

Master's Thesis Project

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ABSTRACT

Departing in a case study analysis, informed by strategic narrative theory, the objective of this thesis is to answer the following research question: How have state-led interfaith dialogue initiatives in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan developed in the aftermath of 9/11, and what do these developments, including narratives of moderate and tolerant Islam, say about the Kingdom's self-perception and projection of identity onto the international, political stage? The analysis departs in a content analysis of two documents, namely the *Amman Message* and *A Common Word Between Us and You*, argued to constitute the bearing pillars of interfaith engagements in Jordan. The analysis is focused on how Jordanian interfaith initiatives constitute a means of soft power to the Kingdom, and it is concluded that King Abdullah II, through the AM and ACW, is able to form an identity narrative of him as an Islamic moderate leader of the Middle East, fighting a global threat of radicalization, that aligns with expectations of Western powers, and thereby cultivate his alliances with these powers.

INTRODUCTION

On the 9th of September 2001 (9/11), an act of devastating terrorism in the name of Islam planted narratives of ‘the threat of radicalization’, the ‘rise of religious extremism’ or ‘bad’ religion, and the ‘clash of civilizations’ deep in the soil of the international community’s political and public spheres. As such, especially the threat of radicalization has evolved to be one of the great security issues facing nation states of the 21st century. This, however, is not the only trend that has been on the rise in the aftermath of 9/11, as the events marked a breaking point for a global business of interfaith initiatives² and international faith-based cooperation and peace-building. As such, the movement has brought counter-narratives of ‘dialogue of civilizations’, ‘freedom of religion’, and ‘religious moderation’ to the table of international politics, adding the resurgence of ‘good’ religion to the overall framework (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, pp. 1-4; Hurd, 2017, pp. 2-3; 23; 27).

Nation states, and non-state actors alike, engage in interfaith activities, and the region of the Middle East³ is no exception to the interfaith developments of the 21st century. The Kingdom of Jordan has been a frontrunner in the region when it comes to faith-based dialogue initiatives, both in terms of the amount of effort that the Kingdom has put into it, and in terms of the general attention its activities have received in theological, political, and academic circles. Jordanian engagements with interfaith can be traced back to the 1980’s, but it is with concrete interfaith dialogue projects like the 2004 *Amman Message* (AM)⁴ and the 2007 open letter *A Common Word Between Us and You* (ACW)⁵ that the Kingdom truly joined in on the post 9/11 ‘interfaith movement’. Central to these projects is a narrative of moderate and tolerant Islam, but where exactly lies the national interests and motivations for a monarchy of the Middle East to engage with such matters (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 5; Markiewicz, 2018, pp. 89-96)?

CASE OF INTEREST

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has picked up interfaith dialogue, in the aftermath of 9/11, with great eagerness and seemingly high ambitions of interreligious world peace and understanding.

² The concept of interfaith initiatives is to be understood in accordance with Fahy and Hayne’s definition; “*interfaith initiatives are conceived in terms of improving understanding and building better relationships between members of different religious traditions*” (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 5).

³ For the purpose of this thesis, the Middle East will onwards be limited to refer to a total of 17 countries, including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen (Haynes, 2014, p. 254).

⁴ Attached as Appendix A and referenced throughout the thesis as (AA).

⁵ (*A Common Word Between Us and You: 5-year Anniversary Edition*, 2012) – Referenced throughout the thesis as (ACW, 2012).

Interfaith dialogue projects constitute a form of faith-based diplomacy where religion is promoted as a key resolution to domestic, regional, and international conflicts (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, pp. 3-4), and the fact that a national state engages begs the question of what other motivations and interests the Hashemite Kingdom might have, apart from a praiseworthy goal of “world peace and harmony”. The AM and ACW are presented as two religiously motivated documents, but I argue here, as has been done by others before (Browsers, 2011; Gutkowski, 2016; Kayaoglu, 2012; Markiewicz, 2018), that political interests are equally essential to these two projects, if not more so. Thus, it is assumed that the two documents constitute a means of soft power to the Hashemite Kingdom, but to what extent and with what purpose? Investigating this matter of interest involves broader perspectives of historical context, internationally trending narratives and counter-narratives, foreign policy issues, and means of persuasion in international communication.

Strategic narrative theory is a theory of soft power, and a strategic narrative is broadly defined as a “*means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors*” (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, pp. 5-6). Analyzing the Hashemite Kingdom's interfaith initiatives within a strategic narrative framework, presents a relevant case study for examining the problems stated above. Thus, the objective of this thesis is to analyze the AM and ACW, within a theoretical framework of strategic narratives, to reflect on how interfaith engagements are beneficial to the Kingdom's foreign policy interest. The primary focus is on the Kingdom's self-perception and identity projection on the global stage, as I argue this to be the source of soft power gains of the Kingdom's interfaith activities. It has been argued by John Fahy and Jeffrey Haynes that, in the field of IR, “*relatively little attention has been paid to how interfaith initiatives have been conceived in terms of, and have contributed towards, global politics*” (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 6), and thus this is what I aim to contribute to with this thesis.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The reflections above have resulted in the following research question: *How have state-led interfaith dialogue initiatives in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan developed in the aftermath of 9/11, and what do these developments, including narratives of moderate and tolerant Islam, say about the Kingdom's self-perception and projection of identity onto the international, political stage?*

The ambition of this thesis is to analyze the AM and ACW within an analytical framework informed by strategic narrative theory, with a primary focus on the state-led nature of the two interfaith projects,

and their status as a means of soft power to the Hashemite Kingdom in international politics. The thesis is structured over three chapters.

The first chapter introduces the case at hand, namely the AM and ACW documents as they constitute the primary empirical sources. Thus, the strategic narrative analysis will depart in the content of those sources. The chapter further provides a contextualization and concept definitions essential to the scope of the case study at hand.

The second chapter outlines the analytical framework, as it explains strategic narrative theory and the concepts derived from it and operationalized. The analytical framework is concluded by considering methodological approaches, emphasizing the analysis as a qualitative case study departing in an in-depth content analysis of the AM and ACW informed by strategic narrative theory.

The third chapter constitutes the analysis. To guide the analysis, the research question is divided into three sub-questions, and the third chapter is thus structured accordingly. The questions are: 1) How does the content of the AM and ACW resemble strategic narrative formation? 2) What do the AM and ACW suggest about the Hashemite Kingdom's self-perception and identity projection onto the international, political stage?; and 3) How can the AM and ACW be understood as a means of soft power, and what motivates the Hashemite Kingdom to pursue such means? How the answering of these three sub-questions proceeds is elaborated under the point of methodological approach, and again respectively as each question is addressed.

CHAPTER 1: THE CASE, THE CONTEXT, AND THE CONCEPTS

This chapter first introduces the AM and ACW, as the two documents are the primary empirical data of this case study. Secondly, the chapter contextualizes Jordan's state-led interfaith initiatives by reviewing regime type, the historical context of Jordan as an agent of diplomacy and moderation in a chaos ridden neighborhood, and general tendencies of interfaith activities in the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11. It is within this context that the development of interfaith activities in Jordan should be understood. Lastly, the chapter reviews concept definitions that are further considered relevant in the examination of the two documents as a strategic soft power tool to the Hashemite Kingdom. This part includes concepts of 'religion', 'modernity', and further how to understand narratives of 'resurgence of religion' and 'clash of civilizations'. Ultimately, the chapter connects Jordanian interfaith initiatives with the historical context of the regime of Jordan and a global surge of 'good' and 'bad' religion, while also determining why the timeframe of post 9/11 is a suitable one for the scope of this thesis.

THE CASE: JORDANIAN INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

When talking about interfaith activities in the 21st century, Jordan is no doubt a heavyweight contestant on a regional as well as an international scale. There has always been communication between faiths and cultures, but the interfaith movement in particular is traced back to the late 19th century (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 1). From the 1960's interfaith initiatives were institutionalized, but as mentioned in the introduction, 9/11 marks a point in time from which the interfaith movement found new momentum and developed rapidly. The development of interfaith activities in the Middle East is elaborated in the broader contextualization later. Jordanian interfaith activities precedes the 2004 *Amman Message*, but it is this project, in combination with the 2007 Open Letter *A Common Word Between Us and You*, that positions Jordan as a highly recognized and important interfaith actor regionally and internationally (Fahy, 2018, p. 312; Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 1; Markiewicz, 2018, p. 89). As such, the two documents have continuously been analyzed by scholars of Religion as well as International Relations. Although both documents will be considered under the broader category of interfaith activities, it is relevant to differentiate between *inter*-faith and *intra*-faith dialogue in the following. As argued by Markiewicz:

“Whereas the Amman Message was an intra-Muslim theological message with an inter-civilizational (aiming to improve Islam-West relations) and political (commissioned by a ruling monarch)

dimension, A Common Word sells itself as a purely theological [interfaith] initiative." (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95)

Intra-faith dialogue thus refers to theology-based dialogue between members within the same religion, while *inter*-faith points towards theology-based dialogue between two or several different religions, as is the case with ACW.

The Amman Message (AM) started out as a sermon held by the Jordanian Chief of Justice in November 2004, endorsed by King Abdullah II of Jordan, ultimately determining what 'true' Islam is, and taking Islam back from those who have 'hijacked' it for extremist and violent purposes (Browsers, 2011, p. 95). Following the sermon was a posing of three questions by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan (RABIIT)⁶ to 24 Islamic scholars of the region; 1) who is a Muslim? 2) Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (Takfir)? 3) Who has the right to issue a *fatwa* (legal ruling)? The consensus amongst the 24 scholars on these three issues led to an international Islamic conference hosted by King Abdullah II, where 200 Islamic scholars from 50 countries further agreed upon, and issued, what came to be known as *the three points of the Amman Message* in July 2005 (Browsers, 2011, p. 945; Markiewicz, 2018, pp. 92-93). The 200 Islamic scholars agreed on the following:

1. They specifically recognized the validity of all 8 *Mathhabs* (legal schools) of *Sunni*, *Shi'a* and *Ibadhi* Islam; of traditional Islamic Theology (*Ash'arism*); of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism), and of true *Salafi* thought, and came to a precise definition of who is a Muslim.
2. Based upon this definition they forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims.
3. Based upon the *Mathahib* they set forth the subjective and objective preconditions for the issuing of *fatwas*, thereby exposing ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam.
(Website; Home: AM)

In July 2006, the message and its three points had been endorsed by another 300 leading Muslim scholars and authorities, bringing signatories to a total of 500 (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 93). On its official website, the AM and its three points are presented first and foremost as a tool for dialogue

⁶ The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought is officially a non-governmental Jordanian institution, however with strong connections to the state and the Royal Hashemite Family. The institute opened in 1980 and was "*designed to examine broader questions related to the proper nature and interpretation of Islam*", and to facilitate *intra*-faith activities particularly directed towards Sunni-Shi'i related issues (Robbins & Rubin, 2013, pp. 65-66).

between Muslims that puts forward an unprecedented foundation for unity of all Muslims around the world:

“... it amounts to a historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma'*) of the *Ummah*⁷ (nation) of Islam in our day, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam” (Website; Home: AM).

This highlights the *intra*-faith nature of the message. Markiewicz refers to the inter-civilizational and political character of the message, emphasizing a potential non-Muslim audience as well, as does Prince Ghazi on the official website of the document (Website; Introduction: AM). However, it is with the second project in focus, *A Common Word Between Us and You* in 2007, that the Jordanian Kingdom explicitly states *inter*-faith dialogue on a theological basis between Muslims and Christians (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95).

A Common Word Between US and You (ACW) builds on the legacy of the AM (Browsers, 2011, p. 955; Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95), and as described by Markiewicz:

“*The open letter is addressed to the heads of Christian Churches and organizations worldwide, inviting Christians to dialogue with Muslims on the basis of two commandments common to both faiths, namely those of loving the one God and loving one's neighbor.*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95)

The description underlines the *inter*-religious agenda of this second initiative and, as was the case with the preceding AM, ACW can be traced directly to King Abdullah II himself, as it was on his request that Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal⁸, (henceforth Prince Ghazi), first took charge in the writing of an Open Letter addressed to Pope Benedict XVI in 2006. The letter was drafted with support and signatures from 38 Islamic scholars in response to a University lecture held by the Pope, where he “*quoted a 14th century source which made some disparaging remarks about Islam, leading to an international outcry* (Markiewicz, 2018, pp. 95-96). Ghazi received a rather discouraging and delayed reply from the Vatican, urging him to a second attempt of dialogue a year later, addressed to *all* Christians with an additional 100 signatories joining to support the message. Departing from the two commandments common to both Islam and Christianity, ACW was a theological message

⁷ Sarah Markiewicz elaborates: “*There is some discussion about who exactly are intended by “my umma,” however the scholars behind the ratification of the Amman Message believe it refers to an agreement between the learned and the authorities within the Muslim community.*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 92)

⁸ Prince Ghazi is the current head of RABIIT and son of Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal who founded the institute in 1980, at that time named Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research. Furthermore, he is the King's advisor and cousin (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 90).

intended to convince and “*motivate religious leaders to pass on their convictions about the commonalities between Christianity and Islam, with the hope of influencing public opinion*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95). This second attempt received immediate and positive responses from the Vatican, Yale University’s Center for Faith and Culture, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to mention three significant ones out of many (Lumbard, 2012, p. 13).

Both messages can be placed in relation to RABIIT, and the institute’s website will guide visitors to the official websites of the AM and ACW, as well as to the website of *The World Interfaith Harmony Week* (WIHW). The WIHW is another international interfaith activity proposed by King Abdullah at the UN General Assembly in 2010, and it is explicitly considered and functioning as an extension of ACW. It has been adopted by the UN, and the first week of February every year, interfaith groups and other “*groups of goodwill*” are provided a platform from where they can show the world and each other what they stand for and further encourage cooperation between different movements around the world. The agenda of ACW shines through as there is an essential purpose of highlighting commonness between people ‘from different places’:

“It is hoped that this initiative will provide a focal point from which all people of goodwill can recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have, and thus provide a strong dosage of peace and harmony to their communities” (Website; WIHW).

STATE-LED INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

Based on the above, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, strongly identified with King Abdullah II, is considered the instigator of the initiatives. The Kingdom’s involvement and ‘ownership’ of the projects is to be considered in relation to RABIIT, as the non-governmental institute is the official platform from where the two projects have been presented (Website: RABIIT). The Institute was established in the 1980’s by the late King Hussein Bin Talal, and since 2000, Prince Ghazi has been the chairman of the institute. He is part of the Royal family, and in addition he currently holds a position as the King’s ‘Personal Envoy and Special Advisor’ (Website: Past and Present: RABIIT). Sara Markiewicz has analyzed the two interfaith projects in question, focusing on their history, goals, and accomplishments, and refers to the two as being ‘top-down’ interfaith initiatives. ‘Top-down’ interfaith initiatives are characterized by typically having a political dimension that could potentially benefit the foreign policy of the given government in charge (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 97). Markiewicz draws this conclusion in accordance with Stacey Gutkowski’s understanding of the AM and ACW as ‘state-endorsed governmental civil society interfaith efforts’, emphasizing the significance of the

Hashemite Kingdom as the instigator and messenger (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 208). The fact that the initiatives can be considered state-led, is largely what qualifies the examination of the AM and ACW as a means of soft power to the regime of Jordan, as it suggests political as well as religious incentives for King Abdullah to engage. In the following, the relevant context for such a case study is outlined.

THE CONTEXT: THE KINGS OF JORDAN AND INTERFAITH IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As just implied, the Hashemite Kingdom and King Abdullah II is at the center of this case study, which calls for further contextualization of the kingdom as the governing power and foreign policy maker of Jordan. Furthermore, the AM and ACW documents are here contextualized within the broader framework of a global interfaith movement post 9/11. The contextualization serves in providing perspectives for reflecting on what the Kingdom's state-led interfaith initiatives suggest about the Kingdom's self-perception and identity projection, while further adding to the discussion on to what extent interfaith constitutes a means of soft power.

AN AUTOCRATIC REGIME RELYING ON WESTERN ALLIANCES

For the scope of this thesis, the primary frame of reference for the Hashemite Kingdom, or regime, will be that of the reign of King Abdullah II, dating back to 1999 when he took over power from his late father, King Hussein Bin Talal. However, his father's reign is relevant to the scope as well, and thus, a review of King Hussein Bin Talal's reign (1952-1999) is provided in order to highlight a history of diplomacy and peace processes in relation to the geographical position of Jordan, characterized by turmoil and wars (Ashton, 2008, p. 3). King Hussein was heavily involved with peace building in the region during his time, and as King Abdullah inherited the challenging geopolitical position, he has proceeded efforts and included interfaith activities in his arsenal of conflict resolution remedies. Thus, the study of Jordanian state-led interfaith initiatives and how these might be viewed as a soft power tool, are focused on the efforts made by King Abdullah II post 9/11.

The Hashemite Kingdom is an Arab, Muslim majority nation state with a population of approximately 9.5 million people, Jordanians making up 6.6 million of that number. The remaining number reflects refugees residing within Jordanian borders, primarily Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees, entering Jordan after regional wars and unrest from 1948 and up until today⁹ (Alvi, 2019, p. 464). Geographical security issues and demographic changes have posed great challenges, and the regime has had to take

⁹ Conflicts and wars count the 1948 Palestinian-Israeli war, the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the 1980 Gulf-war between Iraq and Iran, the Gulf-crisis of 1990-91 (the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the Syrian Civil War starting in 2011 (Alvi, 2019, p. 464; Ashton, 2008).

measures to secure its national borders and population, but also to secure the survival of the regime itself. The Hashemite regime, being an autocratic one, has managed to hold onto power despite challenges, and Hassan Barari argues that part of the explanation lies in the regime being 'hybrid' and 'individual' in nature.

Hassan Barari argues that “*none of the Arab monarchies qualify as a constitutional monarchy in which the monarchs are merely a figurehead while real executive power is vested in an elected government*” (Barari, 2015, p. 104). As such, Middle Eastern monarchies are argued to be the governing power in states of the Gulf, as well as in Morocco and Jordan. Here, royal families have managed to hold on to their claim to power despite regional conflicts, the Arab Spring being particularly significant as state leaders of several republics were dethroned. Barari suggests three explanations, particularly relevant to the case of Jordan, for why this has been the case. Firstly, that internal opposition have enjoyed little or no external backing; secondly, that strong alliances with the West has assisted to further suppress internal opposition; and thirdly, that oppositional parties have aimed for political reform rather than to dethrone their ruler. Barari explains these structures with characteristics of the Jordanian monarchy being an 'individual monarchy' capable of providing a certain amount of democratic reform to accommodate pressure from below. This further enables a description of the monarchy as a 'hybrid regime', meaning a regime that promises political reform to then slow it down and drack it out through a rhetoric of gradual, safe, and measured processes. In other words, the Jordanian regime's promised reforms have constituted more of a smokescreen and a way of fending off pressure from 'below', than actual intentions of giving up power, thus upholding an autocratic ruling form. Despite this, the West, the US and Europe specifically, have praised Jordanian moves towards reform, rather than question the authenticity of their efforts (Barari, 2015, pp. 103-105; 110). Arthur Malantowicz seconds this in arguing that King Abdullah II holds almost absolute power, while democratic institution are mainly put in place to appease “*the international audience the Kingdom relies on so heavily*” (Malantowicz, 2019, p. 323). As such, alliances with Western powers constitute a leg in King Abdullah's regime survival strategy. Accordingly, the regime has cultivated a pro-Western/US orientation, especially as part of its foreign policy activities aimed towards three overall concerns summed up by Faisal Odeh Al-Rfouh:

“a) challenges pertaining to the Arab-Israel conflict, the occupation of the West Bank and the question of Palestinian refugees; (b) promoting the survival of the State in the light of its limited natural and economic resources; and (c) safeguarding Jordan's territorial integrity, sovereignty,

stability, and security notwithstanding multiple internal and external threats in the region” (Al-Rfouh, 2019, p. 373).

These concerns highlight security issues and the regional turmoil that the geographical position of the country has left the Hashemite Kingdom to deal with. Especially the Arab-Israeli conflict has signified the reign of Abdullah II, and it signified the reign of his father before him.

KING HUSSEIN AND HIS LEGACY OF PEACE-BUILDING AND DIPLOMACY

Since his coronation in 1952, King Hussein Bin Talal sought to establish the Hashemite Kingdom as a diplomatic force in the Middle East, determined to resolve the number one conflict between Israel and Palestine and build long lasting peace in the region (Ashton, 2008, pp. 4-6; Shlaim, 2016, p. 295). In general, given Jordan's geopolitical position in the region, Hussein had to navigated through major conflicts and following peace processes, outlined in the following.

The 1956 Suez Crisis was the first big regional crisis facing Hussein directly. Here he congratulated Nassar on his success in nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, which brought Nassar in direct conflict with Britain and France who were the main shareholders. The acknowledgement of Nassar was a smart move on Hussein's part in terms domestic pro-Arab sentiments in a pre-election period, thus guarding himself from Arab nationalist criticism. Hussein was viewed as a pro-Western figure in the Middle East, however, the act brought tension in his already strained relationship with the British, who at the time was Jordan's guaranty for national security and defense against Israel, as well as their primary Western financial backing. A strained and uncertain relation to the British was ultimately replaced by a stronger relationship with the US (Ashton, 2008, pp. 56-61). The Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the national September crisis in 1970, and the signing of the first Camp David accords in 1978 further tested Hussein's alliances and diplomatic skills.

The 1967 Six Days' War, where Arab allies were crushed by Israeli military forces, caused Jordan to lose the West Bank including Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, preceded only by Mecca and Medina in religious significance to the Hashemites (Kamrava, 2013, p. 119). Regaining the West Bank territory from Israeli occupation came to be an essential goal in the peace processes to come¹⁰.

The 1970 September crisis was characterized by Hussein using military power to force out Palestinian guerrilla groups of PLO (the Palestinian Liberation Organization), under the leadership of Yasser

¹⁰ The West Bank was captured by Jordan in the 1948 Israeli-Palestinian war, where Jordan's King Abdullah I had joined the battle for Palestine (Ashton, 2008, p. 3).

Arafat. PLO had come to function as a 'state within a state' in Jordan, attacking Israel from within its borders, and thus jeopardizing the Hashemites national security as Israel would reprise. The deed put Hussein in a bad light amongst his fellow Arab nations, while putting him on the path towards milder relations with Israel (Ashton, 2008, p. 6; 140; 137; Kamrava, 2013, pp. 123-125).

The October war of 1973 was initiated by an impressive surprise attack on Israel by Egyptian and Syrian military forces, and this despite prior warnings made by Hussein, as the King had no interest in being dragged into another conflict between his immediate neighbors, only to be ignored by Washington and Israel (Ashton, 2008, pp. 171-173). The war ended with a psychological victory for the Arab coalition more than anything else (Kamrava, 2013, pp. 126-132; 138).

Following the moral victory in 1973, peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel were initiated, and the Camp David agreement signed in 1978, facilitated by the US president Carter. Hussein, given his interest in the West-Bank dispute and his emphasize of the need to reach a multilateral agreement involving the Palestinians, given their right of self-determination, had hoped to join the negotiations. However, the King was not invited to the actual summit, neither was the Palestinians, thus leaving it to the Egyptian president Sadat to realize Arab ambitions of peace in a bilateral agreement. What came to be, was a document with vague commitments, and still, an implied expectation of Jordan to negotiate peace with Israel based upon it. Peace did not come however, and the events strained Hussein's relations with the US and President Carter. Thus, leading up to the first Gulf War in 1980, the Hashemite King was driven into the arms of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (Ashton, 2008, pp. 199-203).

The alliance between Hussein and Hussein held throughout the eight-year long war between Iraq and Iran, and it was an unusual one given the Western perception of the King as an Arab moderate. The alliance both played on Hashemite heritage in Iraq as well as a dedication to 'Arabism', which the King thought Sadat to fall short of in his peace treaty with the Israelis. The alliance was popular domestically, and it emphasized the King's attraction to the idea of an Arab nation, as did his request for a multilateral peace agreement in the Camp David peace process. King Hussein came to play the part of an intermediary between the US and Iraq during the war. Throughout, he further did what he could to disarm the conflict and mediate between Iraq and Syria. He also played his part in an ineffective ceasefire of 1987 and in "*helping to persuade the Western powers of the justice of Iraq's case in negotiations at the United Nations which ultimately led to a ceasefire*" (Ashton, 2008, p. 228),

altogether stressing his diplomatic efforts and determination for peace (Ashton, 2008, pp. 209-214; 219-220; 226-228).

During the Gulf-crisis of 1990-91, the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, King Hussein kept friendly relations with Saddam Hussein intact, which had no positive effect on the King's Western relations. In addition, the Jordanian King also managed to make enemies out of former Saudi and Kuwaiti friends. Altogether, "*the political and economic consequences of the crisis were to overshadow Jordanian diplomacy for much of the rest of the decade*" (Ashton, 2008, p. 283). This diplomacy was constituted in King Hussein's participation in the Madrid peace process in 1991 following the Gulf-crisis, and the US-instigated signing of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994 following Palestinian engagement in the Oslo process, that resulted in the signing of a second Oslo accords between Israel and Palestine in 1995 (Ashton, 2008, pp. 262-263; 283-284; 366; Shlaim, 2016, p. 295). Last but not least was the King's participation in the Camp David Process of 1999-2000, but seeing as Hussein died in 1999 and the Camp David negotiations eventually broke down, the Hashemite King never got to see the peace that he had fought to put in place throughout his reign. The ultimate blow to the peace negotiations of the 90's came with the al-Aqsa intifada, resulting in frequent and lethal clashes between Israelis and Palestinians once again (Shlaim, 2016, pp. 297-300). Thus, throughout wars and peace processes, Hussein fell out with his otherwise important and trusted allies of US and Britain several times. He succeeded in mending them again, which emphasizes goodwill from Western side and a clear interest in keeping Jordan as a friendly ally in the middle of regional chaos. In the last part of his life, Hussein's rhetoric became colored by interfaith language, as he would refer to peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict as peace between the 'children of Abraham'. Thus, King Hussein perceived his Hashemite Kingdom as an important regional player in peace negotiations both in terms of its Arab status and claim to the territory of the West Bank, as well as its traditional/religious status, and furthermore, his fundamental belief that "*his family was destined to provide leadership for the Arab nation*" (Ashton, 2008, p. 5).

King Abdullah II's coronation in 1999 thus came immediately prior to yet another failing peace process, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue has proceeded to be the number one issue to the King, who's behavior and agency comes to be further determined by the need to preserve the diplomatic relationship with Israel laid out in 1993. The strong ties between Jordan and the US, as well as close cooperation with the European Union, have only increased during the reign of King Abdullah, bringing with it financial aids and strengthening of a wide range of Jordanian security measures and military institutions (Al-Rfouh, 2019, pp. 373-377). As such, the bonds with foreign allies,

significantly Western ones, should be considered of great interest to the Hashemite Kingdom. King Abdullah supporting the US in their post 9/11 'war on terror' constitutes a significant example of cultivating such relations. This particular point of cooperation met significant opposition domestically and regionally, underlining the extent to which staying on favorable terms with the US was at the time, and still is, a priority (Malantowicz, 2019, pp. 331-332). As such, "*the US aid to Jordan has consisted of primarily economic aid since 1951, and military assistance since 1957*" (Alvi, 2019, p. 464).

THE TRADITIONAL LEGITIMACY OF THE HASHEMITES

In addition to constituting a very visible pillar in the US-Jordanian alliance, the 'war on terror' further make up an important perspective in the post 9/11 interfaith movement, as will be elaborated in a short while. First however, attention will be drawn to the religious legitimacy¹¹ of the Kingdom. The Hashemite regime rely greatly on power based in traditional and religious legitimacy. Mehran Kamrava uses the categorization of 'sultanistic regime' to describe Jordan, which entails a political formula of "*traditional legitimacy of the ruling family, which is deeply rooted in the history, cultural heritage, and lore of the country*" (Kamrava, 2013, p. 229). This is done through a genealogical link to the prophet Muhammed, as the Hashemites trace their line of descent to the great-grandfather of the prophet. This genealogically founded legitimacy is assumed to give the royal family the right to govern according to Islamic law. Furthermore, the Hashemites rely on traditional authority, meaning legitimacy linked to Islamic tradition, as guardians of the Islamic holy sites of Mecca and Medina (Wróblewski, 2016, pp. 10-11). However, these sources of legitimacy are arguably providing the Hashemites with a rather fragile claim to power, compared to similar structures in monarchies of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia in particular. The reason for this, as argued by Kamrava, is that the Hashemites traditional/religious legitimacy "*relies not on traditional authority but on "imagined" tradition, a myth based more on the state's reinterpretation of history than on factual heritage and reality*" (Kamrava, 2013, p. 231). This urges Kamrava to categorize Jordan as a 'civic myth monarchy'. However, this does not make the Kingdom less prone to emphasize these myths and maintain historic, traditional, and genealogical symbols in order to improve the legitimacy of the regime (Kamrava, 2013, p. 236).

¹¹ Legitimacy is defined as "*the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed*" (Fox, 2009, p. 277). Jonathan Fox derives his definition from Ian Hurd.

This puts into perspective the blow of losing Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Israelis in 1967 and adds to the understanding of what King Hussein, and later Abdullah II, have at stake when going through peace processes with Israel. As Nigel Ashton points out, King Hussein guarded the Hashemites' responsibility of the holy sites of Jerusalem almost with jealousy, exemplifying this with an episode in 1992, where the dome of the Mosque needed repairing and Hussein offered \$8.25 million out of his own pocket to fund the restoration, in order to somewhat match Saudi funding of \$10 million (Ashton, 2008, p. 292). In 2013, King Abdullah and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas "*signed a historical agreement in Amman, reaffirming the King's Custodianship over Holy sites of Jerusalem*" (Website; Custodianship over Holy Sites: King Abdullah II), thus emphasizing the continuing importance of the matter to the Hashemite King.

Ultimately, regime survival strategies, friendly and supporting alliances with Western powers, and a history of the Hashemite Kingdom as a diplomatic force in the Middle East are considered important contextual factors to the Jordanian state-led interfaith initiatives, as I argue that the Kingdom's engagement ultimately supports these policy interests. The general tendencies of interfaith activities in the Middle East after 9/11 are equally important.

THE POST 9/11 INTERFAITH MOVEMENT: INTERFAITH IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Interfaith initiatives have already been briefly defined, but the scope of this thesis calls for a broader understanding of the phenomenon, as well as the global structures and discourses within which the movement thrives. John Fahy and Jeffrey Haynes argue interfaith activities to have increased on a global stage with unprecedented speed and intensity after 9/11. Global activities have a wide range of purposes and goals, from peace building and conflict resolution, to addressing climate change. One purpose that has gotten great attention in the aftermath of the religiously motivated terrorist attack of 9/11, is that of addressing and countering a global threat of (religious) radicalization. In this regard, interfaith represents a goal of fighting 'bad' religion with 'good' religion. Regardless of the purpose, all interfaith initiatives share the significance of promoting religion as an essential part of solving the great problems of the world, thereby constituting a form of 'faith-based diplomacy'. Though, where faith based diplomacy "*seeks to include religious voices in key global conversations about specific global issues*" (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 5), interfaith activities do so on the basis of improving mutual understanding and relationships between people of two or more different religious beliefs. In other words, interfaith initiatives consider the engagement of, and cooperation amongst, the religions of the world an essential brick in countering and solving conflicts, as well as in building peace and encouraging freedom (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, pp. 1-6).

Turan Kayaoglu considers interfaith activities in the Middle East specifically and argues that 'dialogue of civilizations' is the primary objective of engagement across the region. This objective establishes a response to discourses of clashing civilizations, and it has proven an important factor in foreign policy agendas of the region. Dialogue of civilizations is founded in acceptance: 1) of valuing plurality of civilizations; 2) of a need for international structures that accommodates such plurality; and 3) that dialogue and mutual goodwill between people of different civilizations "*are essential in order to achieve peaceful coexistence*" (Kayaoglu, 2012, pp. 129-130). This is argued based on Samuel Huntington's theory first presented in 1993, and elaborated in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, where he predicts that post-cold war conflicts will increasingly be between civilizations and rooted in culture, "*mostly defined as religion*" (Fox, 2002, pp. 415-416). 'Clash of civilizations' refers here less to the arguments and predictions actually made by Huntington, and more to how the concept has been fitted, used and projected in the contemporary public sphere to label the relationship between Islam and the West. The discourse builds on an assumption of 'us' versus 'them', where Muslims are perceived, from a Western point of view, as the primary opponent of the West. What this opponent has come to represent varies from incompatible with a modern Western society, hateful of it, and even dangerous and violent towards it (Ahmed, 2005, p. 103; Ambrosini, 2011, p. 215; 226).

Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin root popular discourses on negative representations of the Islamic 'other' in the 'Western mind' in Bernard Lewis/Samuel Huntington 'clash of civilizations' views accordingly. They argue that the US-led war on terror, in the aftermath of 9/11, has influenced and exacerbated negative perceptions and projections of Islam, leading to continuous tension between the Western and the Muslim World (Ismael & Rippin, 2010, p. 1). It is within this framework of discourses that the threat of radicalization is emphasized, and post 9/11, this perception of threat narrows in on those who commit violence in the name of Islam specifically. Rippin argues that violence in the name of Islam "*has created the greatest challenge to Muslim identity in the twenty first century*" and that "*Muslims feel that Islam as a whole has become tarnished in the eyes of others*" (Rippin, 2012, p. 203; 204). He argues further that this conflict forces Muslims worldwide to find a balance of enunciating their own religion as fitting with the 'does and don'ts' of a modern society, without turning too secular and liberal and sell out on what is considered to be 'Islamic'. Essential to this is once again a negative perception of Islam as a radical religion (Rippin, 2012, pp. 203-204).

Gutkowski also examines interfaith dialogue initiatives in the Middle East as informed by radical perceptions of Muslims. She argues that interfaith initiatives in the region aim to respond and counter such perceptions through a 'myth of religious moderation', moderation carrying connotations of "*civility, dialogue, reflexivity and tolerance for opposing viewpoints*" (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 206). This aligns with Kayaoglu's understandings, and altogether, Fahy and Haynes sum up the currents of interfaith dialogue initiatives in the Middle East accordingly:

"In the Middle East, interfaith gatherings have come to represent important platforms for the promotion of what is often described as 'true' or 'moderate' Islam, and serve as valuable opportunities to counter the 'clash of civilizations' discourse that continues to inform relations between the Muslim world and the West" (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, p. 1).

With interfaith dialogue initiatives, Jordanian ones constituting a state-led version, religion is granted great significance when it comes to disarming conflicts already playing out on a world stage and avoiding potential conflicts of the future. Fahy and Haynes connect the heightened global engagement with interfaith activities in the aftermath of 9/11 with a general resurgence of religion in IR and international politics (Fahy & Haynes, 2018, pp. 2-3). But what is meant by the concept of religion and the resurgence of it? The concepts are discussed and operationalized in accordance with the scope of this thesis in the following paragraph.

THE CONCEPTS: RESURGENCE OF RELIGION IN A POST-SECULAR AGE

James V. Spickard writes about six sociological narratives about religion and what is happening to it. The six narratives he includes are 'secularization', 'the rise of fundamentalism', 'religious reorganization', 'religious individualization', 'the supply side of religious markets', and 'religion in the context of globalization'. One story tells the tale of religion in decline, another of religion on the rise, while a third argues for a reorganization or restructuring of the phenomenon. Depending on the context and which aspects of religion that are being emphasized, every one of these narratives can be made to fit reality (Spickard, 2006). Sticking with Spickard's terminology, the narrative that is argued to reflect in the case study of Jordanian interfaith initiatives is one of 'religion resurging as a means of soft power in international politics'. Like the other narratives, this one is context dependent, which in turn calls for specifications on concepts of religion, resurgence of it, and soft power. The former two is discussed and operationalized in the following, while the concept of soft power is treated extensively in the analytical framework presented in chapter two.

DEFINING AND OPERATIONALIZING RELIGION

'Religion' as a concept is a highly contested and instable one in academic and public spheres alike. It has been criticized of setting religion apart and treating it as a different domain "*untouched in its essential identity by social context*" (Beyer, 2013, pp. 67, 69 for quote; Hurd, 2017, pp. 11-12); of being a historically bounded and Western centric term; of being a tool of colonialism "*whose use changed according to political needs*" (Beyer, 2013, pp. 66, 68); of being a scholarly construct, an analytical and changeable research strategy inconsiderate of non-academic observers "*who insist that religion is something other or more*" than that; or lastly, for being of no use to others than theologians (Beyer, 2013, p. 70). Marx Weber refused to define religion (Beyer, 2013, p. 64), and various attempts ranging from substantive to functional and polythetic definitions¹² underline the complexity of the concept.

Peter Beyer addresses this complex concept and provides an analysis and critique of parts of the debate outlined above. He finds that the debate is distinctly one between either a 'theological' or 'scientific' approach to religion, correspondingly generated by either religious or scientific systems. Thus, an important distinction is made between theological and non-theological approaches. However, both fail to capture, and even ignore, a third and critical component of the production of religion in the global society of today. In addition to theologians and scholars of religion, the concept is used and valued by many people who do not belong to either of the two groupings. Beyer captures this third group under a category of 'official' approaches to religion, and he hereby refers to religion generated by systems of legislation, politics, education, and mass media (Beyer, 2013, pp. 65, 71-72). In other words, he provides a helpful perspective on how to deal with the concept of religion, namely by acknowledging three approaches which overlap and are interconnected: 'scientific', 'theological', and 'official'. It is an alternative to seeking out a "*singular and universally applicable definition of religion*" (Beyer, 2013, p. 72). Throughout this thesis, Beyer's three approaches to religion are utilized to explain in what type of setting religion in Jordanian interfaith initiatives is generated. The terms 'theological', 'scientific', and 'official' are further operationalized within this framework, to characterize the settings within which the AM and ACW are received.

¹² *Substantive definitions* state what religion is, e.g. 'belief in spiritual beings' (Edward Tylor) or 'an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings' (Spiro). *Functional definitions* state what religion does, e.g. 'uniting followers into a single moral community' (Durkheim). Both versions seek to include all religions within clear boundaries, something that has proven, if not impossible, then at least messy. *Polythetic definitions* provide an alternative in that they offer a number of attributes, religions not having to fulfill all of them to be included (Hamilton, 2001, pp. 12-23).

Elizabeth S. Hurd recognizes the tendency and argues for a “*nuanced and context-specific approach to religion*” (Hurd, 2017, pp. 11-12; 20). She equally divides between three types of religion, namely ‘expert religion’, ‘governing religion’, and ‘lived religion’, generated in certain contexts. Boundaries between the three are unstable and, depending on context and perspective, they interact and compliment or contrast one another. Hurd’s typology will be operationalized in addition to Beyer’s in this case study, as key to explaining how, and to what extent, state-led interfaith initiatives in Jordan comes to represent religious soft power in international politics.

‘Expert religion’ first and foremost emphasizes knowledge about religion produced within a scientific or academic setting by so called experts of the field. Knowledge about religion, religious leaders, and religious politics and practices are in high demand from both decision makers, democratization consultants, and environmentalists etc. as religion increasingly is sought incorporated into policies and programming in numerous contexts. Thus, expert religion is generated in academic contexts, but furthermore in the incorporation of knowledge into political contexts, as this type of religion is relevant in both lawmaking and governance (Hurd, 2017, pp. 8-10, 13). In this case study, the concept of ‘expert religion’ is further operationalized to include religion generated by scholars of Islam and Muslim religious leaders within a theological setting. As such, Beyer’s boundaries between ‘theological’, ‘scientific’ and ‘official’ approaches come to be fluid within Hurd’s category of ‘expert religion’.

‘Governing religion’ as a category covers another type of religion, however, keeping ties with ‘expert religion’ in various contexts. It is defined as “*religion that is privileged through advocacy for international religious freedom, religious toleration, and interfaith understanding, and guarantees for the rights of religious minorities*” (Hurd, 2017, p. 15). Religion is privileged by individuals or groups in power, and the mechanism functions on a local as well as global scale. Privileged religion turns governing when it in cases of religious freedom privileges one minority as religious while overlooking another, or in case of Jordanian interfaith activities bases dialogue on a clear-cut model of what ‘true Islam’ is. In either of the cases, religion becomes a “*technique of governance that authorizes particular forms of politics and regulates the spaces in which people live out their religion*” (Hurd, 2017, p. 17). As such, governing religion should be understood as religion determined by people in political or religious power positions (Hurd, 2017, p. 8). As such, ‘governing religion’, same as ‘expert religion’, emphasizes practices in which religion is ‘policy relevant’ and contributing to law and governing.

‘Lived religion’ stands somewhat in opposition to this and offers perspectives that the two initial types are unable to capture. It zooms in on those who believe in, belong to, and practice religion on an everyday basis. On this level, the relationship between individuals and religious authorities, rituals, texts, and institutions is central. Religion here is understood as a means helping individuals as well as groups “*to navigate and make sense of their lives, connections with others, and place in the world ...*” (Hurd, 2017, p. 8).

THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

‘Resurgence of religion’ qualifies as a narrative about what is happening to religion today, like the six stories described by Spickard. ‘Secularization’ does the same, and as such the two of them can be viewed in opposition to, or as mutually dependent on, one another, meaning that when one resurges it might be viewed as a decline of the other. The question of whether, and how, religion is resurging in the global political and public sphere and in IR accordingly¹³, constitutes an important element in the debate revolving around secularization theory¹⁴. The theory has to a wide extent been considered as somewhat of a truism in Western social science in the years following the Second World War (Haynes, 2014, pp. 29, 37). Discussions amongst IR scholars play out between those who subscribe to the theory, those who strongly question it, and those who believe that it has turned out to be wrong. Jeffrey Haynes belongs to the latter branch of IR scholars, and claims that a resurgence of religion is proof of a failing secularization theory. Haynes perspectives are particularly interesting as he makes the connection between a resurgence of religion in the 21st century and a globally developing interfaith movement (Fahy & Haynes, 2018; Haynes, 2014). Haynes definition of religious resurgence thus helps us to understand the link between Jordanian interfaith initiatives and ‘the resurgence of religion’:

“First, it implies a growing public voice for religion, in the sense that issues are increasingly viewed or framed through a religious lens [...] Around the world, numerous religious leaders and intellectuals now make public their desire to make societies more just, more equal, and more focused on spiritual issues.” (Haynes, 2014, p. 34)

This development is often connected to the assumption of society having entered a post-secular age. ‘Post-secular’ is considered an equally important theoretical assumption about how the international

¹³ IR refers to the scholarly field while the notion of international or global politics refer to the actual political scene where decisions and relations are made.

¹⁴ It is important to distinguish between secularism, secular and secularization. “*Secularism is defined as the state or quality of being secular, the end result of a process of secularization*” (Haynes, 2014, p. 36).

society is structured in terms of religious influence. Thus, it is contextually relevant to a case of interfaith dialogue in Jordan as a means of soft power in international relations. A further elaboration of this assumption departs in secularization theory, and brings arguments made by Jürgen Habermas and Birgitte S. Johansen into play. Habermas' and Johansen's definitions constitute a solid point of departure for understanding how Haynes uses the concepts 'post-secular' and 'resurgence of religion', and how he connects it to interfaith initiatives, and thus how they will be understood and operationalized within this framework.

Secularization theory rests on ideas of scientific enlightenment opposing theocentric and metaphysical worldviews, religion becoming a private matter and thereby losing its relevance and influence in public affairs, politics, lawmaking etc., and a general decline in the need for religious practice and faith in a 'higher' cosmic power as existential security is increasingly ensured around the world (Habermas, 2008). These ideas suggest a separation of religion from something else, here science, politics and public affairs, and societies experiencing such developments would thus be categorized as 'secular'. Secularization theory thus marginalize religion and deem it an irrelevant factor in public matters (Haynes, 2014, p. 29). However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for IR scholars and political decisionmakers to ignore religion, and as argued by Jürgen Habermas; "*global changes and the visible conflicts that flare up in connection with religious issues give us reason to doubt whether the relevance of religion has waned*" (Habermas, 2008). Being an important voice in this debate, Habermas has been a driving power behind coining the term 'post-secular' used to describe secular societies¹⁵ where; "*religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernisation is losing ground*" (Habermas, 2008). This definition does not directly imply a resurgence of religion in society as religion maintains a role that it is already playing. The resurgence is rather constituted in a renewed acknowledgement that religion is still very much in place and is likely to continue to be.

The term 'post-secular' has been highly debated and represents a variety of different meanings in different contexts. However, an inclusive definition entails "*complex and diverse changes that in different ways involve a resacralisation or revitalisation of religion*" (Haynes, 2014, p. 44). In regards to IR, post-secularity becomes a question of religion and religious attitudes flourishing in spaces that were otherwise thought to be secular, thus calling for a reconceptualization of the way that religion

¹⁵ Regions and countries that are often categorized as secular societies are countries in Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as "*these countries and regions show pretty conclusively that citizens live in a secularized society*" (Haynes, 2014, p. 45).

interact with politics and society (Haynes, 2014, pp. 40-41). Birgitte S. Johansen discuss the notion of post-secularity accordingly and suggests that the concept implies moving beyond the secular. She points to one way of approaching 'the moving beyond the secular' "*as a question of religion's resurgence or (re-)appearance in domains of society from which it has hitherto been functionally separated*". Thus, the separation between religion on one side and science and politics on the other is weakening as a consequence of secularization fading away (Johansen, 2013, p. 11).

These reflections indicate that we can talk about post-secular IR and international politics as well as post-secular societies. As the focus of this thesis is on interfaith initiatives as a means of soft power in international politics, the concept 'post-secular' is used to describe a time where religion is increasingly operationalized by various actors through initiatives focused on religious freedom, interfaith dialogue, human rights, and tolerance (Hurd, 2017, pp. 2-3). Modernization (modernity) is a process within global society that is addressed as part of the study as well and briefly described here.

'The modern world' and 'modernity' often come to pose as concepts that equals Western values and norms. However, as argued by Dietrich Young "*We are all modern*" and the concept of 'modernity' should be understood as "*an inherently global condition*" realized in a variety of forms. Thus, he argues against a Western-centric perception of modernization, suggesting for example that 'Islamic modernity' is included and understood in a broader framework of global modernity (Jung, 2017, p. 1; 3; 7). The discussion of a Westernized perception of modernity versus multiple modernities brings an extra level to the examination of the development and ambitions of Jordanian interfaith activities.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To answer the research-question, the analytical framework departs in the documents of the AM and ACW, along with above mentioned arguments and assumptions made in relation to context and concepts relevant to the two interfaith projects. The framework further departs in a theoretical framework consisting of tools derived from strategic narrative theory as presented by Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, and methodological considerations centered around the study of the specific case of Jordanian state-led interfaith initiatives as a means of soft power, both addressed in this chapter. The methodological approach will resemble that of a case study analysis, here bringing together considerations made by Miskimmon et al. and Alan Bryman. The methodological approach is addressed at the end of this chapter, while the theoretical framework is laid out in the following.

THEORY: FROM JOSEPH NYE'S CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER TO STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

The theoretical framework departs in the concept of 'soft power' in international politics, as it is the objective to investigate interfaith dialogue initiatives as a soft power tool to the Hashemite Kingdom. The main theory within this framework will, as mentioned, be one of 'strategic narratives as a means of soft power' presented by Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. The following review will mainly rely on two specific publications of the same three authors, one already mentioned from 2017 (Miskimmon et al., 2017), and another published in 2014; *Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power* (Roselle, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2014). Dealing with soft power, however, requires a mentioning of Joseph Nye's definition as well as a thorough understanding of how Roselle et al. read and utilize Nye's concept, as this reading makes up the basis for strategic narrative theory.

The concept of soft power is mainly developed by Joseph S. Nye and has increasingly been accepted as a means of power in IR studies as well as global politics since the 1990s (Solomon, 2014, p. 721). According to Nye, soft power rests on three resources of a country or a state, namely "*its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)*" (Nye, 2004, p. 11).

“For Nye (2011:16) soft power is the ‘ability to get preferred outcomes through co-optive means of agenda-setting, persuasion, and attraction’”(Solomon, 2014, p. 723)¹⁶. Culture, political values, and foreign policies help determine to what extent this is possible, however, attraction is perceived as the most dominant factor. The power of attraction can be rooted in several different qualities such as, charisma, positive/negative attention, and competences to mention a few. Legitimacy is another quality to be added that will be of relevance to the scope of this case study. This emphasis on qualities of attraction underlines the importance of the social interaction between agents and targets (Solomon, 2014, p. 723). Solomon argues that Nye and other ‘soft power enthusiasts’ have failed to properly put into theory the power of attraction, with the exception of those who point to *“analyzing soft power and attraction as narrative-based phenomena”* (Solomon, 2014, p. 722). In line with this, Roselle et al. argue that soft power analysis, since Nye presented it as a form of influence on international politics in the 1990s, to a great extent has been centered around counting capabilities rather than emphasizing and explaining their actual influence. They argue that strategic narrative analysis presents such opportunities;

“Strategic narrative is soft power in the 21st century. Strategic narrative sets off from a similar starting point that Nye faced in 1990 – understanding fundamental change in the international system and asking: What are the best methods to influence international affairs? Strategic narrative brings us back to core questions in International Relations (IR), back to asking what means and methods of persuasion and influence are likely to work under what conditions, and to a focus on those conditions of communication and interaction, which have changed so fundamentally since Nye’s seminal 1990 article.” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 71)

Strategic Narratives are understood to have great significance to political actors’ self-perception and identity building, both on a global, regional, and domestic scale, underlining very well the relevance of using this particular theory for the purpose of this case study. Strategic Narratives are defined as *“means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors”* (Miskimmon et al., 2017, pp. 5-6). It is added to the understanding that narratives become strategic as they are *“deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current”* (Arsenault, Hong, & Price, 2017, p. 194). Ultimately, the theory represents a study of communication and power amongst states and non-state actors alike, providing explanation for how

¹⁶ Solomon quoting Nye’s work from 2011, *The Future of Power*.

the two concepts align as actors seek to influence the world around them. Miskimmon et al. refer to the original concept of 'strategic narrative', in relation to IR, as being a narrative strategically employed to challenge the legitimacy of one's enemies in a military conflict. Miskimmon et al. extend the concept to a wider range of issues within the study of IR and seek to provide an understanding of how actors use strategic narratives to influence international politics at various levels. As such, political actors forge and make use of three types of strategic narratives in their quest to influence, namely 'international system narratives', 'identity narratives', and 'policy/issue narratives' (Miskimmon et al., 2017, pp. 1-2). The typology constitutes the core of the theory and is reviewed in the following paragraph. Second to that, the authors emphasize five components understood to make up any given strategic narrative. These are agents, scene, act, agency, and purpose, and they are to be reviewed in the following as well.

THREE TYPES OF STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

The first of the three types of strategic narratives is the **international system narrative** which describe the structure of the world, including an understanding of who the different actors are, and "*how the system works*" (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8). The three authors point to 'the War on Terror' as an example of an international system narrative, as this narrative "*sets out states as protecting individuals from non-state actors known as terrorists in a battle for security*" (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 76). The concept is applied in the analysis of the AM and ACW as a tool to understand and explain how the messenger, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, perceives the structures and the actors of the international system of which they are a part. The second type, **identity narrative**, describes the political actor. The concept is used to answer questions such as: what is the story about this political actor, and which values and goals are emphasized by this political actor (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8)? In this case, the focus is on the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, personified by King Abdullah II, and what identity he is projecting onto the global stage through his interfaith engagements. The category of identity narratives is operationalized as a tool to explain this, again departing in the content of the two documents. The third category of narratives is referred to both as **policy narratives** and **issue narratives**. As such, they describe two sides of the same coin and for the current scope, the point of reference will be that of the issue narrative which "*set political actions in context, with an explanation of who the important actors are, what the conflict or issue is, and how a particular course of action will resolve the underlying issue*" (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8). This type of narrative becomes highly relevant in the context of interfaith activities since, as will be clear

from the following analysis of the AM and ACW, they state a conflict or issue that is sought resolved through interfaith understanding and dialogue.

It should be made clear that the three types of narratives are overlapping in nature, and mutually influencing. As such, an identity narrative can be either supported or undermined by a system or issue narrative, and vice versa. This highlights the relevance of considering all three types of narratives in an analysis of Jordanian interfaith activities as a means of soft power or influence in international politics, which primarily has the Kingdom's identity projection in focus. As the narrative categories are operationalized to elaborate how structures and issues of the international system are perceived by the Hashemite Kingdom, they become further relevant in a discussion of motivation and incentive to engage with interfaith activities altogether.

THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF A STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

Strategic narratives are made up from five components: Agents, scene, act, purpose, and agency. In the following, the components are elaborated and operationalized one by one. Important to the understanding of strategic narratives is the concept of 'time sequence'. This refers to "*characteristics to the basic time sequence structure, including causality, inclusion of past-present-future structure, some attempt at resolution, and a notion of nonrandomness (that events are connected in a nonrandom way)*" (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 6). Thus, the five components are understood within this context.

Agent(s) as a concept refers to the actors playing a part in a given narrative. The concept describes an actor's characteristics, interests, and behavior which are important aspects to cover when understanding and explaining a given narrative. Actors differ depending on context, meaning that agents associated with domestic systems (eg. Political parties, economic classes, individuals) might differ from agents associated with the international system (eg. states, non-state actors, terrorists, NGOs) (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 7; Roselle et al., 2014, p. 75). Arsenault et al. emphasize 'legitimizing agents' to play an important part for a strategic narrative to gain acknowledgement and momentum, as "*a legitimizing agent is an individual or group that speaks, or is made to speak, in affirmation of the narrative and its strategic goals*" (Arsenault et al., 2017, p. 203). The specific term will thus function to determine one type of agents in the case study to follow. Other important agents are constituted by those effecting or causing the Hashemite Kingdom to engage with interfaith activities. This second group of agents represents either part of the conflict (act) or the resolution (purpose) of strategic narratives.

Scene (setting/environment) refers to the setting/environment/space in which important actors play out their part. It is important, since actors are partly determined by the context (eg. domestic/international as mentioned above), and strategic narrative analysis asks the questions of “what constitutes the stage?” and “where is action taking place?”. From an international relations and foreign policy perspective, determining the scene becomes a question of determining the system or structure of the world, thus making this component essential in the discussion of potential system narratives. Dealing with scene, as well as with agents, assumptions, assertions, and underlying principles and rationales become heavily influential (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 75). In addition, the concept of scene/environment is operationalized to consider the milieu and space through which interfaith activities are encouraged and carried out. This will particularly refer to a theological and official settings in accordance with Beyer's categories.

Act refers to the conflict or action of a given narrative, and determining the act becomes a question of explaining “*who does what to who or what, and what reactions and interactions follow from that?*” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 75). Agents thus become an essential part in determining the act within a narrative, and it underlines the interrelatedness of the five components. In the analysis to come, ‘conflict’ refers to an act in need of a resolution between two or more parties. ‘Action’ is understood as an underlying factor in a conflict in the sense that a conflict is caused by a line of actions ‘committed’ by agents. The concept thus highlights perceived dangers and enemies and calls for a counter action to an action, a resolution to a conflict, or a neutralization of a tense situation.

Purpose should be understood in relation to act and refers to the resolution/suggested resolution/goal presented in a narrative. Purpose becomes the center around which a narrative revolves, and as Roselle et al. argue, “*narratives are appealing to human beings in part due to the presentation of action to resolve a conflict or disruption to the status quo. The suggested resolution in a narrative in many ways bounds the possible – both in thought and action*” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 76). Arsenault et al. further specifies the conditional nature of the purpose of a strategic narrative. As such, a given strategic narrative must have a purpose of assuring “*that the story predicted or ordered by the narrative will take place, or threatening severe consequences to relevant actors if it does not*” (Arsenault et al., 2017, p. 192).

Agency is constituted by tools and behavior of an actor in relation to a specific conflict and the resolution of it (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 7; Roselle et al., 2014, p. 75). As such, this component is here argued to point back to the means of soft power initially presented by Nye; culture, political

values, foreign policy and attraction. Legitimacy is further added, and altogether, agency becomes the tools by which agents realize their goals. In terms of interfaith activities, faith-based communication, and thereby religion in a certain shape, is understood as such a tool.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to better understand Jordan's interfaith initiatives as soft power, the AM and ACW are singled out as case studies and analyzed with a point of departure in strategic narrative theory. The "*complexities and particular nature*" of one specific case is thus at the center of attention, constituting the object of interest in and of its own (Bryman, 2012, pp. 66-69). As argued by Bryman, a case study can be both theory generating and theory testing, and he attaches the following reflections to the conduct:

"the case study researchers tend to argue that they aim to generate an intensive examination of a single case, in relation to which they then engage in a theoretical analysis. The central issue of concern is the quality of the theoretical reasoning in which the case study researcher engages." (Bryman, 2012, p. 71)

These reflections apply to this case, as it consists in a content analysis of the AM and ACW informed by strategic narrative theory aiming to explain the Hashemite Kingdom's identity projection on the global stage and, in this relation, to ultimately reflect on interfaith activities in Jordan as a means of soft power to the regime. The empirical data chosen, being that of the AM and ACW, are considered 'official' documents deriving from the regime given the state-led nature of them, as opposed to 'private' documents deriving from individuals, organizations and other non-state actors (Bryman, 2012, p. 549). This status of the documents is what qualifies them as a point of departure for examining the Hashemite regime's identity projection and its soft power gains of engaging with interfaith dialogue activities.

What further characterizes this case study is that it is a qualitative one, putting emphasize on context and detail "*because of their significance for their subjects and also because details provide an account of the context within which people's behavior takes place*" (Bryman, 2012, p. 401). This point reflects in the contextualization and concept definitions provided in chapter one, as these provide the context within which the Hashemite Kingdom's interfaith engagement are examined. Thus, I am aware that the choice of empirical data along with the theory, context, and concepts chosen to guide the analysis of this data, are determining for my results. Ultimately, they are chosen because they together prove how the state-led interfaith initiatives are a means of soft power to the Hashemite

regime. Certain limitations apply to a case study analysis as the results apply only to this specific case, and not on a general level.

Miskimmon et al. present four methodological approaches when applying strategic narrative theory to a case, two of them characterized as 'thin analysis' and 'thick analysis'. The answering of this research question will draw on points from both approaches, as the three-part analysis unfolding in the following chapter progresses from thin to thick. Thin analysis entails providing clarity of content and decisions made by an actor, in this case the sender of the AM and ACW, towards narrativizing issues or obstacles as well as clarity of means of persuading other actors to buy into these narratives (O'Loughlin, Miskimmon, & Roselle, 2017, pp. 27-30). Thick analysis employs a more "*complex conceptualization of actors, identities, and processes of communication, recognition, and influence*" and it "*can address the exercise of power*" (O'Loughlin et al., 2017, pp. 33-34). As such, thick analysis is applied to this case study when operationalizing the concept of 'identity narrative', how it projects to a given audience and further to reflect on its soft power potential in international relations.

CHAPTER 3: INTERFAITH INITIATIVES IN JORDAN AS A MEANS OF SOFT POWER

The primary objective of this analysis is to examine Jordanian state-led interfaith initiatives as a means of soft power to the Hashemite Kingdom in its international relations, primarily relations to Western powers. This is done by conducting a content analysis of the AM and ACW informed by strategic narrative theory. The three sub-questions, introduced earlier, operationalize the research question, and the analysis is thus structured accordingly. In the answering of the first question, concepts derived from strategic narrative theory are applied as a tool for explaining the content of the two documents. The rationale behind thinking of the AM and ACW in terms of strategic narratives is thus proven in this first part, as the five components enable a reading that highlights the potential in perceiving the documents as a media for forging and projecting system, issue, and identity narratives. With the first question bringing about an in-depth content analysis of the two documents, the second question takes one step away from the texts, in order to examine the self-perception and identity projection of the Hashemite Kingdom and ultimately King Abdullah II, still informed by strategic narrative theory, and further incorporating contextual and conceptual considerations reviewed in chapter one. The third question reflects on to what extent the two interfaith initiatives constitute a means of soft power to the King as the governing power, and what the motivations are for the King to pursue such means. The reflection adds a broader perspective to the case as it contextualizes the findings of the first two sub-questions further.

1. HOW DOES THE CONTENT OF THE AM AND ACW RESEMBLE STRATEGIC NARRATIVE FORMATION?

The analysis of Jordan's interfaith initiatives departs in separate content analysis of the AM and ACW, in that order, as the documents represent two individual projects presented officially as having differing agendas and status. The five components of strategic narrative theory; agents, scene, agency, act (conflict), and purpose (suggested resolution), constitute the tools used to textually break down the two documents, and the categories of system, issue, and identity narratives are further applied to understand and explain the chosen language and terminology in the documents. In both cases, the analysis is initiated by introducing the structure of the documents and by describing senders and recipients who are considered important agents in my strategic narrative framework. Also considered in the introduction, is the perception of 'scene', thus including two of the five components initially. These are emphasized again throughout the content analysis, in addition to highlighting act (conflict), purpose (suggested resolution), and agency of primary agents. Sara Markiewicz describes the

dimensions of the two documents in comparison, and her interpretations will form a basis for this analysis:

“Whereas the Amman Message was an intra-Muslim theological message with an inter-civilizational (aiming to improve Islam-West relations) and political (commissioned by a ruling monarch) dimension, A Common Word sells itself as a purely theological initiative.” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95)

THE AMMAN MESSAGE

The AM is a document characterized by religious and political ideology rooted in a rhetoric of religious tolerance and moderation, in theological sources of Islam, and finally, in generalizing and vague formulations and ideas. The chosen language is further subject to adjectives that insinuate spectacular and historical events, and urgent matters important to the global society. Such language is vibrant in the presentation and foreword to the document on its official website, where the AM and the three points that followed are made out to represent *“a series of events of great historical importance to the worldwide Islamic nation (Ummah), events without parallel for fourteen centuries”* (Website; Introduction: AM), where unanimous and universal consensus was made on what Islam is and what it is not. As such, the ambition is to denounce wrongful practice and promote true Islam. The document is approximately seven pages long and the first three lines declare it as a message provided in the name of God, which is followed by a quote from the Qur’an:

“God Almighty has said: O humankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes that you may know each other. Truly the most honored of you before God is the most pious of you. (49:13)” (AA, ll. 5-8).

Thus, the document immediately strikes a note of tolerance and mutual understanding between all people on earth, and indicates this to be at the center of Islam as a religion. The document then divides into four main parts, namely: 1) an introduction of sender and recipients; 2) a conflict and resolution description; 3) a textual analysis of theological sources to support the suggested resolution; and 4) a perception of how the resolution is best implemented. As will be further elaborated in the following, the Hashemite Kingdom and King Abdullah are represented as the sender of the message, while the document states that the primary recipient is the ‘Islamic nation’ or ‘our brethren in the lands of Islam and throughout the world’ (AA, ll. 9-12). Furthermore, it is argued that the message is meant to address non-Muslim communities in addition to the Islamic nation. The conflict and resolution descriptions revolve around negative and distorted images of Islam, and as mentioned above, the

promotion of true Islam in response. As such, the message officially aims to disarm global 'clash of civilizations' discourses. Referring to the third part of the document, the promotion of true Islam unfolds in reference to theological sources, while the fourth part of the document considers scholars of Islam to set an example to all other Muslims in the world, as they are essential to 'illuminate' the true, tolerant, and moderate path of Islam (AA, ll. 180-193).

Religion is an essential part of both the content and the construction of the document, and it is argued here that Peter Beyer's 'theological' and 'official' approaches to religion, along with Elizabeth S. Hurd's concepts of 'expert' and 'governing' religion, are useful to explain the religion that is represented in the AM. In other words, the document is interpreted to have the character of promoting a type of Islam that is determined by scholars and dictated by people in power. It underlines the ideological traits of the document, as Islam is described within clear cut boundaries as the Hashemite Kingdom declares their version of Islam the right one, while discarding any type of Islam that deviates from the principles put forward in the document and the three points of the Amman Message.

It is further argued that the document invokes a global agenda as narratives of 'clash of civilizations', between the Western and Muslim world, and 'resurgence of 'bad' religion', are interpreted as international system narratives encouraging the sender of the AM to provide a different one. Thus, it is assessed that the message perceives the global order in terms of a fight between 'good' and 'bad' religion, and the setting in which the battle is fought is an intellectual one (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 256). That the document claims to be a message directed to Muslims worldwide, along with its global agenda, enable a determination of 'scene' as first and foremost an international and intellectual one, while the setting further describes as 'theological' and 'official'. This argument is also supported with reference to international agents' endorsements and responses, addressed further in the answering of the second sub-question.

The following content analysis consists in an in-depth analysis of the AM document highlighting and proving the points just made, as I explain how the text can be interpreted as strategic narrative formation within my theoretical framework.

Sender, recipients, and conflict descriptions: Islam facing threats from two sides

The initial paragraphs of the AM are devoted to introducing the immediate sender/recipient relation, as well as the conflict and issues addressed in the document. The conflict centers around Islam being under attack and facing challenges and threats from two sides;

“This is a declaration to our brethren in the lands of Islam and throughout the world that Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is proud to issue during the blessed month of Ramadan ‘in which the Qur’an descended as guidance to humankind and as clarifications for guidance and discernment’ (2:185).”

“In this declaration we speak frankly to the [Islamic] nation, at this difficult juncture in its history, regarding the perils that beset it. We are aware of the challenges confronting the nation, threatening its identity, assailing its tenets (kalima), and working to distort its religion and harm what is sacred to it. Today the magnanimous message of Islam faces a vicious attack from those who through distortion and fabrication try to portray Islam as an enemy to them. It is also under attack from some who claim affiliation with Islam and commit irresponsible acts in its name.” (AA, ll. 9-19)

Amman, also decorating the headline of the document, represents the Hashemite Kingdom, represented by King Abdullah, as the issuer of the message. The King's efforts are emphasized specifically in the document in relation to resolution and purpose (AA, l. 32). The document addresses the immediate audience as ‘our brethren’. This title captions Muslims living in Muslim majority countries and Muslim minority countries alike. The Muslim brethren all around the world are considered part of an Islamic nation, and from the perspective of the AM, the nation is made up by 1.2 billion Muslims, or one fifth of humanity¹⁷ (AA, ll. 13; 34). Departing in the same quotation (AA, ll 9-19), the document states that the nation is challenged at two levels and by two different sets of agents. One level of threat is represented by those who ‘portray Islam as an enemy’, and another by those who ‘claim affiliation with Islam and commit irresponsible acts in its name’. The first set of agents are not specified much further, however, it is made clear that it is people or groups who link Islam to violence and terrorism and promote it as ‘bad’ religion (AA, ll. 147-148). The Hashemite Kingdom, through the AM, claims this to be a distortion of Islam, that causes great damage to the Muslim people, as they face oppression and “*marginalization or extrication from the movement of human society*” (AA, l. 152; 35) as a result.

Understanding and explaining these statements and claims of the AM within a framework informed by strategic narrative theory brings into focus components of ‘agents’ and ‘act’(conflict). The phrasing of King Abdullah II's role arguably stresses him, and thus the Hashemite Kingdom, as the

¹⁷ In his biography, King Abdullah counts 1.57 billion Muslims in 2012 (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 240). The official counts have varied since 2004 and until now between 1.5-1.9 billion, also depending on the source, thus the numbers presented in the AM are slightly downscaled. In 2009, PEW research center estimated 1.571.198.000 Muslims worldwide. (Pew forum on Religion & Public life, 2009, p. 6)

sender of the message, and therefore he is perceived as an essential, if not primary, agent within the framework, while the main recipient, presented in the text as the 'Islamic nation', constitutes another essential agent. The fact that 'the magnanimous message of Islam' is facing a threat from two sides is interpreted as the primary 'act' or 'conflict'. 'The magnanimous message of Islam' is however an abstract victim in a proclaimed conflict, and the establishing of a global Islamic nation within the text, is interpreted as a means of making conflict and the victims tangible and relevant to the intended audience, and ultimately to make the cause of the documents more legitimate and urgent. It is argued that 'The Islamic nation' comes to represent a group of people that King Abdullah can stand in front of and guide in 'a difficult juncture in its history'. Furthermore, it is argued that the conflict is rooted in violence, extremism and terrorism committed in the name of Islam by a third set of agents. A fourth set of agents promote what the Kingdom perceives as misconceptions, namely distorted images of Islam.

In his biography, *Our Last Best Chance*, King Abdullah describes the AM as an essential move in a fight against *takfiris*, here referring to what has just been termed the 'third set of agents' in the above. The Arabic term translates into "*those who accuse others of being heretics*" (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 240), and King Abdullah characterizes *takfiris* as people who wage war with no consideration for Islam's moral codes, and who will commit suicide attacks believing it will send them straight to heaven. He clearly states that they practice a deviant form of Islam, and that they should be considered nothing more than thugs and murderers;

"They constitute an unrepresentative minority of the 1.57 billion Muslims in the world, but they have had a disproportionate impact on how the faith is perceived" (King Abdullah II, 2012, pp. 240-241).

It is assessed that King Abdullah, with this statement, outlines the connection between the two levels of threat against the Islamic nation, as presented in the AM, by arguing that *takfiris* is directly causing a negative perception of Islam, which in turn leads to distorted portrayals of Islam as an enemy. In a short chapter devoted to the AM, the King makes clear that the message came about upon a request from him to leading Islamic scholars of Jordan and his cousin Ghazi, to come up with a way to combat *takfiris*, thus underscoring the root of the conflict being violence and terrorism in the name of Islam (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 257). As such, the two levels of threat are perceived and projected in the AM as irrevocably intertwined and mutually exacerbating.

The conclusion made by King Abdullah, and formed in the AM, that the entire nation of Islam is facing troubles and threats on a global scale, because of an unrepresentative group of violent fanatics,

is no groundbreaking one. It bids right into Andrew Rippin's argument, that violence in the name of Islam "*has created the greatest challenge to Muslim identity in the twenty first century*" and that "*Muslims feel that Islam as a whole has become tarnished in the eyes of others*" (Rippin, 2012, p. 203; 204). The takfiris, or militants as Rippin refers to them as, creates an internal conflict between a minority and majority group of Muslims, both claiming a "true" version of the same religion that contrasts the other. It is argued in the following, that pursuing a balance of enunciating Islam and thereby fighting takfiris, is the ambition officially stated in the Hashemite Kingdom's AM.

The two levels of threat are connected to two sets of agents, referred to onwards as takfiris and 'image-distorting actors', who together can be considered conflict building agents in an international system as it is perceived by the Hashemite Kingdom. I link these two sets of agents to narratives of 'clash of civilizations' and 'resurgence of 'bad' religion'. Their actions are mutually exacerbating, and they feed the conflict within which all the world's Muslims are taken hostage. Applying the categorization of issue narrative, I interpret this groups of Muslims as victims, while King Abdullah comes to represent the agent who will lead them to resolve the conflict. He aims to do so through promotion of true Islam on an intellectual battlefield, and the following section will examine this point further, as "*how a particular course of action will resolve the underlying issue*" (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8) is an essential part of an issue narrative.

The Purpose: Promoting true and luminous Islam

It is argued that combatting takfiris, and thus contribute to the solving of a conflict that has left Muslims worldwide greatly challenged, officially is presented as the ultimate purpose of the AM. Following the documents initial conflict description, is the suggested resolution to the conflict:

"The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has embraced the path of promoting the true luminous image of Islam, halting the accusations against it and repelling the attacks upon it. This is in accordance with the inherited spiritual and historical responsibility carried by the Hashemite monarchy, honored as direct descendants of the Prophet, the Messenger of God—peace and blessings upon him—who carried the message." (AA, ll. 26-30)

The document claims that the promotion of the 'true' and 'luminous' image of Islam is the resolution to the conflict, as this will 'halt accusations' and 'repel attacks upon it'. The document states the Kingdom to have 'inherited spiritual and historical responsibility' to act, given the Hashemites' line of descendants running back to the Prophet Muhammed. In accordance with the importance of

religious/traditional legitimacy to the Hashemite Kingdom¹⁸, this emphasize made in the document is interpreted as a clear and intentional measure to draw on this form of legitimacy. It is argued to further support a discourse of believers speaking to other believers to convince them to buy into one particular form of Islam over another. That there should be only one, true Islam is not a surprising claim. Wanting to fit all 1.2 billion people of the Islamic nation into one specific 'box of Islam' makes a lot of sense, since being able to point out those who deviate (takfiris), in order to denounce them, is understood to be the Kingdom's primary interest. The obligation that is put on the Hashemite King within the text, and the document itself, represent him acting on it. In turn, this supports the interpretation of him as a primary agent and is further relevant when analyzing the document in relation to identity narrative construction, which is addressed in the answering of the second sub-question.

Traditional legitimacy is considered a tool adding to the Kingdom's level of 'agency', meaning that Abdullah draws on his cultural and religious heritage, as a descendant of the prophet Muhammed, to realize his goals. It is further argued that Abdullah's level of agency, in his quest to resolve the conflict, is heightened by references in the document to his own experience and a historical context of his father's. Efforts to follow and promote the path of true Islam are highlighted in the text as something Abdullah's father, King Hussein Bin Talal, did for five decades before him and something he himself has continued "*with resolution and determination, as a service to Islam*" (AA, II. 33). King Hussein Bin Talal's efforts are not specified further in the document, however, the reference to them suggest a long tradition in Jordan for promoting true Islam along the same lines as is done in the AM, and thus the document embodies norms and values that have 'always' been shared by Jordanians. In other words, the document suggests that people of the nation as well as the international community can rely on the current King of Jordan to do a good job of promoting true Islam (AA, II. 26-36). Altogether, it is meant to heighten the Kingdom's agency in the fight against takfiris, and based in strategic narrative theory, such formulations are argued to bring credibility to the AM and King Abdullah as a legitimate religious leading figure.

'What Islam is, and what it is not!'

The middle section of the document (AA, II. 37–160) is devoted to the actual promotion of true Islam, which, as argued, represents the suggested conflict-resolution and thus the purpose of the AM. All the claims made in the document are thoroughly supported by verses from the Qur'an, however, the

¹⁸ Reviewed from p. 15 of this thesis within the section *The traditional legitimacy of the Hashemites*.

focus here is not on the Qur'an verses specifically, but on the way that they are interpreted in the document. The importance lies in the fact that the AM supports its claims in theology, and whether recipients recognizes these efforts. In the following, claims of the document are outlined and analyzed.

The five pillars of Islam; profession of faith, prayer, alms, fasting, and pilgrimage, are lined up and claimed in the document to be the foundation for a cohesive nation (the Islamic nation), that further supports "*noble principles and values that verify the good of humanity, whose foundation is the oneness of human civilization*" (AA, ll. 44-45). These noble principles include that "*people are equal in rights and obligations, peace and justice, realizing comprehensive security, mutual social responsibility, being good to one's neighbor, protecting belongings and property, honoring pledges, and more*" (AA, ll. 46-48). The document states that they provide common ground for believers of (divine) religions and 'different groups of people'. 'Divine religions' is understood to refer to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as they are said to have the same origin, however, the text also acknowledges other religions and non-religious groups (AA, ll. 49-51). This initial emphasize on the oneness of the human species and on commonalities across 'civilizations' (AA, l. 44), is interpreted here as a leaning towards tolerance, moderation, and acceptance in alignment with the general tendencies of interfaith in the Middle East reviewed in chapter one¹⁹. The document stages these values at the center of attention along with an emphasize of common ground and cooperation, and in contrast to hostile and exclusive attitudes held by takfiris. Here is already indicated what is later interpreted as the primary objective of the 'ACW project', namely the commonalities between two people of different civilizations.

The document states that Islam does not differentiate between color, race, or religion, as it aims for mercy and good for all people (AA, l. 60-63; 72-74). As a Muslim, one should treat 'others' as they themselves wish to be treated, thus the religion encourages tolerance and forgiveness (AA, ll. 77-81). In the same manner, interaction with 'others' should be based on principles of justice and respect, never on cruelty and violence (AA, ll. 82; 88; 66-67). It further reads that all human life is valuable to Islam and the worst sin a Muslim can ever commit is assault, be it murder, injury, or threat, on another human being. This is especially directed towards assaulting non-combatants, civilians, students in school, a child still in its mothers' bosom, and elderly (AA, ll. 92-99). Islam is stated to be a calm and peaceful religion that is further founded upon balance and moderation, and it would

¹⁹ See pp. 16-18 of this thesis: *The post 9/11 interfaith movement: Interfaith in the Middle East*.

never encourage fighting if meet with peace and mercy in return (AA, ll. 100; 125-130). Based on these principles and noble values of Islam, the AM rejects all extremism, radicalism, and fanaticism as those who pursue such means “*are not from the true character of the tolerant, accepting Muslim*” (AA, ll. 109-113). Thus, while the document acknowledges an issue of oppression and injustice towards Muslims being a source of violence in the name of Islam, it denounces violent reactions as wrongful practice and an illegitimate means to oppose and fight such oppression (AA, ll. 114-118).

The document compares Islam to ‘all noble, heavenly religions’, again understood to be Christianity and Judaism specifically, in that they all reject these three ‘isms’, while at the same time, none of them goes free of deviants within their own rankings. On top of this statement comes another one, that is considered essential to the scope of this case study, namely that terrorism is not an Islamic phenomenon, but a phenomenon known to all civilizations throughout history. This statement, along with the open rejection of the three ‘isms’ described in the above, is here interpreted as a direct response to ‘image-distorting’ actors. The stressing of commonalities, and the overall moderate and tolerant nature of Islam, are based in theology and are here argued to be aimed at dissolving conflict enhancing discourses like ‘clash of civilizations’ by emphasizing ‘dialogue of civilizations’ instead. In addition to this theological weapon against takfiris and ‘image-distorting’ actors, the AM calls for participation from the international community, expecting them to implement and live up to laws and resolutions issued by the United Nations, in order to counter oppression (AA, ll. 147-148).

As such, the international community is interpreted as an additional recipient of the message, however vaguely specified, and thus an agent that could potentially make a difference in resolving the conflict. Even though the international community is not highlighted to a great extent in the document, the intentions of doing so are there and the motivation to promote the message in those circles has no doubt increased since the publication back in 2004 (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 213). This argument is taken up further when addressing the second sub-question.

One last characterization of Islam is highlighted before the document moves on to the methods of realizing and promoting the true spirit of Islam. I argue that this last highlighting taps into Rippin’s perspective on the challenge of balancing the enunciation of one’s religion²⁰:

“The way of this great religion that we are honored to belong to calls us to affiliate with and participate in modern society, and to contribute to its elevation and progress, helping one another

²⁰ Rippin’s points are elaborated on p. 17 of this thesis.

with every faculty [to achieve] good and to comprehend, desiring justice for all peoples, while faithfully proclaiming the truth [of our religion], and sincerely expressing the soundness of our faith and beliefs—all of which are founded upon God's call for coexistence and piety. [We are called] to work toward renewing our civilization, based upon the guidance of religion, and following upon established practical intellectual policies.” (AA, ll. 154-160).

This claim is not directly supported by theological references in the document and is therefore understood to be rooted in argumentation analyzed in the previous sections. It highlights the immediate issue Rippin refers to, namely that it can be, or at least is made out to be in ‘clash of civilization’ narratives, challenging to explicitly draw a connection between modernity and traditional Islam. With reference to the quotation presented above, the AM draws this exact connection between modernity and Islam, in claiming that affiliating with modern society is ‘the way of this great religion’. The document thereby aligns affiliation with modern society with tolerance and moderation as primary principles of Islam, that any Muslim ought to live by. It can be interpreted as yet another dis-confirming response specifically aimed at the discourse of clashing civilizations and the perceived incompatibility of the Muslim and Western world within this discourse. In addition, the text points to enunciating the true spirit of Islam as another one of the primary goals of Islam, and by emphasizing this, the AM is argued to fit Rippin’s model well.

In linking Islam to modern society, the document is vague in its formulation, as ‘modern society’ can imply a great and varying number of things. With reference to Dietrich Jung’s analysis of the use of ‘modernity’, presented in chapter one, the vague use of the term within the AM begs the question of what kind of modernity the document ascribes to: a global umbrella of multiple modernities, or a modernity that is rooted in Western norms and values?

The AM stages Islamic preachers as the primary media through which the message can be promoted in a sound and knowledgeable way, and scholars of the nation are trusted to provide them with knowledge of Islam, the contemporary society, and how the two are related;

“The scholars shield our youth from the danger of sliding down the paths of ignorance, corruption, close-minded-ness and subordination. It is our scholars who illuminate them the paths of tolerance, moderation, and goodness, and prevent them from [falling] into the abysses of extremism and fanaticism that destroy the spirit and body” (AA, ll. 182-185).

As such, the Islamic scholars of the nation can be described as ‘co-agents’ to King Abdullah within the analytical framework, in the sense that they are requested by him at the frontline of the battle against takfiris. He acknowledges that a message emerging from the throne alone has little power (King Abdullah II, 2012, pp. 257-258), while the endorsement and participation of Islamic scholars supports a religious and theological authority of the message. As such, the role of Islamic scholars in relation to the AM fit the description of a ‘legitimizing agent’ in a strategic narrative. This reflects in the efforts made to conform the AM into three points initially agreed upon and endorsed by 200 Islamic scholars from 50 countries, later more.

The three points of the AM first determine what schools and groups of Islam qualify to be defined as (true) Muslims. Secondly, it forbids takfir (declaration of apostasy) between Muslims, and thirdly, it determines who is able to issue fatwas (legal advise), “*thereby exposing ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam*”²¹. These three points are what arguably drive the AM to be more than just a statement of what the Hashemite Kingdom endorses as true and luminous Islam, to a message carrying status of consensus within the global Ummah, and thus as law making, referring back to the proclaimed uniqueness of the AM²². The concept of ‘governing religion’ is an adequate one to apply to this way of determining what fits within boundaries of Islam, and what does not, and it is discussed in greater detail further on.

Joseph Lombard deems the three points “*a frontal attack on Al Qaeda’s theological methods*”(Lombard, 2012, p. 17), which definitively condemn extremists on behalf of the entire Islamic nation and as a crucial step in a true war on terrorism (Lombard, 2012, pp. 17-18). These moves are argued in the 5th year anniversary edition of ACW, to be a very strong foundation for the additional efforts of interfaith dialogue exceeding the intra-faith activities of the AM, as it is often required from those with whom Islam is seeking dialogue, that Muslims first denounce extremism (Lombard, 2012, p. 19). With the AM and the three points of the AM, the Hashemite Kingdom claims to do so with great authority and legitimacy and on behalf of the entire nation of Islam.

²¹ Dr. Joseph Lombard explains the connection between determining who can issue a fatwa as a means of fighting takfiris; “*for every act of terrorism that takes the name of Islam is preceded by an attempt at justification in Islamic terms. Within traditional Islam this is usually done through fatwas. Demonstrating the illegitimacy of fatwas that call for wanton violence thus strikes at the very root of extremist interpretations of Islam. That is to say that the problem of extremist interpretations of Islam is a textual, methodological problem that requires a textual, methodological solution*”(Lombard, 2012, p. 18)

²² I have addressed ‘The proclaimed uniqueness’ on p. 32.

In conclusion, the analysis of the purpose of the AM allows for an extended exemplification on how I view the text to work as strategic narrative formation. I suggest an international system structured around narratives of 'clash of civilizations' and 'resurgence of 'bad' religion', that allows the conflict to flourish on an international level. This aligns with the issue narrative already suggested, which includes conflict building agents of takfiris and 'image-distorting' actors, posing a double-sided threat to the Islamic nation. It is with these issues in hand and within this international system that I place King Abdullah as an agent. Rippin's model supports the proposed issue narrative and adds to the understanding of system narrative, as I identify 'Muslims having to openly enunciate their belief' to be a condition of the international system, based on his model. King Abdullah's promotion of true Islam constitutes the suggested resolution within the issue narrative, and as such, fighting 'bad' religion, as well as negative perceptions of Islam with the promotion of moderate and tolerant Islam, becomes the primary response and resolution.

Based on the above, Hurd's concept of governing religion is applied, as the AM is argued to reflect people in power, the Hashemite Kingdom backed by Islamic scholars, claiming what Islam is and what it is not. This is discussed in greater detail later.

A COMMON WORD BETWEEN US AND YOU

The 'ACW' document is an open letter that was first published in 2007 as a call for dialogue between Muslims and Christians of the world, from 138 Muslim religious leaders to Christian communities headed by the Pope. It was reprinted in a 5-year anniversary edition that contains the letter itself, responses to it, as well as an article by Dr. Joseph Lumbard, an American scholar, providing an overview of the history of the letter. The article provides a very positive account of the Jordanian dialogue project, and highlights the points of the AM as a foundation for this second and highly promoted project (Lumbard, 2012, pp. 11-50). Furthermore, the anniversary edition provides a list of major events held in relation to ACW, publications and courses as a result of the letter, and other additional fruits of the interfaith dialogue initiative.

The actual letter takes up thirty pages of the edition, followed by the original list of 138 signatories, constituting the official senders of the message, and an additional 170 signatories who endorsed the letter in the aftermath of its publication. The additional 170 signatories are arguably just as much of an intended audience of the message as are Christian communities. The document is structured in three overall parts, the first one functioning as an introduction and summary of the overall purpose and ambition of the document. In the letter, Muslim religious leaders call upon Christians of the world

to come together with them on the basis of two commandments of love that is shared between them, namely love of the One God, and love of the neighbor. The text argues for their good relationship to serve as the foundation of world peace, implying great importance (ACW, 2012, pp. 51-54). The second part of the document is constituted in a two-part comparison of Islam's and Christianity's love of God and, secondly, a comparison of their love for the neighbor. The comparison is based in the interpretation of Bible and Qur'an passages, basing the claims of essential commonalities between the two in theology. The third part repeats the call for dialogue, and emphasizes the common grounds shared by the two religions, and the urgency of them coming together.

With reference to previous definitions, the document is focused on interfaith communication and cooperation between Muslims and Christians, suggesting the immediate perspective and agenda of the letter to be different from that of the AM, which officially represents a message from Muslims to other Muslims, however, with political and inter-civilizational dimensions. In comparison, ACW presents itself as purely theological (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95). It is however argued in the following, that the same perception of 'international system narrative' presented in relation to the AM applies here, and that religion generated in an official setting can be demonstrated alongside religion generated in a theological setting. Hurd's concepts of governing and expert religion equally apply.

Like with the AM, the 'ACW project' was requested and endorsed by King Abdullah, yet again positioning the Hashemite King in the place of the instigator, allowing to interpret him as a primary agent in a given narrative (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 260). The text, however, draws away immediate attention from the Kingdom, as the document is presented as "*An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders*" (ACW, 2012, p. 51). A point should be made of the so called 'Muslim religious leaders'. Included in this group are Grand Muftis, Imams, presidents and chairmen of organizations and councils, Muslim intellectuals, academic scholars, professors and heads of universities etc. from all across the Middle East region, as well as representatives from Ukraine, Turkey, Croatia, Nigeria, Russia, Azerbaijan, USA, France, Sudan, Germany, Italy, India, Switzerland, the UK, Malaysia, Belgium, Kosovo, Bosnia, Slovenia, and Canada (ACW, 2012, pp. 81-90). Dr. Joseph Lombard is included in the group of Muslim religious leaders, while "merely" being an American university professor educated in Islamic Studies, Religious Studies and in addition, having studied the Qur'an, Hadith, Sufism, and Islamic philosophy with traditional teachers across the Middle East. He has personally advised King Abdullah on interfaith matters and converted to Islam himself. Thus, he qualifies as a Muslim, but what makes him a religious leader? He is one example, and as indicated, the list includes a wide variety of job descriptions and titles. The broad list of senders includes Prince

Ghazi as both a representative for RABIIT as well as for the Hashemite Kingdom. The letter addresses 26 named Christian religious leaders, Pope Benedict XVI being the first one mentioned, as well as other leaders of Christian Churches everywhere.

Evidently, the Hashemite Kingdom is emphasized to a lesser degree than in the case of the AM. A possible explanation for this refers to a point I made in relation to the AM, namely that a statement coming from the monarch alone has limited agency in the fight against takfiris. In the same sense, it would be reasonable to assume that the focus on Islamic scholars and intellectuals from “*Every major Islamic country or region in the world*”, rather than just the Hashemite Kingdom, carries greater theological authority and relevance when reaching out for faith based dialogue. Thus, having as broad a range of signatories as possible is of great relevance, and the support of Muslim religious leaders is perceived here to be an act of giving the message authority through ‘legitimizing agents’.

Like the AM, ACW is described as a historic and groundbreaking event, this time, with focus on the unprecedented number of Muslim scholars and intellectuals backing a message of inter-recognition between Muslims and Christians:

“In A Common Word Between Us and You, 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals have unanimously come together for the first time since the days of the Prophet to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam ... Never before have Muslims delivered this kind of definitive consensus statement on Christianity” (Website: Introduction to ACW)

As it will become evident in the content analysis that follows, ACW is just as plastered with idealist terms and phrases as the AM, emphasizing an urgency and extreme importance of the document and its purpose, while rooting it in a framework of theological conflict resolution. The two sections below will proceed in the same manner as did the content analysis of the AM, with the first one examining the conflict of the document, and secondly, the purpose and suggested resolution in order to show how the text works as strategic narrative formation.

The conflict of ACW: Clashing or Compatible Civilizations?

Following the list of the 26 Christian recipients of ACW, the actual text and letter is introduced with what can be considered the perceived conflict within a strategic narrative framework:

“Muslims and Christians together, make up well over half of the world’s population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians.” (ACW, 2012, p. 53)

The immediate conflict staged in ACW is that of two civilizations potentially clashing, leaving the world in a state of chaos. The potential conflict is exacerbated by the modern world's weaponry and an unprecedented intertwining of the two biggest religions of our time in a global setting, thus bringing attention to the consequences of globalization. The conflict statement is concluded with a dark prediction, namely that if Muslims and Christians cannot have a peaceful relationship, "*the very survival of the world itself is perhaps at stake*" (ACW, 2012, pp. 72-73).

Staging two religions, and their relationship, as so influential to the state of the entire world suggest, in accordance with the sender/recipient relation, that the leading representatives of Christianity and Islam constitute the two primary agents at play within the text. The Islamic nation is already determined and delimited through the three points of the AM, while Christianity is arguably perceived, by the sender, as a group guided and represented by the Pope in Rome. This is indicated by the recipient list, as well as by King Abdullah in his biography, where he refers to Christianity as a religion having one official clergy (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 58). Thus, the two primary agents can be detected as the religious leaders representing two groups of people that is perceived in the document as unanimous. I argue that the scene on which they are acting is thus a global, intellectual one, and as further emphasized in the following, theology is presented as the foundation of the interaction. This underlines the relevance of applying Hurd's and Beyer's typologies of religion, with a focus on 'expert' and 'governing' religion generated in 'official' and 'theological' settings, exemplified later on in the analysis.

The overall conflict put forward in ACW suggests an importance and urgency of Christians and Muslims coming to a common ground and mutual understanding, ultimately representing the purpose of the letter. Before examining this purpose in detail, the conflict description is linked to that of the AM, as they correlate significantly. The point of departure for arguing this is based in the episode of Pope Benedict XVI citing negative comments made on Islam in the fourteenth century by a Byzantine emperor;

"Show me just what Muhammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached" (Pope Benedict 2006, 597).

Whether or not the Pope intended to insinuate that Islam is a religion prone to violence, his lecture was received as such in Muslim communities around the world, causing tension and unrest between Muslims and Christians (the Western world) (Ambrosini, 2011, p. 216). As pointed out by Sara

Markiewicz, the Regensburg episode was ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’, as it happened in the slipstream of a major London terror attack and the Danish cartoon crisis (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95).

In his biography, King Abdullah points to the tension, caused from the Regensburg incident, as the conflict that had him, once again, go to his Cousin Ghazi requesting his efforts to resolve this global tension (King Abdullah II, 2012, p. 260). The distortion and mis-portrayal of Islam, rooted in violence in the name of Islam, is thus argued to recur as a precondition of the conflict as it constitute the source of tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, from the perspective of the Hashemite Kingdom. Linked to the perspective of ACW, this mis-representation of Islam, particularly when made by the “leader of Christianity”, can possibly end up causing clashes, leading the world to perish. The resolution lies in interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians, based on the common grounds that they share.

The Purpose and Suggested Resolution to the Conflict: Promoting Common Grounds

Taken from the second chapter of the 5-year anniversary edition of ACW, Dr. Joseph Lumbard introduces the purpose of the letter as follows;

“ACW is a document which uses religion as the solution to the problems of interreligious tensions. By basing itself on solid theological grounds in both religions – the twin Commandments to love God and love the neighbor – ACW has demonstrated to Christians and Muslims that they have a certain common ground (despite irreducible theological differences) and that both religions require them to have relations based on love not on hatred.” (Lumbard, 2012, p. 9)

As such, ACW revolves around creating peace and understanding between Muslims and Christians globally, and as evident from the conflict examination above, this relation is essential to world peace altogether, whatever that might entail. The vagueness of the formulations is addressed further in the second part of the analysis.

The letter presents dialogue based in the theological scriptures of Islam and Christianity as the resolution to the conflict, and the call for dialogue is in itself supported by a passage from the Qur’an in the opening of the letter, which bid Muslims to call the “*People of the Scripture*” to come to a common word with them; *that we shall worship non but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner onto him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides God ... (Aal ‘Imran, 3:64)*” (ACW, 2012, p. 54). People of the Scripture is understood as Christians and Jews, and the Qur’an passage is

interpreted in the letter to emphasize the commonality between two religions, as both are devoted to one God. Each has the right to hold on to their god, making acceptance, tolerance, and religious freedom key in this relationship. After having settled that, the letter moves on to showing how the two religions share the commandments of loving the One God and loving one's neighbors. The comparison is based in text passages from sacred texts of Islam and Christianity, and the commandments are perceived in the text as the most important commandments in both religions, which might be considered a favorable point of departure for comparison. The commandments are presented as making up an already existing and indisputable basis for peace and understanding between the two civilizations (ACW, 2012, p. 53). This stands in clear opposition to the 'clash of civilization' narrative, as the document argues that the two religions are fundamentally compatible and not fundamentally clashing. It is also an extremely generalizing and yet again vague statement to be taken up again in the second part of the analysis.

The document builds the argument in two parts, first comparing the theological basis for loving one God and then for loving one's neighbor (ACW, 2012, pp. 55-67). The message of loving one's neighbor is already emphasized in the AM, and ACW further addresses the conflicts, emphasized in the system and issue narratives suggested in relation to the content of the AM. The Hashemites' perception of true Islam as moderate and tolerant connects well with the commandment of loving One God;

"Love of the neighbour is an essential and integral part of faith in God and love of God because in Islam without love of the neighbour there is no true faith in God and no righteousness." (ACW, 2012, p. 66)

Those who do not tolerate and accept Christians, as well as other non-Christian groups, is deviating from the true spirit of Islam. The letter states that loving one's neighbor entails generosity and self-sacrifice, indicating that a Muslim must go even further than just living side by side with other groups in acceptance, but that they should treat others like they would their own. It is additionally emphasized that freedom of religion and justice is essential to the relationship (ACW, 2012, pp. 66-67; 70). Thus, Islam is again stressed as compatible with the Christian community, and the narrative of Islam being violent and hateful towards Christians (the West), is sought dissolved on the basis of theology. The same argument is made in relation to Christianity and the word of the Bible, in the old and new testament, where 'loving your neighbour as yourself' is stated to represent an equally important

commandment (ACW, 2012, p. 67). The argumentation towards compatibility and love between the two religions is conclusively made in ACW by a conditional claim based in the Qur'an;

“As Muslims, we say to Christians that we are not against them and that Islam is not against them—so long as they do not wage war against Muslims on account of their religion, oppress them and drive them out of their homes ...” (ACW, 2012, p. 70).

Equally, argumentation for Christians not to view Muslims as an enemy is found in the Bible and presented in the document (ACW, 2012, p. 70). That this argument is stressed in the concluding pages of the letter arguably indicates the pronounced effort to work within and against the perceived structures of the world, that distort the image of Islam on the basis of deviant, extremists groups committing violence in the name of Islam, and causing distress for the entire Islamic nation.

Based on this analysis, the system and issue narratives suggested in relation to the AM is argued to fit ACW, as I argue that the conflict portrayed in ACW can be viewed as informed by ‘clash of civilizations’ and ‘resurgence of ‘bad’ religion’ narratives working as structures within the international system of which I place the agents. Thus, the international system, as it is interpreted to be perceived by the sender, still requires Muslims to ‘set the record straight’. Putting this into a model of ‘issue narrative formation’, the root of the conflict is like that of the AM, but the stakes and consequences of these global structures is heightened in the conflict description of ACW, as not only the Islamic Nation is threatened, but world peace altogether. The suggested resolution is presented as interfaith dialogue between the two biggest religions, based in theologically founded common grounds, suggesting that religion is the key to world peace. Narrowing in on agents, the same conflict building ones, takfiris and image-distorting actors, are at play, while the entire world is taken hostage in a conflict. Representatives from each Islam and Christianity (the two biggest civilizations) are the ones who can resolve the conflict by going into dialogue, facilitate mutual understanding, and promote common grounds. However, as the instigator, the Hashemite King plays an essential part in the resolution as well.

SUMMARY

The analysis has proven that concepts of strategic narrative theory, especially categories of system and issue narrative applies to the AM and ACW, and further that the two projects, officially presented as intra-faith and interfaith dialogue projects respectively, is rooted in the same conflict perceptions and ultimately pursues the same goal of promoting Islam as a moderate and tolerant religion as key to conflict resolution, or in other words, to convince Western, Christian communities of the moderate,

tolerant, and compassionate character of Islam. Theology, and thus religion, forms the basis of the suggested resolution.

The following part will examine how the AM and ACW can be understood as a means for the Hashemite Kingdom to project a specific identity in an international context, as opposed to a domestic context. The same analytical framework continues to inform the case study as Miskimmon et al.'s 'identity narrative' category is applied. With reference to the general theory, system, issue, and identity narratives are intertwined categories that can be understood to either support or undermine one another. This underlines the relevance of considering system and issue narratives, and thus the importance of incorporating the findings of the first sub-question in the next part of the analysis.

2. WHAT DO THE AM AND ACW SUGGEST ABOUT THE KINGDOM'S SELF-PERCEPTION AND IDENTITY PROJECTION ONTO THE INTERNATIONAL, POLITICAL STAGE?

The answering of this second question will depart in a further examination of what the state-led interfaith initiatives in Jordan suggest about the Hashemite Kingdom's self-perception and identity projection onto the international, political stage. This part will take an analytical step back from the two documents and consider the complexity of King Abdullah of Jordan as an international, political actor. Thus, this part of the analysis moves across the spectrum from a thin to a thick analysis and employs the category of 'identity narrative' while considering the historical and structural context of the Hashemite Kingdom. Religion and religious legitimacy are argued essential parts of King Abdullah's interfaith engagement, and therefore relevant to the interpretation of an identity narrative. Thus, the King's use of religion is analyzed accordingly. First however, attention is drawn to the system and issue narratives proven in the content analysis of the AM and ACW, conducted in the above, as these influence the understanding of given identity narrative. Stacey Gutkowski's article; *We are the very model of a moderate Muslim state: The Amman Messages and Jordan's foreign policy*, is particularly relevant and included in the analysis.

THE IDENTITY NARRATIVE OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM

Detecting a strategic identity narrative of the Hashemite Kingdom, on the basis of the AM and ACW, is rooted in the context of the two interfaith initiatives being state-led and generally emphasized and promoted, especially to an international audience, with reference to the King's engagement and by the King himself²³. As such, the documents are argued to be of strategic relevance to the Kingdom's identity projection on a global stage, and with reference to research conducted by Michelle Browsers

²³ This is evident both in the King's biography (King Abdullah II, 2012).

(2011), Sarah Markiewicz (2018), and Stacey Gutkowski (2016), this has been suggested a primary goal of interfaith activities in Jordan altogether. Stacy Gutkowski points out that interfaith activities have presented itself as an opportunity for Jordan to enhance a brand of moderation, a label already linked to Jordan by its Western allies, to include Islamic moderation post 2004. Jordan has thus extended its 'nation brand' to emphasize religious moderation. Gutkowski understands 'nation branding' as "*a set of political moves by state officials to secure power in comparison to other states*" (Gutkowski, 2016, pp. 209-212; 219). As such, branding is similar in its goals to strategic narrative construction, as it too refers to power relations between political actors, making Gutkowski's analysis and her findings highly relevant to the scope of this one.

Strategic narrative construction is set apart from branding, in its structural foundation in the five components making up system, issue, and identity narratives. Also, the narratives reliance on a 'time sequence', meaning the construction of a shared past-present- and future rendered in causality and the framing of conflict resolutions that must be enacted, sets strategic narratives apart from branding (Miskimmon et al., 2017, pp. 6-7). As mentioned, the three types of strategic narratives are intertwined, and each one influences the legitimacy of the other, making the system and issue narratives detected in the analysis of the AM and ACW relevant in the analysis of the Kingdom's identity projection as a strategic matter.

The strategic narratives interpreted from the content of the AM and ACW are argued to be narratives of moderate and tolerant Islam, that shares common grounds with Christianity (and Judaism), countering narratives of 'clash of civilizations' and 'resurgence of 'bad' religion'. Essential to the storytelling in the two documents is an urgency for the international community to acknowledge its representation of Islam. The overall purpose of the two documents are argued to be the same, as it is argued that both documents aim to counter the negative perception of Islam, which has increasingly spread in the global political and public sphere after 9/11. The urgency connected to the matter and the promises of either conflict resolving success or, worst case scenario, ultimate world chaos if the audience fail to acknowledge the message, imply a strategic nature to the content. I argue this in accordance with the theory informing this study, as formulations setting up ultimatums, where the response seems to be straightforward, can be detected as strategically applied to persuade an audience (Arsenault et al., 2017, p. 192). What sensible religious leader, foreign policy actor, or international organization would choose a path that leads to chaos? Gutkowski sums up the overall ambitions of the Hashemite regime's interfaith activities, starting with the AM in 2004, in accordance with the interpretations made here, namely as aiming:

“to change negative Western narratives about Islam, promote peaceful and global exchange on the basis of religious ethics and values, and for moderation, particularly religious moderation, to shape the foreign and domestic policies of other Arab Middle Eastern states.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 211)

This correlates well with the content of the AM, where the Hashemite Kingdom is arguably positioned as a leading figure to the Islamic nation, who shines light on the path that will bring the Muslims of the world out of the identity crisis and distress that takfiris and the negative narratives about Islam has left them in. The AM was initially presented as a message to Muslims, and thus fellow Muslim Majority countries in the Middle East, on “how to do Islam right”, especially in the context of modernization and in the interaction with the non-Muslim parts of the world. The document reads that the Hashemites are taking the lead, and thus, this is read into an identity narrative of King Abdullah as a regional religious leader setting an example for the rest of the region to follow. In other words, a story of what King Abdullah stands for, and what his role in the world is, is being told. In this context, his request to Prince Ghazi and RABIIIT to ease increasing tension between Muslim and Christian communities in 2006, resulting in ACW, can be viewed as a demonstration of that leadership. In addition, Gutkowski specifically emphasizes an ambition of bringing religious moderation into policies of Arab states, presenting the King as not just a regional prime example on how to do Islam, but furthermore on how to do politics informed by Islam.

Engaging with interfaith activities is thus defining to an assumed identity narrative of the Hashemite Kingdom in and of its own, as King Abdullah arguably projects as the regional religious leader of ‘true, moderate, and tolerant Islam’, and as a Muslim state-leader in friendly dialogue with Christian, Western communities and affiliated with modern society in general. Such an identity narrative arguably finds legitimacy in a historical context of King Hussein’s reign, as the AM makes explicit reference to his efforts of interfaith conflict resolution and peacebuilding. His efforts are not elaborated further in the document, but as reviewed on page 13 of this thesis, Hussein picked up a quasi-religious rhetoric, as the King would refer to peace processes with Israel, and in the region, as a quests for peace between the “children of Abraham”, meaning Muslims, Christians, and Jews (Ashton, 2008, p. 6). Hussein’s reference to interfaith conflict resolution was a late additional element of his almost fifty years long fight for just and long-lasting peace in his tumultuous neighborhood. As such, the conflicts that the former king was addressing was regional ones first of all, still primarily addressed through political diplomacy despite quasi-religious formulations. Gutkowski captions the development as follows:

“From 1994 to 2004, Jordan’s support for interfaith dialogue was ‘meant to support [the Israeli/Palestinian] political process to create a better climate for peace’. Since 2004, under the auspices of the Amman Messages, Jordan’s efforts to promote moderate Islam shifted to ostensibly provide a counter-weight to Salafist and jihadist voices in the region and to educate the West about the variety of Islamic experiences, particularly of nonviolence.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 212)

The support of the of the current king’s place in the world as a leader of moderate Islam, that encourages dialogue, is thus mainly constituted in the long history of Jordan as a politically diplomatic player with a generally friendly and cooperative relationship with Western great powers of the US and Europe. Interfaith is thus a type of diplomacy picked up by King Abdullah, and the historic context of Jordan’s urges of diplomacy brings credibility to Abdullah as an authority in interfaith diplomacy as well.

The identity narrative of King Abdullah is interpreted in relation to the formerly detected issue and system narratives, and is thus perceived as centered around denouncing terrorism in the name of Islam, and doing so by promoting the only true version of Islam rooted in tolerance, moderation, and love for one’s neighbors. The assumption that the international system requires Muslims to enunciate their religion and denounce terrorism (Rippin, 2012), aligns with an identity narrative of the Hashemite Kingdom, as the King is doing just that by making an effort to change ‘the negative Western narratives about Islam’, as Gutkowski phrase it (2016, p. 211).

Engaging with interfaith is further defining to the King’s identity narrative in the sense that it tells a story about the King as one who utilizes religion as a tool of international conflict resolution and diplomacy. His agency is based on religious ethics and values, as Gutkowski puts it (2016, p. 211). Throughout the content analysis of this thesis, this has been referred to as theology-based principles of Islam and, in ACW, of Christianity as well. Theology is understood in accordance with Peter Beyer’s definition of a ‘theological’ approach to religion, namely that it is religion generated in a religious system, as opposed to a scientific or an official system. It can certainly be argued that religion generated in a religious setting is at place. This is based on the King’s urge to place the AM and ACW under the authority of religious scholars of Islam and the, using Prince Ghazi’s words, coming together of the Muslim intellectuals and leaders constituting a historically unanimous Ummah defining true Islam, based in authoritative textual interpretations of holy scriptures. The theological foundation of the two documents is additionally sought constituted in the traditional legitimacy of the Hashemites, or at least the civic myth of it. The suggested identity narrative further finds legitimacy

in this traditional legitimacy of the Hashemite lineage and their status as guardians of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Markiewicz draws a similar conclusion from her analysis of the AM, as she argues that “*Abdullah II perceives a Hashemite legacy as being, in a way, defenders of the faith*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 91).

Even though great effort is made by the regime to emphasize the theological foundation of the documents, they still constitute top-down, state-led initiatives, thus rooting them in the official system. In other words, religion, as it comes across in the AM and ACW, is interpreted as first and foremost generated in a system of politics. Abdullah's use of religion is analyzed in greater detail in the following, as is the reception from intended, as well as unintended, audiences of Jordan's interfaith messages. Altogether, this leads to a reflection in the third and final part of this case study, on interfaith as a means of soft power to the Hashemite regime, as an identity narrative of the Hashemite King as a regional leader of moderate and tolerant Islam is argued to benefit the King in his relations with Western powers.

THE KING'S USE OF RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY

As part of the context for this case study, it has been determined that interfaith activities are understood as a form of faith-based diplomacy, that stresses mutual understanding and tolerance between different religions as a primary goal of conflict resolution on a domestic, regional, and international level altogether. Sarah Markiewicz argues that the AM in and of its own “*has powerful content, however it lacks religious weight as it comes from an individual – even if that individual is a ruling monarch*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 92). Abdullah himself recognizes this and aims to bring so-called religious weight to his message through the three points of the AM being ratified by the Ummah, as the Ummah is perceived by the King²⁴, bringing unanimous religious and political consensus onto the weight scale. A long list of endorsements from leading Muslim figures, regionally and globally, indicates that this has been successful, a list that is considered in more detail shortly. Religion generated in a mix of theological and official systems can thus be linked to the two state-led initiatives, along with the long list of endorsements. This questions Markiewicz notion of the ‘lack of religious weight’, as the weight of religion depends very much on how we define religion and towards which audience the messages are directed.

²⁴ Sarah Markiewicz elaborates: “*There is some discussion about who exactly are intended by “my umma,” however the scholars behind the ratification of the Amman Message believe it refers to an agreement between the learned and the authorities within the Muslim community.*” (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 92)

The approaches to the concept of religion, presented by Peter Beyer and Elizabeth Hurd respectively, are applied to this case in order to explain what characterizes the religion that drives the interfaith initiatives, and thus the proposed strategic narratives. Formulations based in ideology are additionally determining to the interpretation of 'type of religion', thus such formulations are considered in the following. Theological and official approaches to religion, as defined by Beyer, overlap with Hurd's conceptions of religion in the form of expert and governing religion. All four categories have already been connected to the scope of this case, and the focus here is primarily on how their representation adds to the assumption of the identity narrative presented above.

The concept of expert religion applies to Jordan's interfaith initiatives, as it is religion generated in a theological and official setting, interpreted by Muslim intellectuals, scholars, and leading Muslim authorities (the Ummah). In other words, it is interpreted as top-down driven and set apart from 'lived religion', which here describes the day to day practice of the believer. The concept of expert religion further suffices, as the projects have emerged in consultation with academic scholars specifically focusing on interfaith activities in their line of work, Dr. Joseph Lumbard here being a recurring example. As such, expert religion is generated in a theological and official setting, here understood to provide the Hashemite regime with a blueprint of what 'true Islam' is, namely one that is moderate and tolerant, as the findings of the content analysis have stressed. Projected through state-led interfaith initiatives, religion is argued to further take the character of governing, in the sense that people in power, here the Hashemite regime, rules what kind of religion is good, what kind of religion is bad, and ultimately, what is no kind of religion at all. Highlighting the rhetorical formulations in the documents, adds another level to the interpretation of the initiatives as set apart from 'lived religion' and rather working on a theological and official expert and governing level.

Through a content analysis informed by strategic narrative theory, I have argued that the Hashemite regime's ideas and perceptions can be understood and explained as strategic counter-narratives to Islam-negative narratives already flourishing in international settings. Furthermore, I have argued the promotion of such counter-narratives to represent a behavior called for by an international system that requires Muslims to enunciate their religion. The same goes for the idea of religion, as the concept of governing religion arguably works at a higher level. As such, I link the form of religion projected through the AM and ACW to internationally accepted narratives of religious freedom, religious tolerance, and interfaith understanding, and the idea that there is a fight between 'two faces of religion', a good and a bad one. Hurd points specifically to the narrative of the 'two faces of religion' and argues that:

“attraction of religion as a public international good, and fear of it as a potential source of discord and violence, has broad appeal in societies in which there is otherwise little agreement, and often significant confusion, at the intersection of religion, politics, law, and public life.” (Hurd, 2017, p. 27)

She argues this narrative to have had great political traction across the political landscape of the US and Europe, and she generally date these tendencies to have picked up after 9/11 (Hurd, 2017, pp. 2-3; 22-27; 37-41). Interpreted within this context, the governing religion, that is argued to be the driver of Jordan's interfaith dialogue initiatives, is ultimately governed itself by the way that religion intersects with the international, political landscape. It is thus argued that the documents carry weight of religion generated in the official system on top of the theological weight. The AM and ACW are ambitious in their goals yet reassuring in the claim that religion carries the resolution to the most pressing conflicts of contemporary society, and thus religion and interfaith dialogue is key to realizing such goals.

With religion representing the key to resolution of conflicts rooted in the violent actions of takfiris, as it is presented in the AM and ACW, the messages accommodates this popular narrative across the Western political spectrum of 'the fight between two faces of religion', and it can be argued that the Hashemite King, with his interfaith engagements, takes a role as a regional leader fighting the good fight, and being on the same side as his Western allies. It comes to resemble a strategic identity narrative, as it is strategically smart for the Hashemite King to underline his allegiance with Western powers, given his foreign policy and security interests and geopolitical position. The perceived threat of radicalization, increasing since 9/11, provides a beneficial setting for him to do so through interfaith engagements.

It is argued that the interfaith activities of the Hashemite regime is very much a matter of ideology, as they are understood to forge and project an understanding of the world system, the conflicts in it, and the resolutions to them, as something perceived *“in terms of abstract ideas rather than of lived experience”* (Website; Ideology, 2020). Returning to the point of rhetorical formulations, support for this argument is found in generalizing, exaggerated, and ultimately, vague formulations throughout the two documents. An example is the idea of a global Islamic nation sharing one primary identity, as stated in the AM. Throughout, the document claims that Islam is founded on five principles important to all Muslims, and further, that the religion does not differentiate between color, race or religion, and that Islam has as its ultimate goal to realize mercy and good for all people. Therefore,

all of the above should be something that any Muslim lives by. Those, who do not, are deviates (AA, II. 13; 37-48; 60-63; 72-73). Formulations in ACW follow similar patterns, in stating that a good relationship between Muslims and Christians will lead to world peace, while the opposite could result in chaos and the world to go under. First, how does the one even measure world peace or ultimate world chaos? They are vague claims that hardly reflect structures of reality in any concrete or tangible way. The same goes for the assumption that Islam and Christianity are two unanimous groups of people, living up to the theological principles presented in the two documents. It is a generalization with little link to reality, as is the idea that the two commandments presented in ACW actually is the most important ones to the individual believer.

The point is underlined with reference to the narratives of religion described by James V. Spickard and presented in chapter one of this thesis. He addresses a narrative of 'religious individualization' that tells the story of a "*fundamental shift in the locus of religion from organizations to individuals*" telling us that "*individuals now pick and choose among various religious options, crafting a custom-made religious life, rather than choosing a package formulated by any religious hierarchy*" (Spickard, 2006, p. 5). This narrative of religion clearly goes against the narrative of religion detected in the two interfaith documents, as does the notion of 'believing without belonging' that suggest tendencies of people generally staying religious, but doing so outside of boundaries of organizations and denominations (Davie, 1990, p. 455). In other words, the way religion works is context dependent, and the way that Islam and Christianity are described in the two documents does not consider this. The documents thus represent a very narrow definition of religion, exemplifying the divide between perceptions of lived religion and expert/governing religion.

Markiewicz points to this disconnect between the officially stated audience of Muslim 'brothers' domestically and globally in the AM, and the audience that it actually reaches, as the message "*bears no relation to the ground*" (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 98). A lack of support from the general national population can be viewed as de-legitimizing to the interfaith projects as the Muslim Majority population must necessarily support the Hashemites' perception and projection of true, moderate, Western-friendly Islam. However, the Kingdom has controlled the public religious sphere since the fifties, arguably keeping disagreeing voices in check (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 212). The following section, as well as the final part of the analysis reflects on Western political actors as a primary audience in addition to Muslim and Christian religious communities.

THE RECEPTION OF THE AM AND ACW

When conducting a strategic narrative analysis, narratives are approached on three levels; 1) how they are forged; 2) how they are projected; and 3) how they are received (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 9). The intended audience naturally has a lot of influence on how a given narrative is forged and projected, as the ultimate success of a strategic narrative is constituted in the acknowledgement by its audience. However, how a narrative is received can only ever be assumed by the instigator beforehand, while reactions from an unintended audience, in addition, can influence the legitimacy of the narratives once they are projected onto the world stage. The following paragraph will differentiate between reactions from theological, scientific, and official systems in accordance with Peter Beyer's definitions. The responses generated within theological and official systems will be the ones given primary attention here, seeing as these are the systems that the documents are argued to be forged within and projected towards. Still, the scientific community has proven a significant audience, and will also be considered.

The effort made to connect a wide range of high-profile Muslim signatories, both before and after, plays an essential part in a strategic narrative analysis of the messages as they pose as legitimizing agents. The same can be said about the reactions that have followed from the international community. The AM had in 2016 collected 552 signatories in 84 countries, and the message is still open for endorsements through a link on its website (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 211). Endorsing the message is a way for Muslim groups, leading figures, and individuals to openly denounce violence and terrorism in the name of Islam. The list of endorsements includes kings, government leaders and foreign affairs ministers from all Muslim majority countries of the region, in addition to a number of other Muslim Majority countries beyond the region, thus representing acknowledgement and denouncing of takfiris generated in the official system. The list further includes several Western scholars particular represented by the United States and United Kingdom. Dr. Joseph Lumbard, an American university professor already mentioned a number of times and greatly involved with the ACW project, poses one example. The UK has similar representatives on the list in Cambridge lecturer Tim Winther and the Director of Oxford (University) Centre for Islamic Studies, Prof. Farhan Nizami (Website; Endorsements: AM). These profiles represent the scientific system, and there is something interesting about the fact that they choose to put their name on these state-led initiatives. More than anything, the list of endorsements underline that the Hashemite Kingdom is well connected, and its interfaith message resonates in intellectual, theological, and official settings.

Likewise, the 5-year anniversary edition of ACW also presents a long list of generally positive and friendly responses received from the 'top of Christianity': "*Within the first year of its release, around 70 leading Christian figures responded to A Common Word (ACW) in one form or another*" (ACW: list of respondents, 2012, p. 103). The list has expanded in the years that followed, and it shows a variety of Christian denominations responding to the call for dialogue, including Evangelical Christians. Lumbard, in his contribution to the anniversary edition, points to the establishment of dialogue between traditional Muslims and Evangelicals to be particularly noteworthy, as "*the two communities have had little exposure to one another and often view one another with suspicion*", and interfaith conferences following ACW had a leader of the American evangelical movement share a stage with an international leader of traditional Islamic communities, something that was apparently unprecedented. The historical aspect surrounding the Jordanian interfaith activities is thus again emphasized (Lumbard, 2012, p. 26).

Having leading evangelicals endorse the message is thus presented as being of great value, although the endorsements of theological profiles such as Pope Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, also on the list, no doubt bring a higher degree of legitimacy given their own global reach of religious legitimacy. As it is already clear from the content analysis, ACW is framed by a discourse of Muslim religious leaders speaking to Christian religious leaders, and thus the positive responses from the people listed above, including Christian scholars of Islam, can be viewed as a primary success criterion of the message being reached.

This criterion of success, and the responses highlighted in the anniversary edition of ACW, stress the top-down structure of the initiatives as dialogue conducted on an intellectual and theological expert level. The AM implied initial intentions of the points of the messages to "trickle down" and lead to understanding and dialogue at the level of what Hurd refers to as lived religion. As such, the text stresses how the individual, young Muslim will benefit from the promotion of true and luminous Islam through means of education, so that he or she will choose moderation and tolerance over extremism and radicalism (AA, ll. 180-185). This will presumably benefit the entire international community, within which the threat of radicalization is perceived to be a pending security issue for most nation states. Arguably, the two projects have had little effect in this regard however, and interfaith has instead presented itself as a means for the Hashemite Kingdom to project an identity narrative of being a regional leader of moderate and tolerant Islam, from which they can benefit in their international relations.

SUMMARY

Interfaith engagement represents a form of faith-based diplomacy, thereby stressing religion as key to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It is argued that the state-led dialogue initiatives in Jordan are adding to a specific identity narrative of King Abdullah as an Islamic moderate leader of the Middle East region, fighting the threat of radicalization by promoting a narrow perception of true Islam that aligns with the international system's expectations. Within the theoretical framework, system and issue narratives are understood to potentially challenge or support a given identity narrative, and with reference to the content analysis of the two documents, it is argued that they fulfill the purpose of supporting the suggested identity narrative of King Abdullah. Based on this, it is concluded that the King is utilizing religion as a means of soft power to emphasize and strengthen alliances with Western political powers. The findings are reflected upon in a broader context in the final part of the analysis.

3. HOW CAN THE AM AND ACW BE UNDERSTOOD AS A MEANS OF SOFT POWER, AND WHAT MOTIVATES THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM TO PERSUE SUCH MEANS?

This final chapter proceeds as a reflection on the results of sub-questions one and two, considering to what extent religion, in the context of interfaith engagements, can be considered a means of soft power to the Hashemite Kingdom in its international relations. The reflection will depart in a short outline of research on the AM and ACW conducted by Gutkowski, Browsers, and Markiewicz, as all three point to political motivations and how an image of moderate Islam benefits the Hashemite regime in their relations to their Western allies in particular. Secondly, the chapter reflects on religion as a means of soft power within the overall context of resurgence of religion in international politics in a post-secular age. Finally, the chapter reflects on the Hashemite regime's motivations for pursuing such means, again with reference to the research of the three scholars mentioned above, and within the context of the regime's foreign policy and security interests, and the interfaith movement after 9/11.

WESTERN ALLIES AS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE

The findings of this thesis have provided evidence, that the AM and ACW documents can very well be understood as a point of departure for telling a specific and strategic story, about the Hashemite king as a regional leader in the global fight against radicalization and terrorism in the name of Islam. Stacey Gutkowski argues that the motivation for engaging with interfaith dialogue is both religious and political:

“while Jordan’s official and state endorsed civil society efforts to promote ‘moderate Islam’ stem in part from a seeming authentic interest in promoting dialogue and peace, the Jordanian Hashemite regime has also used the Amman Messages as a calling card to the West, a way to grease the wheels of increased security and political cooperation which has not always been popular with the population.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 208)

This brings Jordanian foreign policy objectives to the center of attention and suggests Western allies as an intended audience to the messages. Her argument is supported by the arguments of this thesis, as my interpretations of the documents’ content emphasizes a representation of religion having character of expert and governing religion generated in a mix of theological and official settings, along with the generalizing and vague formulations that cannot be mirrored in complex reality. Gutkowski further argues that in a broader context of the war on terror *“the United States and its allies have developed a binary view of ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ Islam which relies on an overly narrow conception of what religion ‘is’ ...”* (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 208). In the same manner, the governing character of the religion that has been proven in the AM and ACW throughout this thesis aligns with such an approach, as true Islam is narrowed down to be moderate, tolerant, and modern, discarding anyone who does not comply as un-Islamic. Interfaith engagement in Jordan can thus be considered, yet again, as tapping into Western agendas. The governing power of Jordan benefit from doing so, as political trusts with the West has been built through these engagements (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 213).

Markiewicz points to the fact that the AM and ACW have not worked to the extent that they were officially intended, since even though interfaith dialogue initiatives in general have been on the rise since 9/11, *“Islam-West and Christian-Muslim relations remain strained”* while radicalization continues to pose a threat (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 97). Markiewicz, with reference to Gutkowski, points to the top-down structure of the initiatives as delimiting to the social effect, emphasizing rather the political dimension (Markiewicz, 2018, pp. 97-98). Michelle Browsers joins the quire of scholars who emphasizes political impetuses, over religious ones, in the forging of the AM, and concludes that *“the message was formulated strategically rather than dialogically”* and that it *“continues to exist within a nexus of interests and policies”* (Browsers, 2011, p. 944). Even though it is hard to measure the actual effect of the AM and ACW on US-Jordanian and EU-Jordanian relations, it is suggested that it at least effects the way that Jordan is perceived as an actor on the global stage to some extent. Gutkowski reflects on this matter with reference to a Western diplomat:

“Jordan’s discourse of moderation has successfully permeated Western diplomatic discourse with diplomats regularly emphasizing ‘shared values’ alongside interests. For example, one Amman-based Western diplomat describing King Abdullah II as ‘one of us ... a mid-Atlantic king who increasingly shares our worldview’.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 219)

RELIGION AS A MEANS OF SOFT POWER IN A POST-SECULAR AGE

The academic construct of a contemporary ‘post-secular age’ is linked to another construct, namely the ‘resurgence of religion’ within international politics and IR, both discussed in chapter one and deemed highly relevant to the interfaith movement post 9/11. To recap, a post-secular age as a concept refers to reconceptualization of the way that religion interacts with politics and society, and implies that the relation is ‘moving beyond the secular’. The concept has been operationalized in this framework as a concept that describes *“a time where religion is increasingly operationalized by various actors through initiatives on religious freedom, interfaith dialogue, human rights, and tolerance”* (Quote from page 21-22 of this thesis), because religion is resurging *“in domains of society from which it has hitherto been functionally separated”* (Johansen, 2013, p. 11). The example brought to us by Elizabeth Hurd, that the political scenes in the US and Europe have increasingly been attracted to perceptions of *“religion as a public international good, and fear of it as a potential source of discord and violence”* (Hurd, 2017, p. 27) in the aftermath of 9/11²⁵, supports the contemporary context of the AM and ACW to be one of a post-secular age. It is this context, where narratives of religion increasingly merge with political domains, that interfaith engagements can pose as a means of soft power. Peter Beyer added the ‘official approach to religion’ to a system that was primarily considering theological and scientific approaches, which further stress an increased acknowledgement of religion’s relevance to matters of policy making.

By analyzing the content of the AM and ACW, informed by strategic narrative theory, I have made assumptions about how King Abdullah, as the instigator and a continuous promotor of the two documents, narrows in on specific perceptions about the international system and its actors, as well as the issues that are pressing within this system. In doing so, King Abdullah arguably adds to an identity narrative that places him strategically as an agent in the international system, who accommodates expectations from Western allies, and who goes to the frontline, on an intellectual battlefield, in the fight against takfiris, and ultimately, the overall ‘war on terror’. The context of the post-secular contemporary society is arguably what makes it favorable for a governing power such

²⁵ Treated in the second part of the analysis on p. 55-56 of this thesis.

as the Hashemite Kingdom to emphasize religious values and ethics as part of the identity narrative they project onto the global, political stage. As argued by Gutkowski:

“Jordan’s branding as moderately Islamic and supportive of interfaith dialogue has proved critical to building political trust with the West.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 213)

MOTIVATIONS AND GAINS

Considering the motivations behind the Hashemite Kingdom engaging with interfaith dialogue, falls into a discussion already outlined, namely whether the engagement is religiously or politically motivated, or both. As we are not able to investigate the mind of the instigator, the assessment of motivation rests on what the instigator says, how the instigator behaves, and within which context the instigator is behaving. Jordan constitutes a Muslim majority country, whose governing power assigns great value to its traditional and genealogical claim to power²⁶, which is proudly promoted and emphasized, also within the AM where this traditional and genealogical heritage leaves King Abdullah with a religious responsibility to promote true Islam and resolve the Islamic nation’s issues. This suggest a religious obligation and thus religious motivation for engagement. Prince Ghazi has further made it clear that the intention of ACW was purely theological, and not political (Markiewicz, 2018, p. 95). The analysis conducted in the first and second part of this chapter, however, suggest something different, namely that religion is very well essential to the storytelling of the documents, but that it is governing religion generated in a primarily official setting that drives the narratives. This is argued to support the arguments presented by Markiewicz, Gutkowski and Browsers, namely that incentives for Abdullah to engage with state-led interfaith initiatives, and to continuously promote them towards a Western audience, are just as political as they are religious, if not more so.

Considering the research findings in relation to the contextualization provided in the first chapter of this thesis, adds to the assumption that the Kingdom is strategically using the AM and ACW as means of telling a story, about its place in the world, that will benefit foreign policy interests, and furthermore, potentially constitute a leg in the Kingdom’s regime survival strategy. The links are drawn in the following.

Referring to the context highlighted in this thesis, as relevant to understand the AM and ACW as documents constituting means of soft power, attention was drawn to the geopolitical position of Jordan as a country in a region historically characterized by an ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, Gulf-

²⁶ The Hashemite Kingdom’s traditional/religious legitimacy is outlined from p. 15 of this thesis.

wars, US invasions, and civil wars. Apart from having tested the two kings, Abdullah II and Hussein before him, on their skills of diplomacy and peace building, large groups of refugees have caused rapid and challenging demographic changes to a country that has not been blessed with oil revenues and further suffers from water scarcity. This is altogether something that challenges the survival of the regime, as a regime less capable of providing for all its citizens is bound to face some pressure from below. To accommodate such challenges, the Hashemite regime is highly dependent on foreign aid, and the US and Europe are significant in this regard²⁷. From a Western point of view, a lot of security interests are connected to the turmoil of the Middle East, be it refugees, the spread of radicalization, stationed military troops, and a continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine²⁸. Thus, Jordan's geopolitical position in the midst of all of it, makes the Hashemite a favored ally to Western powers in return.

Back in the day, King Hussein build his relationship to Western powers on being an Arab moderate, and a regionally and internationally well-connected diplomate. He was influential and active, if not represented, in numerous peace processes, Camp David 1 and 2 and the signing of a peace treaty with Israel being significant examples. Despite his image as an Arab moderate accommodating and friendly towards Western powers, he was prone to Arabism, exemplified in his strong alliance with Saddam Hussein. As argued by Nigel Ashton, King Hussein was under the conviction "*that his family [the Hashemites] was destined to provide leadership for the Arab nation*" (Ashton, 2008, p. 5), and that Arab problems should be solved amongst Arabs without influence from foreign powers. Ashton further underlines, that King Hussein was no doubt punching above his weight in his claim for Arab leadership, as his continuous "*clandestine contact with Israel*" and the fact that he sided with the West on multiple occasions. Leanings towards Arabism was a popular feature amongst the Jordanian population, although somewhat straining in Hussein's relations to the West (Ashton, 2008, pp. 5-6; 211-214).

Cultivating alliances with Western powers constitute a leg of Jordan's regime survival strategy (Barari, 2015, p. 103). Hasan Barari argues, with reference to Jordan, Morocco, and the GCC monarchies, that:

²⁷ The context that is referred to here is elaborated on pp. 10-15 of this thesis.

²⁸ The Israel-Palestine conflict continues to be of great interest to the US given their friendly relations with Israel.

“The pro-Western orientation of these regimes has helped them to encourage the United States and its European Union allies not to cultivate any relationships with opposition forces in their countries.” (Barari, 2015, p. 110)

Based on the findings of the analysis presented in this chapter, I support the argument of Browsers, Gutkowski and Markiewicz presented above, and argue that Jordanian state-led interfaith initiatives constitute one tool, amongst various others, through which the Hashemite regime can cultivate alliances with Western powers, ultimately supporting the autocratic character of the regime in Jordan. Based in her research on the effects of the AM and ACW, Gutkowski concludes accordingly that:

“This particular case suggests the need to look carefully at the social construction of moderate identity in foreign and domestic policy, not least as a part of ‘culture as display’ because this display may mask authoritarian and anti-democratic practices or may have more monologic characteristics than dialogic.” (Gutkowski, 2016, p. 221)

It is a critical point that needs to be considered in relation to the overall positive reception that the two messages are receiving from international political and religious communities, as it might contribute to anti-democratic practices. Furthermore, the governing character of religion, as it is presented in the two documents, narrows down a definition of Islam that does not resemble that of the lived religion of the people on the ground, in addition to delimiting Islam to the practices of eight official schools in the three points of the AM, ultimately sending a signal of false pluralism.

Reading the AM and ACW through the lenses of strategic narrative theory have enabled the interpretations made in the above, and as such, the documents can be understood as means *“by which political actors [the Hashemite Kingdom] attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors”* (Miskimmon et al., 2017, pp. 5-6). The narratives that the Hashemite Kingdom aims to persuade other political actors to buy into, is that of the Hashemite Kingdom as an Islamic moderate fighting radicalization under the same banners as its Western allies. They are doing so by promoting their perception of true Islam, namely a moderate and tolerant kind, thereby operationalizing religion as key to cultivate international relations. The context of a post-secular age in the aftermath of 9/11 provides a favorable context for doing so.

CONCLUSION

Departing in a case study analysis informed by strategic narrative theory, focused on the documents of the AM and ACW, the objective of this thesis has been to answer the following research question: *How have state-led interfaith dialogue initiatives in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan developed in the aftermath of 9/11, and what do these developments, including narratives of moderate and tolerant Islam, say about the Kingdom's self-perception and projection of identity onto the international, political stage?* The research question has been addressed and answered based on three sub-questions, namely: 1) How does the content of the AM and ACW resemble strategic narrative formation? 2) What do the AM and ACW suggest about the Hashemite Kingdom's self-perception and identity projection onto the international, political stage?; and 3) How can the AM and ACW be understood as a means of soft power, and what motivates the Hashemite Kingdom to pursue such means?

It is concluded that the state-led interfaith initiatives in Jordan, in addition to the officially stated purpose of resolving conflict and tension in Islam-Christian and Islam-Western relations on a 'ground level', have developed to aid the regime in cultivating relations with Western political powers. Creating dialogue between civilizations to counter narratives of 'clash of civilizations' and 'resurgence of 'bad' religion', ultimately aiding the Islamic nation and world society at large, might have been the officially stated purpose. Likewise, the intention of the message to 'trickle down' might very well be sincere and reflect a compliance with the religious responsibilities of the Hashemite heritage. However, I argue there to be several factors from which it can be drawn that the two interfaith initiatives constitute a means of political soft power to the Hashemite Kingdom. The state-led character of the initiatives is the point of departure. It has been argued that the top-down structure of the interfaith initiatives in Jordan have had limited social effects. In addition, vague and generalizing formulations within the two texts have disconnected the two projects from lived experiences. Ultimately, I argue that these structures characterize as expert and governing religion generated within official and theological settings.

The analysis, informed by strategic narrative theory, has highlighted an identity narrative of King Abdullah as an Islamic moderate leader of the Middle East, fighting the threat of radicalization by promoting a narrow perception of true Islam that aligns with the international system's expectations. As such, it is concluded that the state-led interfaith initiatives in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have come to accommodate Jordanian foreign policy interests to a far greater extent, than theologically rooted ambitions of creating dialogue amongst civilizations, world peace, and harmony.

The AM and ACW constitute means through which the Hashemite Kingdom can tell a story about its place in the world, namely under US and European banners in the fight against 'bad' religion, which potentially benefit Jordan's foreign policy interests, and furthermore, constitute a leg in the Kingdom's regime survival strategy. The context of a post-secular age, and the resurgence of religion in international politics in the aftermath of 9/11, have facilitated a favorable environment for interfaith initiatives as a soft power means to cultivate these Western alliances.

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