example of this point. Ennahda is finding it difficult to navigate the narrow straits of satisfying multiple constituencies, but the old regime elites have little power to hold Ennahda to its vow of respecting Bourguibist secularism if it chooses to discard its promises. Ideological hegemony depends on the power of the state to maintain, and it is a hard task defending it without a ruling political apparatus.

In conclusion, political science’s understanding of the democratic transition process is incomplete without a fuller view of ideology and how conflict over ideological principles negatively impacts the transition process. While this is a variable that only impacts a subset of states, it is an important one given its causal weight and the mechanisms by which it asserts
itself, and it accounts for the timing of transitions in a range of cases. It also helps to explain why some states went down a transitional path but ultimately did not transition, and so contributes to our understanding of authoritarian persistence as well. Ideology may be difficult to identify and to measure, but this difficulty does not mean that it should be relegated to the sidelines when seeking to explain democratic transitions.

After taking a rigorous approach to studying ideology and its effects, it is evident that the literature on democratic transitions is incomplete. Ideological conflict can indeed act as a structural constraint on transitions, but this only becomes clear following a reclassification of authoritarian regimes that allows them to be categorized as ideological. While Linz’s work on totalitarian regimes is indispensable, it has had a negative side effect of removing ideology from the transitions discussion as most transitions take place in authoritarian states. In thinking about ideology in a broader manner and allowing for the fact that many different types of states adopt governing ideologies that legitimate and constrain their range of action, we can understand a wider range of behavior and account for more outcomes in the area of political transitions. Ideology is a powerful force in motivating state behavior under certain conditions, and the political science literature on democratic transitions has suffered for its neglect of this crucial variable. The study of political development would be well served by reintegrating ideology into approaching how we view regimes and their prospects for change.
Appendix A

Explanation and sources for the data and variables used in Table 1 and the OLS regression in Table 2:

Democracy: A dummy variable for whether or not a country is a democracy for each country/year observation. In order to determine a country’s status, Polity scores for each country from the Polity IV dataset were used, with -10 to 6 coded as non-democratic and 7 to 10 coded as democratic.

Conflict: A dummy variable assessing whether or not ideological conflict exists in a given country for each country/year observation. After determining that a state is an ideological one, a state is coded as having ideological conflict if the primary opposition espouses a conflicting ideology (see Chapter 2 for an extensive discussion of these categories).

GDP2005: A country’s gross domestic product per capita in 2005 dollars for each country/year observation. GDP data comes from Penn World Tables version 6.3 and can be found at https://pwt.sas.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt63/pwt63_form.php

Pop: A country’s population for each country/year observation. GDP data comes from Penn World Tables version 6.3

Urban: A country’s level of urbanization as measured by the percentage of the population living in urban areas for each country/year observation. Urbanization data comes from the World Bank and can be found at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS
**Ethnic**: A country’s level of ethnic heterogeneity for each country/year observation. Ethnic fractionalization data comes from the Alesina dataset and can be found with the Fractionalization publication at [http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html](http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html)

**Language**: A country’s level of linguistic heterogeneity for each country/year observation. Linguistic fractionalization data comes from the Alesina dataset and can be found with the Fractionalization publication at [http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html](http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html)

**Relig**: A country’s level of religious heterogeneity for each country/year observation. Religious fractionalization data comes from the Alesina dataset and can be found with the Fractionalization publication at [http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html](http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/romain.wacziarg/papersum.html)

**Notes**

The countries in Table 1 having undergone democratic transitions are defined by having achieved a Polity score of 7 or higher and maintained a score of 7 or higher for at least five consecutive years. Two countries that fit this criteria were left out of the 39 countries included in Table 1: Botswana, which reached a 7 in 1969 and has never fallen below that number but was rated a 6 when it achieved independence in 1966; and Ukraine, which reached a 7 in 1994 and maintained it for six years before falling one point to 6 but was also rated a 6 when it achieved independence in 1991. Since both countries started their existence only one point below becoming a full democracy, and as there is some ambiguity whether a Polity score of 6 rather than 7 constitutes a democracy (see note Chapter 2, note 33), I elected to leave them off the list of transitions.
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