

“The Jordanian National Narrative: The Narrative Between Popular Culture and Media”

(On the Eightieth Anniversary of Jordanian Independence)

Researchers:

Dr. Munther Jaradat
Eng. Aseel Mousa Matar
Ms. Amal Al-Masri

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possesses a high capacity for continuity and self-reproduction in response to contemporary political, social, and cultural transformations. The results also showed that the Jordanian national narrative is based on a deep historical legacy that has contributed to strengthening national identity and consolidating national belonging within Jordanian society. The research also revealed that preserving the national narrative is not limited to official institutions, but rather represents a shared societal responsibility in which the roles of the state and society are integrated. The research concluded that social memory and oral narratives play a significant role in the continuity of the national narrative and enhancing its presence in the Jordanian collective consciousness, and that the Hashemite leadership has constituted a pivotal element in building the Jordanian national narrative and reinforcing the values of stability and national unity. The relationship between the Hashemite leadership and Jordanian society has contributed to consolidating the image of the state and strengthening social cohesion within the Jordanian national narrative.

Keywords: Narrative, National Identity, Popular Narrative, Media, Hashemite Leadership.

Abstract:

This research aimed to present a comprehensive analytical framework that combines historical perspectives with integrated critical readings to address the concept of the Jordanian national narrative, including its development and origins, its social and cultural dimensions, and its contemporary challenges. To achieve these objectives, the research adopted a descriptive approach to construct a conceptual framework based on a set of references related to history and national identity. This framework aimed to develop a deep theoretical understanding of this concept within the broader Arab context and the specific Jordanian context. To enhance the theoretical and historical analysis, the researchers conducted a qualitative interview with a prominent national figure with expertise in Jordanian history and society. This interview, conducted by photographer Zohrab Markarian, one of the most prominent documenters of modern Jordanian history and the personal photographer of the late King Hussein bin Talal for over twenty-two years, aimed to support the interpretation and analysis and connect theoretical dimensions to the real-world context. The research findings demonstrate that the Jordanian national narrative

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Introduction:

The national narrative is considered a fundamental pillar in shaping the identity of nations. It represents the framework that encompasses and preserves the story of the homeland, its historical events across time, its national symbols, the sacrifices of

its people, and its deeply rooted values that influence individuals' awareness and sense of belonging. In its profound sense, the national narrative is not merely confined to documenting the history of the nation; rather, it transcends this role to become a process through which the past is reinterpreted in ways that serve the present and envision a distinguished future. It is the instrument that strengthens national unity and reinforces loyalty and belonging to the homeland and its leadership.

Within the Jordanian context, the national narrative reflects the journey of state-building since the founding era, with all its challenges and hardships, leading to a stage of stability and development. This narrative becomes especially evident during national occasions, foremost among them the anniversary of Jordanian Independence Day, commemorated on the twenty-fifth of May, the day on which free will prevailed and the Jordanian flag was raised proudly among nations. Eighty years of dignity, achievement, pride, generosity, and values. Eighty years during which Jordan has advanced confidently under its wise Hashemite leadership.

The national narrative is embodied in its noblest meanings through the Hashemite leadership, which has carried the responsibility of building the state, safeguarding its dignity, and preserving its identity and standing. Since its establishment, the journey of the nation has been closely associated with a wise vision and leadership that derived its authenticity and legitimacy from history (Al-Ibrahim, 2016; Al-Majali, 2018), and consolidated its position through achievement and dedication. Consequently, the national narrative has become a noble story that embodies the meanings of construction, perseverance, and struggle.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, may God protect him, the national narrative continues to renew itself through a contemporary spirit grounded in enduring principles and directed toward a future based on development, human empowerment, and the rule of law. The vision of His Majesty King Abdullah II has consistently served as a clear roadmap for strengthening Jordan's position and preserving its security and stability at both the regional and international levels, in harmony with the values and traditions upon which the Jordanian state was founded.

Alongside the role of His Majesty King Abdullah II, the role of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II emerges as the steadfast extension of this narrative and the bearer of the nation's future aspirations. Crown Prince Al Hussein embodies the model of the ambitious Jordanian youth striving toward knowledge, education, and innovation. His active presence across various fields reflects a renewed image of the national narrative—one that harmonizes the authenticity of the past, the dynamism of the present, and the aspirations of a brighter future.

In this context, it is impossible not to recall the great legacy left by the departed Hashemite leaders, foremost among them the late King Hussein bin Talal, may he rest in peace, who led the nation with wisdom and distinction and presented an exceptional model of wise leadership through strengthening national unity. Equally remembered with pride and appreciation is the significant historical role of the late King Abdullah I bin Al Hussein, the founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who laid the foundational pillars of the Jordanian state and played a pivotal role in shaping Jordanian national identity.

Accordingly, the national narrative represents a historical story through which the living journey of successive Hashemite leadership is manifested, a leadership that has inherited and transmitted the values of renaissance, dignity, pride, loyalty, belonging, and progress. It further affirms that Jordan, under its wise leadership and with its great people, continues to move steadily toward a prosperous future, firmly grounded in its rich heritage and renewed vision.

To strengthen the theoretical and historical analysis, the researchers conducted a qualitative interview with a national figure possessing extensive expertise and knowledge of Jordan's historical and social affairs. The aim was to support the interpretation and analysis while linking the theoretical dimensions to the lived reality. This figure was the photographer Zahrab Markarian, one of the most prominent documentarians of modern Jordanian history, who served as the personal photographer to the late King Hussein bin Talal for more than twenty-two years. This unique position enabled him to witness numerous national, political, and social milestones firsthand and to provide valuable narratives that contribute to a deeper understanding of the dimensions of the Jordanian national narrative and the social memory associated with it.

The significance of the present study stems from the subject it addresses, including the concept of the national narrative, which is considered a relatively modern concept within the field of historical and cultural studies. Despite its implicit presence in certain articles and writings, the concept has not received sufficient scholarly attention within the Jordanian context. The existing literature largely remains confined to general discussions or partial treatments that require further research, theoretical grounding, and analytical depth. Accordingly, the present study represents an important attempt to bridge this research gap within the existing theoretical literature by offering a comprehensive analytical framework that combines

historical perspective with integrated critical analysis in order to examine the concept of the Jordanian national narrative, including its origins, development, social and cultural dimensions, and contemporary challenges.

The importance of the present study also lies in the fact that it does not merely provide a descriptive analysis of the term national narrative; rather, it seeks to construct a conceptual framework grounded in a range of references related to history and national identity. Furthermore, it aspires to contribute effectively to the advancement of a deeper theoretical understanding of this concept within the Arab context in general and the Jordanian context in particular. It is hoped that this study will enrich both the Arab and Jordanian scholarly libraries with a modern academic reference that may serve future scientific research related to this field, thereby contributing to the enrichment of academic knowledge and scientific inquiry within this vital area of study.

The Concept of National Narrative and Identity in Historical Studies

Historical narrative has gained increasing importance within contemporary studies, as history is no longer viewed merely as a means of describing historical events and recounting facts sequentially; rather, it has become a complex process through which the story of the past is constructed (Muhafazah, 1973). The concept of the national narrative has thus emerged as an analytical framework that enables researchers to understand how history is formed and how events and facts are organized in ways that grant the past its authentic meaning and clear significance.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the concept of historical narrative has evolved as a result of the emergence of diverse approaches to historiography. Historians began presenting multiple perspectives regarding the nature of historical knowledge, the mechanisms of writing history, and the interpretation of historical events. They emphasized that writing history is not limited to collecting documents and arranging events chronologically; rather, it also requires organizing these events and presenting them within a narrative structure that reflects the depth and authenticity of the past. Consequently, historical narrative came to be understood as a collection of diverse forms representing the past within a particular context influenced by the prevailing cultural, political, and social factors of the time.

The national narrative emerges as a fundamental concept concerned with examining the relationship between history and identity. Modern states, within the framework of intellectual and political transformation, rely on numerous factors to establish internal cohesion, including legal and political institutions, as well as a shared historical narrative upon which the interpretation of the nation's origins is based. This narrative serves as a collective conception that reflects the substance of the past and constitutes the symbolic foundation of national identity (Jaradat, 2022; Al-Kasasbeh, 2023).

A variety of factors play a significant role in shaping the national narrative, including historical events, leadership figures, and cultural symbols. These factors interact and overlap to form a coherent narrative structure that expresses the essence of national history and grants symbolic dimensions to historical events. Hence, the national narrative is not merely a retelling of history; rather, it is a process through which collective memory is constructed and through which pivotal moments and events that influenced the nation's history and highlighted its national identity are articulated. National identity requires a long-term interaction between history, memory, and culture. In other words, national identity does not emerge spontaneously; instead, it connects members of society to a shared history that fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among them (Abdul Wahab, 2021).

Through various cultural and educational institutions, modern states and their leaderships seek to reinforce the national narrative, whether through educational curricula or communication and media channels. These institutions bear the responsibility of transmitting history to current and future generations in order to ensure the consolidation of historical consciousness among them (Tahboub, 2022). This process cannot be carried out in an isolated or individual manner; rather, it requires the collective efforts of institutions and social groups to actively contribute to reproducing narratives through popular memory and the social stories circulated among members of society. This clearly demonstrates the close relationship between written history and social memory. While history is transmitted through documents, records, and written sources, social memory relies primarily on narratives exchanged among individuals that reflect the collective experiences lived by society. Such narratives constitute an essential component in shaping society's perception of its past.

As a result of the intersection between history and social memory, increasing attention has been devoted to examining the relationship between official recorded history and popular social memory. History necessarily depends on written sources and documented records to interpret events and facts, whereas social narrative focuses on the human experience that conveys society's perceptions, often adding symbolic or emotional dimensions to these experiences. Nevertheless, the existence of

differences between history and popular social memory does not imply contradiction between them; rather, popular social narratives may be relied upon to explain how members of society perceive their history and construct their understanding of it.

According to comparative historical studies, the study of national narratives has, in some cases, been closely associated with the emergence of the modern state. For instance, nineteenth-century nationalist movements in Europe played a significant role in rewriting national history in ways that strengthened a sense of national belonging. This, in turn, encouraged an increase in historical studies aimed at highlighting the historical roots of European nations and emphasizing their continuity across time (Bin Issa, 2021). In the Arab world, the period of liberation from colonial domination and the emergence of nation-states in the twentieth century marked the beginning of the construction of national narratives. Newly independent states were keen to highlight the roles of their leaders, national figures, and liberation movements in achieving independence and ending colonial rule through the production of corresponding historical accounts. These historical narratives subsequently became an integral part of national memory, emphasizing the nation-building phase and being transmitted through media channels and educational curricula.

Accordingly, it can be affirmed that the Jordanian national narrative was shaped as a result of the political transformations associated with the establishment of the Jordanian state during the twentieth century. These transformations contributed to the crystallization of the historical narrative from which the Jordanian state emerged and through which its stages of development evolved under varying local, regional, and international influences. Within this context, numerous historical events played a role in shaping the Jordanian national narrative, including the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan, the Great Arab Revolt, and the political and cultural transformations witnessed by Jordan in subsequent periods and years. These transformations confirm that the Jordanian narrative did not emerge abruptly or spontaneously; rather, it was influenced by a wide range of political, social, and cultural factors. The Jordanian state played a significant role in constructing this narrative and emphasizing its importance and fundamental components, in addition to the role of Jordanian society, which transmitted this narrative through its popular stories and social traditions that contributed to preserving the authenticity and spirit of history.

The study and analysis of the national narrative cannot rely solely on historical events and official historical discourse; it also requires the examination of popular social narratives deeply rooted in collective memory, which have played a prominent role in shaping national identity within Jordanian society. This indicates that the national narrative represents the product of interaction between the state and society, whereby historical documents intersect with historical memory and popular narratives to form a shared perception that reflects historical transformations. This interactive framework constitutes the foundation upon which the present study is based in analyzing the Jordanian national narrative, as such interaction necessarily contributes to understanding the relationship between history and memory, which represents the central axis of national narrative studies in contemporary societies.

The Historical Development of the Jordanian National Narrative

The Jordanian national narrative emerged and evolved amid the numerous transformations that reshaped the Arab East during the early twentieth century. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, along with the emergence of new political entities, contributed significantly to redefining the political landscape of the Arab region and shaping its national and social identities. Within this context, the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 represented a prominent political entity born out of the political transformations experienced across the Arab world. With its establishment began the journey of building the Jordanian state and forming the national narrative that emerged from it (Al-Madi & Al-Mousa, 2021). This supports what has previously been emphasized in the present study: namely, that the national narrative does not emerge suddenly, but rather develops through a continuous historical process in which political, social, and cultural factors intersect. The Emirate of Transjordan constituted the foundational pillar upon which the national narrative was built, while subsequent historical events contributed to its development and reformulation in ways that corresponded with the transformations, changes, and developments experienced by both the Jordanian state and Jordanian society as a whole.

First: The Great Arab Revolt and Historical Legitimacy

The outbreak of the Great Arab Revolt in 1916 represented a fundamental pillar in the construction of the historical national narrative that played an influential role in the formation of the modern Jordanian state. This revolt was not merely a transformative milestone for Jordan alone; rather, it constituted a major turning point for the entire Arab Mashreq.

Historically, it has been portrayed as the movement that brought Ottoman rule in the Arab region to an end and contributed to the establishment and independence of Arab states.

The emergence of the Jordanian state was closely linked to the Great Arab Revolt, as the founder of the Jordanian state belonged to the Hashemite family, which led the revolt. This affiliation granted the Jordanian national narrative a profound historical dimension that extended beyond the boundaries of the modern state. Consequently, the Great Arab Revolt became an inseparable part of the national historical background upon which the legitimacy of the Jordanian state was founded.

Within this context, the Great Arab Revolt came to be presented as the starting point of the broader project that ultimately contributed to the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 (Badran, 2024). This central symbol has been consistently documented and reinforced through educational curricula and national celebrations that emphasize the significance of the Great Arab Revolt in shaping Jordanian national identity.

Second: The Historical Context of the Establishment of the Jordanian State

The Emirate of Transjordan was established within a complex regional political framework and as a result of the political arrangements that followed the end of the First World War and the partition of the Arab Mashreq. With the arrival of Prince Abdullah bin Al Hussein to the region of Transjordan in 1921, a new phase began that constituted a major turning point and a pivotal moment in Jordanian history. This phase centered on the construction of a stable political entity through the establishment of administrative and military institutions responsible for managing and organizing state affairs. This period witnessed numerous significant achievements and tremendous efforts that contributed to the formation of the modern institutions of the Emirate, including the establishment of a central administrative apparatus, the organization of the Jordanian Armed Forces, and the creation of governmental institutions that became foundational pillars of the Jordanian state. These institutions assumed responsibility for regulating political, economic, and cultural life within the Emirate of Transjordan.

This stage represented the starting point from which the historical narrative associated with the founding of the Emirate began to emerge, eventually becoming a fundamental pillar of the Jordanian national narrative. It emphasized the profound and wise role of the Hashemite leadership in building the Jordanian state and establishing the foundations of political stability within the region. Accordingly, the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan represented the historical founding moment of the modern Jordanian state.

Third: Building Modern Institutions

The process of building modern institutions contributed significantly to consolidating the state within Jordanian society. These institutions acquired a central role in strengthening citizens' sense of belonging to the homeland and its leadership, particularly amid the economic, social, and cultural developments experienced by the state. Within this context, the institutions of the Jordanian Armed Forces are regarded as among the most prominent symbols of the modern Jordanian state. The Jordanian army recorded important historical milestones across the Arab region, defending the homeland courageously against colonial ambitions and reinforcing the concept of statehood within society. Consequently, the Jordanian national narrative portrayed the armed forces as one of the fundamental pillars of the state.

It is also essential to highlight the role of educational and cultural institutions in fostering national consciousness and loyalty among younger generations. These institutions—including schools and universities—transmitted the historical narrative of the state through educational curricula and communication platforms that highlighted the milestones of Jordanian history since the earliest stages of the state's establishment.

Fourth: Pivotal Historical Events and Their Role in Strengthening the Presence of the Jordanian National Narrative

A number of significant historical events constituted major turning points in shaping the Jordanian national narrative, including the 1948 War, which profoundly affected Jordan's political and demographic reality, and the 1967 War, which introduced numerous challenges that contributed to redefining the priorities of the Jordanian state and strengthening the internal front. These events represented a test of the Jordanian state's resilience in confronting surrounding crises.

The events of 1968 also represented a central phase in Jordan's national history, as the country witnessed the Battle of Karameh, which became immortalized within the national memory. The battle reflected the capability of the Jordanian state, under its Hashemite leadership, to defend the nation, confront regional challenges, and reinforce national dignity. It also consolidated the image of Jordan as a proud and steadfast nation capable of protecting its territory. These historical events became enduring central symbols within the national memory and continue to be invoked as models embodying steadfastness, confidence, determination, and sovereignty.

Fifth: Modern Political Transformations

Jordanian national discourse has been influenced by a series of modern political transformations since the late 1980s, including the resumption of parliamentary life in 1989, which opened the door to broad discussions concerning national identity and introduced new interpretations of certain historical events.

Jordanian society also witnessed a significant expansion in media and cultural spaces, contributing to the diversification of narratives surrounding the nation's rich history. These transformations promoted greater openness and led to the reformulation of certain elements of the national narrative within the context of public discourse associated with the social experiences of Jordanian society. Despite this openness, the fundamental components of the national narrative remained unaffected; indeed, it may be argued that they became even more firmly rooted and increasingly connected to the role of the Hashemite leadership in preserving national security and stability, supporting political order, and commemorating the historical events that represented critical turning points in the history of the national narrative.

Pivotal transformations are not limited solely to wars and conflicts; they also include milestones that contributed to the building of the modern state and the strengthening of its economic standing and competitiveness. Jordan has witnessed an important journey of reform and development at both the political and economic levels through the advancement of state institutions, the enhancement of Jordan's regional and international role, and the consolidation of the principles of justice and moderation that characterize Jordan's wise political approach.

Collectively, these events and transformations contributed to shaping the integrated fabric of the Jordanian national narrative. Within this narrative, the meanings of resilience, sacrifice, and values became deeply intertwined, presenting a distinguished image of a nation that, through its wise leadership and cohesive people, demonstrated the ability to transform challenges and hardships into opportunities and capabilities that shaped its rich national history and strengthened the enduring presence of the Jordanian state across generations.

The Role of Popular Narratives and Social Memory in Shaping the Jordanian National Narrative

Understanding history and the nation's rich past does not rely solely on reviewing historical documents and academic writings; it also depends on social memory, which reflects the image that members of society construct regarding the past. Individuals preserve popular narratives within their collective consciousness, transmit them across generations, and express them through their own language and distinctive forms of expression. Consequently, these narratives become influenced by the surrounding social, cultural, and political conditions.

Given that Jordanian society places special importance on customs and traditions, popular memory has constituted an important source for transmitting the nation's rich history across generations. These narratives have contributed to consolidating national identity and constructing a social perception of national history and the historical events experienced by Jordanian society. The social narratives embedded within popular memory are not merely stories circulated among individuals; rather, they often reflect the manner in which society perceives the history of the state itself.

First: The Concept of Collective (Social) Memory in Historical Studies

The concept of collective memory has represented an important framework for understanding the relationship between society and history (the past), as it reflects the shared memories held by members of society regarding historical events that have been circulated and transmitted across generations according to surrounding circumstances. Collective memory does not merely function as a means of transmitting or preserving history; rather, it reveals how individuals perceive and interpret

the past in accordance with the needs of the present and the future. Certain historical events may receive greater attention or emphasis than others, not necessarily because of their intrinsic importance, but because of how individuals interpret those events and the extent to which they relate them to contemporary reality.

This indicates that social memory is one of the important factors in shaping the national narrative, as these narratives reflect the collective consciousness of individuals and contribute to strengthening their sense of belonging in relation to past historical events.

Second: Oral Narratives in Jordanian Society

Oral narrative has represented an important means of transmitting historical events across time, particularly within local communities and long-established tribes that preserved numerous narratives concerning past historical events, including the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921, the 1948 War, and other political, economic, and social developments experienced by Jordanian society, especially during the twentieth century.

These oral narratives take various forms. They may be transmitted through elders, through popular stories recorded in audio or visual formats that attempt to present historical events realistically to individuals, or through widely circulated folk songs that evoke national events. Despite the diversity of these forms and methods, the resulting outcome remains the same: the preservation of historical events and the transmission of their significant role in building the modern Jordanian state across generations. Moreover, these narratives ensure that such events remain embedded in individuals' historical memory and continue to be passed down from one generation to another. Oral narratives documented historical events within collective consciousness even before they were recorded in books and written historical sources, thereby becoming a major factor in shaping the social perception of national history.

Third: National Symbols in Jordanian Popular Memory

Certain historical figures have acquired a prominent and enduring place within popular memory, becoming essential elements of the nation's glorious history due to their influential role in strengthening national belonging and loyalty, particularly in cases where their impact was closely tied to collective experiences and pivotal historical moments. This is especially evident in military events that constituted a central pillar in preserving Jordan's stability and independence. Such events are recalled within popular discourse as historical experiences and collective moments that embodied the values of resilience, unity, and determination within Jordanian society.

Likewise, the historical figures associated with these events are regarded as enduring national symbols within popular narratives, particularly those connected to the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan and the Arabization of the Jordanian Army. These figures represent timeless national symbols that strengthened Jordan's sovereign standing, preserved its glory, and safeguarded its dignity.

Fourth: The Interaction Between Official History and Popular Narratives

Written history cannot be separated from popular narratives, as the relationship between them is, in most cases, one of integration and interaction, even when discrepancies emerge between official written documents and narratives circulated among certain individuals. Official history relies on written documentation that records historical events and interprets them within political, economic, social, and cultural contexts, whereas popular narratives are grounded in the human, social, and cultural experiences associated with those historical events.

Achieving integration between official history and popular narratives contributes to the formation of a national narrative that combines the authenticity of documented history with the symbolic, emotional, and interactive dimensions produced through collective memory. In many cases, popular narratives may enhance the clarity and accessibility of official history preserved in written historical documents, as the popular mode of transmission can exert emotional and psychological influence on how history is conveyed and understood by members of society. In other cases, historical events may be interpreted through

popular narratives in ways that differ from official history, which may indicate the existence of multiple forms of social memory. Nevertheless, such plurality does not negate or diminish the shared national narrative; rather, it may enrich national discourse and contribute to broadening the scope of its interpretation and understanding.

Fifth: Social Memory and Its Impact on Shaping National Identity

Social memory has contributed to constructing a shared perception of history among members of society in ways that reinforced the presence of national history, enhanced social awareness, and strengthened national belonging toward Jordan—both its leadership and its people. The manner in which national history is recalled through popular narratives is presented as part of the national experience that shaped Jordan's deeply rooted national identity.

This confirms that Jordanian national identity was not formed solely through political discourse or modern institutions; rather, it was also shaped through social and popular memory, which consolidated national identity and strengthened its presence within Jordanian society. In many instances, these narratives preserved important details reflecting historical experiences and contributed to transmitting national values and ideas to subsequent generations in ways that reinforced their sense of national belonging.

The Jordanian National Narrative in the Contemporary Era

The era of globalization and technological digital advancement has brought about numerous political, economic, social, and cultural transformations over recent decades. The national narrative has certainly not been isolated from these transformations; instead, it has been profoundly influenced by developments in the digital, media, cultural, and social spheres. This has led to the emergence of new approaches to interpreting historical events and presenting alternative perspectives on certain historical issues.

These new narratives have not necessarily altered the fundamental constants associated with the national narrative or the essential elements that contributed to shaping the national story, including the role of the Hashemite leadership in consolidating the glory of the Jordanian state, the importance of state institutions in nation-building and maintaining political, cultural, and social stability, and the national symbols that shaped historical transformations in contemporary Jordanian history. However, these emerging narratives have succeeded in creating new spaces for discussion surrounding national history, thereby expanding debates related to the national narrative and the role of all societal and national institutions in preserving and protecting this narrative amid technological developments and the comprehensive transformations affecting all aspects of life.

First: The Role of Official Institutions in Producing the National Narrative

Official institutions possess significant importance and play a central role in organizing and producing the national narrative. Educational, cultural, and media institutions are primarily responsible for transmitting historical narratives within society and communicating them accurately to future generations. Within Jordanian society, educational institutions assume a major role in designing curricula rich with chapters dedicated to presenting the history of the Jordanian state in a systematic and coherent manner, beginning with the establishment of the Emirate and extending to the contemporary period.

Similarly, cultural and media institutions play an important role in highlighting Jordan's major historical milestones through organizing national and cultural events and celebrations that revive historical events and national symbols, thereby contributing to the consolidation of Jordan's rich historical identity.

Second: Digital Media and Its Role in Producing and Organizing the Historical Narrative

Media outlets occupy an important position in strengthening the presence of historical narratives (Al-Jabri, 2016). This is clearly reflected in documentary programs and direct media coverage of national occasions, through which media institutions strive to present Jordanian history in renewed and engaging ways that reinforce national bonds and belonging while connecting different historical phases through a distinctive narrative style.

The digital revolution and the widespread use of social media platforms have also created numerous spaces for discussing national history. These platforms have enabled individuals to express their opinions freely and exchange perspectives related to circulating popular narratives (Munasir, 2019), thereby contributing to the diversification of historical narratives associated with national events. This digital transformation and contemporary openness have established a shared channel of communication between members of society themselves and between society and educational, cultural, and academic institutions.

Third: The National Narrative and Contemporary Challenges

The nature of digital, technological, cultural, and media transformations has contributed to increasing the challenges facing the historical national narrative in the contemporary digital age. These challenges are reflected in the multiplicity of historical narratives circulated and exchanged through various media platforms. Cultural globalization has also led to greater interaction and overlap between cultures, which may influence the ways in which other cultures perceive national history. In some cases, national narratives may be subject to reinterpretations that affect their original meaning or critique them from perspectives that may not always be appropriate due to the many differences between past and present contexts.

These challenges do not diminish the importance of the national narrative. The national narrative is not static; rather, it is dynamic, continuously renewing itself over time and interacting with surrounding political, cultural, and social transformations. At the same time, however, it may be exposed to numerous forms of interference through digital and interactive platforms, potentially leading to confusion within public consciousness or to fragmented and incomplete representations of the narrative that affect the accuracy and coherence of its presentation.

Moreover, regional instability and surrounding political pressures constitute an additional challenge that compels state institutions to preserve the national narrative within a rapidly changing environment, reinforce the values of citizenship and belonging, and strengthen trust between the state and society. This also necessitates an ongoing national discourse capable of engaging with contemporary realities and involving younger generations in the process of state development and progress. Accordingly, the real challenge does not lie in preserving the historical narrative as a rigid and static text; rather, the true challenge lies in maintaining the national narrative as a living and evolving entity capable of accommodating surrounding transformations and expressing the aspirations of the present and the future without losing its authenticity, historical depth, or connection to its deeply rooted national identity.

Representations of the Hashemite Leadership in Social Memory and the Jordanian National Narrative

To strengthen the analysis related to the Jordanian national narrative and social memory, the study drew upon a qualitative interview with the Jordanian-Armenian photographer Zohrab Markarian, one of the most prominent figures who visually and humanely documented modern Jordanian history. Markarian served as the personal photographer of the late King Hussein bin Talal for more than twenty-two years, a role that enabled him to closely witness and document numerous political, social, and national milestones through an extensive archive exceeding one million photographs.

The importance of this personality within the context of the study stems from his role as a witness to a significant dimension of the formation of Jordanian national memory, not only through photography as a tool of historical documentation, but also through the direct experiences he shared with the Hashemite leadership and with Jordanian society in all its components. Markarian became closely associated with documenting the humanitarian and national dimensions connected to King Hussein and the Hashemite family, in addition to documenting social life, tribal traditions, and national occasions. This made him an integral part of the visual and social memory of the modern Jordanian state.

His reflections during the interview contributed to providing a qualitative reading of the Jordanian national narrative, particularly regarding the image of the Hashemite leadership within collective consciousness and the values of humility, peace, and closeness to citizens, as well as the symbolic relationship that connected the Hashemites with Jordanian society and its tribes. The interview also reflected the role played by oral narratives and social memory in strengthening the presence and continuity of the Jordanian national narrative across generations.

Popular narratives and social memory reveal a clear and enduring positive image of the Hashemite leadership within the Jordanian national narrative, as this image is associated with values such as humility, closeness to citizens, and the pursuit of peace and stability. In this context, the photographer of the late King Hussein noted during the interview that the Hashemites ‘seek peace and love, not war’, recalling King Hussein’s approach to resolving issues through wisdom and compassion, while emphasizing the continuation of this approach under King Abdullah II. The interviewee also recounted several incidents reflecting humility and closeness to citizens, including an occasion in which King Abdullah II waited for a foreign journalist despite her delay for a scheduled meeting, an act that left her with a profoundly different impression of the relationship between leadership and the people in Jordan compared to what she had witnessed with other leaders. The interviewee stated:

We are still living in peace to this day. Why? Because the Hashemites are fair and seek peace and love, not war and assassinations. I personally witnessed how King Hussein used to solve problems. He solved them with love, and the same applies to King Abdullah II. I remember once there was a journalist who was supposed to interview King Abdullah but arrived late. The King said: ‘Why is the journalist late? Call her.’ I spoke with her, and she said it was cold and she was surprised that the King would still see her. I told her: the King is waiting for you, come quickly. She rushed and conducted the interview. During the interview, she said that she had met many global leaders and kings, but in Jordan, when she met the son of King Hussein (King Abdullah II), he was the King who waited for her. In all her other meetings, she had to wait for hours for leaders, but in Jordan, it was the Hashemite King who waited for her. Look at the humility.

Oral narratives associated with King Hussein bin Talal reveal a deeply emotional and human dimension within Jordanian social memory. The image of the King in popular memory is not limited to his political or official role; rather, it extends to that of a paternal figure characterized by closeness to citizens and humane engagement with them. In this context, photographer Zohrab Markarian referred to the extent of affection held for King Hussein by those close to him, recalling his experience while preparing a book documenting King Hussein’s biography in 2019. During this process, he sought support from prominent national figures, including Hussein Al-Hawatmeh and Abdul Hadi Al-Majali, who, according to his narrative, expressed their profound emotional attachment to the King, stating that they did not merely love him but “adored him”. The interviewee stated:

Let me tell you why Zohrab doesn’t just love King Hussein—he adores him (emphasizing the word). I was working on a book about King Hussein in 2019, and I went to my dear friend Hussein Al-Hawatmeh and Abdul Hadi Al-Majali to support the project. They told me, ‘Of course, with pleasure.’ I asked them, ‘Do you love him that much?’ They said, ‘We don’t just love him—we adore him. I will never forget that.’

The interviewee further recalled another narrative reflecting King Hussein’s image in Jordanian popular consciousness during a graduation ceremony for officers in Zarqa. According to his narrative, a Bedouin man approached the King in anger, shouting in front of everyone that he had sworn an oath to slap him because his son had been imprisoned. As narrated by Markarian, King Hussein dealt with the situation calmly and with containment, refusing any forceful intervention by the guards. He asked the man to explain his grievance, and after listening, the man admitted that his son deserved imprisonment. However, the King, according to the narrative, ordered the release of the son in recognition of the father’s honesty and frankness. The situation then transformed into an emotionally charged moment, ending with the man crying and embracing the King. The interviewee stated:

Now we come to our beloved Abu Abdullah. In Zarqa, he was attending an officers’ graduation ceremony, and I was there. A Bedouin man came running toward him shouting ‘Hussein! Hussein!’ The guards immediately tried to stop him, but the King said: ‘Leave him, leave him. Come here my dear. Why do you want to hit me? What happened?’ The man said: ‘You imprisoned my son.’ The King said: ‘God willing, I will look into the matter.’ The man said: ‘No, he deserves imprisonment.’ The King looked at him and said: ‘Because you spoke the truth, one of the officers will go and release your son. And because you swore an oath, you may fulfill it.’ The man began to cry and embraced King Hussein. This is how the King used to solve problems. I have not seen anyone in the world solve problems like this. That is why I adore him—he is my beloved. Take care of Abu Hussein, my dear.

This oral narrative reveals the symbolic image occupied by King Hussein within the Jordanian national narrative as a leader who is close to his people and who relies on dialogue, tolerance, and human-centered approaches in managing different situations. It also illustrates how social memory and popular narratives contribute to reproducing the image of Hashemite

leadership within collective consciousness, transforming it into an integral component of Jordanian national identity and its associated values, such as tolerance, justice, humility, and closeness to people.

The interviewee also highlighted the close relationship that linked King Hussein and later King Abdullah II to Jordanian tribes, noting that King Hussein used to sit with tribal members and share coffee and tea inside their tents as part of a broader social and symbolic engagement with local communities. He further recalled an incident during a military training exercise involving King Abdullah II, in which the King refused to be treated as an exception within the military institution, emphasizing that ‘the army does not recognize the son of the King; rather, leadership belongs to whoever is in command’. The interviewee stated:

King Hussein greatly enjoyed sitting with tribal communities, sharing coffee and tea with them inside their tents. The same applies to King Abdullah. When he was conducting military training exercises in Al-Katranah on tanks, I went there, saw him, and took photographs. They invited me for lunch, and he was sitting next to me. I said to him: ‘Your Majesty, why are you sitting next to me? You should be at the head of the table.’ He replied: ‘The army does not have a “son of the King”, In the military, it is the commander who takes charge’. There is no one better than the Hashemites. The entire Arab world should learn from them peace and love.

This popular narrative reflects the image of Hashemite leadership within the Jordanian social imagination as a leadership grounded in humility, belonging, justice, and closeness to citizens. These are values that constitute a fundamental component of the contemporary Jordanian national narrative.

The relationship between the Hashemite leadership and Jordanian tribes emerges as one of the central pillars of the Jordanian national narrative. Historically, this relationship has been characterized by mutual respect, national belonging, loyalty, and direct social engagement. In this context, photographer Zohrab Markarian recalled a personal experience dating back to the mid-1980s, while working on a book entitled *Book and Homeland*, which he intended as a gift to King Hussein bin Talal on the occasion of his birthday.

According to the interviewee’s narrative, a visit was arranged to the Jafr region to photograph one of the castles associated with Hashemite history in Jordan. There, he was received by a tribal sheikh who showed a high level of traditional Arab hospitality. Markarian described how the visit shifted from a purely documentary assignment into a deeply social and human experience that reflected the nature of relations between Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite leadership, particularly after the sheikh gifted him two horses in celebration of the birth of his twin children.

This oral narrative reveals the symbolic presence of tribes within the Jordanian national narrative as a fundamental social and cultural component in the construction of the state and national identity. It also reflects the nature of the relationship that linked King Hussein with Jordanian tribes, which the interviewee described as a relationship based on mutual affection and respect, noting that King Hussein ‘deeply loved the Jordanian tribes’. This, in turn, contributed to consolidating the image of Hashemite leadership within collective consciousness as a leadership closely connected to the social and cultural fabric of Jordanian society.

Moreover, these narratives highlight the role played by oral traditions and personal memories in preserving social values associated with Jordanian national identity, such as generosity, solidarity, belonging, and the human bonds between leadership and society. These values constitute a significant component of contemporary Jordanian social memory and the national narrative.

Conclusion

The present study has emphasized the importance of the national narrative as a key influential element in shaping contemporary national identity. It analyzed the relationship between written history and popular collective narratives, as well as the importance of their interconnection and its role in constructing society’s perception of Jordan’s rich historical experience.

The findings indicate that the Jordanian national narrative is linked to a long historical trajectory that accompanies the formation of the modern Jordanian state and the development of its official, economic, and educational institutions over time.

The study also confirmed that the Jordanian national narrative was not the product of a unidirectional process; rather, it emerged from continuous interactive relations between the Jordanian state and society. Various official institutions, media outlets, and communication channels have played an important role in organizing and disseminating the historical narrative in a structured and accessible manner through educational and media platforms. Social memory is no less significant than official historical documentation, as popular narratives have contributed to preserving numerous historical details that were later recorded in written historical sources.

The study further indicated that technological development and media and cultural transformation have contributed to the diversification of discussions and narratives surrounding national history, turning the national narrative into a subject of public debate. However, these transformations have not diminished the value of the national narrative; rather, they have contributed to its development and enrichment in ways that have deepened societal and younger generations' understanding of Jordanian history.

The Jordanian national narrative represents a framework for understanding the nation's rich historical experience and strengthening collective national identity. However, the development of this narrative requires an engagement with surrounding transformations, the continuation of rigorous academic research on Jordan's history, and a deeper analytical examination of historical sources in a way that contributes to presenting a comprehensive and holistic picture of the Jordanian historical experience.

The oral and personal narratives included in this study demonstrate that the Jordanian national narrative is not constructed solely on official political and historical events; rather, it is also shaped through social memory and the human stories circulated within Jordanian society. The testimony of photographer Zohrab Markarian, as one of the most prominent documenters of modern Jordanian history and a close associate of King Hussein bin Talal, reflected the image of Hashemite leadership in Jordanian collective consciousness as one grounded in humility, closeness to citizens, dialogue, and human-centered engagement. These narratives also highlighted the historical relationship between the Hashemite leadership and Jordanian tribes, along with the associated values of generosity, belonging, and social cohesion. This, in turn, has contributed to consolidating the presence of the Hashemite leadership within the Jordanian national narrative as an integral part of national identity and social memory.

These findings confirm that oral narrative and popular memory constitute an important element in understanding the Jordanian national narrative and ensuring its continuity, particularly amid contemporary political, social, and cultural transformations.

The Jordanian national narrative has proved its capacity, through its rich historical legacy, depth, and intellectual flexibility, to reproduce itself in ways that align with the demands of the present while anticipating the future. Accordingly, preserving and strengthening the historical narrative is not solely the responsibility of official institutions; rather, it is a shared collective responsibility that integrates the roles of the state with those of society in order to reinforce national identity, enhance belonging, and build a socially aware community that recognizes the value and historical depth of its nation.

The national narrative, therefore, should not be treated as a static text; instead, it represents a living and evolving discourse that recalls the achievements of the past, nurtures the aspirations of the present, and continuously reinforces national identity in renewed forms. Ultimately, the Jordanian national narrative, anchored in its Hashemite leadership and loyal people, remains the expression of an ongoing journey, a nation's story written with steadfastness, determination, and resilience, drawing its strength and continuity from its enduring historical legacy.

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