



# The Media and the Path of Building the State of Jordan: An Analytical Study of the Transformations of Identity and Society

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## Abstract

This study seeks to understand the media's relationship with the Jordanian national identity as a problematic case study in the path of building the modern Jordanian state. It also seeks to identify the role of the media in formulating the Jordanian national identity and the positioning of the identity in the contexts of the Jordanian media from a critical perspective that benefits from the heritage and literature of media cultural studies and from the media dimension of the public field theory.

The study concluded that the media's relationship with shaping the Jordanian national identity throughout history is a thorny and vague one in most stages as a result of the nature of transformations undergone by the state and society and of the regional circumstances that have cast their shadow on the demographic identity of the Jordanian society. While the media-political vagueness has actually served the path of constructing the identity at some stages, it has currently lost this privilege.

**Key words:** Mass Media; Jordan Media; Jordanian identity; Political history

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of the identity has resurfaced in strength in social studies. This coincided with the rise of the revolution of modern communications and the expansive climate of mergers and separations experienced by many societies, as well as paths of rebuilding countries, the wave of new democracy, and the local cultural and social trends.

The relationship between the media and national identities poses several basic questions, such as: Did the popular media contribute to social integration and to melt the sub-identities into one single culture? To what extent did the media affect the development of patriotism that prevailed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Did the globalization of the television and the live broadcast contribute to remapping the cultural content of patriotism opposite global consciousness? Did the new media and multiple information technology applications contribute to linking and bringing closer the cross-border cultural groups, or did it contribute to the revival of sub-identities and the rise of the phenomenon of minorities and blatant cultural groups?

The media reflects the social, cultural and political reality of societies. This is clear in the historical paths of the issue of the identity. This refers to three main paths around which the social-political argumentation revolve. These are: The path of the identity's formation and establishment; the path of the identity's making or manufacture; and the path of the national identity's development. These three paths intersect and there is no clear distinction or separation among them.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multiple pieces of writing and arguments saw that media outlets have performed, with efficiency, basic roles within

those three paths in formulating and re-formulating identities, as well as in manufacturing the identity and its symbols and in developing the finalized identity, through national identities, cross-border national identities, and sub-identities. Yet, all these opinions and positions have not crystallized into a comprehensive media theory that explains the relationship of the media with the national, local, or cross-border identity (Al-Tarrah, 2005, pp.4-5).

The invention of printing and the emergence of the first general of newspapers have been linked to the origins of modern homelands and nationalism. This was clearly evident in the model of building the identity of the “nationalist state” in Europe, as was the case with the arrival of printing into the colonies of the Spanish Empire. The printing technology has rendered the matter of entrenching, growing and spreading national languages possible and, indeed, essential for giving root to identity and belonging (Anderson, 1983, p. 34).

As for China, it did develop the printing technology, but Chinese nationalism did not mature in the 19th century, because the traditional use of printing alone was not enough. The media is the creator and generator of modern consciousness. Newspapers, periodicals and magazines created groups of readers who have similar interests and ideas and who spread them amidst the societies through their consumption of common news and ideas. This is, in other words, the creation of the consciousness of the nationalist elite that undertakes the job of spreading a common nationalist consciousness (Anderson, 1983, pp.36-45).

Media outlets have contributed to translate the theory of the melting pot of the American model into reality through the role that the press then radio and television played in social integration. The American media system adopted the policy of localism, meaning that local contexts were given priority and the larger share of the media’s interest with the aim of creating agreement among social, economic and political contexts in a common cultural framework in order to agree with the public policy framework on the federal level (Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The prevalence of the social and political integration in localism trends in the American media was observed, so much so that, in the 19th century, it became a political tool in the identity’s manufacturing, while in the first half of the 20th century, it reached the nationalist ideology level and sometimes exceeded it to the level of vulgar localism (Ibid., p.62). This policy was accompanied by a series of legislation that focused on three basic policies (localism, competition, pluralism and diversity). Moreover, it is noteworthy how democratic countries intervened to protect the role of the media in manufacturing the identity. The development of postal services has contributed to enhancing the values of localism in the western press as

a result of the state’s intervention through legislation.<sup>1</sup> While the development of postal services was supposed to expand the scope of the newspapers’ interests at the expense localism, legislation that accompanied this development in Europe for the purpose of developing the identity refocused localism through the privileges and exemptions that were granted to the newspapers with regard to the post (Kielbowicz, 1983).

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the policy of localism provided a wide range of models to reformulate or manufacture the identity through cultural and political integration on one hand, and protection of cultural and political pluralism and diversity on the other. This was the case of the Australian model, where the role of local radios and newspapers was evident in the social and cultural melting, the creation of the public frame, and the offer of symbols (Forde, 2003).

The policy of localism in media outlets played a conclusive role in the path of new nations, namely the process of building citizenship, which encompasses multiple cultures, races and religions. Professional experience developed new experiences in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicating the media’s capability of spreading a common public culture that transcends differences and makes the coexistence of sub-cultures possible and viable as the media creates a comprehensive or all-encompassing nationalist culture.

At the end of the 1960s, Habermas spoke about the role of the press in creating common political and cultural values among the elite in the 19th century, leading to the maturity of the nationalist state in its European model (Habermas, 1992) In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the press, radio and television worked together to build the new nationalist state. In his model for analyzing nationalism, Gallner presents a reading of the role of the media in rebuilding identities, saying that nationalism was not only linked to the capitalist development of societies, but also linked to the harmony and cultural compatibility via the mass media (Gellner, 1983, p.121). This was also articulated, albeit in a different way, by Anderson in his studies about the rise of imaginary groups and societies or what he called “imagined nationalisms” as a result of the effectiveness of mass media, which would explain the rise of nationalist identities in dozens of new countries of the world (Anderson, 1983).

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<sup>1</sup> Media policies contributed to framing the geographic dimension of localism through license denial. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continued to set specific standards to frame the geographic dimension of localism in cities, rural areas and states (FCC, 2008). Also, European policies and legislation take into consideration the geographic dimension into consideration (Trappel & Manigolo, 2009, p.201). In all cases, regulatory legislation continued to set aside a specific percentage of the media content to respond to the requirements of unification and the larger national values.

A set of studies have emphasized the centrality of modern media in manufacturing the national identity (Buscomb, 1993). Millions of people have gained their nationalist sense and all other relevant feelings of identity and citizenship when the newspapers placed them in a common interest with one another. Meanwhile, the radio opened the magic door to imagination in moving and promoting feelings of belonging to the group and the sense of identity. The television formulated the values that ultimately identified and personified the national identity.

The model of the countries and societies of East Europe, in the cases of integration in the era of the Eastern Block and in the era of the new state, presents examples that are close to the roles of the media in the issue of the identity. Experiences of these peoples prove that state-directed media, and under the stress of oppression practiced by the state, is not enough to entrench all-encompassing nationalist emotions and to establish an identity on ideological bases. On the contrary, facts proved that anti-Communism local and regional cultures used the media to reformulate the national identities, with speed of revitalization and revival that exceeded expectations. This is addressed by the return of the Homelands trend in post-modern literature, not only in East Europe, but, rather, in local cultures and obsolete identities that regained their stature because of their extensive use of the media (Smith, 1984).

The new media, which constitutes the fifth revolution of communications, operates on the basis of reformulating many of the concepts and theoretical introductions that have long controlled the media's relationship with the identity. Electronic media provides superior effectiveness in reformulating and reviving group identities by diminishing the effect of relations among the location, the physical space and the methods of traditional communication, towards adopting new outlets for information and cross-border communication networks (Al-Tarrah, 2005).

Despite the fact that the new media is one of the tools and ammunitions of globalization based on the principle of cultural profiling, yet the outcome of recent years has not, in its entirety, been in the service of the imperial analysis of the future of culture in the globalization age, meaning the dilution of national identities and the eradication of local cultures on the basis that new media technology is capable of separating the identity from the place (Schiller, 1991). This gives precedence to the rise of cross-national borders cultures, as physical borders, in turn, gradually become transparent, through which ideas, along with commodities, cross without legal or cultural barriers. On the opposite of this, the post-modernism trend sees that the new media is moving in a different direction towards pluralism and the proliferation of expressions of national cultures, and ultimately more towards disintegration and partition than integration.

The other conclusion regarding the stature of the new media in the discussion about identity seems to be in the fact that identities formulated carefully and meticulously according to state molds are at risk, unless there is development and growth penetrating the depths of society.

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## 2. THE MEDIA AND THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

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There are three ideological frames that addressed the historical beginning and development of the Jordanian national identity. These frames were linked to ideological positions vis-à-vis the establishment of the Jordanian entity and the role of colonial relations in the establishment of political entities, or to ideological positions vis-à-vis the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship and its historical evolution, and the conflict over Palestine's future.

The first trend linked the rise of the Jordanian national identity to colonial influences, whereby the establishment of the Jordanian Emirate was related to the wave of manufacturing Arab entities as part of arrangements in the aftermath of World War I. This trend attributes the mechanisms of the identity's making to the legal and military establishments, which had British sponsorship and in which the commander of the Jordanian Army, Scottish born Glubb Pasha, played the largest role at that stage, after which the state picked up that role and continued on the path. In those two stages, the military and legal establishments, otherwise known as the bureaucracy, produced a set of mental images, cultural and political expressions, practices and traditions, which attempted to give roots to the identity or create origins for it (Massad, 2001). This trend was prominent in the writings of a number of Arab, western and Israeli writers, including Joseph A. Massad (2002), Vatikiotis P. J. (1957), and Mary Wilson (1989).

The second trend in the literature that discussed the Jordanian national identity adopted the issue of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship and the related topics of the conflict over Palestine's future, the conflict on representing the Palestinians, the repercussions of the wars and the waves of refugees that Jordan experienced as a result of these repercussions. The bulk of discussions in these writings revolved around the Palestinian component of the Jordanian identity in light of developments in the region after 1948. This trend does not represent a single perspective, but shares similar fields of discussion. The most prominent people who contributed to this trend were Asher Susser (1994), Robert Satloff (1986), Lina Layne (1994), Clinton Bailey (1988), and Abou Odeh (1999).

As for the third trend, its argument revolved around analyzing the development of the Jordanian social and cultural structures and their transformations within

the context of the Jordanian historical geography. This context studied a variety of topics, ranging from the tribe and its transformations, the Bedouin communities and their transformations, the components of the Jordanian community, Jordanian Christianity, the local expressions of the Jordanian identity, and the institutional expressions. The most prominent people who contributed to this trend were Hani Al-Hourani (1971-2000), Hanna Kildani (1993), Kamel Abou Jaber, Ali Mahafza (1993), Mustafa Hamarneh (1991-2003), Ra'ouf Abou Jaber, and Laurie Brand.

In light of this background and in order to learn about the role of the media in the building and making of the Jordanian national identity, the media's relationship with the identity's path of development is divided into four historical stages:

### 2.1 The Vague Establishment Stage

Some proponents of "re-establishing Jordanian nationalism" on the basis of the events of social history in the pre-modern state era, most of whom are East Jordanians, argue that the Jordanian identity was declared in a historical moment that preceded the establishment of the state. This refers to the Um Qais conference of 1920, where tribal leaders came together and agreed to unify the local entities.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, identities are not created through decisions or conferences, but, rather, they are the outcome of socio-political accumulation through history, creating a social and political consciousness. Many studies of history provide evidence from the 19th century, talking the historical beginnings of the crystallization of the sense of self, socially and politically. For example, new critical studies refute the stories told by the historians of the Ottoman state and the observations of the western travelers regarding the situations in local communities. Local leaders in Karak were not just Bedouins who did not belong, as described in the books of travelers and in Ottoman sources. Indeed, Duree explains that the ruler of Karak in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mohammad Al-Majali was well aware and knowledgeable about governance and managing people's affairs, as well as tax collection and alliances, and that he was in a hurry to develop agriculture and trade. Moreover, the sabotage experienced by the city of Karak and the urban areas of the south was not the result of Bedouin invasions, but, rather, due to the attacks of Ibrahim Pasha's army (Longue, 1999). This is repeated

<sup>2</sup> At the Um Qais conference, which was held on 2 September 1920 and included the people of Ajloun district and leaders from other Jordanian areas, as well as the British commander, Major Somerset, the people called for forming an independent national Arab government comprising the areas of Salt, Karak, Ajloun and Jarash and including the areas of Horan and Al-Qunaitrah. The people hoped that the areas of Marji'youn and Sor will be added to the government in the future (Ali Mahafza, *History of Modern Jordan*, Jordan Book Center, 1989, p.18).

in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Wahhabis invasions reached the borders of Amman. Meanwhile, Transjordan saw fast and accumulative social and economic change since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during which the transformation of villages into towns and towns into cities was prominent, as economic exchanges increased among them and new elites capable of outreach and communication surfaced (Rogan, 2003).

With the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan on the foundations of the Great Arab Revolt, the official establishment of the state's identity started to crystallize. Despite the fact that Prince Abdullah's project was not purely Jordanian in its initial stage, and his ambition veered towards Greater Syria and the Arab Mashreq - the Prince's political rhetoric was structured on being Arab-Islamic-Jordanian, namely the establishment of an Arab state that has a liberal Islamic ideology and is in reconciliation with the West, with Jordan as the platform - basic institutions worked on formulating the identity of the state, which is the legal bureaucratic institution, namely the state's official institutions and the military institutions. The colonialist role, which was exercised by the British, cannot be overlooked in the process of mapping out the details of the roles of these institutions (Massad, 2001, pp.163-175), albeit not in the exaggerated form portrayed by Massad (2001), as if everything was tailored, completely and entirely, in London and Glasgow by the Scottish officer, Glubb Pasha. The conclusive factor in the momentum of the nascent state's identity is the content of Prince Abdullah's project. We see this in hundreds of signals and symbols, such as the flag of the Syrian state, which was adopted as the flag of the Jordanian state, and the name given to the army—the Arab Army, and the concentrated integrations of some minorities within the fabric of the state, like the Circassian population.

This was accompanied by the presence of Arab heads of Jordanian governments of non-Jordanian descent. The issue of the national identity was not a priority for them, but the actions of the nascent state moved to entrench an open Arab Islamic identity at the expense of entrenching the elements of the national identity. This was also accompanied by opposing voices of opinion leaders and intellectuals who were against this approach, which placed the expressions of the national identity into a state of confusion and elusion. This vagueness rendered the issue of the identity of a perplexity from the beginning, and this, in turn, affected the nascent media, represented by the press at the time, and the state's media address.

The first Jordanian newspaper, Al-Haq Ya'lou, appeared in the camp of Prince Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein in Ma'an, publishing its first issue on 7 March 1921. It published six issues within two months: four in Ma'an and two in Amman. The newspaper identified itself as "an Arab revolutionary newspaper" (Shafiq, 2005, p.14). The preliminary analysis of the content of this newspaper does not indicate any content related to the Jordanian

environment, and no Jordanian elitist writers had participated in writing any of its issues. Al-Haq Ya'lou was just an "opinion publication," in which nationalist-like statements and some articles and poems were published, contributed by the elite of Arab intellectuals who had were in the company of Prince Abdullah, including Mohammad Al-Ansi and Abdel Latif Shaker.<sup>3</sup> The state had intervened in the establishment and management of newspapers at three stages: the first was during the establishment stage and twice in later stages. At this stage, the state established the Al-Sharq Al-Arabi<sup>4</sup> newspaper in 1923 and appointed Mohammad Al-Shuraiqi as editor-in-chief. It is the first official newspaper that was directly managed by the state, which had bought the first printing press in 1923.<sup>5</sup> The newspaper's name is a direct reference to the direction of Prince Abdullah's project and not to the local identity of the nascent state. After publishing 123 issues, the newspaper became an official gazette for publishing laws and governmental notifications in 1926 (Al-Mousa, 1998).

This stage saw the publication of several newspapers in Jordan, most of them were weekly or half-monthly. Daily newspapers emerged in the early 1940s, but they were not regular or stable.

The newspapers of this stage were ideologically divided along two major lines, namely the proponents and the opposition, as well as the position vis-à-vis the nascent identity.

The first newspapers published by the private sector represented the elite of Arab intellectuals who were supporters of Prince Abdullah. The identity and content of these newspapers were not concerned with presenting a Jordanian media rhetoric that would contribute to highlighting the local aspects of the national identity. Those included Jazirat Al-Arab newspaper (1927), published by Husam Al-Din Al-Khatib (born in Aleppo); Al-Shari'ah newspaper, published by Mahmoud Al-Karmi (born in Toulkarm); Al-Urdun newspaper (1927), published by Khalil Nasr, a Lebanese man who immigrated to Haifa and recalled to Amman by the Prince (Al-Mousa, 1998, pp.89-92); Al-Wafa' newspaper

(1946), published by Salah Touqan, and it published official notifications and news captured from Al-Ahram newspaper, as well as lectures by Army commander Glubb Pasha; and Al-Jazirah newspaper (1939), published by Tayseer Thibyan (born in Syria), and it was focused on publishing opinion pieces and political and literary debates, and later became the platform of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ibid., pp.29-93).

As for the Jordanian opposition press, they were more linked to the expressions of the national identity in its cultural and political concept. The fate of most of these newspapers was closure and ban from publication. Those included Al-Anba' newspaper (1928), published by Mustafa Wahbi Al-Tal, and it was shut down after the first issue; and Sada Al-Arab newspaper (1927), published by Saleh Al-Smadi; Al-Mithaq newspaper (1933), published by Sobhi Abu Ghanima and Adel Al-Athma, and it was the mouthpiece for the Executive Committee of the Opposition National Conference. Meanwhile, many of the Jordanian writers and intellectuals, who carried a critical media rhetoric on the issue of the identity, had found free forums for them in the Palestinian press, including Mustafa Wahbi Al-Tal, Mohammad Sobhi Abu Ghanima, Niyazi Al-Tal, and Sobhi Al-Keilani.

The state's media rhetoric on the issue of the identity at this stage presented a clear image of the roots of the problem of the Jordanian national identity. These were represented in glorifying the Arab elements of the identity and marginalizing the national elements and dimensions, which ultimately put the state in a dilemma expressed by the media vagueness policy.

## 2.2 Vague Expansion (Re-Establishing Jordanian Nationalism)

This stage (1948-1970) saw widespread political and strategic root transformations. It witnessed widespread change in the demographic identity following the 1948 war and the strong initial waves of refugees into Jordan. This was followed by the unification of the West Bank and East Bank and the transformations in the country following the 1952 constitution, bringing it to a temporary democratic spring, during which partisan life prospered. This was followed by the era of King Hussein Bin Talal, who reformulated the Jordanian national identity according to a different vision from that which prevailed during the era of his grandfather, King Abdullah.

At this stage, the most important aspects of transformations in the course of formulating the Jordanian national identity were represented in four basic determinants:

- First: The change in the country's demographic identity as a result of the Palestinian refugees.
- Second: The vague expansion of the components and content of the identity following the unification of the West Bank and East Bank, during which political, legal and social issues were

<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Al-Ansi was born in Tripoli, Lebanon in 1880. Abdel Latif Shaker was born in Damascus in 1898.

<sup>4</sup> The Jordanian Government intentionally and officially intervened in the establishment of newspapers following its first experience with Al-Sharq Al-Arabi. The second time it intervened was when it entered as partner in the Al-Dustour and Al-Quds newspapers after merging the four daily newspapers that were published in Jerusalem (Al-Manar, Filastin, Al-Jihad, Al-Difa') in 1967. Its third intervention was in 1971 when it intervened in the publication of Al-Ra'y newspaper, which was sold to the private sector in 1974 (Al-Mousa, 1988, p.86).

<sup>5</sup> The Jordanian Government purchased the first printing press to enter Transjordan. It was transported on mules from Jerusalem to Amman in 1923. It printed the newspapers of Al-Sharq Al-Arabi, Al-Shari'ah, Al-Jazirah, and Sada Al-Arab. In 1925, Khalil Nasr established the first printing press for the private sector, through which he published his newspaper, Al-Urdun.

not resolved to finalize the project of building a national state, because the unification was not a democratic choice for the two parties; rather that the Palestinians found themselves forced to adopt this choice (Stefanie, 2008, pp.91-94), which affect the conflict over the identity, which, in turn, escalated in the 1960s with the rise of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fateh) with a political program contrary to the nascent national identity.

- Third: King Hussein's project to reformulate the Jordanian national identity, which saw two historical moments, the first of which saw interactions of an Arab-Jordanian trend, while the second was overtaken by interactions of a Jordanian-Arab trend.
- Fourth: The struggle for the future of the identity, which was erupted by the Palestinian trends, foremost of which was the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fateh), resulting in the point of clash in the events of September 1970.

In all these transformations, two aspects were prevalent. The first was the establishment of Jordanian nationalism and rebuilding the state's media rhetoric on the basis of facts that were more leaning towards the internal Jordanian, and the second was the vagueness of the course of reformulating the national identity. This meant a case of contradiction between rhetoric and practice, which sometimes appeared to be deliberate and intentional (Frish, 2002), or the vague selectivity in dealing with the symbols and meanings of the identity. This put the society in a state of confusion and perplexity. The state was not clear in people's minds and the institutions lacked job specializations. At this stage, Brand describes the formation of a hybrid identity that was neither clearly Transjordanian nor clearly Palestinian. Meanwhile, the conflict with the PLO and the attempt by the official political community to continue the political maneuver on the Palestinian front created reactions from a new elite group that had been trying, since the second half of the 1950s, to formulate a Jordanian nationalism that steers away from the Hashemites. This was the failed attempt of looking for legitimacy in the Arab sphere before entrenching their local legitimacy, meaning the coup d'états attempts led by the free officers.

The media reflects standing situations and contributes to them and it mirrors the nature of the conflict and the distribution of power in the society. As such, the Jordanian media at this stage was expressing a new generation of media to vagueness in the identity's rhetoric. While the official rhetoric focused on continuing the reformulation of the state's identity according to the specifics of each stage, the state's media rhetoric did not move towards the depths of the society in order to melt, integrate and produce an integrated identity that encompassed all of the society's components.

The Press and Publications Law, published in 1953, was characterized by being liberal and lenient<sup>6</sup>. This was accompanied by a political environment that was relatively open to public freedoms. Partisan life and ideological press prospered, creating a state of congestion on the daily and weekly press scene, despite the poor economic capabilities of those newspapers and the fact that they were personal projects. The congestion and the strength of the ideological expression in an atmosphere of pan-Arab expansion resulted in emphasizing the weak role of the press in building the "national identity" and promoting awareness of the cultural, political and legal principles that serve social integration. The circumstances of the unification of the West Bank and the East Bank, which was followed by the pan-Arab regional expansion and local political openness, were all factors that came together and contributed to weakening the job of the press in creating a "national group," i.e. local opinion leaders who would contribute to entrenching the values of common citizenship and an all-encompassing identity in people's consciousness. The political elite were divided between an identity of struggle and an identity of pan-Arab and humanitarian horizon. This made the research Daniel Lerner to dedicate a full chapter in his 1958 book, "The Passing of Traditional Society," describing Jordan as a "country with two peoples." (Lerner, 1959, pp.302-343)

Since the end of the 1950s, the role of Radio Jordan, which was established in 1959<sup>7</sup>, in reformulating the media's role in the making of the integrated Jordanian national identity, started to take shape. It was a role often regarded with admiration. This role had three main aspects:

- First aspect: The attempt to reunify society under the state's vision of the national state and entrenching this through radio content and programs that continued for decades to represent the notion of the central cultural content of the identity and the cultural and social diversity within it. This appeared in programs like "Madafat Abu Mahmoud," which had an extensive audience representing various parts of the society; "Jayshuna Al-Arabi," which contributed to the creating of a highly esteemed mental image of the stature and role of the army as one of the most prominent sources of the all-encompassing national

<sup>6</sup> The Press and Publications Law of 1953 did not preset a large capital as condition for licensing newspapers. It also stipulated litigation before the courts in the event of rejecting a license or if the government obstructs a newspaper more than three days (Al-Mousa, 1998, 112).

<sup>7</sup> Jordanian radio broadcasting started in Ramallah in 1950 under the name of the Jordanian Radio Corporation, which was established using tools and equipment taken over by the Jordanian Army in 1948 from the radio of the British Mandate. In 1956, Amman Radio was inaugurated in Jabal Al-Husseini, and in 1959, the current radio was established.

values; "Rasa'el Shawq," which was a bridge of communication among the Jordanians in the West Bank and East Bank. Moreover, the radio started early on to dedicate time for broadcasting the prayers of the Jordanian Christian communities.

- Second aspect: National symbolization and forming the legitimacy of the Hashemite leadership. The radio was a window for King Hussein to convey the rhetoric of the Jordanian state from an Arab-Islamic-Jordan rhetoric to an Arab-Jordanian rhetoric and then into a Jordanian-Arab rhetoric. This media focus benefited from the radio's characteristics of releasing the vivid imagination and raising hopes, which ultimately gave rise to the notion of "imagined nationalism" in a special model that tried to link Jordanian nationalism with King Hussein's symbolism, which was strongly entrenched in later years and continues to stand strong in the minds of Jordanian generations.
- Third aspect: The role of the song and drama, which were basic radio tools and played a role in shaping the national identity. Haydar Mahmoud<sup>8</sup> describes "Radio Jordan as the central meeting place for political leaders and media practitioners to manufacture song materials and listen to them. It was one of the methods of presenting the political decision, attracting people, and preparing them for the political comment that follows." Moreover, radio drama conveyed heritage and contributed to the society's unification around the state's vision of identity.

At this stage, Radio Jordan was the state's main tool in presenting its rhetoric on the identity. After a short period of time, it became the second largest and most important radio station in the Arab world. While the Amman Radio had the higher voice in the making of the identity, the official rhetoric, however, pushed it into a state of mystery and vagueness. This is clear from the conflict with the Sawt Al-Arab radio when it came to Arab conflicts.

### 2.3 The Mysterious Deflation

This stage (1970-1989) was characterized by the receding role of the media in the course of building the national identity in light of political and strategic transformations after Jordan lost the West Bank and following the events of conflict with the Palestinian organizations in 1970, as well as the Rabat Summit decision in 1974, making the PLO the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. At this stage, the Jordanian economy was positively affected by the rise of oil prices and the increase of Jordanians' remittances,

<sup>8</sup> Jordanian poet and literary person, former minister, former director of Radio Jordan.

which continued to the mid 1980s leading to the decision of administrative and legal disengagement with the West Bank in 1988.

The role of the media at this stage can be described as conservative. The majority of media outlets were controlled by the state, and the media simply expressed the visions of the consecutive governments. The cohesion of the state's address on the identity receded and it started to reflect the positions of the Jordanian governments. The most prominent media event at this stage was probably the publication of Al-Ra'y newspaper, which came about after the Wasfi Al-Tal government understood the effects of the 1967 law to merge the newspapers and the state's need for a newspaper that would be the government's mouthpiece (Abu-Arja, 2000, p.219). Additionally, the television contributed to shaping the national identity as tailored to the measurements of this stage, and it became the state's strong arm in efforts to unify society behind the state's objectives.

Also during this stage, Jordanian drama prospered, attempting to reflect the state's vision of the national identity at that time. This formed the foundation for "bedouinizing" the Jordanian society by focusing on Bedouin drama. It cannot be said for certain whether the Bedouin drama featured political content and objectives, but it did, practically, contribute to the stereotype that was used by the media to reflect the Jordanian society.

### 2.4 The Mysterious Openness

At this stage (1989-2015), the country experienced several transformations, the most important of which was the political openness in the aftermath of the 1989 events. This included the return of parliamentary and political party life, the growth of media freedoms, the restructuring of the national economy, the launch of the political settlement, the transfer of authority from the late King Hussein Bin Talal to King Abdullah II, leading to the Arab revolutions. All these transformations have affected, in various degrees, the role of the media in the continuing course of shaping the Jordanian identity on the basis of the resilient vagueness.

In the 1990s, the country saw media openness and a state of instability in media legislation (Shuqair, 2011, pp.29-30). This contributed to relax the government institutions' grip on the media outlets after the private sector was permitted to invest in the audio-visual sector according to the 2002 law (Ibid., p.61) and in the aftermath of the prosperity of the online media and digital media applications. This has provided an environment suitable for the rise of new expressions related to the identity in a climate of movement towards political reforms, the promise of which remained elusive for two decades.

During this stage, the job of the media outlets was extensive in the area of managing sharp dialogues about national identity and citizenship. Since the 1990s, the

Jordanian Al-Ra'y newspaper, through writers' articles, offered heavy doses of dialogues and interactions on threat sources to the identity and the definition of the citizenship for the two Jordanian categories (East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin). In time, the ban and political censorship were lifted off these discussions, which media outlets did not know before (Stefanie, 2008). Three types of rhetoric emerged clearly and they were reflected by the media and considered by the elite from a political viewpoint.

First: The rhetoric of the state and its media institutions, which had kept silent for a long time about the media's debates, while the official media's rhetoric stopped at the traditional concept of the national identity, which itself was as vague as that of the position vis-à-vis the belonging of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, considering the matter as postponed and related to the conclusion of the Palestinian cause. The media's rhetoric focused on providing an image for the integrated identity, which was strongly presented in quotes entrenched and emphasized by King Hussein's political speeches. These included: "Jordanians are of all origins and backgrounds"; "Jordanians of the migrants and supporters"; "National unity is a red line."

Second: The rhetoric of the East Bank Jordanian elite, which presented media content varied in the extent of accepting the other Jordanian of Palestinian origin. This reflected an ideological formula of Jordanian nationalism, which accepted all backgrounds within the frame of Jordanian nationalism as long as it included loyalty and belonging to this national identity. This rhetoric showed increased concerns and worries since the 1980s as a result of the Israeli right-wing party's promotion of the idea of the alternative homeland and arguing that "Palestine is Jordan." This, in turn, created a strong reaction, which was reflected in media content since the 1990s and increased significantly in the following decade towards emphasizing the national pan-Arab distinction from Palestine amid political, cultural and social expressions that found in the media a very welcome refuge. This situation was repeated with strength as the talk of political reform in the Middle East became clearer, something that was understood by a large part of Jordanians as being a recipe to strike down the national identity.<sup>9</sup>

Third: The rhetoric of citizenship, which was represented by the Jordanians of Palestinian origin and who found in the media openness since the 1990s a perfect opportunity to express the "incomplete rights" in terms of parliamentary representation and access to high-ranking jobs in state institutions, as well as in military and security establishments. This was explained by Adnan

Abou Odeh in one of his publications in the late 1990s (Abu-Odeh, 1999).

### 3. THE MEDIA AND STEREOTYPING THE JORDANIAN IDENTITY

The decades of the Cold War constituted a broad testing ground for the media's ability to shape mental and stereotypical images<sup>10</sup> in the ideological struggle of the identities. Various levels of producing and defining "the other" have flourished, from the other being "the enemy" to the other being "the close neighbor." This was framed by controlling the trends of media and advertising contents, the ability of the media to set the society's priorities, the nature of news consumption, and the way the media contributes to crisis management, and the methods of framing ideas and positions that together feed into an accumulation, which ultimately creates the mental images and stereotypes about identity.

The Jordanian identity, in its multiple paths, saw systematic and semi-systematic stereotyping processes, in which the Jordanian, Arab and international media contributed to various extents. The media presented four basic realms of stereotypes.

#### 3.1 The Stereotype of the Establishment

The media practiced stereotyping through two images. The first was the official image, portrayed by the state through its own media outlets. This image had an Arab slant, based on the Great Arab Revolt and open to the world. The second image was portrayed by Arab media and Arab ideologists and domestic supporters, as well as western and Israeli media and academic writings. This image linked the identity of the state to colonial industry, greatly exaggerating the role of colonial circles in establishing the Jordanian state and shaping its identity. This image progressed over the later decades and was similarly applied to the identity of Jordan's relationship with western projects in the region.

#### 3.2 The Stereotype of the Integrated Identity

King Hussein greatly benefited from the experiences of his grandfather, King Abdullah, and he tried to reproduce the integrated national identity in more than one historical occasion. He veered away from elimination and exclusion, even if it was by carrying out a symbolic celebration. During the eras of King Hussein and King Abdullah II,

<sup>9</sup> The concept of "representative justice" means representing citizens in representative institutions (parliament, municipalities, local councils, unions, and others) and in high-ranking state jobs in a manner that reflects the demographic reality.

<sup>10</sup> The well-known American political commentator, Walter Lippmann, was the first to introduce the term "stereotype" into the field of social sciences through his 1922 book, "The Public Opinion." He defines stereotypes as "The common mental images that a group of individuals have and that often comprised a simplified, diminished or distorted opinion, or an emotional attitude towards a person or a general issue." The term "stereotype" comes from the printing technology, which is a name of the metal printing board that is used to print hundreds and thousands of copies or matching images without the need to change it (Barakat, 1999, pp.103-108).



the media contributed to the creation of stereotypes or images about the national identity, each of which had its own political and cultural objectives. The most significant of these stereotypes are:

### **3.2.1 The Image of the One Jordanian Family**

King Hussein launched the expression “the one Jordanian family” for the first time in 1956 amidst a state of sharp contradiction and polarization between modernization on one hand and traditionalism on the other and between modernization on one hand and stability on the other (Tweissi, 2011). This expression became one of the keys used by the state’s media rhetoric to defend the national identity. Early on, Radio Jordan had a role in entrenching this expression in the state’s media rhetoric, while the media rhetoric targeting the domestic scene was characterized by the father figure caring for the one family (Frish, 2002). With the escalation of controversy over the identity, this rhetoric used this particular image in the protection of national unity.

### **3.2.2 The Image of the “Muhajirin” and “Al-Ansar”**

This is an image for rhetoric with Islamic overtones used by the media to express the relationships among the components of the Jordanian national identity. It spoke of the Jordanians who received the Palestinian refugees, symbolizing the former to the “al-ansar” or supporters, who followed the prophet in his migration to Medina Munawara, and the latter to the “muhajirin” or migrants.

This image flourished in the 1970s as the Islamic Movement contributed to its strength, among other presentations that were used in the media rhetoric. The Islamic Movement’s media rhetoric used these image to express its rejection of the administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank.

### **3.2.3 The Ideo of Varied Origins and Backgrounds**

King Hussein set off the expression of “Jordanians of different origins and backgrounds” in the beginning of the 1990s in a prevailing atmosphere of wide scale domestic and regional challenges and after the decision of administrative and legal disengagement with the West Bank. The expression was designed to encourage mobilization in the interest of domestic national unity. The expression became a media framework for portraying the multi-root national identity. It was an image that media consumption ultimately turned into a broad and loose portrayal of the components of the Jordanian identity.

## **3.3 The Stereotype of Bedouins and Tribes**

### **3.3.1 The Bedouin and Tribal Identity**

For economic and political, as well as other purposes, the official media’s rhetoric promoted the image of the Bedouin society as representing that of the Jordanian society, bypassing social and cultural facts and the stage of modernization that the society went through. This image

started towards the end of the 1950s by reviving Bedouin songs and folkloric programs, and continued through the 1970s and 1980s by utilizing media tools and multiple content, including television drama, which Jordan became famous for and which stereotyped the Jordanian person as a Bedouin character, despite the volume of social and cultural change seen within the Jordanian society.

There are several explanations for this image and stereotype, including the state adopting traditional colonialist tools, which were based on raising the stature of Bedouins and making them one of the pivots of the national identity (Massad, 2001, pp.105-111) for political objectives and to maintain a status of distinction and classification within the Jordanian identity. Another viewpoint argued that the official media’s rhetoric sought to emphasize the modernization of the Jordanian society in terms of the quality of life, but, at the same time, preserve the positive values of Bedouin life (Zubeidi, 2009).

Despite the diminishing role of tribes in social life, which is their natural scope, and following a series of measures that contributed to marginalizing loyalty to tribes in favor of loyalty to the state, which was evident from the cancellation of tribal norms and laws, there was revival of a new pattern of tribalism in the Jordanian society, which took a political aspect and which flourished since the return of parliamentary life and political openness in the 1990s and found direct resonance in the media’s rhetoric. Here, the power of the media becomes clear as it re-shaped the identity and linked it to the prevailing tribal trend.

### **3.3.2 The Image of the Minority and the Majority**

The international media and some Arab media outlets presented a stereotypical image of the demographic makeup of the Jordanian state by portraying the Jordanian society as having a Palestinian majority and a Jordanian Bedouin minority. This image was perpetuated by the continuing official vagueness in this regard.

The roots of this image date back to population estimates after the unification of the West Bank and the East Bank. At that time, the population of the new state was estimated to be two-thirds in the West Bank in Palestine and one-third of Jordanians. This has inevitably changed with the occupation of the West Bank. The proponents of the Jordanian East Bank identity criticize this idea as being one of the tools to promote the alternative homeland and to say that the Palestinian state is actually in Jordan. Meanwhile, the other side uses that idea to refer to political marginalization.

## **3.4 The New Stereotype**

The new public arena, which the country came to know since the early 1990s as a result of the political openness and political transformations, provided new and unfamiliar opportunities for media expressions about the content of the identity. This followed the undoing of

the state's monopoly of some media outlets, leading to the proliferation of radio and television stations owned by the private sector, as well as the spread of the online media.<sup>11</sup>

Political developments, in this new media environment, contributed to spread new mental images and stereotypes about identity. The Jordanian media outlets saw successive waves of debate about identity, citizenship and reform, and these debates were the most extensive and bold, and were not completely devoid of an exchange of moral violence, most of which revolving around the issue of relationships between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Some of the new images included the following:

- The image of political reform that targets national identity and paves the way for the Israeli right-wing's idea of the "alternative homeland." The concept of reform for a large part of the Jordanians became "le nom de guerre" for the idea of the alternative homeland.
- The image of the racist national identity: The congestion of online media and internet-based social networks, as well as the political openness, contributed to the escalation of expressions countering traditional expressions of the Jordanian national identity, by linking it to racism in practices, traditions, contents, and symbols.

Some of these trends described the existence of mutually accusatory media rhetoric between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin as both parties exchanged accusations of racism. Meanwhile, the accusation of racism for the Jordanian national identity with its realistic expressions found extensive room in the new media. This applied as well to the local cultural expressions and the symbols of the identity in terms of the dress, the dialect and the food. Indeed, some East Bank Jordanians accused the counter rhetoric as portraying "love of Jordan and belonging to its identity as being one form of racism." On the opposite side, Jordanians of Palestinian origin argued that "East Bank Jordanians define the Jordanian as being any non-Palestinian person." (Stefanie, 2008, pp.86-92)

In this context, some media outlets in recent years were extensively criticized, especially the semi-official radio stations, for broadcasting songs and programs that glorified all that is Jordanian and undermined everything else. They warned of the risk of growing violence and racism.

Additionally, some Jordanian writers of Palestinian origin contributed articles to Israeli and western newspapers, and their writings were markedly intense,

<sup>11</sup> The Audio-Visual Law was issued in 2002, allowing the establishment of private radio and television stations for the first time. In 2012, there were 26 radio stations and more than 160 news websites in Jordan.

leaning towards the same fears expressed by the other party with regard to the national identity.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. THE CONTEMPORARY JORDANIAN MEDIA AND THE IDENTITY CRISIS

Recent years since the beginning of the new century saw the intensification of expression about the identity crisis in the Jordanian media, and Jordanian journalists and activists transported this heavy discussion into the international media.

The severity of polarization reached the point where King Abdullah II, on more than one occasion, warned of the "hate speech" in references to the major effects left behind by the severe media debates among the elite and the social and political powers.<sup>13</sup>

During these years, the political backgrounds around which the media debates over the identity took place were repeated, although they appeared to be more in-depth and intense than before. These backgrounds can be summarized in an intersected package of issues and attitudes, all of which converge into the identity crisis, which is the creator of the square-like crisis in the political rhetoric as reflected by the media (identity -

<sup>12</sup> Several Jordanian writers of Palestinian origin wrote provocative articles that tended to poke the fears and concerns that threaten the national identity and the idea of the alternative homeland. These included writings by Mudar Zahran in the Israeli Yediot Aharonot newspaper and the Middle East Quarterly Journal, such as the article entitled "Jordan facing a civil war," in which he wrote: "King 'Abdullah is in a bad state due to the transformations experienced by the Jordanian tribes that control the rule and the army and that are demanding more authority and privileges. They are asking the king for a constitutional monarchy that is tailored to serve their interests. They stage demonstrations demanding the expulsion of the Palestinians. The king may find himself in confrontation between the Palestinian majority and the Bedouin minority, and having to surrender more concessions regarding his authority." [Mudar Zahra, Jordan Facing Civil War? Stoegate Institute, April 4, 2011]. Another example is Zahran's article entitled "Jordan is Palestine" in the Middle East Quarterly, in which he wrote: "The relative calm in Amman is an illusion. The unspoken truth is that the Palestinians, the country's largest ethnic group, have developed a profound hatred of the regime and view the Hashemites as occupiers of eastern Palestine—intruders rather than legitimate rulers. This, in turn, makes a regime change in Jordan more likely than ever. Such a change, however, would not only be confined to the toppling of yet another Arab despot but would also open the door to the only viable peace solution—and one that has effectively existed for quite some time: a Palestinian state in Jordan." [Muder Zahran (2012) Jordan Is Palestinian. Middle East Quarterly, winter, 2012, pp.3-12].

<sup>13</sup> "We want a media that can carry the message of freedom and reform, optimise the accomplishments of our country and protect national unity and the relationship among Jordanians and that with the state based on citizenship founded on justice, respect for the law and a guarantee of public freedoms and human dignity. I would like to warn of the deterioration of political and media discourse into one that aims to trigger hatred. I will not accept any infringement on the freedom of Jordanians, their dignity or national unity, and I emphasise my opposition to chaos that leads to destruction." [Excerpt from King Abdullah II's speech on June 12, 2011].

reform - citizenship - alternative homeland). The most important of these is the position vis-à-vis the goals of political reform and concerns for the national identity, which is in itself the position regarding the representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in representative establishments, most importantly parliament and public sector jobs, namely the actual context of the concept of citizenship in the media rhetoric for this part of society. In turn, all these intersecting issues come together in the idea of the alternative homeland that Israel has been managing, promotionally and in the media, since the early 1980s.

The state's contemporary official media rhetoric on the issue of the identity is divided into two levels. The first level, which is the rhetoric targeting the domestic scene, is focused on the idea of national unity and the all-encompassing identity that all Jordanians take part in shaping. This rhetoric also rejects the idea of the alternative homeland, describing it as an illusion, and refuses the obsessive concern for the identity.

The second level, which is the rhetoric targeting the regional scene, is focused on internal national unity and cohesion and is constantly remembering the refugee issue and the right of return. This is seen repetitively in the address on the international scene, which attempts to strengthen the idea that the Jordanian state is protective of diversity and plurality within the national fabric.

As for the independent media, which are managed by the public and civil sectors, three levels for the media rhetoric could be distinguished on the issue of the identity:

- a) The media rhetoric is represented by a group of journalists and media practitioners, most of whom are East Bank Jordanians. They represent the concern for the identity and warn of the idea of the alternative homeland and of reform turning into a mere façade to harm the identity. This rhetoric sometimes includes exaggeration and political utilization.
- b) The citizenship rhetoric is represented by a group of Jordanians, most of whom of Palestinian origin. This group talks about incomplete rights and fair representation in state institutions, and reject marginalization.
- c) The reform rhetoric is presented by a fairer group that tries to present a balanced media rhetoric in between the proponents of the identity and those of the citizenship. This political sorting is limited to the journalists themselves and it does not represent the media institutions they work for, as the latter try to keep their distance and not be linked to any particular side.

The political and social crisis in the past decade led to the growth of a media rhetoric that contributed to the rise of sub-identities. This was evident as local media outlets, especially the new media, online social media, and some radio stations, transformed into incubators for sub-identities, which raised and stirred harsh expressions

as part of attempts to grow region-based identities, tribal identities, and, sometimes, religious identities.

The relative political openness led to changing some of the rules of the local political game. This made the elite, with their various intellectual, political and cultural references, find in the media a wide area for highlighting capabilities, achieving stature, and catching attention. The identity issue, at this stage, provided rich material for the elite to prove their presence through the media.

As in previous stages, ideology-based elites, which do not necessarily express the reality in the society, manage severe and intense debates and discussions through the media. The intensity of these debates is increased with the spread of new media and electronic media, allowing room for interaction by a wide anonymous public.

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## CONCLUSION

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This study examined the media and the path of building and shaping the state in Jordan from the perspective of the identity crisis. The study concluded that the media's relationship with shaping the Jordanian national identity throughout history is a thorny and vague one in most stages as a result of the nature of transformations undergone by the state and society and of the regional circumstances that have cast their shadow on the demographic identity of the Jordanian society. While the media-political vagueness has actually served the path of constructing the identity at some stages, it has currently lost this privilege.

The study viewed the identity related rhetoric in the Jordanian media and its many expressions and stereotypes that were reflected by the media, as well as the media's contribution in reflecting the identity crisis that was expressed by the elite and that formed an aspect of the public space.

The study concluded a group of suggestions that will benefit in activating the media's constructive role in the path of developing and entrenching the all-encompassing national identity, through good practices based on the experiences of other societies, albeit tailored to the specifications of the Jordanian case.

These principles were represented by history and central culture, diversity and pluralism within the fabric of unity, media localism, development of media professionalism and quality, and a media agenda based on a set of media policies that seek to develop a constructive perspective for the all-encompassing national identity to ensure the media's serious and professional contribution on the basis of principles of social responsibility, scientific planning, and human rights principles.

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