

Book Review: Competition and
efficiency in the Arab world
Edited by Khalid Sekkat,
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This book, published in 2008, aims at providing an assessment of competition and efficiency in four Arab countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. It is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides a general introduction to the economic status of the four chosen countries focusing on their economic performance, business landscape and likeliness of competition therein. Moreover, it sheds the light on the economic reforms pursued by these countries.

The following chapters begin with a discussion over the major economic developments and reforms which were undertaken in each of these countries. They further continue with an assessment of the manufacturing sector in each country, degree of concentration, degree of imports penetration and the status of competition in the market. Finally, each chapter concludes with an evaluation of the respective competition law regime.

More specifically, Chapter Two deals with Egypt, which begun its privatization programs and reform plans during the 1990's. Among several useful observations on the country's economy, the authors note that 80% of the Egyptian industrial production is from food products, textiles and wearing apparel, chemicals and engineering industries. They assure that specialization and concentration constitute basic features of the Egyptian economy. Finally, they provide an assessment of the Egyptian competition law where they point out several deficiencies.

In Chapter Three concerning Jordan, one again can notice that most of the industries are highly concentrated. However, the authors note that the market power of such concentrations is diminished through a range of governmental policies and high import penetration. Furthermore, they undertook a very interesting questionnaire, submitted to 50 companies, from where it became clear that 52% of the companies surveyed were not aware of the presence of a competition law. Moreover, 90% of those companies indicated that they do not need to go to report to the Competition Directorate any infringements. However,

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the other 10% noted that they either have filed or will file complaints due to copyright infringements. This denotes, according to the authors, lack of awareness among market players of the content of the law and its objectives due to the potential presence of several infringements in the market.

Turning to Chapter Four on the situation in Morocco, it appears that during the 1990's the economy began to open up to global economies through regional and bilateral trade agreements. Its market is highly specialized and concentrated in wearing apparel and food products. It is argued that this might expose the economy to the danger of being dependent on certain industries. The authors continue with the assessment of the Moroccan Competition law. They demonstrate that the competent competition council lacks both the power to undertake investigations on its own initiative and the power to request documents from market players. Eventually, they conclude that there is not effective implementation of competition law in Morocco up-to-day due to the lack of the government's commitment to undertake the necessary market reforms.

The final country considered is Tunisia. As in the previous chapters, a general overview of the developments of the economy and the market structure is first discussed. It appears that Tunisia has exceptionally been achieving several successes with regard to growth rates and the diversification of the economy. Nonetheless, the author assures that it still suffers from '*many inefficient governmental controls on economic activities, lack of competition, immature and imperfect capital markets and poor corporate governance*'.

Ultimately, the concluding chapter recapitulates the aforementioned ones. The data forming the basis for the analysis of the four Arab countries date from up to 2001. Given that this book was published in 2008, one might have expected more updated information that would have given a more precise overview of the current situation in the countries concerned. In addition, it would have been worth mentioning the Aghadir Agreement which was concluded among the four countries under consideration. This agreement deals with Free Trade zones, but includes explicit articles on competition among the four member states. Generally speaking, it was expected that this book provide more updated information and wider coverage of the Arab world rather than being limited to just four countries.