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Tribal Statecraft and Freedom of Expression in Jordan

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TRIBAL STATECRAFT AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN JORDAN

by

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to the gallant Bedouin Arabs of Jordan and

elsewhere - may their noble and indomitable spirit never be extinguished,

may they never lose their liberties, and may they find God's favor always

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, I investigate the connection between the policies regarding freedom of speech and expression promulgated by the government of Jordan in the decade following the Arab Spring and Jordan's tribal Bedouin heritage, with a focus on how traditional Bedouin values and attitudes regarding the nature and purpose of public spaces influence modern state policies regarding freedom of expression. In the investigation of this subject, I surveyed a diverse catalog of research covering politics and issues of freedom of expression in Jordan in the 2010s as well as the political and social values of tribal Arab culture in general, and further guided the general direction of this survey using my experience of living in Jordan over two summers. I found that tribalism, specifically of the traditional Bedouin model, is deeply ingrained into Jordanian political culture, and that the Jordanian government practices a long-standing tradition of statecraft in which governance is practiced as tribal mediation and management. The research that I accessed suggests that the traditional Arab Bedouin social system of tribalism promulgates specific views and attitudes regarding issues of public space, in-group unity, social harmony, and individual rights, and that these attitudes have in turn influenced the day-to-day expression of Islam and its nominal values in Arab regions such as Jordan. Finally, I synthesize these findings into a theory which details how the desert environment of Arabia influenced traditional Bedouin attitudes regarding issues of in-group unity and public space, and how these deeply-rooted values have influenced the strongly Bedouin-influenced Jordanian government's approach to issues of freedom of expression in the decade following the Arab Spring. A survey of several high-profile incidents of censorship by the Jordanian

government following the Arab Spring is given to support these conclusions, and illustrate how they fit into my model of censorship in Jordan being influenced and guided by a longstanding regional tradition of tribal statecraft.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the great drama of global politics following the end of the Second World War, few regions have been as consistently and conspicuously troubled as the Middle East. The region has been rocked by international conflicts, civil wars, uprisings, and revolutions throughout its modern post-colonial history, so much so that its image in the popular Western psyche is oftentimes synonymous with sectarian conflict, civil war, and acts of terrorism. The greatest political conflict to shake the Middle East and draw the eyes of the world once again to the region in recent years was the Arab Spring of 2011, in which a series of protests, uprisings, and revolutions erupted and spread rapidly across the region, overthrowing long-ruling dictators in some countries and sparking civil wars that continue to this day in others. But one country, sitting near the geographic center of both the Middle East and the Arab cultural core and surrounded on all sides by neighbors engulfed in conflict, controversy, instability, or even outright civil war, has conspicuously managed to avoid any significant conflict or instability since the storm of the Arab Spring first swept the region into chaos - the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

While not as politically prominent in the history of the Middle East as many of its neighbors, Jordan has assumed a new role as an island of stability in a roiling ocean of conflict and as an oasis of moderacy in a desert of ideological radicalism. This Arab kingdom's unique position of stability and relative prosperity in the face of its regional political climate has raised questions regarding the origins of such peace (Ryan 2018), and specifically if there were any particular policies or decisions promulgated by the leadership of the Jordanian state which managed the protests and discontent during and after the Arab Spring more effectively than its neighbors. One notable factor that makes Jordan unique

compared to neighboring Arab states that were more thoroughly destabilized by the Arab Spring protests, such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, or Egypt, is that it is a monarchy rather than a democracy, and that it is comparatively far more rural, Bedouin, and tribal in its culture and heritage (Bani Salameh 2016). In this paper, I investigate the questions of how Jordan's tribal culture has influenced its government's traditional pattern of statecraft, and how this form of statecraft has informed the Jordanian government's policies towards issues of freedom of expression in the decade following the Arab Spring.

To answer this question, I first studied a number of articles and scholarly studies related to censorship and other legal actions regarding freedom of expression undertaken by the Jordanian government following the Arab Spring in order to assess how said government has usually approached such issues (cf. Duffy, Elananza, Ghazal, Ibrahim, Krishan, and Spies). Then, I studied a number of scholarly articles and books in order to better understand how Jordan's tribal Arab Bedouin culture has affected its political history and culture, especially during the Arab Spring (cf. Bani Salameh, Dann, Robins, Ryan, and Spindel). After having established the many ways in which Jordan's cultural heritage has affected its politics and governance throughout its history, I studied various scholarly sources that discussed how the foundational elements of this cultural heritage—namely Arab tribalism and Islamic values—traditionally approached issues of freedom of expression (cf. Brown, Darling, Dukhan, Huntington, Lane, Rosen, Salzman, Spengler, and Tannous), so as to draw parallels between these historical socio-political phenomena and modern Jordanian legislation.

In the first chapter of this paper, I explore the institution of tribalism in an Arab cultural context and how it has influenced Jordan's tradition of statecraft throughout its

history. In the second chapter, I explore the attitudes that traditional Arab tribal culture takes towards issues of public space and community as a whole. In the third chapter, I show how these attitudes have affected the daily practice of Islamic religious values in Arab society, such that nominally Islamic values in Jordan can in practice act as a proxy for tribal Bedouin values. In the fourth chapter, I explain how these traditional Arab cultural attitudes towards public space and the appropriate role of government within it influence attitudes and beliefs regarding issues of expression and public speech, and how these attitudes and beliefs have been expressed in Jordanian public policy through both the means and the ends of state censorship.

CHAPTER I: ARAB TRIBALISM, TRIBAL STATECRAFT, AND ITS ROLE IN JORDANIAN HISTORY

The region that is today the Kingdom of Jordan has a rather short history of independent statehood and statecraft and a fragile national identity, and as such its rulers have often had to rule by use of the most important social factor in the region: the system of tribalism (Bani Salameh 2016). This system of tribalist statecraft, in which the central ruler (whether a foreign colonial administrator or a local monarch) rules the nation indirectly by the manipulation, management, and mediation of tribal interests and intrigue, has been a consistent theme in Jordanian political history from at least the Ottoman Era up until the present (Ibid. 2016, Robins 2019). This chapter explores the nature of tribalism in the context of Arab society, how such a social system might affect society and politics in general, and the historical record of how tribalism has impacted Jordanian politics.

The largest and most politically powerful social group identity in a tribalist society, as Jordan was for most of its history, is traditionally that of the tribe, which can be defined in this context as "a localised group in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organisation, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct in terms of customs, dialect or language, and origins" (Dukhan 2014, 3). In simpler terms, an Arab tribe is a large and tightly-knit extended family that also possesses a political dimension. The tribe and its importance as an institution are ancient and fundamental to Arab society, owing at least in part to the uniquely harsh and resource-poor environment that incubated the culture in its infancy, that being the Arabian Desert. With survival often in question in such an environment, only tightly-knit groups could survive. Due to this "long history of adjustment to and survival within a peculiar type of natural environment" (Tannous 1947,

8), we see throughout early Arab history "the development of a clearly crystallized cultural unit with definite patterns of behavior relative to various aspects of life, [whose] patterns prescribe for the individual and the group the traditional ways of doing things within the spheres of economic activity, religion, family life, recreation, government, and other forms of human relationship" (Ibid. 1947, 8). One of the possible reasons as to why this tribal system influences so many aspects of life may be because the Arab tribe is seen as collectively responsible for all of the actions of its members, good or bad (Dukhan 2014). This accountability and loyalty to the tribe is rewarded with the collective support of the tribe, so that when a tribesman is "attacked, group members are obliged to unite to defend themselves, [and when] members sustain injury or loss, group members unite to gain compensation or seek vengeance" (Ibid. 2014, 7).

While the tribal system creates strong unity and harmony within tribes, it often ends up breeding conflict between them. Competition over resources can more often than not lead to conflict, and in pre-Islamic Arabia (circa the sixth century and before) this was further intensified by both the scarcity of resources and the tribal social structure in which status and survival depend on "increasing progeny and livestock [that then strain] pasturage, water, and arable land" (Salzman 2008, 2). The dilemma of the "tragedy of the commons," the question of how to manage publicly accessible or commonly shared resources, becomes much more intense and important when said resources are in short supply. In such a geographic and social context, where "tribal structure enhances feelings of unity and normalizes antipathy against outsiders [and where waging war] over territory and livestock not only feels natural and justified but is also desirable" (Ibid. 2008, 2), achieving unity across tribal lines becomes supremely difficult. When a little more water,

a few more goats, or a bit more pasture can mean the difference between life and death for the Bedouin man and his tribe, there is little if any incentive to share these precious resources with tribal outsiders.

Inter-tribal unity among the Bedouins was not entirely impossible, with the Arab Bedouin tribes eventually being united under the religion of Islam and the leadership of its Prophet Muhammad. In uniting around their new shared religions the Bedouins did not forsake their tribal roots, but instead a new "tribe" of sorts emerged: the *umma* (Huntington 1997), or universal community of Muslim believers. As a group identity defined by its universality and its connection to the one supreme God, loyalty to the *umma* now trumped loyalty to the merely local and familiar tribe. As Philip Carl Salzman wrote in *Middle East Quarterly* in 2008: "From a political point of view, Islam raised tribal society to a higher, more inclusive level of integration. But it was not able to replace the central principle of tribal political organization. Framing Muslims in opposition to the infidel preserved the balanced opposition. As with tribal lineage, affiliation and loyalty became defined by opposition" (7-8). However, even with a pan-tribal unity having been achieved through the universal community Islam, the persistent strength of tribal loyalties continued to be a bane to Arab rulers and states, with such states and other institutions having historically been relatively impotent when compared to tribal power and influence (Alterman 2019). As such, while Arab culture does possess intense in-group loyalty that is directed on the small scale towards the tribe and immediate family and on the large scale towards the global *umma* of Muslim believers, it suffers from a perpetual "hollow middle in its hierarchy of loyalties" (Huntington 1997, 174) wherein loyalty to king and country often come after loyalty to God and family, at least among the common people of the countryside and the

desert (Bani Salameh 2016). The Western-style nation-state, being traditionally conceived of as a pluralistic society of individuals engaging and interacting in a shared public space (Huntington 1997) and drawing upon cultural tendencies such as secularism and an opposition to nepotism, has always had difficulty asserting itself and its importance in the political culture of the Middle East, and highly tribal Jordan was no exception to this.

With Arab tribalism having the strongest influence among those from whom it originated, namely the nomadic Bedouins of the desert, the Bedouin-dominated steppes and deserts of the region east of the Jordan River have often vexed would-be rulers of the area (Bani Salameh 2016; Robins 2019). The dominant tribalist social structure of the region that now constitutes the Kingdom of Jordan has forced its rulers throughout history to rule by means of a special form of statecraft that treats governance as tribal management (Ibid. 2016). In such a system, the ruler of the country is not its supreme owner and leader who rules directly, but instead rules indirectly by managing, mediating, and manipulating the tribes of the realm and their interactions with each other. This Bedouin style of monarchy, where the government consists of a tribal confederacy centered around a mostly hands-off monarch, could be called a more "federal" system of government in contrast to the more "unitary" systems of government found in more urbanized and thus less tribal regions of the Arab world such as Egypt or Syria (Spindel 2011). This unique pattern of statecraft has been practiced by both the Ottoman and British Empires as well by the independent monarchical government of Jordan following 1946 (Robins 2019).

Under the rule of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, Trans-Jordan did not constitute a distinct administrative unit. The Jordanians, like the other Arabs of the Levant, identified first and foremost with their faith, their tribe, or perhaps their village, but by and large not

with the Ottoman state (Bani Salameh 2016). As such, the Ottomans ruled the region by the strategic appeasement of certain powerful tribes by giving them gifts or even deputizing them as enforcers of imperial politics (Ibid. 2016; Robins 2019). Throughout Ottoman rule, the area was treated as a backwater of sorts, suffering from isolation and negligence (Bani Salameh 2016). Politics and society in the region were dominated by Bedouin tribes, and they would start and constitute the main opposition movements against Ottoman rule in the area, such as in the 1910 Al-Karak revolt (Ibid. 2016).

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 brought the declining Ottoman Empire into open conflict with its two European upstart imperial competitors: Britain and France, who each had imperial ambitions of their own in the Middle East (Robins 2019). In 1916, two years into the war, a new Arab Revolt arose the Ottomans, once again made up mostly of nomadic Bedouin tribesmen (Dukhan 2014). The British had promised the Arabs an independent and united Arab state if they were to revolt against their mutual enemy, and so the Arabs did as such, emboldened by their new British support. To further strengthen the revolt, the British cooperated with the Arab Hashemite dynasty of the Hijaz region of modern Saudi Arabia, eventually convincing the dynasty to join their war efforts against the Ottomans with the promise of the creation of a Hashemite-ruled united Arab state carved out of former Ottoman territory (Robins 2019).

Britain, having already drawn up the colonial divisions of the Arab Ottoman territories in the secret Sykes-Picot and San Remo agreements between it and France, reneged on its promises to the Arabs as soon as the war was over and the Ottomans were defeated (Robins 2019). In the terms of these agreements, the lands of the Middle East were divided between the two victorious European powers with no regard for the state of

the locals. Borders were drawn arbitrarily, disrupting the traditional order of local identity groups, whether ethnic, religious, or tribal (Huntington 1997). Some groups now found themselves split between multiple countries, others lumped into a single country with very dissimilar groups. Not only did this set the stage for future sectarian and inter-tribal conflict, but it also made the process of creating strong national identities for these newborn nations all the more difficult (Bani Salameh 2016).

The British, who already preferred to rule indirectly by installing and controlling local rulers as opposed to the French policy of direct rule over colonies, installed the Hashemite Prince Abdullah I as the ruler of the Transjordan territory in the early 1920s (Robins 2019). The British further reinforced their rule by buying the loyalty of poor Bedouin tribes with gifts and humanitarian aid, as well as by deputizing local Bedouin warriors and integrating them into their local border police units (Ibid. 2019). The British colonial policy of indirect rule was well-suited for Jordan, which even under the Ottomans had been administered in such a manner (Ibid. 2019).

Abdullah found himself "in an area that did not have a previous orientation with the concept of the state" (Bani Salameh 2016, 988), and thus had to rule through the pre-existing power structure of the local Bedouin tribes. He followed the example of his British overlords, who controlled Jordan by ruling through tribal elites, forming military bands out of disparate tribe members to patrol the countryside, and buying off the loyalty of the oft-impoverished Bedouin tribes with various humanitarian donations (Robins 2019), by pursuing a policy of "divide and rule" (Bani Salameh 2016, 988). In this policy, Abdullah ensured the loyalty of local tribal leaders with benefits such as "granting them ranks and positions and registering the state's lands under their names as tribal properties" in addition

to other gifts and grants (Ibid. 2016, 988). The "carrot" of gift-giving was further backed up by the "stick" of the *Banī Ṣaḫir*, a powerful Bedouin tribe with whom Abdullah had deputized as his enforcers (Robins 2019). Even though Jordan was not a particularly large country, and Abdullah had the reputation of the Hashemite dynasty supporting him, he nevertheless found it easiest to rule indirectly through the pre-existing tribal structure.

On May 25th, 1946, Jordan gained its independence from Britain as the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan (soon changed to simply the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), beginning a new era in its still-short history (Robins 2019). Jordan was already struggling to form a distinct national identity (Bani Salameh 2016), especially since its monarch, Abdullah I, still had aspirations to form a united Arab state in the Greater Syria region; for him, the Jordanian state was merely the first step towards his dream of a united Arab state (Ibid. 2016). Yet the struggle to forge a strong and shared national identity is one with which many states of the Arab world, not just Jordan, continuously struggle, as in these countries national identity often constitutes "a means for cleavage and conflict in light of tribal, sectarian, and ethnic conflicts (Ibid. 2016, 986)." As such, Jordan's fragile national identity should not be seen as an incidental condition stemming from King Abdullah's neglect of the country and delegation of his role as ruler to the local tribes due to his pan-Arab political aspirations, but rather as a systemic condition that is typical of the region as a whole.

The divisions that can emerge in the process of creating a united identity for a new country could not be much better demonstrated than in Jordan's struggle with its Palestinian population. After the declaration of the creation of the state of Israel on May 14th, 1948, a large coalition of Arab countries, Jordan included, invaded the newborn

nation in order to return the land to the control of the Arab Palestinians. Although Israel would end up surviving the war and fending off the invading Arab armies, Jordanian forces managed to occupy and hold onto a large part of Palestine west of the Jordan River, known thereafter as the West Bank (Robins 2019). Jordan formally annexed this territory following the Jericho Conference of December 1st, 1948, where "Palestinian leaders called for joining the remaining part of Palestine (the West Bank) to Trans-Jordan and for pledging allegiance to Abdullah bin Hussein as king of the unified state (Bani Salameh 2016, 989)." This annexation, combined with a huge wave of Palestinian refugees fleeing the war, led to Jordan's population becoming two-thirds Palestinian.

While the Jordanian government sought to create a united national identity for both native Jordanians (often referred to thereafter as East Bankers) and the new Palestinians (often referred to as West Bankers in kind), Palestinians clung to their identity. In the 1960s, Palestinian identity would take a more politically destabilizing course through the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which promoted Palestinian identity, liberation, and independence. Thus a long-standing conflict between Jordanian East Bankers and Palestinian West Bankers emerged, with the former often being seen as a source of stability and the latter of instability (Bani Salameh 2016). The following decades would see continuous conflict between West and East Bankers in Jordan. However, in spite of the huge political and demographic changes which Jordan had undergone, the fundamentally tribal dynamic of the nation and its politics remained unchanged. The Palestinians, having entered into a fundamentally tribal country, now found themselves constituting a large and powerful yet disorganized and often unwelcome tribe in the country. Rather than changing the tribal political tradition of Jordan, they joined

it and were themselves changed by it. This demonstrates not only the strength and robustness of the tribal system itself, but also how thoroughly ingrained it is into Jordanian society.

CHAPTER II: TRADITIONAL TRIBAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS

PUBLIC SPACE

In a nation as deeply influenced by tribalism as Jordan, one would naturally expect the values inherent in such a tribal system to have had a profound impact on Jordanian society and governance. As freedom of speech is an issue of the public sphere, a culture's attitudes and beliefs regarding the nature and purpose of public space should be taken into account when investigating how said culture's values might inform issues of freedom of expression. Traditional tribal Arab culture has particular views and attitudes regarding the public space, and these are informed by the environment from which it originated. In this chapter, I explore the attitudes that traditional tribal Arab society holds towards issues of property, public space, and freedom of expression; the potential origins of these attitudes; and examples of expressions of these attitudes throughout Arab culture.

Traditional Arab attitudes towards issues of ownership and public space can in large part be traced back to the origin of traditional Arab Bedouin culture in a very particular environment. The early Arab culture of the Bedouins was defined primarily by its "long history of adjustment to and survival within a peculiar type of natural environment" (Tannous 1947, 8), with said natural environment being the harsh and resource-poor Arabian Desert. This environment led to locals organizing themselves into tightly-knit tribes, and that said tribes had to live a life of nomadic pastoralism as agriculture was seemingly impossible in the desert. The heavy physical labor required by this lifestyle increased the incentive towards both internal tribal unity as well as the raising of large families, as more offspring meant more able bodies to aid in the day-to-day labor of pastoralism (Salzman 2008). The need for a large and tightly-knit tribe was deepened

further by the ever-present threat of raids by rival tribes, eager to take some of the "pasturage, water, and arable land" (Ibid. 2008, 2) that are all three necessary for pastoral life and quite scarce in a desert environment. The unforgiving environment and the scarcity of precious resources in the Arabian Desert meant that if one wanted to survive there, they would have to be fiercely loyal to their familial allies and distrusting of everyone else.

The pressures placed upon the Arab Bedouin tribe by such harsh environmental and social conditions led to loyalty to and unity within the tribe becoming traditional virtues of the utmost importance. In the Arab tribal community, "all members of a tribe are expected to unify and support the tribe when it is in conflict with others" (Salzman 2008, 3). As such, individual interests must be balanced against or even subsumed within the collective interests of the tribe. The responsibility of the individual towards the tribe is the necessary price to pay, as the tribes are "vested with responsibility for the defense of each member and responsible for harm any member does to outsiders" (Ibid. 2008, 1), and thus the individual Arab bears the responsibilities of a member of his tribe within it and a representative of his tribe outside of it. Women especially had many responsibilities in such a system, as their "reproductive capacity was necessary for lineage strength" (Ibid. 2008, 7), and as such had their behaviors closely monitored by their family members, being protected as a precious resource of the tribe. In order to survive as a Bedouin, the tribe must come first and the individual second. This stands in sharp contrast to modern Western views on society as an association of free individuals, giving us a glimpse into the gulf which exists between the political values of the Arab world and those of the West.

This social system, forged in the harsh conditions of the Arabian Desert, created a unique set of values relating to issues of ownership, property, and space. Owing to the

importance that control over resources had for an Arab Bedouin and his tribe, and especially since said control is so hotly contested by other Bedouin tribes, we find that "the concept of ownership is crucial to Arab culture" (Rosen 2000, 197). In such a culture, everything is owned by someone; if it is not, someone (or rather, some tribe) simply has not taken it yet (Ibid. 2000). Even in modern Arab countries, the legacy of the tribal Bedouin life out of which Arab culture emerged lives on in the common attitudes towards public space, which as a concept can be said to "hardly [even] exist" (Ibid. 2000, 197) in such places. In these countries, "[i]ndividuals intrude onto sidewalks, edge onto one another's land, [and] press up against any unused area" (Ibid. 2000, 197). It is as if the tribal contest for resources never ended, instead only moving from the battlefield of the desert to that of the city.

As such, we can say that the traditional tribal culture of the Arab Bedouins is one in which the very concept of public or shared space is denied, and instead everything is controlled by one tribe or another, each of which in turn enforce strong internal unity. Public spaces in such countries are therefore defined by separation rather than unity, competition rather than cooperation, and mistrust rather than openness (Rosen 2000). While within the trusted group, which includes tribe members and guests, Arabs are generally very welcoming and generous, they are less so to outsiders and strangers (Ibid. 2000). Arab architecture tends to turn inward, away from the outside world and the public space, and towards the internal world of the family and the tribe; a good example of this is the traditional Arab home, built around a walled-off central courtyard with few if any outward-facing windows. In Jordan in particular, gardens and even front porches are usually surrounded by tall and opaque brick walls instead of the humble picket fences

found in America. In some Arab countries, one can legally stop the construction of a new building if said building would allow strangers to see into your home's windows (Ibid. 2000). We see in these and all of the previously given examples a firm rejection of the idea of shared, neutral public space in favor of the tribal world. In such a situation, the highest degree of inter-tribal social unity which can be achieved reliably is in the pursuit of peace and stability; high-minded ideologies and idealistic programs, on the other hand, are far less reliable motivators for the Arab public (Bani Salameh 2016).

CHAPTER III: TRIBAL INFLUENCES ON ISLAMIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS PUBLIC SPACE

The second primary factor which influences Jordan's culture, and by extension its statecraft and policymaking, is the religion of Islam. For the purposes of this paper, focus is given not to the core doctrines of Islam, but instead to the day-to-day practical application of the faith among the local Arabs of Jordan. The practice and expression of Islam in Jordan has been influenced by the region's tribal Bedouin heritage and values, particularly with regards to beliefs about public space and ownership; thus, nominally Islamic concerns can act as a secondary proxy for traditional Arab attitudes and values in Jordanian society. In this section I detail how Arab tribal values have influenced the expression of Islam, especially regarding the public space.

Islam was the first force in history to unite the feuding Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula into a single cohesive polity, who had spent the period before the faith's arrival engaged in regular inter-tribal warfare and competition for resources (Salzman 2008). It did so, in large part, by transcending tribal boundaries, giving the Arabs a new collective identity which transcended old tribal divisions in the form of the *umma*, the community of all Muslim believers (Ibid. 2008). Although the Arabs now had a new group identity which was common to all of them, this did not mean that they would forget or neglect their tribal identity and the duties included therein; loyalty to the *umma* and the Prophet did not negate loyalty to the tribe and the *šaiḫ* (Ibid. 2008). The tightly-knit tribal ethos of collectivism and internal unity, called ʿaṣabīya by the eminent Arab Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun, who extolled it as a necessary component of political power and civilization itself (Darling 2007), had simply expanded its scope.

With this in mind, Islamic traditions in Arab countries are likely to reflect the values of the primeval Arab Bedouins regarding issues of public space, in-group harmony, and freedom of expression. This expectation is seemingly confirmed by a study of the political and cultural reality in the region. Traditional Islamic ethics and values regarding women in the Arab Middle East strongly emphasize modesty and purity, reflecting "tribal notions of honor" (Salzman 2008, 7). These tribal notions in turn recall the scarcity mindset of Bedouin tribes struggling to survive in an unforgiving desert, for whom a woman and her reproductive capabilities are precious resources to be closely guarded from potentially dangerous outsiders (Ibid. 2008). From this, it can be reasoned that Islam had in no way abolished old tribal notions of ownership or attitudes towards space, but had instead expanded them.

Out of these values regarding public space and in-group unity and loyalty descend attitudes towards issues of speech and conviction. Issues of apostasy and heresy are approached "largely in terms of their public [and social], rather than private [and spiritual], implications" (Rosen 2000, 197) in Islam. To a Muslim Bedouin, his religious identity is in many ways defined by his belonging within and loyalty to his *umma*, much like how his personal identity is in many ways defined by his belonging within and loyalty to his tribe (Salzman 2008). The word *umma* itself has various definitions, and these include not just "the people of a [particular] religion[, a] people to whom an apostle is sent[, and t]he followers of a prophet," (Lane 1863, 90) but also "[a] nation, a people, a race, a tribe, distinct body, or family [and a] man's people, community, tribe, kinsfolk, or party" (Ibid. 1863, 90). The double meaning of this word may suggest a double meaning to the thing it

describes, possibly indicating a dual nature of the *umma* as an institution with both religious and tribal or familial dimensions.

In such a cultural context, a change of religion is not just a purely personal choice but is necessarily a public act, a renunciation of not just one's faith but also of one's tribe by extension (Rosen 2000). Several Islamic countries at present refuse to sign international conventions allowing and promoting freedom of religion, with the given reason not being personal religious conviction or fear of divine retribution but rather that their leaders believe that "one cannot leave Islam (the "nation, tribe, or family" (Lane 1863, 90) of the *umma*,) without it having systemic repercussions for the order of society" as a whole (Ibid 2000, 197). For Arab governments, ruling over nation-states with fragile national identities, anxieties about maintaining a stable and peaceful social and political order dominate the decision-making process, and Jordan is no exception to this.

Traditional Islamic attitudes towards apostasy, described in Islam with the Arabic terms *ridda* or *irtidād*, both of which mean "to return or revert from," (Lane 1867, 1061-3), provide an excellent case study for this attitude towards freedom of speech which is primarily predicated on the maintenance of public order and unity. The sense of "returning" here should be understood less so as mentally returning to previous beliefs but instead as socially returning from and abandoning the *umma*. In the early Muslim community, *ridda* was seen "not as meaning a personal choice of changing one's religion but as the public act of political secession from the Muslim community" (Brown 2017, 3). Since such an act threatened the integrity and public safety of not just the *umma* but of the state and society as a whole, and as such under traditional Islamic jurisprudence the apostate or *murtadd* "he who has returned" (Lane 1867, 1063) was to be put to death (Brown 2017). Such a

punishment had little to do with the act itself, but instead with the damage it threatened to cause to the social order and public peace. The Islamic jurist Ibn Humām (d. 1457) explained that "It is necessary to punish apostasy with death in order to avert the evil of war, not as punishment for the act of unbelief, because the greatest punishment for that is with God" (Ibid. 2017, 15).

Such values reflect the ʿaṣabīya of Ibn Khaldun, which is defined in *Lane's Lexicon* as follows (emphasis added):

> The quality of him who [...] aids *his people, or party*, against hostile conduct: or of him who is angry, or zealous, for the sake of *his party*, and defends them: or of him who invites others to the aid of *his party*, and to combine, or league, with them against those who act towards them with hostility, whether they be wrongdoers or wronged: or of him who leagues with others: or of him who defends others: or partisanship; party-spirit; or zeal in the cause of a party: or [...] a strong attachment, which holds several persons closely united by the same interest or the same opinion" (Lane 1872, 2059).

The tribal and collectivist roots of this concept are made very clear by this definition: in the frame of ʿaṣabīya, it is the *party* or the *league*, not the individual or even the ideal, to which individuals are expected to be zealously devoted. One could replace every instance of "party" in the above definition with "tribe" and the meaning would work just as well. As such, Ibn Khaldun's lionization of ʿaṣabīya as one of the chief driving forces of civilization itself and his own prestigious role in the Arab-Islamic intellectual tradition demonstrate the continual strength of the tribal mindset throughout Arab history.

Consensus is a core value of the Muslim *umma* in Arab countries, and indeed the German author Oswald Spengler identified the *Consensus* as the ideal political structure of not just Islam but of all Abrahamic faiths, which he grouped together into a single, unity-focused Arabian civilization (Spengler 1928). All of these examples demonstrate that in the Arab-Islamic cultural context of Jordan, being strongly influenced by Bedouin traditions and values, it is often the social consequences of actions and speech that are of primary interest to the community and lawmakers, and not necessarily the acts or words themselves (Ibid. 2000). This mindset and the values which generated it have a strong effect on Jordanian policy, even to this day.

CHAPTER IV: CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING JORDANIAN PUBLIC POLICY REGARDING ISSUES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

With both the breadth and depth of tribalism's influence on Jordanian politics and society having been explored, along with the nature of tribal attitudes towards public space, it is reasonable to conclude that Jordan's policies towards issues of freedom of expression throughout the decade following the Arab Spring were influenced by its unique tribal heritage and values, and this in turn helped to ensure the Kingdom's stability. Jordan is a nation defined in many ways by the tribal system, and this tribal system brings with it two values that greatly influence attitudes towards freedom of speech. First, the tribal system strongly incentivizes in-group loyalty and unity, encouraging individuals to work and fight for their tribe and discouraging them from doing or saying anything that could disrupt or hurt intra-tribal relationships and the general feeling of unity (Salzman 2008). Within the tribe, stability and unity are valued above individual expression and self-determination, but this system strives not for rigid ideological conformity in the domain of private opinions but instead for agreement and consensus in the domain of public opinion (Rosen 2000). Second, the tribal system denies the existence of general, shared, neutral public space; everything must belong to one actor or another, whether that actor is an individual or a tribe. As such, political speech is not seen as simply expressing one's opinions into a neutral shared space, as it might be conceived in the West, but instead as an act defined by its social consequences, particularly regarding its effect on social unity and stability both within a single tribe and between multiple tribes (Ibid. 2000).

Both of these tribal values, the prioritization of intra-tribal unity and stability and the denial of public shared space, have influenced Jordanian society, whether directly through the tribal Arab Bedouin culture that persists to this day in Jordan or indirectly through the proxy of nominally Islamic values that are often rooted in the very same Arab Bedouin culture. In traditional Arab and Islamic states throughout history, governments have typically "encourage[d] individuals to keep their potentially disruptive thoughts hidden [...] until and if they can be forged into publicly validated relationships with desirable social consequences" (Rosen 2000, 199). Public order, unity, and stability are all prioritized.

This is only more so the case in a state such as Jordan, where a fragile national identity leaves the nation-state vulnerable to increasing tribalism and "Bedouinization" (Bani Salameh 2016, 995). With the nation-state already historically weak in the Arab world when compared to the local identity of the tribe and the global identity of the *umma* (Huntington 1997), Jordan is further threatened by the possibility of the complete dissolution of the state into smaller tribal groups or subsumption into a pan-national Islamic state. The borders of Jordan are rather arbitrary with regards to local identities—dividing tribes and groups between two nations in some places and lumping them together within a single polity in others. This relic of the sort of careless European colonialism that was typified by the Sykes-Picot Treaty (Huntington 1997) is not unique to Jordan but is found throughout other Arab countries in the region, creating a region where states as a rule "often fail to achieve the integration and unification of citizens' loyalty to the state as a common identity that guarantees their interests" (Bani Salameh 986). As such, Jordan's tradition of statecraft, which can be best summarized as "governance as tribal management," prioritizes

stability and "keeping the peace" over ideological goals or even national unity and the formation of a "national comprehensive identity" (Ibid. 2016, 995). It does this for both reasons of cynical self-preservation and also as an expression of its indigenous cultural values.

In such a tribal system, Jordan is seen less as a unified nation-state with clear common interests and instead as a collection of tribes, for whom the Hashemite king and his government exist primarily to resolve inter-tribal disputes and whose legitimacy is ensured in turn by appealing to said tribes. Historically, ruling empires in the Middle East granted a great deal of autonomy to local tribal entities, allowing them to manage their own affairs in exchange for declaring loyalty and paying taxes to the imperial center (Spindel 2011). The pattern of "rule by tribal management" was continued by the first Jordanian monarch, Prince Abdullah, who selectively granted gifts and positions of leadership to important tribal leaders (Bani Salameh 2016) and deputized the powerful *Bani Sakhr* tribe to help police the region (Robins 2019).

In a 2012 opinion piece on Jordanian political affairs for *Al-Jazeera*, Tunisian political scientist Larbi Sadiki mentions a controversy involving an extravagant birthday party that was held by the country's British-born Queen Rania. When discussing the popular public discussion of the issue, he neither mentions the view of Jordanian citizens nor Jordanian politicians on the issue, but instead he quite tellingly says that "*tribes* stand on either side of the allegations" [emphasis added] (2012, 4). In spite of these tribal differences, Jordanians have generally supported the monarchy as an institution (Ibrahim 2022). Because of this role as the agreed mediator between the tribes, the Hashemite dynasty is fundamental to maintaining Jordan as a distinct nation-state, and its built-up

reputation helped in large part to ensure the Jordanian regime's survival through the Arab Spring (Spindel 2011).

In order to maintain the stability of the Jordanian state and nation and thus its own power, the Hashemite dynasty must protect those social factors that uphold it: intra- and inter-tribal stability, broad social consensus, the maintenance of public morality as a social unifier, good relations with vital foreign allies, and the reputation of the monarchy and its regime. It accomplishes this task in part by utilizing a subtle "velvet glove" approach to censorship, where both the ends and the means of censorship are oriented towards maximizing stability. The ends of Jordanian censorship strive towards stability by targeting their efforts towards speech that most threatens social and political stability, while the means of these censorship efforts strive towards stability by being subtle and discreet enough so as to avoid the appearance of tyranny or abuse. The latter factor is especially important for Jordan's relationship with influential and liberal Western allies, namely the United States, and is enhanced by public declarations of reform and liberalization. Several cases of censorship in Jordan throughout the decade following the Arab Spring follow with an explanation of how each case demonstrates the Jordanian government's policy of tribally-influenced and subtle pro-stability censorship.

Before the Arab Spring, Jordan had a complicated media environment (Duffy 2015). While more liberalizing and dissident publications were beginning to emerge in the decade or two before 2011, the Jordanian press was by and large "loyalist" (Ibid. 2015, 2) in its adherence to the status quo and the government's point of view. Soon after the emergence of the Arab Spring, the current Jordanian monarch, King Abdullah II, fired his cabinet and vowed to take "practical, swift and tangible steps to launch a real political

reform process [...] including expanding public freedoms" (Ibid. 2015, 1). However, data from press freedom organizations suggest that press freedom in Jordan has actually decreased since the Arab Spring (Ibid. 2015). Having not been followed up by meaningful action, these promises appear to have been made solely to appease protestors and thus avoid any further potential instability and political chaos. "The green reed that bends in the wind is stronger than the mighty oak that breaks in a storm" is a Chinese proverb that can be applied to the comparison of the censorship strategies of the Jordanian and Syrian governments. The Jordanian government "bent" with the desires of local protestors (at least nominally) for a time in order to preserve its own stability. One only needs to compare the calm and friendly response of Jordanian police to the Arab Spring protests, where police shook hands with protestors and handed out bottled water (Spindel 2011), to the harsh and violent retribution against protestors by the police in Syria that eventually led to the outbreak the Syrian Civil War (Ryan 2018) to see the practical benefits that a more accepting and conciliatory attitude towards protestors can bring. While the Syrian government did not bend and thus ignited a severe civil conflict, the Jordanian government bent and thus maintained stability.

However, these supportive words from the Jordanian regime remained just that, words, as the Jordanian government not only failed to meaningfully reform its media policies but instead went in the opposite direction, "further restricting freedom of expression even more than it did before 2011" (Duffy 2015, 1). While this may seem confusing from a Western perspective, in Jordan's Arab-Islamic cultural context, where censorship is seen as a perfectly acceptable means of maintaining the all-important social stability and unity, it would be sensible to increase censorship in times of instability. Only

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a year after the Arab Spring, in April of 2012, Jordanian officials arrested two journalists, Jamal al-Muhtaseb and his sister Sahar al-Muhtaseb, for publishing a report alleging corruption in the Jordanian parliament and royal court. They were charged with "opposing the ruling system" and detained for two weeks before being released on bail of 5,000 Jordanian dinars (equivalent to $7,000), and the authorities eventually dropped the charges (Ibid. 2015, 4). However, the message remained clear to journalists that the Jordanian regime would not tolerate speech that threatened its reputation—the thing that had helped it to stay in power and keep the nation together during the Arab Spring protests. Unity and stability had prevailed over individual rights, as they would continue to do in the following months and years.

In September of that same year, the Jordanian National Assembly passed several amendments to the Kingdom's press and publications law that added new regulations to the administration of Internet publications. Local news websites would now have to register with the Jordanian government before launch, be managed by a member of the Jordan Press Association, and be held responsible for any user comments posted on their website (Duffy 2015). This last point can be contrasted with the equivalent law in America, where online publishers and users cannot be treated as the publisher or speaker of information or content provided by another user (Brannon 2021).

Jordan had tightened its grip around the emerging sphere of digital media, having forced website publishers to bear responsibility for any comment posted on their page. This provides a good example of the difference between the two cultural attitudes towards freedom of speech here: in individualistic and culturally Western America, websites are treated as open and public forums where anyone may speak their mind and the owner of

the forum cannot be held accountable for it; in collectivist and culturally Arab Jordan, websites are treated as necessarily cohesive groups where the owner is responsible for the behavior and speech of his site's users, much as a tribal elder or *šaiḫ* is responsible for the behavior and speech of his tribe's members.

This legal amendment would have far-reaching implications for freedom of speech in Jordan. According to the Jordan Press Association (JPA), between 2012 and 2013 Jordan's level of press freedom fell from a score of 51 out of 100 to 44.15 out of 100 (Ghazal 2014). According to the President of the JPA, Tareq Momani, this was due to the recent Press and Publications Law amendment and the subsequent request by Jordanian authorities for internet service providers to block more than 281 unlicensed news websites that were now illegal under the new amendment (Ibid. 2014). But online news providers would not be the only ones affected by the passage of the law. In July of 2013, two Jordanian activists, Thabet Assaf and Tarek Khader, were arrested while leaving a televised debate wherein they criticized the Jordanian government for the new amendments to the nation's press and publications law, saying that the amendments threatened free expression in Jordan (Duffy 2015). The activists were charged with "inciting antiregime sentiment" (Ibid. 2015, 5), accused of being Islamists (and thus a threat to a stable society), and imprisoned. This incident constitutes a good example of censorship and suppression made for the sake of stability; publicly criticizing the regime and its actions threatens the unity and stability of the system, and thus it must be punished.

The Jordanian government used internal censorship to pursue stability and order not just domestically, but internationally as well. In September of 2013, a year after the controversial press and publications law amendments were passed, two Jordanian

journalists, Nidhal al-Fara'neh and Amjad Mu'ala, were arrested for posting a video that allegedly showed the brother of the Emir of Qatar engaging in illicit acts (Duffy 2015). The two were charged under article 118 of the Jordanian penal code, which makes it a crime to engage "in acts, writings, or speeches not approved by the government that would subject Jordan to the danger of violent acts or disturb its relations with a foreign state" (Ibid. 2015, 5). The wording of this law is telling: it is not the content of the speech or writing that is cause for concern, but rather the potential for said speech or writing to disrupt the social status quo. The problem, as the Jordanian government openly admitted, was not that the journalists had violated an individual's privacy, but rather that they had threatened to disrupt Jordan's relations with a foreign state. With half of its budget dependent on foreign aid (Ryan 2018), it is no surprise that the Jordanian regime is quick to respond to things that might disrupt said aid. Less than five years after the incident, Qatar extended a $500 million aid package to Jordan (Reuters 2018), a clear example of why the Jordanian government considers its relations with the wealthy Gulf state to be of such vital importance.

Another example of Jordan using censorship to maintain peaceful relations with neighboring countries happened in April of 2014, when the Jordanian parliament explicitly criminalized communication "that would subject the kingdom [of Jordan] to hostile acts or harm its relations with a foreign country" (Duffy 2015, 5). This law would be used as soon as June of that year to justify the raiding and shutting down of Al-Abasiya, an Iraqi television station in Amman that had broadcasted criticism of the Iraqi government (Ibid. 2015). In both of these cases, Jordan pursued stability above all else, censoring its own

citizens in order to maintain good relations with neighboring countries like Iraq and wealthy benefactor nations like Qatar.

Along with these explicitly political examples of tribally-minded pro-stability censorship, there are also examples of censorship that is used less so to suppress dissent or prevent disorder and more so to avoid causing public offense. One case of this is in the official Jordanian Arabic subtitles of the American sitcom *Friends*, where mentions of pork, illicit (at least according to traditional Islamic values) sexual acts, Hanukkah, and Israel are replaced with similar alternatives, euphemisms, or are simply omitted outright (Krishan 2012). Mentions of pork and illicit sexual acts could offend Jordan's Muslim majority or potentially even damage the religious unity found therein by challenging traditional values; either case would mean instability for Jordan. Mentions of Israel and related topics (e.g. Judaism, Hanukkah, etc.) could potentially incite conflict within Jordan's sizable Palestinian community as well, again sowing the seeds for internal social disruption and instability.

In all of these examples, Jordan's actions can be easily understood through the lens of tribal statecraft. In the crisis of the Arab Spring and the regional chaos in the following decade, the Jordanian government was forced to rely more thoroughly on its time-tested Bedouin political traditions. Since these Bedouin traditions and attitudes had spent millennia evolving so as to effectively mitigate conflict within groups in a resource-poor environment, their continued presence and influence in Jordan have constituted a boon for the nation. A political tradition not as attuned to the needs and pressures of harsh desert living as the Bedouin tradition would most likely not have helped Jordan to manage its scarce resources as well, and a political tradition not so steeped in the intricacies of inter-

and intra-tribal conflicts in all likelihood would not have helped Jordan to maintain government stability in the face of numerous competing interest groups and a fragile national identity.

With Jordan's thoroughly Bedouin cultural, religious, and political background understood, one can then examine how these values manifest into policies befitting Jordan's precarious political situation. While the decisions of Jordan's government do seem to be based on a rational analysis of the political circumstances both within the Kingdom and in its surrounding neighbors, a strongly Bedouin attitude can be seen to underlie these decisions. The rational analysis of the political situation by its leaders constitutes the "conscious" motive, whereas the implicit Arab-Islamic cultural values and attitudes of the nation that have formed the worldview of Jordan's leaders constitute the "unconscious" motive. The Jordanian government has reacted to various political issues in the area of freedom of expression in a manner informed by this "unconscious motive." The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces the threats of a fragile national identity, stronger competing identities tribal and pan-Islamic that further challenge said national identity, and a regional neighborhood filled with political chaos and disruption. However, there is a sense in which Jordan, with its strong tradition of tribal statecraft, is well-prepared for such a situation. Just like its tribal Bedouin predecessors, the leaders of Jordan find themselves in a harsh, resource-poor environment where they are threatened by potential enemies on all sides. This may explain why Jordan remained relatively stable in comparison to its regional neighbors, who are by and large less tribal and more urban.

The general theme of Jordanian censorship in the 2010s has been one of *stability above all else*. This attitude can be seen expressed in several different instances of

Jordanian censorship (or lack thereof), many of which addressed different aspects of stability. At the beginning of the Arab Spring in Jordan, protests were led by the *Hirak* movement, which was made up of youths from various East Bank tribes (Ibrahim 2022). King Abdullah's police treated the protestors humanely, and the King himself openly promised reform (Spindel 2011). Contrast this, then, with the situation in Syria, where torture and abuse of Syrian youths involved in protests at the hands of the Syrian police led to the revolt of the prominent and politically powerful tribes to which they belonged, eventually leading to the eruption of the Syrian Civil War (Ibid. 2011). Yet among more modern and urban individuals with weaker tribal affiliations, such as journalists, the Jordanian regime is far less conciliatory. News websites must submit to be registered and regulated by the Jordanian government, and journalists and activists alike are arrested for criticizing the regime's policies, exposing corruption in the royal court, or threatening the Kingdom's relations with influential neighbors (i.e. Iraq) or potential economic benefactors (i.e. Qatar) (Duffy 2015).

The regulation of news websites reflects the traditional Arab-Islamic outlook of words as being judged by their social effects on in-group cohesion and stability. Arresting journalists for criticizing or scandalizing the regime reflects on the importance of the Hashemite dynasty's reputation and perception as a just actor as a key factor in maintaining its position as the manager and mediator of the Jordanian tribes. Finally, the arrests related to Jordan's relations with foreign countries are not merely cynical political maneuvering, but also reflects an implicit Bedouin prioritization of keeping the peace and good relations with powerful neighbors over individual liberties.

The deep roots of Jordanian censorship in cultural values and norms expresses itself in how open and honest the Jordanian government's pro-stability censorship efforts are. In spite of King Abdullah II's promises of reform and liberalization, his government does not attempt to hide or obscure the motives for its censorship efforts. One only has to look at the record of Jordanian censorship efforts and read the official charges to see the explicitly pro-stability intentions out in the open. Rather than the Western-style language of individual human rights and justice, the language of authority, stability, and consensus are used. The two journalists arrested in 2012 for exposing royal corruption, for example, were not charged with violating privacy or breaking some sort of confidentiality law, but instead were explicitly arrested for the crime of "opposing the ruling system" (Duffy 2015, 4). The two activists who were arrested the following year for merely criticizing the new Jordanian press and publications law on television were charged with "inciting antiregime sentiment" (Ibid. 2015, 5); attention should be given to how they were arrested after making their views know on television, a very public medium, and recall the Arab-Islamic views towards the problem of dissenting speech not being found in its contents, but in its potential for social disruption (Rosen 2000). Jordanian journalists have been arrested on multiple occasions for speech that threatened to "disturb [Jordan's] relations with a foreign state" (Duffy 2015, 5), a clear case of the maintenance of social and political peace, stability, and consensus trumping individual liberties. To an American viewer, this may seem odd or even unthinkable, but to a Jordanian Arab raised on Bedouin cultural values, it is an entirely sensible course of action.

While these arrests and their motives are made explicit, the Jordanian policy towards censorship on the whole remains subtle and discreet. While individual journalists

may have been arrested over the years, King Abdullah nevertheless made proclamations of reform and liberalization and avoided openly suppressing the large and popular Arab Spring protests (Duffy 2015). It is probable that these latter, more liberal-seeming courses of action were taken to maintain the Hashemite dynasty's image and reputation as well as the Kingdom's relationship with powerful liberal allies and benefactors (i.e. the USA).

CONCLUSION

The connection between the Jordanian government's policies regarding freedom of expression in the decade following the Arab Spring and the nation's deeply-rooted Arab Bedouin culture, traditions, and values has been shown here to be quite strong. Throughout the region's history, local rulers have controlled their lands by appeasing tribal interests, mediating inter-tribal conflicts, and managing external affairs, and otherwise letting the tribes manage their own affairs. Whether under imperial Ottoman rule, colonial British rule, or independent Hashemite rule, governments have consistently ruled by means of the traditional Jordanian mode of statecraft, which is that of *governance as tribal management*. This monarchical yet confederal tradition of statecraft has enabled Jordan to absorb large minority populations such as Palestinian refugees by incorporating them into the tribal system as a new interest group.

But this tribal society did not just affect the political situation in which the government of Jordan found itself, but also informed the values by which it defined itself. While governments around the world tend to rationally pursue their own interests, what those interests entail can change from culture to culture, as "[v]alues, culture, and institutions pervasively influence how states define their interests" (Huntington 1997, 34). For a society like Jordan's, strongly influenced by its tribal Arab Bedouin heritage and its harsh and resource-poor desert environment as it was, these culturally-defined state interests include: maintaining internal peace and stability; making and maintaining good relations with neighboring nations and potential international benefactors; keeping the peace between the various tribes and other interest groups that made up the country; preserving the reputation of the Jordanian monarchy and the ruling Hashemite dynasty as

just and necessary institutions; and maintaining public consensus and unity regarding traditional Islamic values and morals.

The common thread that connects all of these interests of the Jordanian government is *maintaining stability*. This is an important priority for the Hashemite monarchy and its government for three primary reasons, two immediate or proximate and one ultimate or underlying.

The first immediate reason is the internal political situation within the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan's national identity has been fragile since its inception—just like many of its Arab neighbors—and this problem was only exacerbated by its tribal culture and its large Palestinian population (Bani Salameh 2016). The Jordanian government was thus faced with the difficult task of maintaining a nation with weak ʿaṣabīya, or in-group loyalty and unity, on the national scale but strong ʿaṣabīya on the sub-national (i.e. tribal) scale. A citizenry more loyal to their sub-national group identity than to their national identity presents a threat to a government that seeks to maintain stability and unity.

The second immediate reason is that the region surrounding Jordan was filled with other unstable countries, which in many cases fell into open revolution or civil war following the Arab Spring (Ryan 2018). This political situation, in which an already-fragile national identity is further threatened by external political conflict and chaos, put the Jordanian government on the defensive and incentivized them to prioritize maintaining stability by the means most familiar to a government historically oriented towards tribal statecraft: by keeping the peace between the tribes.

The third and ultimate reason is Jordan's tribal Bedouin heritage. While the aforementioned immediate political conditions did affect the nature of Jordanian policy to an extent, this response was ultimately predicated on and influenced by a number of deeply-rooted traditional Arab-Islamic values.

First, Jordanian censorship policy demonstrates a clear preference towards maintaining internal unity and loyalty towards the Hashemite dynasty and its regime. This attitude is ultimately rooted in the value of ʿaṣabīya—the spirit of "partisanship, party-spirit, or zeal" (Lane 1872, 2059)—that held the Bedouin tribes together in ancient Arabia (Salzman 2008) and led the early Arab Muslims to prescribe the death penalty to the apostate *murtadd* who threatened the internal unity of the Muslim "family" (Ibid. 1863, 90) that is the *umma* with his public abandonment of the community.

Second, Jordanian censorship policy pursues stability over specific ideological ends. Journalists are not arrested for promoting ideas that the King or the government find offensive, but rather for threatening the stability of the Jordanian regime's position either domestically or abroad (Duffy 2015). This reflects traditional Arab-Islamic anxieties about the fragility of the stability of the social order, perhaps owing to Arab culture's roots in a conflict-ridden tribal Bedouin society (Salzman 2008) where shared, neutral public space is often denied in favor of tribal competition (Rosen 2000). Much like with Ibn Humām's justification for the traditional penalty for apostates, the Jordanian government engages in censorship "not as punishment for the act [but instead] in order to avert the evil of war" (Brown 2017, 15).

Third, Jordanian censorship is predicated on a view of freedom of speech as a public act, further complicated by a traditional tribal worldview which denies the existence of

most neutral public spaces and views all public actions as tribal interactions with social consequences (Rosen 2000). This tribal relation to space is expressed quite directly today in inward-focusing, opaque Arab residential architecture, for example (Ibid. 2000). In such an environment, there can be no neutral or inconsequential public expressions of speech, and as such any act of public speech is seen as having potential consequences for the stability of the state and the social order as a whole and is thus of interest to the state.

The combination of these underlying cultural values—the prioritization of in-group loyalty, unity, and stability (exemplified in the concepts of Ibn Khaldun's ʿaṣabīya, Spengler's *Consensus*, and the traditional punishment for *irtidād*) over individual opinions or desires on the one hand, and the lack of a conception of a neutral, shared public space on the other—thus creates a sociopolitical environment in which freedom of expression is seen as a potential threat to social cohesion, agreement, unity, and stability either between members of a tribe or between different tribes. There is no neutral space—everything is seen as having a tribal dimension, and things are judged on their public effect on the state of this tribal system.

It seems as though Jordan's stability throughout the Arab Spring in spite of its precarious regional, political, and economic circumstances can be attributed at least partially to its treatment of issues of freedom of expression, which was in turn made possible by a combination of the shrewd political maneuvering of the Hashemite regime and the nation's own tribal Bedouin heritage. The Jordanian government has selectively tolerated and cracked down on political dissent, based on which course of action would ensure maximum stability. It also preserved the favor of important international allies and financial benefactors by publicly espousing ideals favorable to some (i.e. the USA) and

cracking down on would-be scandals in service of others (i.e. Qatar and Iraq). Jordan's tribal Bedouin heritage and the values stemming from it had primed its leadership for dealing with crises of division, scarcity, and instability. In approaching issues of freedom of speech with the traditional Arab-Islamic attitude of judging acts of speech not by their content but rather by their potential negative social consequences, the Jordanian regime was likely made more capable of making clear-headed political decisions in the pursuit of stability above all else. The Bedouin tradition of tribal statecraft (i.e. *governance as tribal management*) also helped to guide Jordanian policy to handle issues of freedom of speech and other political issues so as to minimize inter-tribal conflict and maintain the position of the Hashemite dynasty as the central, unifying force in Jordan. In remembering and preserving the values and traditions of its Bedouin past, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has ensured its existence for the present.

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