

The Role of the Jordanian News Agency (PETRA) in Political Development

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ABSTRACT--- *The aim of this research paper is to discuss the role played by the Jordanian News Agency or Petra in the political development of not only Jordan but also other countries in the Arabian world as well. Before ascertaining the role played by PETRA in the political development, the article gives a definition of what is meant by both a role and political development and presents a wide range of literature review on the issue. Recommendations regarding what needs to be done by stakeholders in order to help PETRA continue playing a vital role in political development has also been given towards the end of the paper. The whole contents of the paper have effectively been summed up in the conclusion part. The general view of the article is that indeed, the Jordanian News Agency plays a significant role in the political development of Jordan and in other Arabian countries in which it operates.*

Keywords--- Role, News Agency, Political Development, PETRA

1. INTRODUCTION

PETRA is a term that stands for the Jordan News Agency established as an Independent body that was linked or associated with the Ministry of Information in Jordan. A role is defined as a part or a function which is assumed and played by something or an individual in a specific situation. Political development is defined as the capacity of a specific political system to effectively satisfy the ever changing needs and aspirations of its members of society. Jordan is a country that located in the “heart” of the Middle East and it is also on Saudi Arabia’s Northwest. PETRA is a news agency that was established on the 16th of July 1969 through a Royal Decree and which is renown because of its provision of news bulletins that reflect on the diversity of various opinions as they are occur in the Jordanian society and more so the cause of democracy and political development in the Jordan Kingdom. Petra has a staff of 238 employees of which 135 are journalists that are affiliated and have membership to the prestigious Jordan Press Association or JPA (Verloo et al, 2012). In essence, the Jordan News Agency or PETRA is indeed the news agency of Jordan whose Director and Agency Executive is Faisal AlShboul and which has its headquarters in Amman in Jordan. The Minister responsible for this State agency is Samih Maaita who is the Minister of “State for Media Affairs and Communications” in the country.

Background Information on Jordan

Jordan is located to the west of Israel while Iraq is located on its East. Syria is located to the North of Jordan and it has access towards the Red Sea through the Port City of the Aqaba which is based at the Northern end of “the Gulf of Aqaba”. By June 2012, Jordan had a total population of 6,309,963 people. While the official language of Jordan is Arabic, the English language is also widely spoken by Jordanians who are mostly businessmen (Gupta et al, 2012). The currency that is used in Jordan is the *Jordanian Dinar* which is also abbreviated as JD. Jordan’s geographic coordinates are “29, 11-33,22N, 34, 59-39,18E”

Based on its Facebook page (<https://web.facebook.com/pg/petranews/about/>) among the products that are offered by PETRA include but are not limited to news services, training services Television services (which includes making of documentaries and leasing equipment and studio), Breaking News through the Short messaging Service (SMS), Advertising using the website, and archive materials which includes news and photos. It is important to note that PETRA is a “fully-fledged” professional body that actively participated in the creation of JPA. That part, PETRA is also an active member of the “Federation of Arab News Agencies” (FANA) as well as the “Non-Aligned Countries’ Agencies pooling” (Al Akash & Boswall, 2015). The Jordanian News Agencies has correspondents in various countries such as in Moscow, Bahrain, New York, Cairo, Gaza, Paris, Tokyo, Beirut, Baghdad, Bucharest, Manama, Abu Dhabi, Ramallah, Beijing, Kuwait, London, Copenhagen, Bonn, Doha, and even in Kuala Lumpur. In June 2004, PETRA eventually became an independent body or entity soon after the Ministry of Information was dissolved. As a result, a “special ordinance” was put in place in order to give the Jordanian New Agency both administrative and financial independence and in order to specify powers of the Council Agency and those powers that were conferred to the Director General, The

“new ordinance” gave PETRA the right of selling some of its services and contents to subscribers who were willing (Ayish, 2016).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Through provision of numerous news services in both English and Arabic on its major outlet, the Jordanian News Agency or Petra has played a significant role in the political development of not only the Jordanian Kingdom but also around the Arabian region as well (Hart & Kvittingen, 2015). The major aim of this research paper is therefore to discuss the role that is played by the Jordanian News Agency (PETRA) in the political development of Jordan and the neighboring regions. PETRA plays a significant role in the enhancement of political development in the various regions that it operates in that not only does it present its audience with photos of daily activities and events that are covered on its websites but it also provides “direct dispatches” to approximately 22 subscribers in Arab as well as in other foreign news agencies that have offices based in Amman.

Political development has been significantly enhanced through the Jordanian News Agency in that it is strongly committed to its vision of ensuring that its technical and professional performance is well upgraded in order to match or suit with the other global news agencies that are highly distinguished (Susser, 2017).. Through its mission, PETRA also ensures that there is provision of news services that not only have a high level of credibility but also have a high degree of accuracy and neutrality thus greatly upholding political development in its areas of operation. Since the year 1998, PETRA has played a significant role in ensuring that it focuses on the various aspects of child life through sporting of any shortcomings that befalls them and ensuring that the same is relayed to the relevant political players in the affected places for action to be taken.

The role of the Jordanian News Agency in the development of the child awareness rights has therefore enhanced political development among nations in that it has made both the private and the public entities to become involved in the enrichment of child life in order to attain treaty objectives. PETRA has played a significant role in political development across the world in that it has been highly responsible for the collection and dissemination of relevant political information across the world that has led to promotion of greater diversity as well as the balancing of news sources in global news (Archetti, 2014). This is quite important since it has enabled populations to effectively participate in their respective national democratic practices and processes.

The provision of relevant and credible news to its audience by the Jordanian News agency has led to the successful implementation of democratic societies across the world. It is prudent to note that even though PETRA was made an independent body, the agency has never succumbed towards commercial pressures but instead, its main goal has been ensuring that there is effective balancing of public service with that of commercial sustainability. The provision of some of its services free of charge to the audience has made the Jordanian Agency or PETRA to play a significant role in the political development of various societies across the world.

The provision of specialized training by PETRA for the journalists especially in the using of computers, the English language as well as translation has made it possible for the audience to easily comprehend what was being communicated (Davis, 2016).. As a result, this has enabled such audiences to effectively comprehend their rights thus enhancing political development among such populations. Based on Article 4 of the “Jordan News Agency Law⁵⁰¹”, the PETRA’s mandate is to cover various issues, activities, and events at the national, Arab, and global levels, and contribute towards promotion of journalistic and media careers in the Jordanian Kingdom. It is also tasked with the responsibility of keeping up with the relevant changes and developments, both technical and professional in the field of information and communication. This has greatly enabled the society to have relevant political information at hand.

The powers that are conferred on Petra have made it possible for it to enhance political development in the relevant communities. For instance, PETRA is tasked with the responsibility of provision of news services as well as materials which are collected and prepared from numerous sources both inside as well as outside the kingdom (Turner, 2015). Its ability to exchange both technical and professional services and facilities with the Arab and other global news agencies has made it possible for PETRA to provide relevant information that has helped in shaping political discourse in Jordan. The fact that PETRA trains agency staff and also conducts research and studies aimed at provision of specialized opinion polls, bulletins, and news services have greatly enhanced political awareness among masses in Jordan and other places across the world. As a media outlet, PETRA plays a significant role in political development of populations in that it ensures that effective services are provided for all individuals staying in Jordan through giving voice to their perspectives as well as ensuring that they are provided with the relevant information that they require (Tuastad, 2014).

Another significant role that is played by the Jordanian News Agency in political development is that it has continued to provide essential information that has enabled the country to achieve political prosperity. For instance, the information provided by PETRA news agency has enabled the Jordanian Kingdom to pursue political reforms that are aimed at promotion of greater democratic transparency and accountability, political pluralism, as well as strengthening of the civil society in the country. The efforts made by PETRA in provision of news regarding the political discourse in the country have played a significant role in the enhancement of the long term prospects for prosperity and stability (Bolin &

Ståhlberg, 2015).). In addition to that, PETRA has continued to inform the general public regarding various political events that affect the country thus creating more democratic awareness among them. For instance, the news agency has provided crucial information regarding political reforms in Jordan such as the passing of the “national decentralization and municipalities” law, amendments about laws on the elections and political parties, development of a “National Integrity Strategy” aimed at fighting corruption as well as increasing transparency, and even provided the public with information about easing the requirements for the public demonstrations, as well as restrictions on state jurisdiction on the security of the Court on the civilians. The Jordanian News Agency (2013) played a significant role in provision of information in the last parliamentary elections in Jordan that were held in the year 2013. It is through provision of reliable, accurate, and reliable information by PETRA that the elections were deemed as being credible by almost all the international observers.

Even though there prevails challenges about the political participation, press freedom, and even a decrease in the legislative space for most of civil societies in Jordan, PETRA has tried all it can to provide the general public with information on what is occurring in the political arena. The fact that PETRA uses an integrated computer system has made it easier for it to both receive and transmit news to various news agencies across the world at very fast speeds (Maziad, 2011). The use of the internet as the major distribution mechanism has made it possible for the agency to reach a wide range of audience and deliver to them news regarding the political expeditions in Jordan. This has therefore made it easier for the audience to receive political information that has been conventionally been packaged through direct lines. Owing to the fact that the use of the internet is presently more vital for both production and networking as opposed to it being used for publishing purposes, this has made the PETRA website attract approximately 500,000 visitors on a monthly basis who are keen on accessing information about the state of their nation as well as political information.

PETRA has played a significant role in the political development of Jordan in that with the support of UNESCO, it developed an “electronic photo archiving system” in storage of photos. The development of the system helped the news agency (PETRA) to store approximately 100,000 photos out of the 500,000 photos that it owned (Banks, Day, & Muller, 2016). The photos not only comprised of very important and significant events in the history and timelines of Jordan as a Kingdom but it also comprised of vital political and historical information and photos. The news agency has made significant efforts to ensure that it is well equipped with the latest technological and informational developments.

The news department at the Jordanian News Agency is tasked with the responsibility of not only covering but also making follow ups of official private and public sector activities as they happen in both Amman and governorates. In addition to that, it is also tasked with the responsibility of covering crucial political and social events as well as the preparation of interviews and reports on numerous issues in Jordan and even in the Arab world. This has been quite beneficial in the enhancement of political development among populations in such countries (Meeds, 2015). The News Editing Department of the Jordanian News Department plays a crucial role in political development in that it is responsible for the successful implementation of various activities that are aimed at ensuring that Jordanians are well informed on the political affairs that the country is faced with. For instance, the News Editing Department edits the news items which are sent in by correspondents and reporters both in the English and Arabic language and ensure that they are transmitted to the general public.

Another crucial aspect and role that is played by PETRA in political development is that it follows up on various news items that have any contents on Jordan as a Kingdom in the foreign media and informs the public on what other nations think about it. This is quite important since it helps the Jordan government and the general public to have a clear picture on what the other nations or the world think about it and its political landscape (Lee & Nerghes, 2017). Through ensuring that the agency’s work is well sustained on the website in English language, this ensures that all the audience who are conversant with the English language are well informed of various political undertaking and happenings in Jordan and in the whole world.

The specialized News Department of the Jordanian News Agency is also tasked with the responsibility of preparing various investigative reports on issues of political interests towards the Jordanians. This is quite important because it helps citizens to have a clear overview of the political situation as it is in Jordan, in the entire Arab world, as well as in the global arena. On the other hand, the Information and Media Department at the Jordanian News Agency also play a significant role in the political development of Jordan and in the world as a whole in that it publishes the news and photos of the agency regarding the political happenings thus presenting the much needed evidence that makes their news to become authentic.

PETRA’S training and development department is quite important in ensuring there is political development in Jordan and in other parts of the world. For example, the department is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that there is effective in-house training for its employees. This is quite important since it helps the journalists to effectively have the relevant skills of gathering political information that could be of important value to the audience in realistic and authentic manner. Moreover, the fact that it cooperates with other training centers on the issues of standardization of its training activities ensures that the best political information is delivered to the audience within the shortest time possible. The

political development of Jordan as a country has greatly been achieved through the Jordanian News Agency or PETRA. This is quite true since the news agency tries in all endeavors to make sure that Jordan as a country is marketed as a peaceful country which is politically stable. This is despite of the fact that the country might be experiencing some political challenges at the backyard. Owing to the fact that the Jordanian News Agency has established positive relations with both the local and global institutions, it has positively marketed Jordan as a country that upholds great political policies of governance thus making many people such as tourists desire to visit it.

Legislation and Governance

The Jordanian News Agency plays a significant role in political development in that it provides important information regarding the Kingdom's constitution, the Judiciary, the Religious Courts, and the civil courts through its website which is accessed by a broad audience. Through giving broad explanation regarding how the judicial system in Jordan works, the Jordanians are presented with an effective platform of ascertaining various matters regarding personal matters and jurisdiction on other different matters. It is also through the Jordanian News Agency that political development in Jordan is enhanced. For the example, PETRA's website comprises useful information regarding the Jordanian government and it provides the general public with information about the present cabinet of the Kingdom. This is quite important since it provides the public with any political changes that might be made on the cabinet.

Political development is achieved through the role that is played by the Jordanian News Agency because it is tasked with the responsibility of transmitting the mission and voice of the Jordanian Kingdom. This is done through reports and news that emphasize the achievements of Jordan and the Arab views regarding numeral causes on all the levels. In addition to that, the Jordanian News Agency is also making efforts to ensure that it keeps in pace with all the most recent political developments that occurs in Jordan (Bebawi, 2016). This is done through ensuring that it provides its well trained reporters and journalists with modern science and new technological innovations that enables them to cover any new political developments on time and within the shortest time possible. Based on the most recent events that have occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, and even in other parts of the Arab world, it is actually prudent to ensure that the young Jordanians are both enabled and supported so that they can demand freedom and democracy.

It can truly be asserted that the Jordanian News Agency has played a significant role in raising of awareness for the political developments especially among the youth and also in promotion of democracy in the Jordanian society. As a result of their rising or increasing political awareness as well as access to the social media and contents put forth by the Jordanian News Agency, the youths in Jordan have now become cognizant with their duties and rights as citizens than in the time immemorial (Packenham, 2015). As the Jordanian Kingdom enter a new and crucial era under the most recent constitutional amendments, it is important to note that exigency for achievement of democracy has become crucial towards the present generation. The Jordanian news agency in all its forms thus plays a key role in the political development and enhancement of the national comprehensive reforms in Jordan. This is attributed to the fact that it indeed frames the appropriate platform that ultimately mobilizes the support of the general public.

The Jordanian News Agency has held numerous roundtable meetings with relevant stakeholders in the political and media arena with an aim of opening as well as promoting discussions regarding the importance of PETRA in spreading of political awareness and development. In most of such meetings, PETRA emphasized on the development of knowledge regarding constitutional rights among the young generation. The fact that such meetings were attended by renown politicians and media experts aspired to enhance the chance for participation in the political development as well as establishment of communities that were politically active in Jordan (Van Dijk, 2013).

According to HE Eng. Musa Al Maaitah, the Minister of Political Development in Jordan (Ulrichsen, 2016), it was ascertained that it is important for the young people in Jordan to become well informed of the various political developments in Jordan. It was asserted that in order to effectively attain the goals of political development, it was important for it to become activated through ensuring that there was political participation of all the relevant stakeholders, the Jordanian youth included. The Jordanian News Agency plays a significant role in both the political development as well as dissemination of crucial political information especially during the period of political movements in Jordan (Johnson, 2015). It is also important to note that it is through the relevant provision of timely and accurate political information to the public by PETRA that political developments have been made possible in Jordan. For instance, some of the popularly renowned and supported constitutional amendments in Jordan can be attributed to the provision of political information by the Jordanian News Agency (PETRA).

It is through the provision of relevant political information by the Jordanian News Agency that political participation and development among the Jordanian youth has been increased significantly. This has therefore made it possible for this young generation to become capable of effectively participating in not only the building of the future community but also in taking of responsibility in order to overcome any existing political obstacles. The Jordanian News Agency has played a significant role in educating the public regarding their duties and rights in the Jordanian politics which has significantly aided in political development. This is quite true since the combination of the media, the youth,

and political developments forms the three main working areas of the “Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung” which are important visions and aspirations that ought to be promoted through various ways and also applied in the development of important policy (Abu-Hamdi, 2017).

It is a true assertion that it is actually through the provision of essential political content by the Jordanian News Agency to the masses that major political changes that happened in Tunisia, Egypt, as well as in other Arab Nations seeking reforms were successfully. This is due to the determination and the will of the youth who were well informed of various political developments through PETRA (Al Akash & Boswall, 2015). It is also through the efforts made by PETRA that the government of Jordan is now well prepared on receiving feasible ideas of various topics about not only the political developments in Jordan but also on the fights against corruption (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015). Armed with both the young as well as conscious intellectuals on one hand, the presence of a free and impartial press on the other hand has made it easier and possible for all and sundry to express their opinions uninhibited. It is also through the role of the Jordanian News Agency in news provision regarding political developments that the Jordanian government and other governments in the Muslim world have taken the desires of their citizens into their account and ensured that they are promoted.

The Jordanian News Agency has played a significant role in ensuring that the senses of political duties and rights of the youth in Jordan and in other Arab Countries are well enhanced. It can truly be asserted that the Jordanian News Agency/PETRA plays a significant role in the political development of various regions in that it has a close relationship with the comprehensive reforms that have occurred in Jordan and in other Arab countries. PETRA has played a decisive role in the contemporary political lives of various places through not only its audio and text contents, but also through the visual format as well (Farajat, Liu & Pennington-Gray, 2017). As a result, PETRA has created a vital role in all the facets or aspects of political development because it has now become a strategic and instrumental tool for societies, nations, and even individuals in affecting both popular opinion and policy.

The Jordanian News Agency has since time immemorial been at the forefront of pushing cooperation between the civil societies, media organizations, and even global organizations which sponsor and support media forums. Such cooperation is indeed beneficial because it helps in fostering the democratic transformation process. This is true since each specific organization plays a crucial role in provision of access towards the political pluralism objectives which include among others respect for the state institutions, property, equality, justice, and the rule of law (Ababneh, 2016). It is through PETRA that the state has been able to use it as an instrument for delivery of messages regarding modernization, development, and political reform. It is also through this news agency that most of the citizens across the countries of operation have been given a voice to become involved in participative democracy.

The Jordanian News Agency has played a significant role in political development in that it has effectively represented the diversity associated with the Jordanian people through various media devices. It has also provided important advice to youth so that all the parts of the society are well represented. The development of political awareness among the masses which has been made possible through the Jordanian News Agency contents made the Jordanian government to effectively respond to numerous expectations of its citizens during the constitutional amendments processes especially regarding the performance of the parliament. That apart, it can truly be ascertained that PETRA has played an important role in raising of the political awareness among the youth (Al-Khasawneh & Barakat, 2016). This is indeed quite true because it is through the news agency’s use of contemporary electronic media that the young people or the youth have been duly educated regarding Jordanian politics. This has ultimately made every citizen in Jordan and in other Arab countries to become an active, essential, and even influential part of political development using the internet.

As opposed to magazines and newspapers, the Jordanian News Agency has ensured that it upholds online journalism which has made it easier for its news contents on any political development to be delivered to its broad audience on a real time basis. To add on that, the rapid technological and information technology evolutions has made it easier for individuals to have the much needed freedom of expression which is quite important in the political development of any nation. It is important to note that even though conventional news sources still have a significant impact on numerous political decisions, they do not actually have a similar impact as when social media is used in fighting for the political discourse in any given country.

The embracing of social media platforms by the Jordanian News Agency has enabled political leaders to have a grasp and idea regarding the opinions of the public while also giving the citizens in such countries the ability of having a direct influence on the general political development decision making processes (Sakr, 2016). This is quite true since the more mediums and opportunities that a country’s citizens have to access and even share information, the more reluctant they will be on keeping silent on the various problems and challenges in the political systems. This quite ultimately affects the political development of the countries in which such citizens dwell in. Owing to the fact there are cases in which there is growth of sentiments against any form of misinformation that are made by the political establishments, the use of the internet by PETRA is ultimately the best mechanism or tool that can be used in countering the political discourses. It is therefore apparent that the use of electronic media by PETRA indeed plays an active and vital role in not only processes of change, but also in political development and democratization.

The Jordanian News Agency (PETRA) plays a crucial role in political development in that the information that is presented on its websites has encouraged citizens to have political participation (Martínez, 2017). For instance, the youth in Jordan and in other Arabic countries frequently get involved in the political development of their countries through PETRA's social media website which discuss numerous events about their respective communities as well as issues affecting their daily lives and even political situations. In the contemporary world, the Jordanian News Agency has provided its audience with an opportunity to not only contact the news agency but also present suggestions and develop solutions that are independent of the systems that have been established. This has greatly enhanced their respective communities in the concept of political development and democracy.

The role played by PETRA in the political development of various countries cannot be underestimated. This is due to the fact that its news website allows users to quickly “interact supports” in the promotion of democracy in respective societies. Despite the fact that there are some form of restrictions, the PETRA website succeeds in some way in ensuring that the control of the state on the conscience of individuals is limited to some extent. One of the most prominent feature or characteristic of PETRA's interactive website lies in its ability to both break censorship as well as the “tyranny of the authorities”. As a result, it easily overcomes any form of persecution by the State. The revolution or advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has played a major role in the ability of the Jordanian News Agency to offer crucial information to the audience that has resulted in political development in Jordan and in other Arab countries (Kumaraswamy & Singh, 2016).

Political development has been achieved by citizens through PETRA's initiatives' in that citizens can not only observe and criticize, but they can also guide and support decisions that have been made by all the political elements and governments in their respective countries. The contents offered by PETRA on their numerous news channels has enhanced political development in that it has offered consumers with an opportunity to exploit, highlight, and even strengthen existing political movements while ensuring that it is well receptive to the society's needs (Fullam, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGIES

To get information regarding the role played by the Jordanian News Agency in Political Development, information was obtained from books and well as from important articles from the internet regarding the topic. The researcher then compiled the information into this research article.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above information, it is quite evident that dispensation of political information can easily be done through the use of news agencies. There is need for the Jordanian News Agency (PETRA) to be provided with all the relevant technological and financial resources that will make it easier for it to dispense crucial information that will aid in political development with ease and in an effective manner. The Jordanian Government should thus make it its priority to ensure that PETRA is well equipped with all the relevant equipment that will enable citizens and all the general public to get easy access to information that will help in the political development of Jordan and other countries in which the agency operates in. the Jordanian government should also remove any form of restrictions or limitations that will prevent PETRA from executing its duties and mandates in an environment that is free from fear and any form of intimidations.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the above facts, it is quite evident that the Jordanian News Agency (PETRA) plays a significant role in the political developments in Jordan and in other Arab countries. It is thus quite apparent that without the input of this news agency, then the political situations in such countries could be worse and could not be as good as they are. However, there is need to strengthen PETRA and other news agencies across the world to ensure that they provide the best content that will create enhanced political awareness among the recipients of their information so that best political policies are implemented for their benefit. It is also through the use of online platforms that citizens can be able to become informed of what is happening in their respective countries and respond to any political challenges that need to be rectified or clarified to their own benefit. It is important to note that the responsibility of enhancing political development should not be left to governments alone but rather, it should be the collective responsibility of all the concerned stakeholders. PETRA should thus always lead the way in ensuring that its audiences and readers are well aware of the prevailing political situations in the fastest way possible. PETRA as a media agency should generally be applauded by all and sundry because of the role it has played in the political development of not only Jordan but also in the different countries in which it operates.

6. REFERENCES

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