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# Sun, Sea, Sand and Security

A Theory-Developing Study on the Relation Between  
Tourism and Lack of Political Liberalization

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# Abstract

This bachelor thesis main ambition is to develop a theoretical foundation that can provide plausible explanations to the relation between tourism and lack of political liberalization in less-developed and middle-income countries.

The thesis identifies a number of unique features of tourism as a sociological and commercial phenomena. This conceptualization of tourism paves the way for the formulation of a set of hypotheses which serve as the foundation of the theory. As a final stage in the thesis the hypotheses will be illustrated through a smaller case-study of Tunisia and the links found between tourism and political authoritarianism in this country.

The general assessment of the theory that is presented in this study is that tourism can act as an efficient agent of socio-cultural change, creating more complex and diverse structures of interest in the society concerned. This raises the probability of social disruption and political instability as expectations of social and participatory demands are not met. On this point the interests of *host* and *home* country elites converge into one; political stability. Through different strategies the elite groups then work to keep the socio-political situation stable, which leaves the country concerned in a state of upheld authoritarianism

*Key words:* Tourism, Political Stability, Third World, Authoritarianism, Socio-cultural development

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# 1 Introduction

In the novel "Platform" by french author, poet and rap artist Michel Houellebecq, the narrator and his girlfriend who is working in the tourism industry plots a scheme to put out the fire of desire in the heart of the Westerners through organizing sex tourism in the Third World. The novel split the world of the literati in two. One half dismissed the novel as a simple attempt of provocation, the other declared it as brilliant in its cynicism as it was sharp in its critique of West European modernity. In any case, judging from the strong reactions, it was obvious that the author had touched upon subjects and issues deeply controversial. Houellebecq placed the phenomenon of tourism in a socio-cultural context, and one of the many things the novel tries to communicate to its reader is that tourism is political in its every aspect. This is brutally illustrated by the blowing up of the crown jewel among the sex resorts by Islamic fundamentalists in the end of the novel.

With the same ambition, though from a different perspective, this thesis seeks to throw light on the relatively overlooked political and socio-cultural nature and implications of mass-tourism to the less developed and middle-income countries. With the aim of contributing to a better understanding of the indirect relation between tourism and democratic deficits, this thesis primary goal is to lay the fundament for a theory helping to explain this phenomena.

## 1.1 Statement of Purpose

Our intuition tells us that socio-economic change and development in a country burdened with authoritarianism will increase the likelihood of a process of political liberalization. To be democratic, many believe, a country also needs to be 'modern'. In the academic community there is also some recognition of a certain correlation between socio-cultural and economic development and political liberalization. Though, in the present world it seems like reality is catching up with theory. Countries such as China, Cuba, or for that matter Tunisia seem to challenge this notion.

The intellectual point of departure in this thesis is the observation that some less developed and middle-income countries highly dependent on tourism have been subjects of relatively rapid socio-economic change, partly as a consequence of the prominence of the tourism industry in the country. These countries have not experienced a political liberalization even remotely commensurate with change and liberalization in the economic and social spheres. This lack of political change

is puzzling and awakes the ambition to examine the role played by tourism as an indirect brake on political liberalization.

In a wider perspective the purpose of this thesis is to emphasize the inevitably political nature of tourism and to argue its relation to lack of political liberalization. Since no adequate theoretical models where the relation between tourism and remained authoritarianism is taken into account as a key explanatory factor exist, the more concrete aim and purpose of the thesis is to develop such a theoretical foundation. The main question guiding this thesis, that is to be analysed and answered within the frame of the developed theoretical model is formulated as follows:

*“ What makes tourism development change socio-cultural relations in tourism-dependent countries without it taking on a political dimension? ”*

## 1.2 Method and Material

In all aspects, the work with this thesis has been guided by the theory that it seeks to develop. The methodology that is applied then becomes a function of the theory, in the sense that what methodological approach judged to serve the theory best has been chosen. In theory developing studies it is usually better to occupy oneself with few cases of comparison or to focus completely on one case and assemble a large amount of information than to gather less information regarding many cases (Esaiasson et al 2003 p.123). This is one of the reasons why this work wears the research design of the case study. It is important to emphasize that this is a case-study only in second instance and a theory developing study in the first instance. Tunisia, which is the empirical case of concern, is a very good illustration of what the theory seeks to explain. Adding this empirically focused section to the thesis hopefully will provide not only further explanatory backing to the theory, but also life and vitality.

To promote intersubjectivity in this thesis, to make the intellectual paths, choices and considerations easy to follow I have tried to be as explicit as possible in all aspects, especially concerning the theoretical development. Though, perhaps the most efficient way of observing the approach taken in this thesis is by studying the table of contents, which many times is a mirror image of this (Lundquist 1993 p.96). By observing the disposition of the thesis it is easy to notice that the approach of this thesis tries to be eclectic. The perspectives and concepts used in this work originates from different research sources – from social-psychology to IR-related research.

The different material that is used throughout this thesis is pervasively of secondary nature. For the part of the thesis devoted to theory development, highly abstract material from the theoretical sphere is given prominence, while the case-specific parts focusing on explaining the specificity of the tourism industry and

the situation in Tunisia quite naturally rests against material with a more concrete, qualitative substance.

### 1.3 Introduction to Theory and Problem

The theoretical framework developed in this thesis has the ambition to provide some plausible explanations to the phenomena of disparity between social and political change in tourism-dependent countries. The assumption that there exists a specific relation between these two processes of change is a thought expressed by several scholars. This shared dynamic has been described by Mancur Olsen (1963 p.533) as follows: “The economic system, the social system, and the political system are obviously interdependent parts of a single society, and if one part changes quickly, there must also be instability in other parts of the society.” Even though there seems to be some scholarly agreement on a certain correlation between the processes of socio-cultural and political change it is a puzzle that remains unsolved, though many theories and explanations have been presented. The modernization school is perhaps the most well-known of those. The grand days of the modernization school was the 1960’s-1970’s and some of its most well-known spokesmen were Lerner (1958) and Huntington (1968). They assume that specific individual attitudes and societal institutions are essential for development, and that these emerge principally in response to development-related stimuli (Tessler&Hawkins 1979 p.473). Proponents of the modernization school believe that to be democratic and ‘developed’ a society needs to be modern, that is; Western. Today there hardly exist anyone within the academic community that is a clear-cut proponent of the modernization school. The most common and widespread critique of this theory is that it is euro-centric because it equates ‘developed’ with ‘Western’<sup>1</sup>. Even though modernization theory as an independent instrument of analysis today is heavily discredited it still contains some important insights on the macro-level, social-psychological mechanisms at work in a society experiencing rapid change<sup>2</sup>. The theoretical framework suggested in this paper finds inspiration in those parts of the classic modernization theory, but at the same time discards the theory as a whole. The same can be said about the so-called Diffusion Theory. In short and obviously very simplified, diffusion theory seeks to explain processes of democratization, and to a lesser

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<sup>1</sup> In equating ‘developed’ with ‘western’ the theory is criticized for delivering the same recipe for development and progress for all countries. Because of this it fails to acknowledge different countries and societies unique features and different socio-cultural and historical contexts.

<sup>2</sup> Personally, I do not agree with the modernization school of thought in its claim of the universality of the ‘Western’ model. At the same time, I find it hard to argue against the fact that non-liberal or non-democratic societies have to experience some form of change before becoming democratic; be it institutional, behavioral or exogenous factor change.

degree liberalization<sup>3</sup>, as a function of the *spread* of new ideas and innovations. Even though the theory developed in this thesis finds some inspiration in diffusion theory, and although similar concepts such as demonstration effects are used it can not fully encapsulate the phenomenon sought to be explained. While diffusion theory focuses on the spread of values, ideas and inventions with a potentially positive effect on its subject, the theoretical foundation developed here identifies causal mechanisms with an overall negative effect on the concerned country and its population.

The foundational intellectual approaches in the theory borrows heavily from the works of certain scholars and fields of study. The work of Ted Gurr in *Why Men Rebel* (1971) is the work that the theory is most heavily indebted to. Theories and concepts found in the Modernization school of thought have also provided important contributions to the lines of thought found in the theory.

If one is to have a realistic approach to a societal phenomena as complex and multi-dimensional as social and political change it is crucial to bear in mind that what is possible to deliver in terms of explanations are merely theories, hypotheses; *suggestions*. What's more, these suggestions will be heavily influenced by our pre-understanding, the cognitive frame of reference which filters the information we receive and digest. Viewed in this perspective, there is no such thing as a *purely* theory developing study, the assumptions made are to some extent always related to previous knowledge or perceptions of the problem that is to be explained (Esaiasson et al 2003 p.123). The positivist ideal of identifying law-bound mechanisms in the social sciences remains just that; ideals (Lundquist 1993 p.42).

With that said, some optimism might be appropriate. There exists some seminal work on the subject of interest of this thesis. Richter (1992) Sönmez (1998) Hall (1994) Hall & O'Sullivan (1996) are the main contributors to the literature on the relation between tourism and political stability. By finding inspiration and help from this work a cumulative approach to the subject is made possible.

The theory that this thesis formulates tries to illuminate the relation between the tourism industry and the relatively stagnant process of political change in many middle-income countries highly dependent on tourism. It argues that the specific attributes of the tourism industry creates a modernizing situation that is more intense and deep than that caused by other forms of economic development. The specificity of the tourism industry and the socio-cultural effects it gives rise to can be a double-edged sword for regime and elites in middle-income countries. Seen in a short-term perspective tourism is a source of income and benefit for both elite groups and the rest of the population. It can provide jobs, foreign exchange and macro-economical stability, all of which can be identified as key

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<sup>3</sup> Democratization literature in most cases distinguish between the terms 'democratization' and 'liberalization'. The two processes are seen as qualitatively different, where liberalization is seen as an imperfect form of democratization. See Uhlin, 1995 p.21 for a in-depth discussion on the difference of these terms. The same study provides an overview of the most important contributors to the diffusion theory school of thought.

factors of political stability. In the case of countries harbouring authoritarian regimes, political stability translates to remained authoritarianism. But, as the theory this work presents argues, the other side of the sword is the risk of political *instability* that can be identified in a longer perspective. The theory places its focus on this long-term perspective and identifies some socio-cultural effects on the host country and its society that mass-tourism development might have. It is argued that these effects in turn have the potential to ignite sparks of social disruption and as a consequence of this working by causal mechanisms; political instability.

The theory further assumes that this risk of political instability is clearly and well in advance identified by elites in the *host* as well as *home* countries. Both home and host elites have more or less obvious vital interests in maintaining the activities of the tourism industry and on at least one crucial point those interests converge into the interest in political stability. Without political stability there can be next to no tourism industry at all, it is an absolute prerequisite to be able to provide security for the tourists. This stability, the theory argues, is then upheld in more or less direct ways through the identification of this shared interest. This in turn works as the engine behind a situation where socio-cultural change can be both rapid and deep, while the evolution of the political situation is left in a static state.

## 1.4 Disposition

Chapter 1 has been focused on introducing the problem and purpose of this thesis as well as discussing methodological and material-related aspects that come into question when outlining the scope and character of this study. Chapter 2 aims at conceptualizing the tourism phenomenon and identify some vital aspects of the industry's unique features, that in turn motivates the attention on the all too neglected relation between tourism and political stability visavi political instability found in this study. The second chapter will pave the way for chapter number 3, which is dedicated to presenting and discussing the hypotheses that together and in interplay constitutes the theory that this thesis presents. The fourth and last chapter is empirically focused. Through its focus on the case of Tunisia, this chapter will provide the theory presented in the previous chapter with backbone and vitality. Finishing off this chapter and also the thesis as a whole, is some concluding remarks where the discussions and findings of this thesis will be assessed and the main question posed in the first chapter will be answered.



## 2 The Unique Features of Tourism

Tourism as a social and commercial phenomenon is in many respects very specific. The understanding of this uniqueness and what the consequences of the, in the tourism industry inherent traits are, is vital to the understanding of the theoretical framework. The components that contribute to the unique nature of tourism are intrinsically bound to what the theory tries to explain – thus a discussion of the peculiarities of tourism is an important part of this thesis. This thesis is chiefly concerned with what is commonly called *mass tourism* or *packaged-tour travel*. The primary reason for this is that mass-tourism is qualitatively very different from other forms of tourism. First, this is because of the systematically organized constant flow of income-generating tourists that it provides the host country with. Second, it is because the specific organization and infrastructure of mass-tourism will give rise to unique social, economical and cultural effects. Different types of tourism will have different socio-economic effects (Crick 1989 p.313).

The remaining part of this chapter has the ambition to present and discuss the peculiarities and specificities inherent in the tourism phenomena in a systematic way, with respect to its politico-economic as well as socio-cultural aspects. The different factors contributing to the specificity of tourism is discussed under separate rubrics in an attempt to isolate them from each other, even though they in reality very much overlap. This isolation is necessary since it serves the higher purpose of intellectually connecting the specific traits of the tourism industry to the theory, thus enabling a better understanding of it. The chapter starts off with a discussion of the tourism industry's ability to create job opportunities and what this can mean to the country concerned. Second, the importance of the cross-cultural confrontation, the meeting between the tourist and local is thrown light on. The third and last section of this chapter will deal with the relatively high demand elasticity of tourism and, most importantly, relate this to the issue of political stability which as a concept holds a prominent position throughout the different parts and chapters of this thesis.

## 2.1 The Tourism Industry and the ‘Sponge’ Effect

For a wide range of reasons tourism development is generally seen as a venture that suits the southern middle-income or developing countries especially well. At first sight, the most vital ingredients in a successful development of this industry are the natural resources of sun, sea and sand. By utilizing the geographical comparative advantage many southern countries has been given they may attract affluent northerners to spend their holidays, and thus their money, in the countries concerned (Brohman 1996 p.52). From the perspective of the host country, tourism policies aims in first instance at generating economic growth (Hall 1994 p.112). It is seen as a means of achieving an inflow of foreign exchange and investment, an improvement of infrastructure, improving the foreign debt balance and increasing employment possibilities (Hall 1994 p.120). The possibility of the tourism industry to generate job opportunities is perceived as one of the most important potential gains of developing this form of venture. The labor requirements of the tourism industry ‘fits’ well into the demographic and educational situation in many middle-income countries. Since tourism in comparison with other industries requires relatively little specialization of labor, it is seen as a strategy to absorb big parts of the relatively high levels of young and uneducated with low levels of literacy and overall skills (Poirier&Wright 1993 p.159) (Poirier 1995 p.165). Furthermore, emphasis needs to be put on the fact that many young men and women find employment in the industry. These groups are targeted by the, often multinational, companies because they can pay these individuals relatively low wages. The relatively high capacity of the tourism industry to absorb the low-skilled and young men and women from unemployment statistics into work and activity is key to understanding the further development of the theory. From the perspective of the authoritarian state, government and other elite groups the absorption of the young into the workforce is seen as a way of improving macro-economic stability and to lower risks of social disruption, which if left aside could threaten their grip on power. If the young, urbanized and unemployed are provided with a meaningful occupation and activity they also make it less likely for them to engage in potentially subversive, anti-governmental political or religious activities. This thesis argues is that this can be a double-edged sword with the opposite effect than the desired outcome – the policy choice taken to minimize risks of social upheaval and to promote overall economic and political stability can in fact operate as an agent of social and potentially also political change. The employment possibilities is almost exclusively to be found in urban centers, which intensifies urbanization processes, something that in itself can strain social ties as the individual finds herself in new cultural structures and behavioural patterns (Olson 1963 p.535). An extra multiplier working to intensify this process even more especially applies to the tourism industry in its targeting of the young and relatively low skilled. When the young start earning their own money, sometimes even more than the family head, the power base of traditionalism and patriarchal structures starts to erode (de Kadt 1979 p.43). This, in conjunction with other factors presented later on has the

potential to set off a socio-political dynamic that can pose a threat to the governing elites in the host country. The spark may be lit by individuals and movements objecting against the rapid move away from traditional domestic socio-cultural structures or from groups demanding further social and, more important, political change. Either is possible, though the former holds the highest probability to occur if previous research on modernization and social change is taken into account.

## 2.2 Tourism and the Cross-Cultural Confrontation

As noted above, for several reasons there are many different political “edges” of tourism as a social phenomenon and as a commercial activity. The temporary migration of large groups of people that tourism by definition leads to is one (Harrison 1992 p.4). As observed by Crick (1989 p.334): “Tourism is unique as an export industry in that the consumers themselves travel to collect the goods”. This migration in fact creates temporary enclaves of non-compatriots inside the host country. This is a vital fact that needs to be considered while contemplating the lack of dynamics in the political situation of many developing or middle income countries highly dependent on tourism.

For the tourism industry to be able to function not only tourists are needed, but also people that are ready to cater for the tourists needs. Tourism as an activity takes place in a social context, a simple fact that often is forgotten. There are a number of ways of understanding the confrontation between the guest and the host in a sociological sense. They all more or less converge but it is possible to single out and isolate some of these perspectives. Some scholars view the confrontation and the relationships that the industry forms in terms of domination vs. subordination, as a reproduction of colonial patterns of social subjugation that re-invents roles of the master and servant, simply adjusted to modern conditions (Crick 1989 p.322) (Meethan 2004 p.6) (Britton 2004 p.37) . Furthermore, the interaction between host and guest is often seen as an inherently commercializing process that redefines social realities and adapts them to market conditions, leaving little room for anything but conveyance of stereotypes and clichés. On a more general level this confrontation can be analyzed, somewhat controversially, as a confrontation of “modernity” and “traditionalism”, whereas modernity is represented by the Western tourists visiting the less industrialized and more rural, traditional societies. This clash between modern and traditional values and their accompanying life-styles and consumption patterns becomes exceptionally visible in the creation of surfaces of social contact between the tourist and local inhabitant. Global disparities in wealth and consumption is highlighted in a way

described by some as follows: “No printed page, broadcast speech, or propaganda volley can emphasize the inequity in the global distribution of wealth as effectively as tourism can”<sup>4</sup>. The confrontation not only illuminates gaps of affluence in a global perspective, it also displays differences in values and social conventions between cultures. In the beach enclaves of LDC and middle-income country destinations European values ‘reign supreme’, while surrounded largely by a traditional society (Poirier 1995 p.166). With the above factors taken into account it is not hard to imagine that some form of tension could arise. It needs to be pointed out though, that the confrontation does not necessarily have to be of physical character in the sense that a real meeting between guest and host takes place. In fact, there are rather small possibilities of authentic meetings between the tourist and local. The tourist experience is in large parts a delicately tailored experience, it is a traded service and as such it is also subjugated to the logics of the market. As noted above, there is simply little space left for anything but a socially limited role-play, a conveyance of staged personas<sup>5</sup>. It seems plausible to suggest that this could contribute to friction between guest and host. As it will be argued in chapter three, this can happen through mechanisms set at work by the so called ‘demonstration effects’ and ‘rising expectations’ that tourism brings with it.

## 2.3 The High Demand Elasticity of Tourism

Another feature of tourism that adds to its unique character is the high demand elasticity this industry face. This term means the tourists have a high propensity to change their demand for consuming certain tourism services and visiting tourism destinations. To understand the mechanisms behind the high demand elasticity the concept of the ‘destination image’ needs to be discussed.

Images, and in a varying degree also prejudice, play a key role in the tourists perceptions of a destination country. This applies equally well to tourism marketing and promotion (Hall 1994 p.93). The industry and representatives of the destination country (through for example national tourism agencies) seeks to send out signals that have positive connotations to the potential consumers of tourism services, hoping that this will influence their decision on how and where they are going to spend their vacation and thus, their money (de Kadt 1979 p.53). Sönmez (1998 p.437-438) correctly notes that: “Because of the intangible nature of the tourism experience, destinations depend heavily on positive images”. What constitutes a ‘positive image’ naturally will differ from what kind of tourist we are concerned with, i.e the mass-tourist, the backpacker or the ‘cultural’ tourist. Apart

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<sup>4</sup> Quote taken from Crick, Malcolm, 1989. p:317

<sup>5</sup> For a in-depth discussion of the stereotypical communication situation between guest and host see John Urry’s classic “The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies ” 1990, London: Sage

from the *habitus*<sup>6</sup> related influences it is possible to single out at least one basic component of what constitutes a positive image that reasonably applies to most different tourist typologies. This is the perception of a destination as *safe* to visit. The tourist, whether searching relaxation or adventure, will not visit destinations he perceives as unsafe or threatening for life and health (Lea 1996 p.129).

The mediation of positive or negative images is in large part handled by the media but other actors also play key roles (Hall&O'Sullivan 1996 p.107). There are more dimensions to the concept of the destination image than sending out a positive, selling image of a destination to potential tourism consumers. As for example Richter (1992) has shown, tourism can also be used as a political tool for authoritarian regimes seeking international recognition or respectability. Authoritarian regimes identify tourism as a means to present themselves in a more favourable light and better their international standing and reputation. Furthermore, they know that the existence of an authoritarian regime by itself will not deter tourists, but political instability will (Hall 1994 p.83). Another actor that has a strong potential to influence the perception of different destinations is the governments that generates tourist flows. The tourists can be used as a political pawn or a kind of leverage by those governments (Hall&O'Sullivan 1996 p.106). If viewed in this perspective, the control of tourist flows is equal to any economic sanction. It can even be argued that this is a more delicate foreign policy tool in comparison with traditional economic sanctions since it holds the potential to steer economic flows away from a certain country using more implicit methods, such as limiting transportation possibilities to the destination of choice from the home country (Richter 1992 p.37).

Political stability and it's relation to tourism has been briefly referred to in discussions above. Political stability, or for that matter political *instability* as well have several dimensions in their relation to tourism. In this section we are concerned with the role of political stability in relation to the volatility of tourism's relatively high demand elasticity. There are several definitions of political stability and the one opted for in this thesis needs to be quoted at length:

“ Political stability refers to a situation in which conditions and mechanisms of governance and rule are challenged as to their political legitimacy by elements operating from outside of the normal operations of the political system. When challenge occurs from within a political system and the system is able to adapt and change to meet demands on it, it can be said to be stable. When forces for change are unable to be satisfied from within a political system and then use of such non-legitimate activities as protest, violence or even civil war to seek change, then a political system can be described as unstable.”

(Mansfeld,1996,p106)

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<sup>6</sup> The term refers to the french sociologist Pierre Bordieu's habitus concept found in *Distinction: A Critique of the Judgement of Taste* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. The term habitus refers to different social classes need to differentiate between each other through for example consumption and interests, so as to confirm their place and position in society. The choice of what kind of tourism-experience one choose to consume then becomes a modern day class marker.

Some level of political stability is an absolute prerequisite for any form of organized tourist activity (Hall 1994 p.92). In turn, some level of political stability implies a certain level of state or government involvement. As noted above in the discussion on the 'destination image' tourists will not visit destinations characterized by or associated with political instability or any other form of socio-political volatile situation. In this context it is interesting to note that potential tourists tend to be more cautious toward visiting destinations plagued by political turmoil than countries or regions afflicted by natural disasters or other phenomena not created by man (Sönmez 1998 p.416) (Richter 1992 p.36). To keep the tourists safe, and to maintain an *image* of safety and political stability thus becomes a top priority for elites in both host and guest countries.

Another reason for the relatively high demand elasticity of tourism is the high possibility of destination substitution. The development of the tourism industry needs to be understood as intrinsically bound up with the processes of globalization. Mowforth et al (2003 p.20) notes that " Indeed the motor behind global economic change is the need for the growth of capitalism – new opportunities, new markets and, for tourism, new destinations – in other words the imperative for sustained growth and profitability." The growth of capitalism also means increasing competition for individual tourism destinations in attracting the more and more fickle interests of the tourists (Richter 1992 p.36). As John Lea (1988 p.28) rightly puts it: " There is always another poor and warm destination country looking for an entry into the competitive world of international tourism". The tourism industry is closely connected to the global economy in the sense that the industry is correlated with its fluctuations. Tourism is sensitive to global economic changes, such as rising oil prices or recessions in general, and in times of financial hardship the potential tourists will stay home and save their money or substitute one destination for a cheaper or closer one (Brohman 1996 p.56) (Crick 1989 p.315). Visibly, there is tough competition between different countries and destinations in attracting tourists. If we are concerned with the mode of travelling defined above as mass-tourism it becomes fairly obvious that many a Third World country share the same comparative advantage of the four S': Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex. Following Richter's (1992) line of thought a fifth S needs to be added: Security. Security, which in an authoritarian state structure context translates to political stability, is a scarce resource throughout the developing world, but all the same it is necessary for tourism and in the long run for the maintenance of power for the regime and elite groups. What we arrive to then, is the identification of a common interest in political stability for host and guest country elites.

# 3 Hypotheses and Theoretical Assumptions

This third chapter is dedicated to presenting the hypotheses that together form the theoretical framework this thesis has as its most important ambition to develop. The previous chapter sought to conceptualize the tourism phenomena and provide the reader with the necessary background knowledge. Without this background it would be difficult to fully understand and follow the causal mechanisms thought to be at work here. In this chapter three hypotheses that tries to relate tourism, socio-cultural and economic change to the risk of social disruption and, paradoxically, in a long-term perspective political stability are presented and discussed. The chapter is concluded by a summary of the hypotheses which leads to the presentation of the theory in one coherent textual unit. This last section also contains a more detailed discussion on the instruments and levers available to the elite groups when seeking to promote their interest in a politically stable situation.

## 3.1 Socio-Cultural Change

### *Hypothesis 1:*

*“ Tourism development creates a socio-cultural change more rapid than that brought by other forms of economic development. Through rising expectations and demonstration effects – the exposure of new values and behavioral patterns, social aggregate attitudes will arise in reaction to this which may be appealed or appalled by the new life-style on offer ”*

Mass-tourism focused on sun, sea and sand quite naturally tend to be concentrated to specific areas which can provide these essentials. Furthermore, since the industry requires a certain infrastructure to cater for the transportation, lodging and feeding of the tourists those areas generally are of urban character. The ‘pull’ of the opportunities for jobs and a better material life combined with the ‘push’ of poor living conditions and hard work in the rural areas act as the main incentive behind the urbanization process. Urbanization, as one of the core characteristics of the modernization process will *raise the expectations* for welfare and “the pleasures of urban life” of its subject (Gurr 1971 p.97). Though, many times the newly urbanized will not find what he hoped for (Olson 1963 p.534). Many scholars agree that there is a strong element of disintegration inherent in the urbanization process (Huntington 1968 p.59) (Lerner 1958) (Apter 1965). Mobility of this form can also lead to a straining of social ties as one finds oneself

in a new, unfamiliar context (Olson 1963 p.535). This could act to make these parts of the population more susceptible to demonstration effects of different kinds.

Demonstration effects, in this case refers to the exposure of new life-styles, values, behaviours and consumption patterns that the local is confronted with through being part of, or an observer of the tourism industry. These effects have the potential to provoke reactions in the individual and in a longer perspective the social aggregate that either could perceive the new lifestyle as an attractive or a decadent, corrupt alternative lifestyle.

## 3.2 Potential Demand for Socio-Political Change

### *Hypothesis 2:*

*“Through mechanisms of relative deprivation, large parts of society will react and direct its socio-political demands against the ruling power – demanding change and threatening political stability.”*

Tourism development creates economic growth, but the benefits of this growth does not necessarily have to be equally distributed. In fact, the opposite is most often the case in a middle-income country context. The economic gains created by the industry tends to strengthen pre-existing elites (Gray 2000 p.405). Processes of modernization can leave many disappointed behind, individuals that believed they were to take greater part in the benefits and joys of economic development through tourism but instead came to know the sometimes huge discrepancy between expectations and reality. The losers of economic growth are the “nouveaux pauvres” that will feel much more deprived than those who have known nothing else (Olsen 1963 p.533).

This brings us to the concept of *relative deprivation* (RD) which is defined by Gurr (1971 p.24) as the: “[...]... actors perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping.” The last sentence in this quote is vital to the understanding of RD in relation to tourism. It needs to be emphasized: it is a relative concept, the rising expectations that follows with tourism development widens the material horizon of many through rising expectations as well as demonstration effects, and when reality isn’t able to meet the expectations a feeling of deprivation can occur in those individuals. Operating in interplay with the purely physical demonstration effects of tourism the feeling of deprivation reasonably will grow even stronger and a potential for a sense of frustration arise. When the inhabitants of the host country compare their material situation to that of the tourists and see the many times immense discrepancy some form of tension is almost bound to arise.



Though it is a serious oversimplification, understanding this confrontation as having the potential to lead to mainly two opposite social outcomes or reactions will serve as a way of easier understanding the causal mechanisms thought to be at work in this hypothesis.

(1) The tensions created through the commercialized and socio-economically stratified interaction between guest and host will lead to increasing aversion against tourists and the industry as such (Sönmez 1998 p.426). Further down the causal-chain this can result in a rejection of Western, “modern” values and a reappraisal of more traditional socio-cultural values and patterns. Protests and socio-political demands that spring from this reaction will be directed against the ruling power in attempts to challenge its legitimacy. At the same time the tourists and the industry as such will be targeted and pointed out as a corrupt, alien and immoral force that through close links with the ruling power and elites operate in support of those groups. Tourism is thus seen as the external enemy that through the very nature of the industry, the “outsourcing” inherent in it, becomes internalized. As Wahab (1996 p.180) has shown, this has been the case in Egypt where the Luxor bombings in 1997 still seem to have a deterring effect on tourists flows.

The reaction can also be the opposite, leading locals (often the young and urbanized) (2) to adopt the “foreign” values and consumption patterns, in an attempt to distance oneself from the traditional cultural identity prevalent in the society concerned. In purely hypothetical terms the line of thought in this second of two possible alternative social outcomes is that a move towards more modern societal structures will create raised expectations for expanded material welfare and also political rights and civil liberties which eventually will result in a growing feeling of relative deprivation if these expectations does not meet with reality. In terms of theory, this second reaction has the same potential to gain ground as the first one. Though, in this case it is of little concern which of the outcomes has the highest probability of occurring since this hypothesis has as its main ambition to identify a potential causal source of social disruption and in a longer perspective the threat it may pose to political stability in the country concerned.

These two social outcomes obviously can, and in almost all cases will, occur simultaneously with differing degrees of intensity. Furthermore, the interplay between the two potential outcomes can create a situation where the indignation of the proponents of traditional values intensifies as they observe and experience the transformation of traditional identities and institutions within their society. Reactions like this, that bewails the erosion of traditional societal structures and cultural codes, has the potential of materializing into radicalized, organized socio-political or religious opposition (Tessler&Hawkins 1979 p.490). This can act as a serious threat to the political stability sought by government and elite-groups in the host country as well as foreign actors such as multinational tourism companies and tourists home governments.

### 3.3 Identified Need for Political Stability

*Hypothesis 3:*

*“ When the potential of organized demand for socio-political change is present, domestic and foreign elites will feel the need to promote political stability so as to protect their vital interests.”*

The ambition of this third and last hypothesis is to show how and why the tensions that in varying degree exist in authoritarian states highly dependent on tourism are suppressed. By explaining the structural mechanisms and more actor based motives behind this need for political stability we arrive at the final stage in the development of this theory – the full theoretical explanation of the discrepancy between socio-cultural and political change in tourism-dependent countries provided in this thesis. The instruments of suppression with concern to societal tension and socio-political opposition in authoritarian states are, due to the authoritarian capabilities of the government concerned quite vast. They simply do not have to follow the norms and conventions that their democratic counterparts are restrained by. To put it simple, if uncomfortable voices are raised there are no obvious obstacles to putting a gag to those mouths. In relation to the discussion of the political capabilities of authoritarianism and democracy it is important to note that democracy by no means is a prerequisite for successful tourism development. In fact the opposite has often been the case. As Hall & O’Sullivan (1996,p106) rightly puts it: “ [...]... it may well be the case that certain authoritarian states which limit formal opposition to government may provide extremely stable political environments in which tourism may flourish.”

As have been argued so far, the elites in the host country have strong interests in the tourism industry in more or less direct ways. External effects of an expanding tourism sector increases the demand for construction, imports and transportation. These are areas that are traditionally controlled by state elites, who emerged during import-substitution periods, especially in North Africa (Gray 2000 p.405). In authoritarian societies, tourism development many times is elite-driven. This is partly because of the authoritarian structure of the state in those countries. Authoritarian states are not well known for their material distributional policies – those states tend show huge gaps between rich and poor – elites and masses. Furthermore, feudal and colonial-based social structures still today plays a major role in many of those societies. As the previous hypotheses has argued, the specific attributes of tourism and the causal mechanisms they in turn give rise to holds the potential of creating a risk of social disruption which, if left unattended, could result in a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the regime and in the surges of this challenge create a socio-political volatile situation. In challenging the legitimacy of the prevailing social and political order, it follows that this situation also will pose a threat to the interests of the regime and other elites. The most obvious of those interests are that of economic benefits generated

through tourism and the short-term provision of social stability the job opportunities created by tourism give rise to, but there are also less direct factors that might be beneficial to the elites in the country concerned. Using tourism as a way of gaining international recognition could be an important interest for these elites. On a more general level, of course the most obvious interest that ruling powers and elites identify in maintaining political stability is that this keeps them in power.

The interests of elites in the home countries of the tourists are a bit less obvious. Those elite groups, mainly politicians, tour operators and multinational companies identify political stability in the host country as a priority because it lowers the risks that tourists and their business might be exposed to. The main interests of the elites in the home country lies with the safety of the tourists and to protect vital business interests. The political representatives of the people in democratic countries are vote-maximizers and as such they tend to feel a certain responsibility toward protecting their citizens from harm within as well as outside the borders of the home country.

### 3.4 Instruments of Influence for Home and Host Elites

The role of what here is called ‘the home country elites’ in this process needs to be specified. This term is meant to encapsulate those individuals and groups that in one way or the other holds a stake in the well being of the tourists and the infrastructure that surrounds them. Politicians, seen as representatives of the people is perhaps the most important ‘elite’ group in this case. MNC’s in the tourism industry is identified as the other major stake-holder. It can be argued that their role in relation to that of the ruling power and elites of the host country is relatively weak. Admittedly, there is some sense to this argument but what needs to be taken into account here is the potential power of influence held by the home country elites. If they saw it in their interest to do so they could, to an indefinite degree, influence the political situation in the host country through a set of strategies all to some extent related to tourism. If we chose to look at tourism simply in terms of financial flows between countries, companies and other actors it becomes clear that tourism actually can be used as a body of sanctions. If viewed in this perspective, one of the strongest links of tourism to the field of International Political Economy becomes visible. Hall (1996 p.62) notes that “ Since the Second World War tourism has become an important component of international diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives.” As one of the biggest industries of the world, sometimes even claimed to be *the* biggest, it is understandable that tourism by its sheer economic importance has become an integral part of many countries foreign policies. Redirection of tourism flows can be used as a political instrument or sanction to get different messages across. A ban on compatriots travel to a certain country can be interpreted as a not so subtle

way of showing disapproval in terms of ideology or *realpolitik*- related issues. The American prohibition on travelling to Cuba is a striking example of this. The encouragement of travel between the former state socialist countries as a symbolic notion of communist solidarity was in substance the same policy of practising ideology through tourism (Hall 1994 p.60). Sönmez (1998 p.433) rightly claims that: “[...]... governments can and do exert political pressure through tourism and use it as a promotional vehicle to convey a positive image or as a sanction against others.” Many developed countries to a large extent own or control infrastructure and means of transportation such as airlines and airports, thus giving them the power to redirect or stop traffic to a specific destination (Richter 1992 p.37). Another lever to pull for the government is the issuing of travel warnings, so called *DON'T GO* warnings, provided for countries judged to be potentially dangerous to visit. Taking the USA as an example, one can identify a clear political dimension in the issuing of those warnings. Countries like Israel, Egypt and Mexico seem to require a much higher level of socio-political volatility before a warning is issued than countries that the US are less kindly disposed towards (Mowforth et al 2003 p.253-254).

Reasonably, the power or potential of influence this political tool gives home governments of tourists *could* be used as a way of practising “positive” pressure, trying to influence authoritarian countries to move in a politically liberalizing direction. Instead, political stability through authoritarianism implicitly is favoured. This is manifested in the relative silence about tourist-dependent countries respect for human rights and political liberties. Examples of this are Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt as well as Mexico and many African countries. Perhaps the relative silence is because authoritarian and less democratic regimes have a wider set of abilities in promoting political stability than majority-ruled societies where opposition is allowed and rule of law is generally respected. When the home governments of tourists chose this pragmatic “quiet” policy they contribute to the phenomena this thesis seeks to provide explanations for: the discrepancy between socio-cultural and political change in many destination countries. If the assumptions, insights and arguments the above hypotheses have presented are to be summed up into one coherent textual unit which would serve as the final stage in the development of our theory it could be formulated as follows:

*“Tourism development acts as an efficient agent of social change and, more indirect as an agent of political stagnation. Because political stability is identified as a key factor in tourism development by both host and guest country elites, through different strategies they will contribute to maintaining a political status quo. This leaves the country concerned in a situation where socio-cultural and economic change can be both rapid and deep while the political situation remains unchanged; authoritarian.”*

## 4 Tourism, Social Change and Political Stability in Tunisia

Tunisia of today is regarded as the most 'liberal' of all Arab-Muslim-countries. In a comparative perspective with their Muslim brethren Tunisia has adopted progressive social laws, for example granting female citizens the right to divorce. When the country gained independence from France in 1956 the new, francophone rulers and elites were strongly determined to modernize the country and after the fall of anti-colonialist President Habib Bourguiba and the seizing of power by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 1987 the country also sought to restore and deepen ties with Europe and the West, especially France. This elite-driven modernization has continued to this day. Tourism has been an integral part of this strategy of opening up the economy and expanding education while preserving structures of power. This strategy has been called *al-infitah*, the open-door policy. This last chapter will relate the hypotheses presented in chapter three to the Tunisian case, to anchor the theory in an empirical context and illustrate its applicability to a tourism-dependent, middle-income country like Tunisia.

### 4.1 The Relation Between Tourism and Social Change in Tunisia

#### *Hypothesis 1:*

*“ Tourism development creates a socio-cultural change more rapid than that brought by other forms of economic development. Through rising expectations and demonstration effects – the exposure of new values and behavioral patterns, social aggregate attitudes will arise in reaction to this which may be appealed or appalled by the new life-style on offer ”*

Tourism development in Tunisia is largely a phenomenon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1958 Tunisia only had a small amount of hotels situated in the capital, Tunis, and some others scattered among the larger cities (Huit 1979 p.286). During the late 1960's and 1970's, at the same time when ISI policies were pursued, tourism started to be seen as a possible aspect of economic development. This is key to understanding the integral part played by tourism development in the processes of social and economic change that has taken place in Tunisia since the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tourism was part of a bigger strategy to modernize the country in both material and psychological terms. At an early stage the Tunisian tourism development was geared towards mass-leisure; the sun, beach and relaxation

(Poirier 1995 p.158). Tunisia sought to present itself as a European, Mediterranean destination rather than an Arab, North African destination. This was done mainly for two reasons. First, it was a strategy to take up competition for the relatively affluent European middle-class family tourists with the other Mediterranean resorts. Second, and of course strongly connected with the first reason, 'different' and 'exotic' easily translates into "scary" and 'frightening'(Gray 2000 p.399). As much as it is possible, a European destination image has been understood by the state, elite groups and other policymakers as more stable in its potential to attract tourists than an Arabic, North African destination image. As Poirier (1995 p.162) puts it: "It would take very little to shake the confidence level of a target population already burdened by prejudices and somewhat skeptical about personal security in the arab world." The desire for the surrounding world to perceive Tunisia more as a Mediterranean country should be understood within a broader historical context as a result of the French colonial policy in the country. The former colonial power laid the fundament for a basic but relatively solid educational infrastructure. This educatory system created the francophone elites that in time would rise against the colonial power and demand independence; in itself a very 'modern' project. The same elites were the ones who set out to modernize the country, which in this case clearly meant a move towards a Western, secular social model, and eventually more and more so the corresponding economic model.

The focus on the European leisure market is illustrated by the direct flights to the major cities of Europe from the Jerba and Monastir airports (Gray 2000 p.397). In the initials stage of tourism in Tunisia french tourists were the largest national group utilizing the resorts, thus confirming the historical economic and social ties with the former colonial power France (Poirier 1995 p.158).

The dynamics of the social interaction between tourism and host society in Tunisia to a large extent follows the model presented in hypothesis 1. Increased industrialization and economic development will inevitably start a process of urbanization which in itself will give rise to several other socio-economic and cultural effects. For Tunisia, a major part of the industrialization has meant a focus on export-oriented consumer goods such as textiles and olive oil and of course the expansion of the tourism sector. This industrialization has also come to mean a skewed development where the urban areas and the coastline has received most of the investments, job opportunities and other financial efforts while the interior of the country has been relatively neglected (Poirier&Wright 1993 p.160). The urban-rural gap becomes crushingly evident if dressed in numbers. Figures from 2001 gave that the interior of the country received 4 % of the factories, 14.8 % of total investments, and 10.9 % of the created employment (White 2001 p.117).

The policy of economic liberalization, the *infatih*, not only included efforts to open up the economy for foreign investment, it also meant a considerable raising of spending on education. Rising levels of education among a population is likely to raise its expectations for a better life and if the expectations are not met by reality a social reaction of some form is bound to arise. Connected with the concept of rising expectations (RE) is that of the power of demonstration effects

(DE). In the case of Tunisia DE is present in predominately two forms that both can be related to tourism and its role in the infitah. Tourism development meant a strengthening of preexisting elites, but also the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs concentrated around the tourism industry directly gaining power in society through their increasingly important economic position (de Kadt 1979 p.49) (Smaoui 1979 p.109). The consumption patterns and lifestyles of these new, urbanized elite groups can be sharply contrasting with more traditional ways of life. Groups of the population that have raised their expectations for a better material life might feel deprived when confronted with these “winners” of the new society. The most intense mediator of DE is probably the tourists themselves. Because of geographical proximity and historical ties the absolute majority of tourists visiting Tunisia are Europeans. The resorts in Tunisia can be understood as enclaves, small islands where ‘European’ values reign supreme. Poirier & Wright (1993,p162) notes that: “ Common sights in the West and elsewhere, such as scantily clad visitors on beaches, and open affection between men and women, offend many Tunisians”. There is not only a discrepancy of values at work here but also one of consumption patterns. Seeing the relative affluence of the tourists on visit also has the potential of evoking feelings of relative deprivation among many Tunisians if they compare their own material standards to those of the tourists. The aggregate socio-economic change that the infitah meant for Tunisia started to erode long-standing attitudes and behavioural patterns, while others was left largely unaffected (Tessler&Hawkins 1979 p.478). In any case the rapid changes have made many Tunisians more susceptible to new value-related influences through mechanisms of diffusion. This combined with sometimes disrespectful behaviour of tourists with concern to religious or traditional issues fuels the cause of the Islamist movement *an-nahda*, which in turn leads the Ben Ali regime to increase repression, thereby further taunting Tunisia's human rights record (Poirier 1995 p.167).

## 4.2 Potentials for Political Change

### *Hypothesis 2:*

*“ Through mechanisms of relative deprivation, large parts of society will react and direct its socio-political demands against the ruling power – demanding change and threatening political stability.”*

When Tunisia embarked upon a journey of economic liberalization in the late 1970's many were those who regained hope of a starting process of political change in tandem with the socio-economic opening. Even though the economy opened up, national education was boosted and the working and middle-classes grew considerably it was not followed by a political change towards a less authoritarian rule. Instead, on 7 november 1987 Bourguiba was ousted from

power by the military general Ben Ali. The new ruler promised to enhance political liberties and participation to a degree that was commensurate with the country's relatively advanced social development and "political maturity" (Erdle 2004 p.207). The political liberalization promised by Ben Ali has in fact not occurred, though the development since 1987 has not lacked change and dynamics. Since the coup d'état in 1987 the country has experienced short periods of political liberalization which shortly after have been followed by determined repression against any political opposition.

Tourism development in Tunisia needs to be understood as a next to completely top-driven process. As noted before, the state or government authorities needs to be involved on at least some level if there is to be a functioning tourism industry in a country (Hallreferens). In Tunisia, as is the case in many middle-income countries, the state structures tend to be patrimonial and nepotistic. This increases risks of strong ties between state and business elites. Gray (2000 p.405) notes that: "Although tourism can pose longer-term threats to traditional social structures in the host state, one of the reasons that it has been chosen as a path to economic growth and development is because it is not threatening to the political elites that implement or support it." This assessment is telling for the Tunisian case, although what Gray fails to reflect upon is the threat inherent in the changing of social structures itself and the power-related trade off situation this gives rise to for the elites group.

The development of tourism infrastructure and industry in the country has indeed meant an improved position for pre-existing elites, but if looked upon in the wider context of the infitah it has also meant the emergence of a new entrepreneurial class of elites. To cushion the long-term social impacts of tourism the tourists themselves are isolated in enclaves with few or none opportunities for contact between the tourists and locals. It seems plausible to believe that the confrontation of secular European values and more traditional, Islamic societal structures and behavioral patterns will give rise to some kind of friction. In Tunisia, this friction to a large extent has its roots in value-related issues, but these take a more tangible shape as the different life-styles are confronted with each other. This is illustrated by the competition for water between the hotel complexes and resorts and the society surrounding these enclaves. In a semi-arid country with a big agricultural sector like Tunisia, water is as scarce as valuable. In the Sahel region the average daily per capita consumption of water is around 60 litres, for the residents in the hotel complexes of this region it is around 300 litres. When local inhabitants see hotel owners filling up their swimming pools while the supply for other parts of the city is sporadically cut off, tensions are bound to rise (Poirier&Wright 1993 p.161). This, combined with the newly found wealth of the selected few in the urbanized business and entrepreneurial elites runs a high risk of provoking feelings of relative deprivation in many local inhabitants that are less well off. The demonstration effects of foreign visitors with concern to values and consumption patterns have had as a result a disturbing sense of frustration among the poor when opportunities for satisfying newly awaken desires have been rare (Huit 1979 p.293). This sense of frustration can be materialised into more organized forms of opposition. To pose a more serious political threat to state



elites and authorities it is probable that these feelings need to be backed and utilized by some elite group. In Tunisia, the group with potential capability to absorb feelings of RD and transform these into a subversive movement that could pose a real threat to the regime and its allied elite groups is the Islamist movement, the an-nahda. The subversive potential of the Islamist movement has since long been identified by the regime. For the elections of 1989 the Islamists, now under the name of the Renaissance Party sensed a breakthrough, inspired by the landslide victory of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The regime would not grant the Islamist party legal status, knowing the Islamists to be their only serious rival (Erdle 2004 p.211). Another moral boost for the Islamists was the Gulf War in 1990 which stirred popular discontent among the public which would prove instrumental to the an-nahda, that could ride the wave of anti-Western feelings that the first invasion of Iraq gave rise to in the Arab 'street' (Hamdi 1998 p.71). Tunisia also felt the drastic economic effects that came with a partly Arab destination image in times of war and instability in the Middle East. During the Gulf War tourism receipts dropped by 64 per cent, although it eventually recovered (Poirier&Wright 1993 p.154). The regime knew the only real threat to their power at that time was the Islamists, that had widened its potential recruiting base as a direct consequence of the infitah. The 'losers' of the modernizing processes set in motion in the early post-independence years had produced a growing number of "nouveaux pauvres" that were especially prone to join radical movements. The main arena for its recruitment base was the urban landscape, the suburbs and university campuses. In roughly two years time the regime had crushed the Islamists by harrassing the members, disturbing its meetings and imprisoning its leaders (referens). When done with the Islamists Ben Ali instead turned against the secular opposition, independent journalists and human rights activists (Erdle 2004 p.211). Tunisia of today is perhaps more than ever a repressive police state where no opposition is tolerated. The regime has chosen a path of repression to maintain the stability needed to remain an attractive alternative to investors and tourists (White 2001 p.80). The long term priority and policy of the regime clearly is, as Steffen Erdle puts it (2004 p.211): "[...]...stabilization and modernization, not liberalization and democratization."

### 4.3 Elite Identification of Political Stability

Hypothesis 3:

*"When the potential of organized demand for socio-political change is present, domestic and foreign elites will feel the need to promote political stability so as to protect their vital interests."*

In chapter 2, the relatively high demand elasticity of tourism is discussed. There it is argued that because of several different factors the consumer demand for tourism tend to be especially volatile and that this intensifies the competition

between destination countries. In the scramble for Third World destinations the ultimate comparative advantage is not one of sand, sea sun or sex, but instead security. To be able to provide security for the tourists is an absolute necessity for the destination country. In the case of Tunisia the links between the repressive but politically stable environment and tourism becomes evident when the industry is placed in the broader context of the *infatih*. As Interior minister Abdallah Kallel proclaimed in 1992:” We do not have petrol, we have sun. And the sun needs security.”<sup>7</sup> Of course other sectors of the economy related to the *infatih* such as the export-oriented textile factories of the coastal regions also needs a certain degree of security and political stability but the tourists, because of the fact that they themselves travel to pick up the goods becomes extra vulnerable (Crick 1989 p.334). Furthermore, it is not so much the actual, real security of the tourists as much as the perceived security. The consequences of an ‘Arab’ destination image has been felt by the whole Maghreb area following terrorist attacks or times of political instability in bordering or remotely related countries. In other words, the demand elasticity of tourism works by mechanisms of ‘guilt by association’. This has probably been a source of constant headache for the ‘Westernised’ elite in Tunisia. The isolation of tourists in resorts and hotel complexes, the enclaves, in part have been meant to physically separate them from the society surrounding them, so as to cushion and minimize the social impact their presence might have on it (Gray 2000 p.405). Much in the same way the isolation works to keep the locals out of the small ‘islands of the West’ where a totally different standard of living and consumption level are observed than in the society outside the enclaves.

There is a strong element of demonstration in the tourism sector in Tunisia, but less if any of the communication. This lack of real communication and authentic, non-commercialized meetings between guest and host provides further fuel to Islamists who criticize the Westernization of Tunisian society (Poirier 1995 p.167).

As noted before, the *infatih* should be understood as a top-driven process, carried out on a macro-scale by state authorities with the help and backing of a francophone elite with deep ties to Europe. In essence it has been a process with many parallels to Ataturk’s “modernization from above” in Turkey (White 2001 p.41). A top-driven modernization process is naturally easier to implement in a state governed through authoritarian structures than in a country with more participatory, democratic structures. With our without authoritarian structures, Tunisia has a history and tradition of strong state presence in implementing and upholding policies (Hamdi 1998 p.122). Even though the economic liberalization that started with the *infatih* has meant a bigger presence of private initiatives in the economy, the state still controls strategic sectors such as public infrastructure and still accounts for about 60% of gross fixed investment (Erdle 2004 p.212). The fact that the state and elites closely linked to the regime have maintained a

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in White, Gregory, 2001. ” A Comparative Political Economy of Tunisia and Morocco” State University of New York Press: New York.

decisive grip on domestic financial activities in spite of economic liberalization have enabled them to closely monitor the development of this area and try their best to isolate potential diffusion, or 'spill-over' of liberal policies. The still large input of state investment and the deep ties between the regime and expanding business sectors have been important factors in the ability of the regime to hinder the infitah taking on a political dimension.

Socio-economical change and an improved educational system, both direct effects of the Tunisian infitah policy helped create a more complex society, that in turn raised the expectations and demands of large segments of the population. The more clear it became that the state system could not fully provide for the new demands and interests, the more prone the 'losers' of the infitah became to be attracted by radical movements and ideas promising change.

In a post 9/11 world, perhaps paradoxically, the Arab image of a country can be both a liability and a possibility for authoritarian regimes. A liability because the intensified focus on the democracy and human rights deficit in 'rogue' Muslim states have made international recognition and respect harder to attain, and at the same time a possibility because the war on terror provides many regime leaders with carte blanche with concern to home affairs and domestic opposition (Erdle 2004 p.227). In Tunisia today, all opposition are labelled as either 'Islamist' or 'communist'.

For the member states of the European Union, the stability of the Muslim North African states on its southern flank cannot be overestimated (White 2001 p.43). Because of Tunisia's geographical proximity to Southern Europe, the constant migration pressure, financial interests and more overlooked, the 'islands' of tourists inside the country, security becomes a top priority also for external, foreign elites. With the current logic of policymaking, it seems long term goals such as a democratic development and raised absolute levels of wealth and health are clearly subordinate to short-term strategic priorities such as socio-political stability, which in crude language translates to democratic stagnation.

The external elites in question here are firstly actors with financial interests in the country, for example in the export-oriented textile industry or for that matter in the tourism industry. Second, but more important are the external political 'elites', politicians and policymakers in the European countries. The interest in political stability and security in Tunisia held by foreign political elites have several sources and a complete discussion of these is out of the scope of this thesis. The historical context of the region and remained semi-dependent links with the former colonial power France are important parts of the puzzle, but in this study the attention is turned to the role played by tourism in promoting stability over political liberalization. Tourism per definition takes place outside the borders of the home country, but in the same time works to establish small islands of compatriots in this foreign region or country, thus making it a direct field of responsibility for state authorities and politicians in the home country of the tourists when formulating foreign policy. Following the discussion in hypothesis no. 3 on tourism as an economic sanction one could easily see the possibilities of influence available for the E.U member states, especially if one takes Tunisia's status as a semi-dependent 'non-member member' of the E.U into

account. The potential for promoting a democratic development in Tunisia as well as other parts of the Maghreb is extensive but because of lack of political will short-term interests takes prominence over longer term goals and priorities. Thus, short-term security wins over long-term stability and Tunisia is left in a state of authoritarianism.

## 4.4 Concluding Remarks

The first and foremost purpose of this thesis has been to develop a theoretical foundation that acknowledges the importance of tourism as an agent of upheld authoritarianism in countries highly dependent on this industry. With help from the theory the core question of this thesis was to be answered: “What makes tourism development change socio-cultural relations in tourism-dependent countries without it taking on a political dimension?” The first part of the thesis tried to pinpoint the unique features of tourism. This chapter cleared the way for a theory-focused section where plausible theoretical answers to the problem formulated above were elaborated upon. The hypotheses discussed in this chapter focused on the mechanisms behind social disruption and political instability. To simplify, the conclusion of the theoretical chapter is that the risk of political instability that tourism in a long-term perspective more or less directly contribute to give rise to shared and converging interests of host and home country elites. The shared interest in political stability leads host and home elites to use the different levers and methods available to them to prevent social or political volatility. This functions as a brake on processes of political liberalization and leaves the country in a situation where socio-cultural change can be dynamic and deep while the political situation is left in a static state without prospects of change or liberalization.

The last chapter in this thesis has the characteristics of a smaller case-study. Regrettably, though inevitably, the last chapter has a lot to wish in terms of in-depth analysis and at length qualitative assessment. The primary reason for this is the need to economize on the space constraints given for this bachelor thesis, but also the relative lack of appropriate, up to date material on Tunisia has played a role in this. In spite of this, what emerges is an image of a polarized society with many tensions and surfaces of conflict. The modernization from above has created both winners and losers, but in being top-driven it has not redistributed economic and political assets. A growing middle class combined with a consolidation and strengthening of former elites have instead produced a considerable number of ‘*nouveaux pauvres*’, especially prone to be attracted by radical ideas and movements. This makes the risk of political instability present. Generally, the tensions and instability is kept under control by rulers and elites, though sometimes we have witnessed its violent eruption. Examples of this have been seen around the whole Maghreb area. In Tunisia on April 11 2002 an old synagogue was blown up by Islamic terrorists, killing 16 people. Morocco and Egypt also had its share of terrorism challenging the legitimacy of the regime.

Even if the empirical material used in this thesis adds explanatory strength to my theory, this does not mean that it can be applied with success to other empirical contexts. Tunisia is a North-African former colonial subject with a Muslim-Arab socio-cultural heritage. This, among many other factors such as the country's proximity to a strong European regional block and its long time desire to be perceived as a European country, makes Tunisia different from many other countries. The theory that has been developed in this thesis does not make any universal, grandiose claims. On the contrary it is a humble theory in terms of its claims. On the other hand, it should now be clear that tourism has played a major role in the static political situation in Tunisia. This assessment should act as an incentive for future studies testing this theory, both in countries sharing the Tunisian context such as Morocco and Egypt, but also in countries with differing socio-cultural, geographic and economic contexts, for example Cuba or the sub-Saharan African states with a large tourism sector.

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