

A young woman wearing a pink headscarf is shown in profile, looking down at a tablet device she is holding. The background is dark, and the light from the tablet illuminates her face and hands. The overall mood is focused and modern.

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UNDER NEW AND OLD SYSTEMS

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Changing Attitudes under New and Old Systems

Carolyn Barnett

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

Young, ambitious entrepreneurs in Tunisia and Jordan don't look very different from one another. They plug in their laptops in similar bright, modern coworking spaces, organize TedX conferences and in-school business plan competitions, and work on a similar array of projects in fields such as gaming, mobile apps, clean technology, and medical devices.

Their countries also look similar at first glance. They have pro-Western business communities focused on the services sector, and their tourism sectors are strong. Both even have a small film industry: the southern Tunisian village of Tatoonine in Tunisia gave the planet in *Star Wars* its iconic look and name; Jordan's Petra featured in *Indiana Jones*, and filmmakers use Wadi Rum as a stand-in for Mars.

Elites in both countries stress their need to invest in their human resources, be-

cause people are the only resources they have. An array of programs has arisen in both countries to help young people learn life and job skills, find appropriate careers, and launch new businesses.

Yet a critical distinction now separates Tunisia and Jordan. One country is seeking to craft a new political order, and the other is trying to preserve an existing one. Tunisia's new government seeks ambitious political and economic reforms under its new government, while in Jordan, political change—or even unrest—seems unlikely in the near future. The difference matters for the goals Tunisia and Jordan are trying to achieve. Even if Tunisia and Jordan look similar now, Tunisia's effort to enlist political change as an engine of economic growth puts it on a different path from Jordan. The differences between their experiences—now and over the next several years—will allow us to ex-

amine how much and in what ways political context matters for the effectiveness of workforce development schemes.

A look at recent and ongoing workforce development efforts in each country reveals that these schemes are intended to produce something fundamentally different in each country.¹ In Tunisia, the democratic transition has allowed workforce development to emerge as a disruptive set of activities that aim to contribute to a broader social transformation. Political transition has given new life to efforts to expand and reform technical and vocational education and training (TVET); it has expanded the space for career guidance and entrepreneurship education to flourish through newly vibrant civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, and international aid; it has brought to

Tunisia still has to tackle the entrenched privileges and patronage within its political and economic system, which drove the revolution.

power a government whose proposed economic reforms would support entrepreneurship and encourage the growth of small and medium enterprises; and it has allowed a coalition of political and social

1. Unless otherwise cited, quotations throughout this report are from interviews conducted by the author in Tunisia in January 2015 and in Jordan in April 2015. When particular factual information from an interview is used, the interview is cited, but other quotations are identified in the text itself by the type of individual who shared his or her opinion. Citations of individuals who are not public figures have been anonymized.

actors to start a dialogue about reforming the country's education system. Tunisia still has to tackle the entrenched privileges and patronage within its political and economic system, which drove the revolution—and which cause some to question whether a revolution occurred at all. But it at least has an opportunity to actually make those changes.

In Jordan, the number of organizations and initiatives tackling workforce development continues to grow. Programs funded or implemented by international institutions or foreign donors, philanthropic activities led by the royal family, and private-sector initiatives increasingly support the country's entrepreneurship scene, career guidance efforts, training and employability programs, and even education reform. But these programs,

along with conversations that accompany them about adjusting young people's expectations and attitudes, occur in a context where privileges and patronage are fundamental to the maintenance of the existing political order. Changing attitudes is difficult when people feel their access to opportunities has not changed, and Jordan's politics frequently stymie the policy development, reform, and strategic economic management that could create more opportunities for Jordanians.

The two countries' efforts to better link education and employment and to promote entrepreneurship are similar technical projects but different political and social projects. Tunisians are working to overcome the legacies of dictatorship and build a new, more democratic system—one that inherently allows people to demand more of the government—while simultaneously carrying out economic reforms that try to alter the state's role in the economy. Jordanians are trying to alter society and economic incentives within a political status quo where too much change too quickly could threaten the political order, and the government therefore faces compelling reasons both to reform and to keep things as they are. While it may look like Tunisia and Jordan are engaged in similar workforce development projects, in reality they are seeking to create very different outcomes. The key uncertainty, for which the coming years will provide an answer, is what those outcomes will actually be.

POLITICS, PATRONAGE, AND WORK

Tunisia and Jordan seem to have a lot in common economically. Tunisia has around 11 million people, and Jordan around 8 million.² Both have per capita incomes in the middling range and economies built more on services than manufacturing or agriculture (figure 1). Both have relatively well-educated populations, but economies that produce predominantly low-skilled job opportunities.³ Both have public sectors that employ a significant share of the working population (a quarter in the case of Tunisia and a third in the case of Jordan), with 10–15 percent unemployment overall and about a third of youth unemployed (figure 2)⁴ Each is, as a result, a major exporter of talented workers to the Gulf states (from Jordan), Europe (from

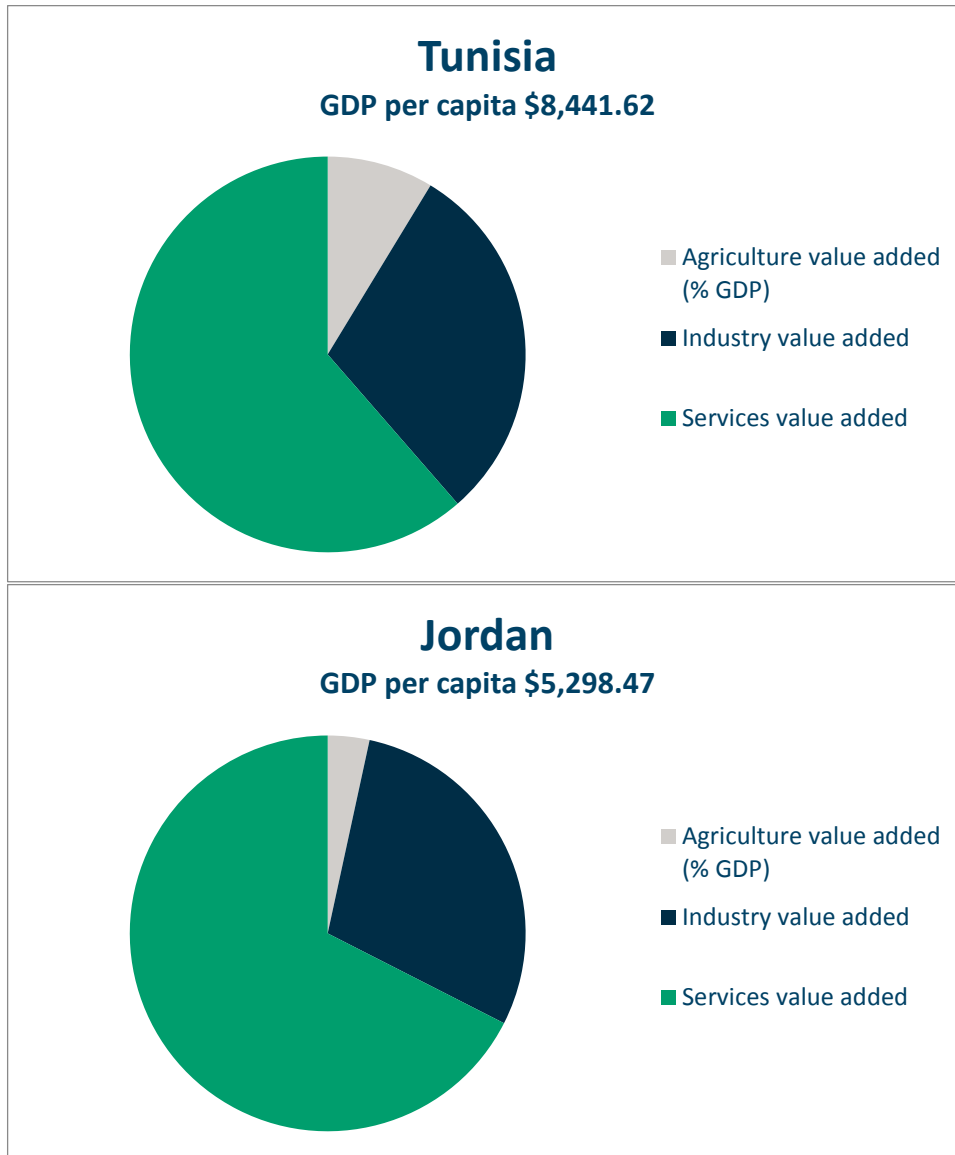
2. Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA World Factbook*, July 2014 estimates, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2119.html#ts>. Figures for Jordan include estimated refugee populations.

3. On Tunisia, see Antonio Nucifora and Bob Rijkers, *The Unfinished Revolution: Bringing Opportunity, Good Jobs and Greater Wealth to All Tunisians* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2014). On Jordan, see Taher Kanaan and May Hanania, "The Disconnect between Education, Job Growth and Employment in Jordan," in *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East*, ed. T. Yousef and N. Dhillon (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 142–65.

4. Data from the International Labour Organization's School to Work Transition Survey from the past five years show that both Tunisia and Jordan have NEET (not in employment, education, or training) rates of over 30 percent among young people aged 15–29. That is, a third of young Tunisians and Jordanians are neither students nor workers, but are simply unoccupied. At the same time, more than half of youth in each country would prefer to work in the public sector—a reaction both to the better job security such positions provide and the fact that families, parents, and potential spouses still see such positions as the most respectable. For NEET data, see European Training Foundation, "Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training in the ETF Partner Countries," March 2014, 3, [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/A0A1BB4102618130C1257E3000329DCA/\\$file/Young%20people%20not%20in%20employment,%20education%20or%20training%20in%20the%20ETF%20partner%20countries.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/A0A1BB4102618130C1257E3000329DCA/$file/Young%20people%20not%20in%20employment,%20education%20or%20training%20in%20the%20ETF%20partner%20countries.pdf). For the preference for public sector employment, see Sami Halabi, "Towards a New Integrated Labor Policy in the Arab World," Khamsoon Policy Paper, March 2015, 7, <http://menapolis.net/publications/files/1428577423pdf1KHAMSOONPOLICYSAMIHALABIENGLISHM1.pdf>, drawing on Gallup World Poll data. Interviews in both Tunisia and Jordan confirmed this preference.

Tunisia), or further afield.⁵ The common economic challenges both countries face have been covered in “endless studies,” as one Jordanian academic lamented. The issues are well understood.

Figure 1: Economic Structures

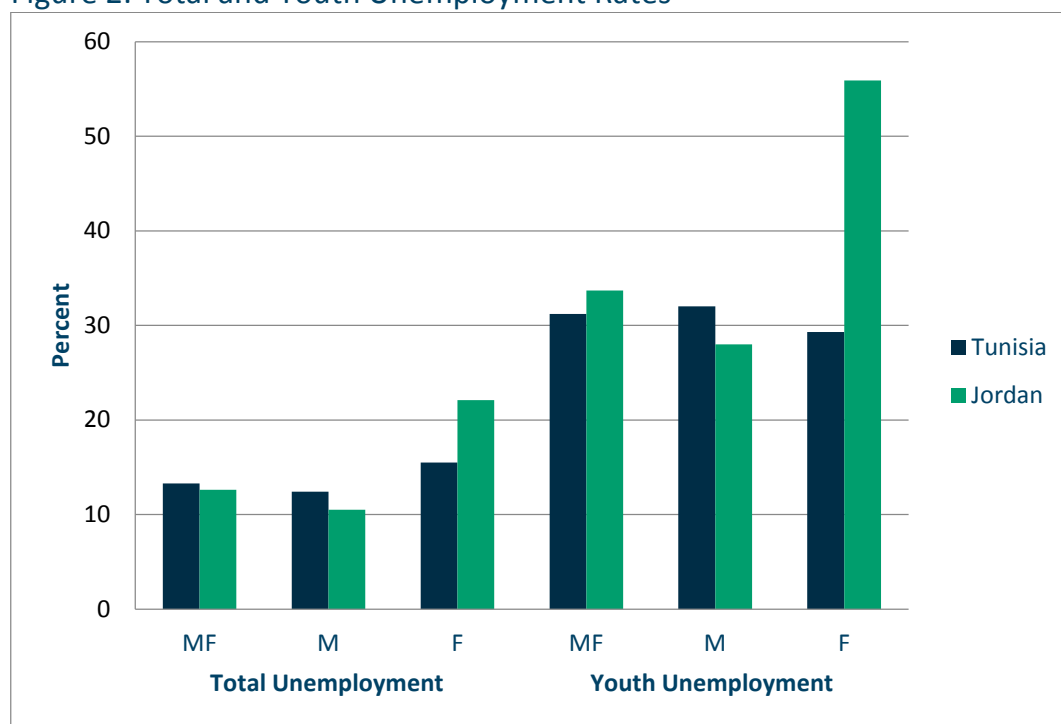


Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) database
Note: GDP is per capita based on purchasing power parity for 2012 in constant 2005 international dollars.

Both countries have also historically had similar leaders—pro-Western, relatively secular self-proclaimed modernizers with strong connections to cosmopolitan business

5. Tunisian economic migrants have traditionally gone predominantly to France, Italy, Germany, and Libya in search of work. Jordanian economic migrants have largely gone to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, although most of the earliest such migrants were Palestinians. Many workers returned to Jordan from the Gulf in the early 1990s in the wake of the Persian Gulf War. Both countries also send a smaller number of emigrants to North America.

Figure 2: Total and Youth Unemployment Rates



Source: ILO, KILM database

Note: Data are for 2013. "Youth Unemployment" indicates rates for ages 15–24. MF indicates rates for all, M indicates male rates, and F indicates female rates.

elites, both at home and abroad—who sought to tackle those challenges in similar ways. They undertook liberalizing structural reforms in the 1980s and 1990s that prompted political opposition, including through violent labor strikes and bread riots. Liberal economic reforms, or at least the veneer of them, remained the name of the game into and throughout the 2000s.⁶ Today, leaders continue to call for similar reforms to improve each country’s competitiveness as a hub in traditional sectors like tourism as well as more innovative fields. For example, Jordan launched Oasis500, a start-up investment company, in 2010, and its leadership has energetically pitched the country as the tech capital of the Middle East since the early 2000s. Tunisian start-ups and investors are looking to catch up, and Tunisian policymakers laud tech innovation as a path forward for the country. In order to address existing challenges and to build the workforces they need for innovative industries, Tunisia and Jordan continue to stress development of their countries’ human resources.

6. Before Ben Ali was ousted, international institutions and observers lauded the “Tunisian economic miracle” (primarily improvement in macroeconomic indicators) that reforms made possible. The policies put in place, however, had “degenerated by the 2000s into a predatory economic system” that enriched the president’s family and close associates. Francesco Cavatorta and Rikke Hostrup Haugbolle, “The End of Authoritarian Rule and the Mythology of Tunisia under Ben Ali,” *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 185.

This effort emphasizes teaching people new skills, educating them in relevant fields, and helping them understand how to transition into the workforce, and it pushes for policies that help to create more and better jobs. All of these things are happening, often with significant assistance from the international community. But people working in these areas consistently express an additional goal: the need to change “mind-sets”—or attitudes and expectations—about work.

Both public discourse and programmatic efforts in Tunisia and Jordan look at poor employment outcomes in part on an individual level. Even as they acknowledge the need for struc-

tural economic reform, many observers and policymakers in both countries also claim that individuals must embrace new attitudes, as a matter of economic necessity, personal morality, or civic duty, whether or not the institutions around them change.

Why are current attitudes seen as problematic, and where did those attitudes come from in the first place? Each country’s political experience in the last century suggests an answer. When people talk about changing mind-sets, they really mean changing how people think about their role in society and the econ-

omy, shifting them away from patterns of patronage, entitlement, and top-down direction and control. They are talking about undoing the work of past politics.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, both the experience of French colonialism and the nature of authoritarianism under Presidents Habib Bourguiba and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali shaped economic attitudes and expectations. Under Bourguiba and Ben Ali, top-down

political control was the norm, and policy often hinged on the whim of the president. Living under an authoritarian system for more than half a century taught many Tunisians that trying something new or pushing for change—whether

economic, social, or political—was prohibited unless expressly permitted. According to many Tunisians, this lesson contributed to a culture that was wary of innovation and risk taking and that instead deferred to authority, expected strong social protection, and sought to preserve existing institutions and privileges rather than generate new ideas, businesses, and systems.⁷

Tunisians currently have one of the lowest self-reported rates of civic participa-

7. For more on the cultural effects of autocracy in Tunisia see Béatrice Hibou, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia*, trans. Andrew Brown (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011).

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tion in the world. Across all measured sectors, an average of less than 1 percent of Tunisians report participating in “work outside of work” or civic engagement of any kind.⁸ The global average is 6.6 percent. In the United States, the average is 9.2 percent. Young people in Tunisia have not historically grown up with the expectation that their individual actions can or should make a difference in their communities.⁹ This is an unsurprising legacy of decades of authoritarianism, under which involvement in any activities outside the purview of the state might be grounds for suspicion and persecution.

The state-led paternalistic development model that both Bourguiba and Ben Ali pursued in Tunisia facilitated corruption of and nepotism under the system (under Ben Ali in particular). Tunisia briefly tried a form of Arab socialism under Bourguiba’s leadership in the 1960s. In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, Tunisia began a modest program of economic liberalization, though much of the economy continued to be led by the state. The reform program expanded in the late 1980s, in part due to conditions set by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank as part of loan packages extended to Tunisia. Despite economic liberalization, features of Arab socialism remained prominent in Tunisia’s economy: large, state-owned enterprises dominated many sectors, a host of legal regulations discouraged foreign direct investment, and around a quarter of employed workers were in the public sector even after structural reforms.¹⁰ Today, Tunisians’ economic views partly depend on whether they live in an area dominated by a state-owned enterprise.¹¹ Tunisians overall continue to support a strong role for the state in regulating and managing the economy, although they differ on the appropriate form and extent of this regulation.¹²

One of the biggest and likely enduring changes in post-revolutionary Tunisia is that people can now speak openly about the dysfunction of this system and the corrupt and undesirable habits it created. In the short term, new freedoms have highlighted these habits and provoked new criticism. As one Tunisian economist said, “After the revolution, nobody wanted to work anymore.” Complaints about Tunisians’ disregard for the value of work showed up in the earliest days after the revolution. Amid pro-

8. Karim Ben Kahla, *Valeurs individuelles et perceptions du travail en Tunisie: Voyage au Coeur de la dynamique de création et de répartitions des richesses en Tunisie*, Institute Arabe des Chefs d’Entreprise (IACE), December 2014, 43, http://www.iace.tn/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Valeurs_individuelles_et_perceptions_du_travail_en_Tunisie_karim-ben-kahla.pdf.

9. Interview with a civil society professional, Tunis, January 2015.

10. “Public sector” here refers both to direct government employment and employment in public enterprises. In 1982, 20 percent of Tunisian workers were employed in the public sector; in 1987, 25 percent were. Mona Said, “Public Sector Employment and Labor Markets in Arab Countries: Recent Developments and Policy Issues,” Economic Research Forum Working Paper no. 9360, Cairo, Egypt, 1996.

11. Chantal E. Berman and Elizabeth R. Nugent, “Defining Political Choices: Tunisia’s Second Democratic Elections from the Ground Up,” Brookings Center for Middle East Policy Analysis Paper no. 38, Washington, DC, May 2015.

12. *Ibid.*, 17.

tests at Kasbah Square in early 2011 calling for deeper political reform after the overthrow of Ben Ali, a counterprotest in another part of Tunis called for “a return to work” in order to show the world that Tunisians are “a civilized people” who fulfill their responsibilities.¹³ In part, this was a response to the behavior of Ben Ali’s family and friends, who were seen as free-loaders relying on connections and favors rather than their own effort or merit.

Meanwhile, the country experienced a moderate drop in labor productivity immediately after the revolution,¹⁴ and the public has debated the causes of and necessary responses to rampant absenteeism,¹⁵ rising school drop-out

rates,¹⁶ and frequent strikes and protests in both public and private workplaces.¹⁷ Many Tunisians who participate in these protests, who are critical of liberal economic policies, or who continue to be excluded from economic opportunities see these trends as a manifestation of the failure of “the revolution” to deliver social justice, and they criticize the country’s political leadership for failing to show tangible results from the political transition.¹⁸ But other Tunisians dismiss the strikes and protests as a failure of work ethic and as a temporary symptom of the emergence from dictatorship. According to this view, once people had some modicum of freedom, they sought to use it any way they could, including through refusing to work.

13. Leyla Dakhli, “A Betrayed Revolution? On the Tunisian Uprising and the Democratic Transition,” *Jadaliyya*, March 5, 2013, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10463/a-betrayed-revolution-on-the-tunisian-uprising-and>.

14. In 2011, labor productivity growth in Tunisia was negative (meaning the contribution of labor productivity to GDP growth declined), and in 2012 and 2013 it returned to pre-2011 growth rates but from a lowered base. Nawel Amrouche, “Labor Productivity in Tunisia: Analysis of Issues and Solutions,” TUNESS, May 2014, http://tuness.org/images/Research_TUNESS_-_Labor_Productivity_-Nawel_1.pdf.

15. While it is difficult to verify alleged rates of absenteeism, Tunisian press outlets and civil society have paid particular attention over the past several years to absenteeism among school teachers, other civil servants, and members of parliament. See for example *La petite corruption: Le danger banalisé* (Tunis: Association Tunisienne des Contrôleurs Publics [ATCP], 2015), http://www.atcp.org.tn/petite_Corruption_Danger_Banalise_ATC_%202015.pdf; Amor Chraïet, “Tunisie: Absentéisme dans les établissements scolaires—Les enseignants font l’école buissonnière,” *All Africa*, January 25, 2015, <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201501250280.html>; Hamza Marzouk, “Tunisie—Enseignement: l’absentéisme frappe nos établissements . . .,” *L’Economiste*, January 30, 2015, [\[senteisme-frappe-nos-etablissements/#sthash.LRkQriYB.dpuf\]\(http://www.leconomistemaghreb.com/2015/03/06/tunisie-arp-absenteisme-retour/\); Nadia Dejoui, “Tunisie—ARP: l’absentéisme est de retour,” *L’Economiste*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.leconomistemaghreb.com/2015/03/06/tunisie-arp-absenteisme-retour/>.](http://www.leconomistemaghreb.com/2015/01/30/tunisie-enseignement-lab-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

16. In each of two recent school years (2011–2012 and 2012–2013), estimates indicate that more than 100,000 pupils dropped out of school in Tunisia as a whole; those figures include over 10 percent of the preparatory (middle school) and secondary population each year, and around 1 percent of the primary school population each year. For additional statistics and an in-depth discussion of the phenomenon of school dropout in Tunisia, see “Al-Inqita’ al-madrasi al-iradi: al-dhahira wa’l-asbab,” *Le Forum Tunsien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (FTDES)*, September 2014, <http://ftdes.net/rapports/descolarisation.pdf>.

17. On specific labor disputes, see for example Heba Saleh, “Strikes and Political Divisions Plague Tunisia Phosphate Industry,” *Financial Times*, February 19, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/a890651a-931a-11e3-8ea7-00144feab7de.html#axzz3UZzflgsm>.

18. See for example Nadia Marzouki and Hamza Heddeb, “Tunisia: Democratic Miracle or Mirage?” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 11, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/06/11/tunisia-democratic-miracle-or-mirage/iakx>.

Moralizing about attitudes toward work and employment has become widespread. In discussions about youth in particular, many policymakers and employers will acknowledge structural challenges while also laying blame on individuals: young people, they say, need to realize that they cannot expect something for nothing,

The perception that some Tunisians “just don’t want to work” contributes to the conviction that education and training need to be overhauled—not just for their own sake, but for the sake of creating a new social as well as political future for the country.

they must lower their expectations and develop a new work ethic. As the Tunisian economics professor put it, “People didn’t know how to be free. They thought it meant they didn’t owe anything to anyone, that they didn’t have any responsibilities.” Some Tunisians perceive the country as dividing not just along socioeconomic or regional lines, but in terms of attitudes related to work. “Tunisia is a two-track country,” one Tunisian entrepreneur said. “50

percent of the people want to work hard, and the other 50 percent just want to be given everything.” The perception that some Tunisians “just don’t want to work” contributes to the conviction that education and training need to be overhauled—not just for their own sake, but for the sake of creating a new social as well as political future for the country.

Jordan

Discussions about youth and work in Jordan feature many of the same complaints—about attitudes, abilities, and ambitions—as those heard in Tunisia, but the ties between politics and economic participation have developed differently in Jordan. In that country, royal patronage and state paternalism have historically played and continue to play a large role in people’s expectations about the economy, work, and social welfare. When the British created the Emirate of Transjordan at the end of World War I, they carved out a space from among former Ottoman provinces in the Levant that had not previously existed as a stand-alone political entity. The Jordanian monarchs they put in place had to build their legitimacy by securing the loyalty of the tribes within their territory, and the historical bargain of loyalty-for-patronage between the Hashemite royal family and various political constituencies (including not only prominent tribes, but also religious and ethnic

minorities, and influential Palestinians) served as the basis for political order in Jordan in the twentieth century.¹⁹

Jordan's monarchy had a conservative orientation in the mid-twentieth century, and it did not undertake the wide-scale nationalization of industries championed by Arab socialist regimes—largely because those sectors barely existed. But the government did take the lead in expanding public services and developing new sectors of the economy, including in transportation and communication, phosphates and fertilizers, electricity, and cement production.²⁰ Growth in these areas helped public-sector employment in Jordan rise from comprising just 5 percent of employment in 1960 to 50 percent in the mid-1970s.²¹ Some studies argue that semiprivate companies should be added to this count, which would raise “total state employment” in the mid-70s above 50 percent.²² In any case, the strength of the Jordanian public sector in key parts of the economy, coupled with the sheer volume of people it employs, has helped to fragment and politically weaken the private sector.

19. It is worth noting that this bargain was not inevitable, nor is tribal loyalty an unshakeable feature of Jordanian politics. See Sean Yom, “Tribal Politics in Contemporary Jordan: The Case of the Hirak Movement,” *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 2 (Spring 2014), 229–47.

20. Curtis R. Ryan, *Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah* (New York: Lynne Reiner, 2002), 115.

21. Ragui Assaad, “The Structure and Evolution of Employment in Jordan,” Economic Research Forum Working Paper no. 674, Giza, Egypt, 7, https://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/rassaad/pdf/Assaad_ERF.pdf.

22. Pete Moore, *Doing Business in the Middle East: Politics and Economic Crisis in Kuwait and Jordan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 105.

Today around one-third of Jordanians who work are employed in the public sector.²³ Most of them are of “East Bank” or non-Palestinian origins, following the implementation in the 1970s of a “Jordanization” policy in public-sector hiring—a response to the threat the government perceived from Palestinians living in Jordan, especially following the Palestine Liberation Organization’s “Black September” uprising against the Hashemite monarchy in 1970–1971.²⁴ Palestinians were barred from most civil service positions beginning in the 1970s (with exceptions for highly skilled technocrats), and by necessity they came to dominate the Jordanian private sector. To this day many in Jordan assume that Palestinian Jordanians are more likely than East Bankers to start a new business or act entrepreneurially, although it is Palestinians and middle- and upper-class East Bankers together who comprise the urban, private-sector economic elite that some argue forms the core of support for the political status quo today.²⁵ East Bank Jordanians, on the other hand, have historically gone predominantly into the public sector.

Perceived problems with Jordanians’ attitudes and expectations about work—they are accused of not wanting to work, lacking initiative, and expecting handouts—are thus tied up with broader po-

23. Assaad, “Structure and Evolution of Employment in Jordan.”

24. This policy involved not only giving preference in hiring to Jordanians demonstrably from East Bank backgrounds, but also the active purging of Palestinians from public sector posts. Katherine Blue Carroll, *Business as Usual? Economic Reform in Jordan* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 110–11.

25. Yom, “Tribal Politics in Contemporary Jordan,” 241.

litical identities. Many East Bank Jordanians see their strength in the public sector as an important source of “native” political power over perceived outsiders, including Palestinians, Iraqis, and now Syrians.²⁶ Some criticisms of existing attitudes toward work are formulated in terms of those identities. One Jordanian university educator, for example, said that he saw Jordanians’ relative lack of entrepreneurial spirit—compared to that of Syrians, Palestinians, and even some in the Gulf—as

Perceived problems with Jordanians’ attitudes and expectations about work—they are accused of not wanting to work, lacking initiative, and expecting handouts—are thus tied up with broader political identities.

deriving from their historical status as nomadic herders rather than urban merchants or coastal pearl divers. The intersection of identity and economic roles in turn shapes how programs are targeted and what change people think is possible—or who they think is impervious to it. A Jordanian policymaker who works on technical and vocational education and training explained that his programs mostly focus on

training women in rural areas because most men in those communities expect they will go into the police or army—traditional occupations for men from East Bank tribes. The perception is that these men are so accustomed to dead-end public sector work that efforts to train them for other paths are largely futile.

Moralizing about work in Jordan also comes from the top of the political system. The palace’s support for a variety of initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, internships, and employability training reflects a sense that promoting new values of work and productivity will act in the interest of social, economic, and political stability. Focusing on individuals is also politically much easier than making deep changes to institutions and policies. If the individual is responsible, the state does not have to be.

26. Curtis Ryan, “We Are All Jordan’ . . . But Who Is We?,” Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), July 13, 2010, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero071310>; Lamis El Muhtaseb, “Jordan’s East Banker—Palestinian Schism,” Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, April 2013, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/746892aacedd3e8fcb1ff7370a77fb67.pdf.

Royal family members talk frequently about the need to build responsibility and citizenship among Jordanians, especially youth. A number of programs in Jordan promote mutually reinforcing values of youth skills, innovation, and citizenship, with a clear orientation toward participation within existing systems and institutions. The King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAJD) and the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) spearhead a number of such efforts.²⁷

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Edraak, the massive open online course (MOOC) initiative launched by the QRF, includes interactive courses on pluralism and human rights as important components of responsible citizenship alongside math and English modules.²⁸ At the launch last July of a new volunteerism initiative organized jointly by KAJD, INJAZ (a regionally active youth entrepreneurship and empowerment program), and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program, Crown Prince Hussein delivered a speech calling volunteerism a “cornerstone for unity and solidarity” that promotes “co-

27. KAJD’s mission is “to empower the Jordanian people and community by pioneering human and infrastructure development . . . in harmony with national development efforts.” See the organization’s website at <http://www.kafd.jo/node/59>.

The Queen Rania Foundation’s programs seek to advance a “vision of productive, engaged citizens engaged in public debate,” largely through education and training initiatives. Interview with Haifa al-Attia, CEO of the QRF, Amman, April 2015.

28. Phone conversation with Edraak staff, April 2015.

hesive societies.”²⁹ Volunteering is also understood to build important skills that can help young people land jobs. The forthcoming ForUs employment website, which is funded by KAJD (and which is discussed in more detail below), will include a volunteering portal, reflecting its

designers’ view that volunteering is a way to build job skills and experience. Public discussions of work ethic, work skills, and citizenship for political stability are consistently linked. For a young person in Jordan, figuring out how

to fit into the economy is not just a matter of self-actualization and empowerment. It is also framed as a matter of national civic responsibility.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AMID NEW AND OLD POLITICS

Despite different political pasts—republican versus monarchical, former French territory versus former British territory—and distinct regional and geopolitical roles,³⁰ Tunisia and Jordan have encour-

29. Dana Al Emam, “Volunteering Builds Cohesive Societies—Crown Prince,” *Jordan Times*, July 24, 2014, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/volunteering-builds-cohesive-societies-%E2%80%94-crown-prince>. For more on the UNV’s work, see <http://www.unv.org/>.

30. Jordan’s position amid Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq gives it unavoidable significance, and has caused it unavoidable troubles from its inception through today. Dealing with constant conflict and external threats to stability has come to define Jordan’s politics as much as any domestic factor. Tunisia, on the other hand, played a minor role in Middle East politics for much of the twentieth century, notable mostly for Bourguiba’s rejection of Nasserist Arab nation-

tered similar macroeconomic challenges, and they face similar perceptions that attitudes toward work need to change. They are now following markedly different political paths, however, even as institutions within each country pursue similar programs aimed at changing people's attitudes about work. Tunisians are seeking to build a new political order, while Jordan's leadership works to preserve the order it has.

Since 2011, Tunisia has overthrown a dictator, negotiated a new constitution, and elected a new parliament that has formed a coalition government with an opportunity to pass a raft of economic reforms.³¹ At the same time, many of the youth who drove the revolution have become increasingly disenchanted and disengaged from politics. Public trust in institutions remains very low, and economic challenges in the short term—including the burden on the public sector as the employer of last resort—have intensified.³² Between 2011 and 2014, among those who voted in Tunisia's elections, concerns about procedural aspects of democracy were overtaken by economic and development concerns as well as “concerns over the quality of democracy—namely corruption, voting irregularities, low trust, and [lack of] transparency.”³³ Tunisian policymakers cite the need for sweeping economic reforms as their highest domestic policy priority, alongside ensuring the security required for economic growth.

Jordan experienced heightened protest activity in 2011, but no major uprising. It remains a monarchy with nominal democratic institutions and a strong state security apparatus. Over the last several years, however, the country has also taken in more than 600,000 Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict to the north.³⁴ The Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State group (ISG) in Syria and Iraq have threatened Jordan's security more generally. Crisis management has taken up much of the government's capacity, even as Jordanians' perceptions of economic security have worsened. From mid-2011 to mid-2014, for example, the percentage of Jordanians who believed things were going “in the wrong direction” rose from 24 to 54 percent, and a majority cited the “poor economic situation” as the primary reason.³⁵ Out of all surveyed in mid-2014, 72 percent cited the poor economic situation as the most important problem facing Jordan; the next-most cited challenge,

alism and brief hosting of PLO leadership after the organization was expelled from Lebanon.

31. Carolyn Barnett, “Getting out of Limbo in Tunisia,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/getting-out-limbo-tunisia>.

32. Anne Brockmeyer, Maha Khatrouch, and Gaël VermeRaballand, “The State as Employer of Last Resort in Postrevolution Tunisia,” *World Bank Research Digest* 9, no. 3 (2015): 1.

33. Berman and Nugent, “Defining Political Choices,” 8.

34. “Syrian Regional Refugee Response: Jordan,” UNHCR, updated May 28, 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

35. University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies, “Public Opinion Poll: Some Current National and Regional Issues,” September 2014, 3–5, <http://www.jcss.org/Photos/635478411873156800.pdf>.

the large number of refugees, clocked in at just 9 percent.³⁶ Jordanians are worried about the economy first and foremost, and that heightens short-term imperatives for the government to be seen doing something about it.

Within each of these contexts, similar efforts to build skills and change attitudes are under way, and observing what has happened over the past few years gives some initial indications of how the contrasting political contexts matter. In Tunisia, workforce development is now articulated as a response to the revolution and as a means of moving the country forward toward a better future. Political change has opened space both for new high-level dialogue and reform and for new bottom-up change. In Jordan, the country's leadership and policy institutions emphasize the importance of workforce development for overall development and stability, but institutional challenges often inhibit effective change. Economic necessity and generational shifts nonetheless are contributing to changes in attitudes and expectations.

Changing the Kinds of Work Youth and Their Families Want

CAREER GUIDANCE

Both Tunisia and Jordan are working to expand career guidance from a low baseline—in fact, both are starting from a position of having practically no formal career guidance for young people. In Tunisia, career guidance to date has been nonexistent in secondary schools and only

nominally available in universities. Without independently funded career centers or guidance counselors at the universities, career guidance has been provided by teachers who receive no extra pay for their services, and it has accordingly proven difficult to get people to spend time advising students. Independent financing and clearer guidelines for career counseling would help overcome students' lack of exposure to information about the labor market and about career fields that might fit their interests and talents. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has indicated, at least preliminarily, that it would be willing to finance putting permanent career guidance counselors in schools—a project that international donors, including the United States, have already promoted.³⁷ While this push occurs at the university level, however, there is little indication that career guidance will be integrated into earlier phases of education any time soon. The new political environment in Tunisia has thus opened space for change, but taking advantage of that space requires a government capacity for reform that has been lacking so far.

Jordan is in a similar position. KAFD partnered with the Ministry of Higher Education to introduce career guidance offices into universities beginning in 2003, but these offices remain underresourced, overstretched, and often irrelevant to

37. USAID has already prioritized setting up functional career development centers in higher education institutions, but efforts are still in their beginning phases, and do not extend to primary or secondary education.

36. *Ibid.*, 6.

most university students. KAFD has since pursued new efforts to strengthen university career centers, but these have not yet gone into effect, and there are no concrete plans to extend career education services into schools below the university level.³⁸

Both Tunisia and Jordan are working to expand career guidance from a low baseline—in fact, both are starting from a position of having practically no formal career guidance for young people.

In both countries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private-sector companies (through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives) have partially filled the gap in both career guidance and employability programs. On the NGO side, organizations like Education for Employment, INJAZ, and the Business Development Center in Jordan offer pro-

grams that help young people assess their strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. Silatech (a Qatar Foundation–created NGO working on youth employment) worked with private-sector partners to launch an employment and career guidance website in Tunisia and several other countries.³⁹ Private companies with a more direct interest in improving employability and career matching have also stepped in. The Jordanian job-posting website Akhtaboot, for example, has hosted live job fairs and offered training programs for job seekers as part of its CSR efforts.⁴⁰ Many of these initiatives have been active in Jordan for some time, but their appearance in Tunisia is more recent—and in many cases only possible because of the newly opened political space for civil society organizations.

One new initiative in Jordan with backing from both the palace and affiliated organizations is a one-stop-shop website, ForUs (both the Arabic word for “opportunities” and a play on the English phrase “for us”). Once up and running, it will help youth explore different career options; self-evaluate for personality, values, and interests; and then connect to appropriate job or volunteer opportunities.⁴¹

38. Interview with KAFD employees, Amman, April 2015.

39. Silatech’s Tamheed assessment helps students identify careers that fit their interests and personalities. See “Tamheed and the Bedaya Center,” Silatech, <http://www.silatech.com/home/our-programs/employability/inspiring-careers>.

40. Phone interview with Akhtaboot founder, April 2015.

41. The portal, which is not yet complete, will aim to offer psychometric testing, labor market information in easily comprehensible graphics, descriptions of different job paths, short videos introducing youth and their parents to the possibilities different paths offer, and other features

Notably, it will also include features that target parents, such as videos that portray young people choosing unconventional career paths and being successful. The portal takes as its premise the belief that providing youth with better and more information will change behavior. The more people know about labor market outcomes and trends in Jordan, the argument goes, the more they will change their ambitions and expectations concerning both education and careers. Knowledge will be power—the power to overcome struc-

tural labor market imbalances and their cultural effects. The project epitomizes the approach, and hope, that top-down initiatives that change individual behavior can make an important difference. But this approach remains untested, and some development professionals in Jordan consider it unrealistic.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

One aim of career guidance would be to steer more youth toward the kind of jobs

all on one website. Youth in high school will be encouraged or required to sign up to use the site. Notably, the effort is intended to benefit only youth who are Jordanian citizens. While the portal offers some exciting possibilities, it also faces obstacles. The first is bureaucratic delay—reportedly, a version of the portal was meant to go online more than a year and a half ago. Second is the fact that not everyone in Jordan has access to the Internet, and there are not yet plans to follow up the portal launch with an aggressive outreach campaign in schools.

that the Tunisian and Jordanian economies produce—often jobs that do not require attending university. At the moment, TVET in Tunisia and Jordan falls prey to many of the same challenges that plague the sector throughout the rest of the region: social expectations to attend university make the sector unattractive even when the jobs are remunerative, and

Following the revolution, the need to expand and invigorate TVET has become a common policy talking point.

management of TVET is fragmented among poorly coordinated political institutions. But in both countries, as well, efforts have been or are being made to expand and improve the

quality of TVET and to direct more young people toward it.

TVET was originally introduced in Tunisia largely as a means of providing jobs as welfare; programs were generally unrelated to actual economic needs or areas of comparative advantage. Then, as part of the country's liberal economic reforms in the 1980s, Tunisia's Ministry of Employment and Vocational Education took steps to align TVET more with economic productivity, putting in place many of the legal and institutional prerequisites it needed to be more effective.⁴² But actual development of TVET stalled, for political,

42. Tunisian Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, "Reforme du dispositif national de la formation professionnelle: Document d'orientation et plan d'operations 2014–2018," November 2013, 11, http://www.emploi.gov.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/Formation_Professionnelle/PDF/Reforme_FP_Tunisie-Fr.pdf.

technical, and cultural reasons, including, according to the ministry (in 2014), “the absence of a culture of ‘professions’ and a disdain for the value of work.”⁴³ On the eve of Tunisia’s revolution, the World Bank was working on a collaboration with the ministry to modernize vocational training and create new technical training options.⁴⁴

Following the revolution, the need to expand and invigorate TVET has become a common policy talking point. In 2013, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Education announced plans for 2014–2018 that will expand existing training programs and introduce some new ones. The document outlining these reforms explicitly ties its agenda and support for it to the political changes wrought by the revolution and the accompanying recognition that unemployment and social exclusion contributed to the political upheaval.⁴⁵ International donors, most notably the German government, have launched new vocational training programs in coordination with the ministry. Political platforms of most of the successful parties in the 2014 elections called for some version of reforms that would better link educational institutions to vocational training options.⁴⁶ The French and German governments and Tunisia’s employers’ federation—the Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade, and Handicrafts (UTICA)—are also discussing ways to partner to further expand vocational offerings.⁴⁷ New politics in Tunisia have led to a more frank diagnosis of the broader causes of workforce development challenges and (at least rhetorically) a reinvigorated commitment to creating opportunities in TVET.

In Jordan, while there have been incremental changes in the TVET sector, institutional inertia has limited their reach. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, and Ministry of Labor each control some components of the TVET ecosystem, and their efforts are not well coordinated. Reforms begun in 2010 sought to link all three through a cross-cutting Employment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ETVET) Council. But in 2013, researchers found that limited government capacity had prevented this council from improving coordination or outcomes significantly.⁴⁸ A move toward demand-driven TVET programs—which

43. *Ibid.*, 12. Translated from the French.

44. World Bank, “Project Information Development: Tunisia Vocational Training and Technical Education Modernization,” 2010, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/06/000262044_20100308113157/Rendered/PDF/TN0PROTECOPIDOCconcept.pdf.

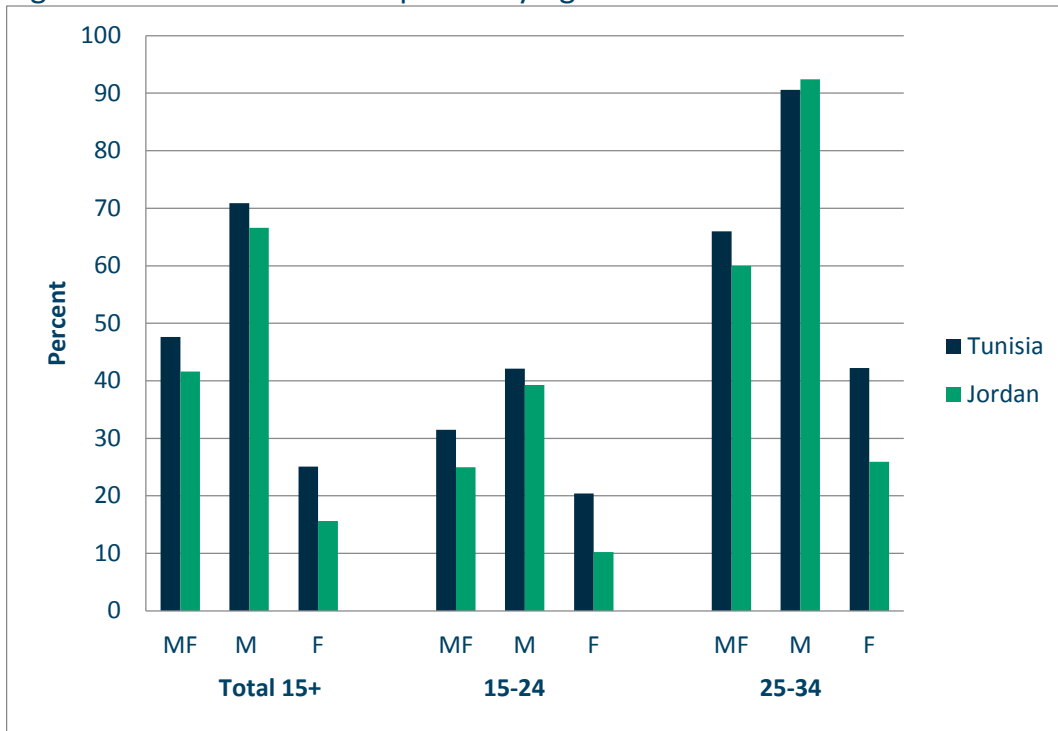
45. Tunisian Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, “Reforme du dispositif national,” 8–9.

46. Institut Arabe des Chefs d’Entreprises, “Législative Tunisienne 2014: Comparateur de programmes,” <http://mailing.iace.tn/elections/comparateur/index.html>.

47. Interview with UTICA officials, Tunis, January 2015.

48. European Training Foundation, “Mapping Vocational Training and Education Governance in Jordan,” 2014, [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/9A93CDC49DAA7AECC1257DA20049318C/\\$file/Jordan_mapping%20VET%20governance.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/9A93CDC49DAA7AECC1257DA20049318C/$file/Jordan_mapping%20VET%20governance.pdf).

Figure 3: Labor Force Participation by Age and Sex



Source: ILO, KILM database

Note: Data are for 2013. MF indicates population rates, M indicates male rates, and F indicates female rates.

align training offerings with specific economic needs or companies and guarantee jobs to those who finish the programs—has reportedly improved the employment outcomes of TVET participants.⁴⁹ Growing numbers of Jordanians are interested in TVET, too. Demand for TVET programs reportedly outstrips supply, although this could be due in part to the benefits that accompany enrollment in a training program (stipend, transportation costs, social security, and more) as much as to a pure desire for job training. Still, with under 100,000 trainees, TVET programs attract just a fraction of aspiring job seekers in Jordan. Many are not new graduates, but those who have tried, and failed, to find other employment.

Changing social attitudes toward TVET has been one focus of efforts in Jordan, where discussions of vocational work refer almost ubiquitously to the “culture of shame” around such employment. Policymakers have also sought to change attitudes that hinder women’s participation in the workforce, including family members’ belief that certain milieus are inappropriate for female workers. One tourism education program, for example, hosts family days where parents or spouses can come and see the work environment, ask questions, raise concerns, and see the success that prior program participants have had. Simi-

49. Ibid.

larly, the ETVET Fund (a government entity that distributes money to TVET programs) has focused its efforts on building factories that employ women exclusively or nearly exclusively, with limits placed on the hours they can work and transportation assistance provided, in order to overcome social hurdles to women working.⁵⁰ Other TVET programs attract between 40 and 60 percent women—an impressive percentage considering that women’s workforce participation rate in Jordan overall is just 15 percent (figure 3). Promotion of TVET will expand in Jordan in the near future. The ForUs portal, for example, will feature information on salaries for vocational or technical jobs so that young people and their parents can see that they often pay competitive wages.⁵¹

Changing the kinds of work people seek and consider acceptable will be difficult in Jordan. Policymakers working in the field believe that finding a way to “rebrand” TVET through new programs, incentives, or markings of prestige is necessary if it is to attract many more people into the kinds of low-skilled and semiskilled jobs that many Jordanians currently do not wish to pursue. Even if this happens, however, it is hard to ask people to shift their expectations to pursue a path they have traditionally seen as shameful when they perceive their lack of opportunities as a political injustice, or believe that corruption and exclusion in their political system is the main source of their problems.⁵² Pure economic motives could drive more people to embrace TVET—as seems already to be taking place—but they may do so resentfully.

Changing How People Learn

A second response to perceived attitude and expectation problems is a focus on education reform in order to instill different modes of thinking from an early age. Building future employees’ “soft skills” (teamwork, communication, etiquette, etc.) and ability to think critically is usually the goal, along with restructuring education to teach skills and subjects more in line with what the labor market requires. The current push for education reform comes from very different directions in each country: in Tunisia, the new government and other social actors are beginning a dialogue on education reform, while in Jordan, the king recently appointed a new commission to try to rethink how education and workforce development should evolve.

50. Interview with ETVET Fund official, Amman, April 2015.

51. Interview with KAFD staff, Amman, April 2015.

52. The 2011 protests in Jordan were not primarily “bread riots” demanding greater direct economic benefits from the state. Participants said they were mainly protesting corruption and pressing for political reform; they criticized the broad political and economic system more than immediate economic need.

EDUCATION REFORM IN TUNISIA

In April 2015, the Tunisian Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and Arab Institute for Human Rights, launched a new national dialogue on education reform.⁵³ Minister of Education Néji Jalloul is spearheading the efforts, which will reportedly include tracking students into different types of training beginning in secondary school through the creation of new “sections” better aligned with the needs of the labor market.⁵⁴ Jalloul has also noted that the ministry will seek to tackle the phenomenon (common across the region, not just in Tunisia) of teachers charging for extracurricular private lessons, and he has expressed optimism at students’ level of engagement and interest in participating in reform of the education system.⁵⁵

Reforming education in Tunisia will be contentious. Many educators and employers blame past “reform” efforts under the Ben Ali government for significantly degrading the educational system in Tunisia.⁵⁶ As a result, there is both a recog-

nition that things need to change and a wariness of government-led reform efforts, even under new leadership. Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi alluded to these perception issues when, in May, he criticized Jalloul for moving too quickly on education reforms and failing to communicate effectively which reforms are under way.⁵⁷ Some educators also fear that “reform” is a euphemism for cutting teachers’ jobs—a move likely to prove highly unpopular in Tunisia, where teachers have one of the country’s most powerful syndicates. The syndicates at the secondary school level in particular have demonstrated their clout and oppose changes they fear would threaten their security or control over the system. Secondary school teachers have repeatedly gone on strike, especially over the past year, demanding higher salaries.⁵⁸ Government officials who want to reform primary and secondary education in Tunisia will have to convince the syndicates that they want to work with them, not against them, in pursuit of reviving and strengthening Tunisia’s education system.

Reforming higher education is also on the docket. While the interim govern-

53. “National Dialogue on Education System’s Reform Starts,” *Tunis Afrique Presse*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.tap.info.tn/en/index.php/society/26392-national-dialogue-on-education-system-s-reform-starts>.

54. “Tunisie—Neji Jalloul annonce de réformes en profondeur du système éducatif,” *Tunisie Numerique*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-neji-jalloul-annonce-de-reformes-en-profondeur-du-systeme-educatif/255427>.

55. “Dialogue sur la réforme du système éducatif—Néji Jalloul surpris par le niveau des élèves tunisiens,” *Business News*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/dialogue-sur-la-reforme-du-systeme-educatif--neji-jalloul-surpris-par-le-niveau-des-eleves-tunisiens,520,55932,3>.

56. In the mid-1990s, the Ben Ali government implemented a series of reforms to the education system that lowered the standards required to

pass the Baccalaureate (the terminal secondary school examination) and expanded the university system, simultaneously reducing the quality of education and funneling more students into university education.

57. “Tunisie—En quoi, les réformes annoncées par Néji Jalloul dérangent Rached Ghannouchi?” *Tunisie Numerique*, May 25, 2015, <http://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-en-quoi-les-reformes-annoncees-par-neji-jalloul-derangent-rached-ghannouchi/256051>.

58. Tarek Amara, “Tunisia Tax Suspension, Teacher Strike Test Reform Agenda,” *Reuters*, March 2, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/02/us-tunisia-reform-idUSKBN-OLY1GK20150302>.

The country's educational system does not need to create more assessments, one Tunisian educator commented; it needs to pull the old assessments out of desk drawers and act on them.

ment held power throughout 2014, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research convened working groups and oversaw the drafting of a plan to overhaul the nation's higher education system. The plan was provisionally approved by the outgoing government in January 2015,⁵⁹ and in February Chiheb Bouden, the new government's minister of higher education and scientific re-

search, launched a dialogue around these principles.⁶⁰ The government is seeking both pedagogical and organizational reforms to the university system, including granting greater autonomy to universities to develop their own strategic plans for the future and reorienting fields of study to produce more graduates prepared to find jobs in Tunisia.⁶¹

Despite advances with reform proposals, change is slow. Some Tunisian educators expressed doubt that implementing the plans for higher education reform would be possible, and broader discussions about reforming education in Tunisia are just getting under way. Educators recounted many instances in the past when the same educational problems had been diagnosed and solutions offered, but no tangible reforms were actually accomplished. The country's educational system does not need to create more assessments, one Tunisian educator commented; it needs to pull the old assessments out of desk drawers and act on them. Tunisia's transition offers the possibility that change will happen, eventually, but it does not guarantee it.

59. Interview with Tawfik Jelassi, interim minister of higher education and scientific research, Tunis, January 2015. In his dual capacity as interim minister of ICT, Jelassi also worked on expanding digital access throughout the country with a plan for the ICT sector called Digital Tunisia, which was provisionally approved in January 2015.

60. *ShemsFM*, "Chiheb Bouden: 'le lancement d'un dialogue sociétal pour la réforme du système universitaire une des principales priorités du ministère,'" February 17, 2015, <http://www.shems-fm.net/fr/actualite/chiheb-bouden-le-lancement-d-un-dialogue-societal-pour-la-reforme-du-syste-universitaire-une-des-principales-priorites-du-ministere-103118>.

61. The six areas of reform are 1) reviewing and changing the specialties offered in universities and the number of students to be admitted to each of them; 2) rethinking teaching methods and figuring out how to integrate ICT into classrooms; 3) coming up with a forward-looking "national university map" that would suggest where to build future universities, grow existing universities, or scale back underutilized ones; 4) giving greater autonomy to universities—specifically, having them develop and take responsibility for implementing their own strategic plans; 5) better linking research activities to commercialization and economic growth; and 6) refocusing universities on improving the employability of their graduates in general. Interview with Tawfik Jelassi, Tunis, January 2015.

EDUCATION REFORM IN JORDAN

Jordan has also seen extended discussions about what is wrong with the education system and how to fix it. Government efforts to increase schools' focus on critical thinking date back to the late 1980s.⁶² Successive waves of education reform initiatives have increasingly focused on raising the quality of education.⁶³

For example, the long-running Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) program, financed by the World Bank, has worked to "transform the education system at the early childhood, basic, and

secondary levels to produce graduates with the skills needed for the knowledge economy."⁶⁴ But tweaks to curricula and classroom structure do not go far enough; Jordanian educators stressed that the ma-

62. At a conference in 1987, Jordan's Ministry of Education launched its first comprehensive education reform. Curriculum reform, research, and teacher training programs were begun to improve the educational system's performance, and the government established the National Council on Human Resources Development (NCHRD) to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the reforms. Since 1987 there have been three waves of education reform in Jordan. Interview with Abdullah al-Ababneh, director of the NCHRD, Amman, April 2015.

63. Ibid.

64. World Bank, "Projects and Operations: Education Reform for Knowledge Economy," updated June 19, 2015, <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P075829>.

ior challenge is a cadre of underqualified and underresourced teachers with little incentive or support to teach the kind of critical thinking sought by reforms. Fixing teaching in the government schools requires a broader political effort to restructure higher education and the civil service, and this has not yet taken place.

The most significant change (in both K-12 and higher education) over the past couple of decades in Jordan has been the introduction of ever-more private educational options.

Instead, the government has allowed alternatives to its troubled schools to proliferate. The most significant change (in both K-12 and higher education) over the past couple of decades in Jordan has been the introduction of ever-more private educational

options. A few decades ago, there were just six Christian-run private schools in Jordan, three each for men and women.⁶⁵ Today, around a quarter of Jordanian students attend private schools,⁶⁶ and in Amman more than half do.⁶⁷ Private schools

65. Interview with Haifa al-Attia, Amman, April 2015.

66. According to Jordanian government data, in 2013–2014 there were 451,139 students in private education in Jordan out of a total of 1,846,963 students (24.4 percent). "School Year 2013–2014 Statistical Report," Ministry of Education of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 11, <http://www.moe.gov.jo/MenuDetails.aspx?MenuID=29>.

67. As measured in "class units," or number of classrooms rather than total pupils. In Amman, 47.2 percent of class units are run by the Ministry of Education; the share of Amman schools overall run by the Ministry of Education is under 40 percent. Ibid., 14, 27.

offer a variety of educational curricula, including the IB (International Baccalaureate) curriculum, AP (Advanced Placement) tests, and other foreign credentials.⁶⁸ Private options have also proliferated at the university level since the early 1990s, when the government enabled private education providers to establish universities in order to accommodate the sharp increase in the number of degree-seeking students. Today there are 10 public and 19 private universities in Jordan.⁶⁹ Most of the private universities are small, however; about three-quarters of Jordanian university students still attend public universities,⁷⁰ and both public and private institutions are considered prestigious.

The educational system may be due for a more dramatic set of reforms. The king recently created a new committee on human resources development.⁷¹ Tasked with nothing less than rethinking the development of Jordanian youth from kindergarten through university, it focuses on maximizing the kinds of critical thinking, creativity, motivation, and life skills that both educators and employers currently say are lacking.⁷² It will aim to address issues that have long plagued the educational system—for example, poor teacher quality, rote memorization pedagogy, and a lack of focus on learner engagement and active learning—and could call for such interventions as raising teacher pay, making teaching a more competitive and prestigious profession, and emphasizing ongoing teacher development as integral to the profession.⁷³

But the new committee could just as easily produce an outcome common to such ventures in Jordan: a well-crafted strategy that cannot be implemented as intended.

68. Public schools designed around foreign models have also been introduced. King's Academy in Madaba, for example, is modeled on Deerfield Academy in the United States, which King Abdullah attended as a teenager.

69. See the Ministry of Higher Education of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan website at <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/>.

70. In 2009–2010, for example, about 80,000 bachelor's-level students attended private universities, while around 264,000 attended public universities. Ministry of Higher Education of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Statistics 2010," www.mohe.gov.jo.

71. "King Calls for Clear Strategy to Develop Education, Human Resources," *Jordan Times*, April 20, 2015, <http://jordantimes.com/king-calls-for-clear-strategy-to-develop-education-human-resources>. According to this article, the king "highlighted the need to enhance citizens' belief in the quality and efficiency of the country's educational system," and the queen emphasized that "the goal goes beyond drawing up strategies to focus on their implementation and objectively dealing with challenges facing the sector." The problem acknowledged by the queen—that many plans and strategies drawn up for Jordan are not implemented—is discussed below.

72. For employer complaints about candidates lacking soft skills, see for example Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Ministry of Labor of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Jordan's National Employment Strategy, 2011–2020,"

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_313611.pdf; Creative Associates and American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan, "Employer Perspective on the Jordanian Labor Force," 2014, <http://www.amcham.jo/Portal1/Upload/Block/Image/Creative%20Associates%20International%20Report.pdf>.

73. Interview with Haifa al-Attia, Amman, April 2015.

On a variety of policymaking fronts, from macroeconomic reform to TVET expansion, many interviewees in Jordan lamented that “beautiful papers” often signal the way forward, but lack effective champions to put their recommendations in place. Status quo politics mean that there are few new political paths to reform. Change requires finagling existing institutions and individuals to support reforms that affect their interests in an environment where failure is more likely to be punished than success is to be rewarded, and where coordination across institutions requires those at the very top to signal that reform is a priority. Overhauling education is not impossible, but it will be very difficult. It is more likely that Jordan will continue to see an expansion of private and extracurricular programs that seek to address the shortcomings of government schools than that the schools themselves will be transformed.

Changing What People Think Is Possible

Promoting entrepreneurship has also become a central feature of efforts to shift work attitudes and expectations in Tunisia and Jordan. Entrepreneurship is hailed as a great source of hope in both countries in response to economic stagnation and unemployment, and efforts to promote it address similar challenges in both countries. But in Tunisia these efforts have emerged largely in spite of the state, while in Jordan the palace and business elites have been a driving force behind entrepreneurship promotion.

AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOOM

Entrepreneurship and microfinance programs and networks in Tunisia have proliferated since the revolution. As one Tunisian who works closely with entrepreneurs noted, in late 2011 there was one start-up incubator in Tunisia; now there are dozens. Business plan competitions and student activities to discuss and promote entrepreneurship are popping up all over the place. On the microfinance side, the country’s only preexisting independent microfinance organization, Enda Inter-Arabe, has expanded its operations, and in 2011 it launched a new program called Bidaya (“Beginning”) to encourage youth to start their own businesses.⁷⁴ A reformed microfinance law was passed in 2013 and new organizations and programs have launched in Tunisia since then.⁷⁵ Microcred, in coordination with Silatech, launched a new fund for entrepreneurs in mid-2015.⁷⁶ The Qatar Friendship Fund and the U.S-funded Tunisian-American Enterprise Fund also plan to make microfinance grants in Tunisia, and a coalition of local and international organizations led by the African Bank for Development launched a joint

74. Interview with Enda Inter-Arabe staff, Tunis, January 2015.

75. See “Taysir Microfinance a accordé ses premiers prêts en Tunisie,” ADIE, May 27, 2014, <http://www.adie.org/actualites/taysir-microfinance-accorde-ses-premiers-prets-en-tunisie>; “Microcred Tunisie,” <http://www.microcred-tunisie.tn/>; “Tunisie : André Lévesque de Desjardins Capital de risques participe à une vérification diligente,” Desjardins, <http://www.did.qc.ca/publications/info-reseau/tunisie-andre-levesque-desjardins-capital-risques-32/>.

76. “Silatech, Microcred Youth Startup Loan ‘Irada’ Launched in Tunisia,” *Zawya*, May 19, 2015, http://www.zawya.com/story/Silatech_Microcred_Youth_Startup_Loan_Irada_Launched_in_Tunisia-ZAWYA20150519102455/.

project called Souk at-Tanmia, which provides small loans to entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas.⁷⁷

Over the past decade, Jordan has emerged alongside Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt as one of the Middle East's leading hubs of entrepreneurship, with most of this activity focused in technology. A combination of government and private-sector efforts in Jordan has launched a rapidly expanding sphere of start-ups and institutions to support them. Several universities have created entrepreneurship centers or instituted entrepreneurship courses, and NGOs provide

In Tunisia and Jordan, teaching entrepreneurship is about more than getting people to start new businesses: it is self-consciously put forward as a project that captures social change already under way and facilitates further social change.

trainings or host events to help people conceptualize new businesses, develop plans and prototypes, establish their businesses, and move through initial phases of development. In addition, institutions with both government and private-sector backing, most notably Oasis500 and the newer Zain Innovation Campus,⁷⁸ provide funding, space, networks, and guidance to help start-ups get going. These efforts started from a low baseline—one observer said he could have described the en-

tire ecosystem in under three minutes just five years ago—but those involved feel they are likely to continue growing and to make a real contribution to economic diversification, growth, and job creation in Jordan. Those who work with young people on trainings in entrepreneurship report that for many the trainings are a transformative experience.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS CULTURAL SHIFT

In Tunisia and Jordan, teaching entrepreneurship is about more than getting people to start new businesses: it is self-consciously put forward as a project that captures social change already under way and facilitates further social change.

77. See their websites at <http://www.qff.tn/en/> (Qatar Friendship Fund); <http://taefund.org/> (Tunisian-American Enterprise Fund); <http://www.soukattanmia.org/> (Souk at-Tanmia).

78. Zain is one of Jordan's three major telecommunications companies.

Common to both countries is an often vague and expansive use of the term “entrepreneurship”⁷⁹ that encompasses the idea of thinking differently, in general, about the choices that are available. “Youth should know that they don’t have

to be an employee,” one Jordanian entrepreneurship advocate said. “There are other options.” To become an entrepreneur is to assume a pioneering identity, whether or not one starts a business. “Being an entrepreneur is cooler than being a rock star now,” was how one Oa-

sis500 team member described it. The way people talk about these programs makes clear that they are only partly about economic development: they are also efforts at helping young people figure out how to act independently and seek self-actualization.

Advocacy and support for entrepreneurship have evolved differently in Tunisia and Jordan. In the former, the emerging set of institutions and individuals promoting entrepreneurship has grown largely in spite of the state. In general, past political practices created a legal and policy envi-

79. According to many interviewees, the word “entrepreneurship” entered the local vocabulary only a few years ago, although obviously the concepts of innovative problem solving and new business creation are not new.

ronment that protects some business interests while hamstringing many others.⁸⁰ Limited access to finance and mentorship, barriers to importing and exporting, poorly designed regulations, government bureaucrats who do not understand busi-

Entrepreneurs in Tunisia cite perseverance in the face of government incompetence and growing links among themselves and with established private-sector companies as the key to their recent successes.

nesses’ needs, and difficulty finding talent are just some of the challenges entrepreneurs face.⁸¹ Ben Ali nominally supported an agenda of innovation and entrepreneurship, but the top-down initiatives implemented during his rule did not genuinely enable entrepreneurs. Many

funding mechanisms for small business development were poorly managed or simply vehicles for distributing patronage.⁸² Today, entrepreneurs in Tunisia cite perseverance in the face of government incompetence and growing links among themselves and with established private-

80. For a detailed analysis of distortions in the Tunisian economy that facilitated corruption and special privileges for economic elites (most of which remain unreformed), see Nucifora and Rijkers, *Unfinished Revolution*.

81. Amr Adly, “Reforming the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Post-Revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia,” Stanford Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law and Center for International Private Enterprise, April 2014, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/24614/Reforming_the_Entrepreneurship_Ecosystem_in_Post-Revolutionary_Egypt_and_Tunisia-_Amr_Adly.pdf.

82. Interview with a microfinance organization director, Tunis, January 2015.

sector companies as the key to their recent successes. Tunisians who mostly lived and worked abroad before the revolution are at the forefront of many of these efforts, along with young people who have built companies and support structures for themselves from the ground up. Many of them appear to feel that the state cannot and should not play a large role in what entrepreneurs are doing—that the most helpful thing would be for it to get out of the way after reforming the laws that inhibit their ability to move forward.

Jordanian entrepreneurs say the same thing and cite many of the same business environment challenges (though these are less severe in Jordan). But they also acknowledge that top-down support has been critical to the emergence of the institutions they have successfully leveraged. As in other spheres in Jordan, royal patronage played a large role in setting the agenda and creating the space for tech entrepreneurship to take off. Political support from the king and financial backing from the King Abdullah II Fund for Development was instrumental to the creation of Oasis500.⁸³ Interviewees across multiple organizations supporting entrepreneurship in Jordan credited the king’s commitment to entrepreneurship as playing a central role in its success to date. They also suggested that some major private-sector actors—notably the major telecommunications companies, which “have the power of the government” to make things happen, according to one entrepreneur—are supporting start-ups as a way to foster local innovative developments for their own strategic purposes. Thanks in large part to this support, Jordan’s entrepreneurship ecosystem is bigger and more developed than Tunisia’s. It also appears to be spurring a genuinely new culture that values initiative and innovation, at least among the people who have been exposed to it.

The central role of the king reflects a common pattern in Jordan in which policy is driven by “ad hoc, informal networks of business-state relations” and is based more on the will and preference of the palace than on adherence to long-term, coordinated economic strategies.⁸⁴ One result—as in Tunisia, where existing social and economic connections usually offer the entrée to spaces that support entrepreneurship—is that these activities remain concentrated among a highly educated, cosmopolitan, often economically advantaged elite. Thus, in Jordan, politics are enabling entrepreneurship promotion, but within specific spaces and in certain forms, creating new opportunities and liberties within boundaries.⁸⁵ Tying himself to trendy entrepreneurship initiatives also serves a political purpose for the king: it burinishes the image he projects of himself as a cosmopolitan, cutting-edge monarch.

83. Interview with Oasis500 staff, Amman, April 2015.

84. Moore, *Doing Business*, 183.

85. These liberties and opportunities can be considered an example of what Jillian Schwedler calls “neoliberal exceptions” to autocratic rule. Jillian Schwedler, “The Political Geography of Protest in Neoliberal Jordan,” *Middle East Critique* 21, no. 3 (December 2012): 259–70.

NOT A PANACEA

Entrepreneurship promotion has its critics. “I am disgusted,” one Western consultant said, “with the naiveté of NGO entrepreneurship promotion activities in Tunisia.”⁸⁶ His complaint? That university-age young people are being targeted with pie-in-the-sky stories about starting a new business; by creating unrealistic expectations, these efforts “are actively doing [the kids] a disservice.” Most successful entrepreneurs in the region, he emphasized, are people with some financial cushion who have worked for at least a few years and grown frustrated in their dead-end jobs, but who have enough know-how to start something useful. Two young leaders in the entrepreneurship community in Jordan also lamented that the very last thing their fellow Jordanians needed was “another trip to Silicon Valley,” where their expectations—not least about the kinds of people they would be able to build business relationships with—are unrealistically inflated. Others in the entrepreneurship-promotion sector in Jordan agreed that programs need to identify local role models whose stories relay genuine challenges the aspiring entrepreneurs are likely to face if they strike out on their own. The problem is that these local success stories are still rare.

Other criticisms of the entrepreneurship sector in both Tunisia and Jordan have to do with its narrow focus on tech companies and, as noted earlier, the fact that many who take advantage of start-up

86. Phone interview with a consultant who has worked on entrepreneurship initiatives in both Jordan and Tunisia, June 2015.

contests or incubators are from comparatively privileged social backgrounds. They tend to have the connections and financial backing to try something risky; if they fail, the failure need not ruin their lives. That these activities are concentrated among an elite raises an important question: even if the companies they start create a lot of jobs and contribute to GDP, is supporting them the best use of development funds? An economist at the African Bank for Development said that employees there have debated this question as they expand the Souk at-Tanmia program in Tunisia. Providing loans to the neediest or the excluded may reduce poverty but have a negligible effect on growth, as those individuals are more likely to lack the knowledge and connections to grow very successful businesses. On the other hand, if a program ends up giving out loans primarily to relatively well-off people who are more likely to be very successful, the program may be perceived as unjustly favoring those who don’t really need the help. That could make it a flashpoint in political contexts—like Tunisia and Jordan—where perceptions of corruption and deep social inequity in access to opportunities resonate deeply.

POLITICAL CONTEXT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Conversations about workforce development initiatives in Tunisia and Jordan sound at once very similar and strikingly different. Commentary on attitude problems, skills gaps, and structural challenges hit the same themes repeatedly. But

they are embedded in fundamentally different frameworks: Tunisians are quick to blame their problems on dictatorship and the failings of the past, and to articulate the need for reforms to education, job training, employment structures, and attitudes toward work as a fundamental part of crafting a new social and political order. Jordanians may blame past policies, but rarely do they indict their entire system. Those still motivated to push for change—and who are in a position to bring it about—usually express their acceptance of working within the institutions they have. And the country’s leadership articulates the need for reforms to education, job training, employment structures, and attitudes toward work as a fundamental part of preserving Jordan’s stability and prosperity.

This difference gives researchers and policymakers an opportunity to assess the effects of similar workforce development policies in different political and institutional contexts. What can be observed so far about how approaches to workforce development in the two countries differ suggests future indicators to watch for when making such an assessment. These include divergent macroeconomic outcomes, divergent attitudes toward and expectations about work, and divergent effects of those attitudes and expectations on political developments.

Tunisia

Democratization in Tunisia creates opportunities for reform, participation, and new economic activity that could strengthen efforts to change mind-sets around work and allow them to have a significant impact. At the same time, a range of problems—the slow pace of change, ongoing economic grievances, the difficulty of tackling entrenched privileges and systems, security threats, and disenchantment with the messiness and complications of democratic politics—could prevent Tunisia from making significant reforms.

Democratization could bolster workforce development .

Democratization could bolster workforce development in several ways. First, the discussion above showed how democratization in Tunisia has helped to advance education reform, career education, and TVET. If successful, the macroeconomic and institutional reforms that Tunisia’s new coalition government has prioritized could help entrepreneurship in Tunisia take off too. Successful reforms of the investment code, tax code, customs regulations, labor code, and other national economic institutions that facilitate new business creation and expansion could increase the number of success sto-

tion, and TVET. If successful, the macroeconomic and institutional reforms that Tunisia’s new coalition government has prioritized could help entrepreneurship in Tunisia take off too. Successful reforms of the investment code, tax code, customs regulations, labor code, and other national economic institutions that facilitate new business creation and expansion could increase the number of success sto-

ries among existing entrepreneurs. That would allow advocates for entrepreneurship to highlight those local successes, potentially inspiring more people to establish new ventures.⁸⁷ Newly or increasingly successful businesses could also simply create more jobs, helping employment outcomes. Democracy could help jump-start Tunisia's economic future. But adopting new laws and actually reforming institutions are two separate tasks. Even if Tunisia's new parliament successfully pushes through the slate of new laws it has prioritized, they may fail to change how business is done in Tunisia.

Second, new space for civic participation could indirectly advance efforts to make young people more proactive, entrepreneurial, and engaged, and equip them with the soft skills that employers often cite as lacking. As civil society in Tunisia expands in

size and scope in the wake of the revolution, opportunities to increase civic participation—and skills for employability—do too. One Tunisian civil society activist proudly related that she sees her organization's work as “elevating” the capabilities and ambitions of its volunteers in their personal career trajectories. A Tunisian
⁸⁷ Part of the hope, too, is that people would create new formal ventures. Currently an estimated 50 percent of Tunisian economic activity is in the informal sector.

entrepreneur who volunteers in schools noted that the students who get involved in clubs to talk about election monitoring learn valuable teamwork and professional skills that help them get jobs later. A Tunisian development professional suggested harnessing the energy of the revolution to create a Tunisian national service program along the lines of AmeriCorps or the Peace Corps, which would recruit young Tunisians to take a year or two to live in poorer communities doing service work. A similar program, CorpsAfrica, has already been launched in nearby Morocco.⁸⁸ A comingling of workforce development and civic participation initiatives

could thus strengthen the effects of both kinds of programs in Tunisia.

Third, Tunisia now also has an opportunity to try to shake things up within the public sector itself. Interviewees working on everything from education reform to entrepreneurship to

vocational training stated that changing mind-sets within public administration was a prerequisite to improving the policies or governance of their respective fields. They wanted government workers to be open to change, dedicated to public service, and willing to take improvements and reforms into their own hands. Broader conversations in Tunisia about

⁸⁸ See the CorpsAfrica website at <http://www.corpsafrica.org/morocco/>.

Democracy could help jump-start Tunisia's economic future. But adopting new laws and actually reforming institutions are two separate tasks.

reinstating “the value of work”—of changing the culture of work and productivity—frequently turn to raising the value of work among public employees. If this can be done, jolting the bureaucracy into life in Tunisia would make it easier for the government to undertake the broad swath of reforms noted above.

These are all big “ifs.” Tunisia’s future in these areas will also depend on how democratization shapes the political salience of attitudes and expectations around work. The last elections brought to power a government set on enacting economic and institutional reforms—but this government must also respond to populist demands that may be at odds with the policies it (and the technocrats who advise it) favors. Extremely low levels of trust in institutions in Tunisia could doom reform efforts or even the attempt to reform the institutions tasked with implementing reforms.⁸⁹ Ideological opposition to liberalizing economic reforms from a politically marginalized left or the interference of entrenched business interests to ward off reforms that would undercut their privileges could stall or even halt government efforts. Disengagement from the political process and disillusionment with democracy could undermine reforms. And persistent security challenges in Tunisia could distract both government and the international community from a focus on economic and social concerns, further alienating youth and undermining Tunisia’s opportunities for making progress on education and employment issues.

The outcomes of workforce development efforts broadly in Tunisia will hinge on whether the new government succeeds as a government, whether its reforms accomplish what they intend, and whether Tunisians continue to use their newly open civil society space to push for further reforms and empower young people. In short, workforce development efforts in Tunisia could have a large impact if a lot of other factors fall into line. If they do not, moralizing about the need for “a culture of work” and lecturing young people about the need to revise their expectations could fall on deaf ears—or could actively antagonize those who feel that they have been given no incentive to embrace such a culture.

Jordan

The continuity in Jordan’s politics and economics suggests that existing patterns of elaborately conceived but stymied reform will persist. Providing people with more information about different career paths or expanding TVET programs will

89. A recent survey revealed that Tunisians feel profound levels of mistrust and fear in their workplace relationships and environments and in their business dealings: 84 percent of Tunisians agreed more that “one must be careful when one does business with others” than that one can generally trust other people (the world average is 74.6 percent). Of Tunisians with jobs, 64.4 percent were either very or somewhat worried about losing their job, and 82.1 percent were either very or somewhat worried about losing or not being able to find a job. And in 2013, “Tunisia [was] the country with the most citizens who have no confidence at all in their government”—48.9 percent. Ben Kahla, *Valeurs individuelles*, 24–42, translated from the French.

lead to only incremental change unless the incentives to pursue new paths, and people's perception of nontraditional careers, change too. The government has called education reform for "comprehensive human resources development" a high priority—but it has prioritized other efforts in the past that did not materialize. Entrepreneurship in Jordan appears to offer a bright spot for empowering youth socially and economically, but entrepreneurship programs reach a limited social stratum, and small business owners in Jordan still face many obstacles to growing and sustaining their businesses. Even as the government lauds start-ups, for example, the tax structure in Jordan encourages many entrepreneurs to relocate their headquarters to the Gulf after they get off the ground—perhaps still sourcing their back end in Amman, but not basing their operations there.⁹⁰

Existing politics in Jordan make it unlikely that there will be significant macroeconomic progress or change in the near future. As a semi-rentier economy dependent on foreign aid and remittances, Jordan does not have strong incentives for domestic reform, and its tendency to focus on short-term crises weakens the prospect that the king or the government will use scarce political capital to push lower-priority reforms. There is no sign of imminent overhaul of the public sector's structure, personnel, or culture to fix problems that others have identified for years, in particular the problem of siloed and often highly personalized pol-

90. Interviews with Jordanian entrepreneurs, Amman, April 2015.

icy development and implementation.⁹¹ There are few if any "whole of government" efforts, and the policies of different ministries working on different parts of the same issue are sometimes at odds with one another. Government agendas within a sector may change entirely with the comings and goings of ministers—and the ministers come and go a lot. Jordan's Ministry of Education, to take one example, had seven ministers in just four years (from 2009 to 2013), each of whom sought to put in place his own initiatives and policies.⁹²

There are nonetheless efforts by talented, reform-minded individuals to create islands of efficiency—small cadres of dynamic and effective workers—within existing institutions in order to implement specific projects or reforms. These may fall prey, however, to inertia, bureaucratic back-stabbing, or attrition. A recent example is what happened to the National Employment Strategy (NES) following its release in 2011. Drafted and designed by a group outside of the existing ministries, partially in response to concerns raised by

91. There is no shortage of assessments and strategy documents in Jordan and Tunisia that explain how to fix education, employment, or labor market issues. "We have so many beautiful papers," one Jordanian analyst stated, "and then nothing happens with them." An educator in Tunisia expressed a very similar sentiment, noting that when a colleague recently asked him how to reform education in Tunisia, he reached into his desk and pulled out a decade-old strategy for reform that had been ignored by the Ben Ali government.

92. Ministry of Education of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Former Ministers," (Arabic), <http://www.moe.gov.jo/MenuDetails.aspx?MenuID=87>; interview with Abdullah Al-Ababneh, Amman, April 2015.

the Arab Spring, the plan was then given to the Ministry of Labor to implement. Critics of this approach note two problems: first, ministry employees were not invested in the strategy because they themselves had not authored it; and second, the ministry was ill equipped to oversee the execution of the strategy. The NES Implementation Unit within the Ministry of Labor struggled to achieve its goals for several years, and was then reorganized. Multiple interviewees from government, the private sector, and international organizations lamented that as a result of low institutional capacity at the Ministry of Labor, the NES, despite being a well-crafted

document, has thus far led to few tangible results.

In spite of Jordan's political and institution challenges, a shift in attitudes and expectations does seem to be under way.

And yet in spite of Jordan's political and institution challenges, a shift in attitudes and expectations does seem to be under way as young Jordanians respond to the reality of the

economic situation they face, are exposed to new ideas about what their working lives can look like, and gain access to programs and resources from both local and international sources to help them pursue their goals. A common outcome continues to be that frustrated young people seek a life abroad. That's not entirely a bad thing: remittances to Jordan remain an important economic resource, and exporting labor alleviates pressure on the labor market within Jordan. But if those individuals do not return, the brain drain means that Jordan's investments in workforce development are benefiting other countries' economic advancement more directly than their own.⁹³

The political consequences of education and employment challenges in Jordan are also unlikely to change beyond what was already evident in 2011—that grievances related to these issues extend beyond a mere demand for resources. Many of the protests in Jordan in 2011 were not driven primarily by demands for improved services, direct provision of job opportunities, or distribution of other resources. They also focused on perceived violations of political rights and the absence of a genuinely participatory political system. While these violations included economic injustices—corruption and cronyism being chief complaints—the demonstrations were not stereotypical “bread riots” or calls for jobs. In the future, if on-the-

93. For more on Jordanian migration see François de Bel-Air, “Highly-skilled Migration from Jordan: A Response to Socio-political Challenges,” CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2010/12, European University Institute, 2010, http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/13447/CARIM_ASN_2010_12.pdf;jsessionid=EB92363A40D2C09C70007F6476EB1A88?sequence=1.

ground efforts to change attitudes and expectations succeed even as broader opportunity structures remain unchanged, there may be more protests of this kind, in which citizens demand better access to the very opportunities and participation they have been taught or trained to seek.

FOR A DIFFERENT TIME

On the walls of the main office of Oasis500 are inspirational quotes from important Arab historical figures. One of them reads, “Do not raise your children the way your parents raised you; they were born for a different time.” Ali bin Abi Taleb (599–661 AD).”

Ali was the fourth Muslim caliph, a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. His words were passed down through generations of Muslim scholars carefully transmitting the wisdom of the earliest followers of the Prophet. They are a reminder of the revolution that Islam brought to the Arabs: a wholesale change of habits, beliefs, and morality that necessitated a generational rupture.

Workforce development efforts aim to create a different generational rupture. Ultimately, the efforts in Tunisia and Jordan—and similar efforts in other countries in the region—are an experiment in

how to change individual attitudes and expectations. Tunisia and Jordan offer the possibility of observing how similar efforts will evolve in contrasting contexts.

Tunisia’s democratic opening has created opportunities for people to think disruptively about education and training, and about ways to reform the institutions that deal with both. But Tunisia’s future trajectory could also be one of stagnation and polarized politics that slow down the pace of change. Jordan faces an uphill battle,

For Tunisia, the future is a test of whether a new political system can create real change; for Jordan, it is a test of whether real change is possible within the system that exists.

despite constant talk from the king on down about the need to get education and training right. Jordan’s leaders talk about workforce development helping to stabilize the country and secure its future, but creating opportunities for Jordanians requires grappling

with the privileges and patronage that help sustain that same political system. Moreover, too much “success” could jeopardize Jordan’s ability to cite its own inadequate performance in soliciting foreign partners’ financial assistance. For Tunisia, the future is a test of whether a new political system can create real change; for Jordan, it is a test of whether real change is possible within the system that exists.

Future divergence between the two countries could come in a few forms. The

two might begin to look different at the macroeconomic level, with one or the other creating a greater number and variety of job opportunities and expanding the space and resources for entrepreneurship, based on the quality of economic policy choices and implementation. The two could look increasingly different in people's attitudes and expectations toward work, attitudes that would be shaped both by context and by the direct impact of workforce development programs discussed here. And the two will most likely look increasingly different in the way that jobs and economic expectations matter for politics. Democracy could make Tunisia's government more capable of reform or more beholden to populist demands (or some of both). As Jordan's government seeks to maintain the status quo, it will need to find a way to deal with public pressure for more opportunities—and it will eventually need to integrate a new wave of refugees into the country's labor market, or at the very least address challenges arising from their presence in the informal sector.⁹⁴

For both countries, and others in the region, the key uncertainty remains whether programs will succeed in reorienting young people's attitudes and expectations about work, and what will happen if those young people still fail to find sufficient opportunities. The fact that Tunisia experienced a revolutionary uprising in 2011, while Jordan did not, is evidence that the employment and human capital development challenges each faces do not and will not determine future political trajectories on their own. But the goals behind workforce development programs and the outcomes they produce will continue to matter for the social, economic, and political futures of each country, whether or not these programs succeed in raising young people for "a different time." ■

94. Economically active refugees in Jordan are overwhelmingly participating in the informal labor market, rather than the formal labor market. Jordan has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which enshrine refugees' right to work. Refugees in Jordan do not enjoy any legal guarantee of the right to work, and only 10 percent of Syrians working in Jordan have formal permits allowing them to do so. Most are competing with Jordanians or third-country workers from Egypt and Southeast Asia for low-skill jobs with increasingly depressed wages. To date, the government has not indicated an intention of integrating Syrian workers into the labor market, but international institutions have cautioned that keeping Syrians in the informal sector undermines the effectiveness of Jordanian labor laws for workers who are in the formal market. International Labour Organization, "Access to Work for Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Discussion Paper on Labour and Refugee Laws and Policies," ILO Regional Office for Arab States, 2015, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_357950.pdf.

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