

# Reconciliation or Alienation: The Representation of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in the Jordanian Print Media: *Al-Ghad Newspaper* as a Case Study

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**Abstract**—The influx of Syrian refugees to Jordan is considered one of the most serious social events that the country has witnessed in decades. The unprecedented flow of refugees that received extensive coverage by the Jordanian print media played an instrumental role in shaping the representation of both the event and the actors involved in the crisis. This paper departs from the premise that news reports are “elements of social events” and as such employ language to change, maintain or inculcate the knowledge, beliefs and social relations shared by members of a society. To this end, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is adopted to investigate how *Al-Ghad Newspaper* uses language to represent and frame the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees and considers whether this portrayal has contributed to the reconciliation or alienation of the Syrian refugees in the Jordanian society.

**Index Terms**—critical discourse analysis, Jordanian print media, Syrian refugee crisis, Syrian refugees, *Al-Ghad Newspaper*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Arab world witnessed a wave of protests that were mainly ignited by the deteriorating standard of living in many of the countries situated in this part of the world. Arab citizens could no longer tolerate the conditions instated by the ruling regimes, such as the rise in prices, the exponential rates of unemployment, and the deficit in human rights that prevented genuine social and economic reform. Consequently, anti-government protests and demonstrations erupted to express the Arab citizens’ disapproval of the status quo.

Inspired by the protests that erupted in Tunisia and Egypt, and coupled with the deteriorating economic conditions prevalent in the country, Syrians took to the streets in March 2011 demanding change and better living conditions. However, the government’s failure to contain the protests, and the violent crackdown on protesters that it adopted, triggered unrest nationwide. Before long, the country descended into a civil war, and the ensuing violence that led to collective killings and a dire humanitarian crisis forced many Syrians to leave the country. Indeed, this conflict, which has been ravaging the country for the past nine years, forced around 6.7 million Syrians to flee their homeland and seek refuge in other parts of the world, leading to “a global refugee crisis of unprecedented proportions” (The Guardian, August 2015).

Although many Syrians left their country to nearby Arab countries during the onset of the civil war in 2011, the Syrian refugee crisis started to gain momentum in 2012 when the number of refugees, looking for safety and stability outside their country, witnessed a drastic increase with long-term effects on the host countries. The countries that received a marked influx of refugees in 2012, and the subsequent years, were Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon; Iraq, Egypt and North Africa accommodated a lower number. By the end of 2014, three million Syrian refugees were officially registered in these countries which were ill-equipped to cater for such an astronomical flow of refugees (Reid, 2018).

In Jordan, the alarming influx of Syrian refugees led to the establishment of three refugee camps, namely the *Zaatari*, the *Azraq* and the *Mrajeeb Al Fhood* (Emirati Jordanian Camp) to provide shelter for the Syrians seeking refuge in the country. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2019 figures, these camps now accommodate around 121 thousand refugees out of the 665,498 registered Syrian refugees in the country. These figures indicate that Jordan is “hosting the second highest share of refugees pro capita in the world” (<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/69371.pdf>). For a country facing economic hardship and with limited resources, this forced displacement has had negative repercussions on Jordan and the Syrian refugees. The difficult economic conditions have deprived many of these refugees of “economic opportunities, quality education and access to essential services” (The Jordan INGO Forum, 2017) making them “desperate for work, impacted by debt and struggling with changing gender roles within families” (CARE International Report, 2017). By the same token, catering for the needs of the refugees had adverse effects on the economic, educational, medical and social sectors in Jordan

which, in turn, aroused Jordanians' resentment against the Syrian refugees; a tense relationship that has existed between the Syrian refugees and the citizens of all the host countries since the beginning of the crisis.

Although the aforementioned factors have played a role in shaping peoples' attitudes towards the Syrian refugees in Jordan, one cannot ignore the influence of the media representation on the public attitudes prevalent in the country with regards to the newcomers. According to Hall (1997, p. 61), representation is "the process by which members of a culture use language to produce meaning." This view entails that the people, events and experiences portrayed in the media do not themselves carry any meaning; rather, it is journalists and reporters who give them meaning through the language they use, and as such, they offer a specific representation of the events they are covering. This paper, therefore, tries to investigate, by adopting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) how *Al-Ghad* journalists use language to portray the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees with the aim of understanding the impact this framing might have on the parties concerned, namely the Jordanian citizens and the Syrian refugees.

## II. COVERAGE OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE PRINT MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, different types of media are used to disseminate information and knowledge. The outlets responsible for such an activity include the conventional media, like newspapers, television and radio and the newly adopted non-conventional sources, such as the social media that depend on the internet and the digital content. This diversity in sources has facilitated access to knowledge and has presented end-receivers with different presentations about the same topic.

The pluralistic media outlets, however, do not always secure unbiased information since they provide hard facts as well as evaluations about current events; a dual role that enables the media to both "reflect" and "shape" public opinion and government actions (Macnamara, 2005). Hence, these organizations have "the power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations and social attitudes" (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 2). Such a role enables the media to act as "important social institutions" (Bell, 1991) that employ language in a specific way to fulfill the agendas and financial aspirations of the "powers" responsible for covering ongoing events in different parts of the world. Consequently, variations in the representations of the same event are noted in the media and the impact of these portrayals on the receiving audience can be paramount. For this reason, media analysis is instrumental in understanding how events are constructed in the print media, for as Fairclough (1995a, p. 47) rightly states:

In media analysis one is always comparing and evaluating representations in terms of what they include and what they exclude, what they foreground and what they background, where they come from and what factors and interests influence their formulation and projection.

One of the events that received extensive worldwide media coverage is the influx of Syrian refugees and migrants to a number of destinations spread over a large geographical area. The turmoil resulting from the unexpected flow of refugees and the resettlement measures adopted by the different governments towards these groups of people, coupled with the media's unpreparedness for this kind of coverage all played a role in defining the image(s) employed in representing the "newcomers."

Indeed, the marked increase in the attention given to the refugee situation in the print media prompted researchers to examine how these outlets have depicted the Syrian refugees who sought refuge in countries all over the world. The research conducted covered a wide spectrum of newspapers and paid special attention to the narrative used in constructing accounts about the refugees, and the impact of the chosen discourse and subject matter on the receiving audience (Matar, 2017; Allen, 2016; Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016; Miholjic, 2017; Parker, 2015; Dosti, 2017; among others).

The analysis of the data has revealed that the representation of the Syrian refugees in the West was mostly unfavorable, with varying degrees of hostilities expressed towards the incoming refugees. Overall, the refugees were considered an economic burden; a threat to national security; a threat to social cohesion; and a reason underlying the increase in crime rates; all factors that lead to insurmountable negative repercussions on all the parties involved in the resettlement crisis. However, the "tone" of the framing varied in the newspapers investigated. In Europe, for example, the Swedish press adopted the most positive attitude in its portrayal of the Syrian refugees, whereas the British press was the most aggressive and the most polarized (Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016).

Another significant finding has been noted regarding the repertoire prevalent in the print media and which has reinstated the widespread negative stereotypical images about the refugees in the West. Words and phrases, like "unwanted invaders," "illegal migrants," "migrant invasion," "opportunists," "unskilled and voiceless crowd, needless to any society," "cockroaches" and "criminals" were labels used to refer to refugees (Parker, 2015; Miholjic, 2017; Tyysk ä et al., 2017; Williams, 2015; respectively). In fact, this inflammatory discourse has hardened public attitudes towards the refugees and has been responsible for influencing public hostility and dehumanization against the displaced Syrians (Coole, 2002; Mollard, 2001; Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013).

In the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA), coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis was influenced by the scale of the refugee resettlement in the host countries as well as the economic, political and social concerns prevalent in these destinations. Media coverage in countries that adopted the "closed door" policy towards the Syrians, like the Gulf

States, focused on reporting the crisis and its consequences in general and “blamed” the US and its western allies for failing to intervene in the conflict in Syria (Matar, 2017).

However, in Lebanon and Jordan where an astronomical flow of refugees was noted, the coverage took a different turn. The “newcomers” were framed as both “victims” and “intruders;” they were “victims” because they were trying to escape the atrocities of the Syrian regime, and hence were considered “brothers” and “guests” in need of all forms of assistance to adapt to their new milieu. In Jordan, these people started receiving services and donations from public and private sources; therefore, sympathy and compassion were the overriding frames observed at the onset of the crisis. With the rapid increase in the number of people seeking refuge in the aforementioned countries, the humanitarian portrayal witnessed a shift since these people became “intruders” who posed a threat to the economic, social and political setup of the host country. Indeed, these groups were considered a “time bomb” that was ready to explode any time (El-Behairy, 2016).

In Egypt, Syrians started to pour into the country during President Morsi’s reign whose government adopted the “open door” policy towards the resettlement of the newcomers. Accordingly, the representations of those displaced were positive and emphasized the human aspect of the crisis; labels such as “brethren” were used extensively, and the economic benefits and the cultural diversity endowed on the Egyptian economy and society because of the Syrian presence in Egypt were highlighted. After Morsi was ousted in June 2013, negative narratives started to replace the positive portrayals that were predominant prior to this date (Mousa & Fahim, 2013). Not only were the Syrians considered affiliates of Morsi and his toppled government, but they also became a “burden” on the economy, with adjectives like “disrespectful,” “ruined” and “lost” circulating more frequently in the different media outlets (Matar, 2017).

The representation and framing of the Syrian refugees in the Western and Arab media outlets reveal that there are points of intersection in the portrayals adopted by the journalistic institutions in these countries. Although the depictions in the Arab media were more tolerant of the new arrivals, especially at the onset of the crisis, the feelings of discontent and frustration against the displaced gradually started to surface with the continuous influx of refugees whose presence entailed additional pressure on the services and the resources in the respective host countries.

### III. THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE JORDANIAN PRINT MEDIA: *AL-GHAD* AS A CASE STUDY

The media sector in Jordan is licensed and regulated by the Jordan Media Commission (JMC) which is a body that is responsible for regulating and developing the printed, electronic and audio-visual media outlets in the country. It also oversees the implementation of the media laws and policies adopted by the government. Although these laws guarantee freedom of expression, modern-day media remains government-influenced which necessitates that journalists adopt self-censoring strategies to ensure that they do not trespass “the red lines,” and hence violate and contradict the nation’s national agendas and values. To secure this end-result, the Press and Publication Law regulates the media environment and is adhered to in the publication of the seven daily newspapers: *Al-Rai*, *Ad-Dustour*, *Al-Ghad*, *Ad-Diyar*, *Al-Anbaat*, *As-Sabeel* and *The Jordan Times*; all of which are in Arabic, with the exception of *The Jordan Times* which is published in English. While some of these dailies are state-owned, others are private institutions.

Although the arrival of refugees to Jordan has attracted the attention of the Jordanian print media since 1948 when Palestinians fled their country to seek refuge in Jordan, the newspaper coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis, characterized by the continuous reporting and the sharp increase in the volume of reporting, has been unprecedented. The dramatic number of refugees pouring into the country, and the challenges their arrival imposed on society as a whole, forced the print media outlets to discuss issues pertaining to this event. Before long, the refugee crisis became one of the most predominant topics tackled on a daily basis in the different newspapers.

One of the dailies that tackled the Syrian refugee crisis extensively is *Al-Ghad*. *Al-Ghad* is a privately-owned daily newspaper that was established by Mohammad Alayyan and *Al-Faridah for Specialized Publications*. Launched in 2004, it was the first independent daily in Jordan’s media landscape to compete with the two-state run newspapers, namely *Al-Rai* and *Ad-Dustour*. According to its founder, *Al-Ghad* is branded as an “independent, liberal, open Jordanian newspaper” that aims at disseminating information of a diverse and pluralistic nature to its readers (Al-Wakeel, 2016). Although the government does not exercise direct editorial control on *Al-Ghad*, the newspaper adopts self-censoring practices, especially regarding reports and articles that can arouse negative “national sentiments” and violate the “principles of the Kingdom.” After fifteen years, studies conducted by the research firm IPSOS-STAT and the organization IREX reveal that “the paper boasts the largest fixed subscriber base readership and overall reader satisfaction rates” (Industry Arabic, 2018); an unexpected success story for a conventional media outlet that has to compete with the non-conventional media landscape that has become easily accessible to users worldwide.

*Al-Ghad* has managed to survive in today’s ever-changing media landscape characterized by a decline in the print media readership and sales in three ways: (1) by targeting a diversified audience; (2) by adapting to the modern media realities; and (3) by striking a balance between the Jordanian Press and Publication Law and independent media coverage. Accordingly, the Oxford Business Group has referred to *Al-Ghad* as “Jordan’s first major independent newspaper” (Fanack Newsletter, 2018). For all of the aforementioned reasons, this newspaper has been chosen as a representative example of the Jordanian print media to investigate how the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees have been depicted and framed and the possible outcome of such representation on *Al-Ghad* readers.

## IV. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) adopts a critical, interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of discourse. The proponents of CDA believe that discourse is a “communicative event” which conveys certain “beliefs,” “ideologies” and “identities” (Chilton and Schäffner, 2002), and hence text producers use language to create and enhance power relations in a society. Language is not an “innocent” medium of communication that is merely used to transfer information; rather, it is an apparatus that instates asymmetrical power relations of dominance, resistance and difference (Fairclough, 1995b; 2003). This view of language involves “interpretative work” (Wodak and Cilla, 2006) which aims at deciphering and explaining, with the help of theories from linguistics and other disciplines, such as sociology, cognitive psychology, philosophy and cultural studies, the “inexplicit” or “hidden” social information expressed in discourse. Accordingly, Fairclough and Wodak, (1997, p. 258) state that CDA involves “real and often extended instances of social interaction that take a linguistic form or a partially linguistic form.”

Although the CDA models introduced over the years differ in the methodology adopted and the research areas covered, CDA practitioners mainly focus on two aspects when analyzing discourse. They consider the relationship that exists between language, power and society and the polemic association between language and its users (Fairclough, 1985; 1992; 1995b; 2003; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; van Dijk 1989; 2006; Wodak, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2015; among others).

One of the CDA models that have gained ground over the years is the framework developed by Fairclough (1985), a major proponent of CDA. Fairclough asserts that CDA transcends the “conventional” methodology of text analysis and encompasses the “relationship between texts, processes and social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the institutional context and the more remote conditions of social structure” (p. 26); an approach that underlines the significance of “social conditions” in the analysis and interpretation of power relations expressed in texts. In the 1990s, Fairclough introduced his three-dimensional model in which he investigated how power relations affect the content and form of discourse by outlining three inter-related dimensions of discourse. These include the object of analysis (verbal or visual texts); the process used by text producers in the production or reception of the object of analysis (writing, reading, speaking, viewing etc.); and the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes. To analyze these dimensions of discourse, Fairclough identifies three different analytical strategies for each of the aforementioned dimensions: description, interpretation and explanation, respectively. Under this categorization, description tackles the formal properties of text; interpretation looks at how texts are produced and how readers interpret texts; and explanation examines the ways in which discourse functions in a specific socio-cultural framework (Fairclough, 1992).

In his later works, Fairclough (2003, p. 2) develops his approach regarding the analysis of discourse by looking at language as “an irreducible part of social life,” and hence, considers texts as “elements of social events” that have “causal effects” on text recipients since texts can change people’s ideologies and views towards various societal events represented in discourse (p. 8). Processing text meaning, and the ensuing effects on the end-receivers, involves three analytical elements: action, representation and identification. Although Fairclough acknowledges the importance of the aforementioned types of meaning, he underlines how language is used in discourse to *represent* the “social events” and the “social actors” involved in a specific societal incident or occasion. To this effect, he identifies and discusses a variety of “principles” and “variables” that are employed in discourse to represent the social events and social actors presented in media discourse.

Van Dijk (1989; 2006), another major proponent of CDA, investigates how discourse can be employed to approve, resist, or reconstruct relations of inequality between different members of a society. He specifically explores how media uses discourse to reinstate racist prejudices against minority groups, and hence generate negative attitudes towards these “social entities.” To van Dijk, manipulation is a key element in CDA whereby “politicians and the media manipulate voters and readers through some kind of discursive influence” (2006, p. 360). Using triangulation to analyze manipulative discourse, van Dijk adopts a social, cognitive and discursive framework because he is of the viewpoint that manipulation involves three interrelated aspects: unequal power relations between the participants (the social dimension); the mental influence inflicted on a community via discourse (the cognitive dimension); and the discourse employed to enact the aforementioned dimensions (the discursive dimension). When discussing the meaning of discourse and its manipulative connotations, van Dijk differentiates between the semantic macrostructures and microstructures employed in discourse. The former level deals with the topics or themes tackled in the representation of a social event, whereas the latter level investigates the lexicon, syntax and rhetorical figures used to shape the representation of a social event and its participants.

Along the same lines, Wodak and Meyer (2015, p. 2) reiterate that CDA aims at “analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language.” To these practitioners, language can “express,” “signal,” “constitute,” and “legitimize” social inequality. Wodak (2001) adds a new dimension to CDA by emphasizing the importance of integrating the historical context of discourse in the analysis of language; she argues that certain sociological and psychological variables determine text production and should be given due attention in the analysis of discourse. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) emphasize the interplay between the linguistic and the non-linguistic aspects that should be taken into consideration in the analysis of discourse. They claim that CDA addresses social issues that revolve around power relations and the interpretation of non-linguistic elements, such as ideology, society, culture and history that play a role in the production of a particular discourse.

Since CDA practitioners consider language part-and-parcel of social life and acknowledge that it is employed to represent certain “beliefs” and “ideologies” about minority groups, this framework is adopted to examine how language can be “manipulated” to portray a certain event and its social actors.

## V. METHODOLOGY

To examine how language is used in the representation and portrayal of the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees, a total of three hundred news reports published between the years 2012 and 2015, and culled from *Al-Ghad Newspaper*, are examined. News reports have been selected for two main reasons. First, *Al-Ghad* exclusively used news reports to provide information on the Syrian refugee crisis and the arrival of Syrian refugees to Jordan. Second, news reports are supposed to be the most unbiased in their representation of events since they focus primarily on presenting hard facts. The analysis aims at confirming or refuting this goal and investigates to what extent it has been implemented on the Syrian refugee crisis. The sample chosen studies a broad cross section of news reporting across the aforementioned period to uncover, by adopting a combination of tools from van Dijk’s (1989; 2006) and Fairclough’s (2003) approaches to CDA, how certain discursive devices are used in *Al-Ghad* to imply specific meanings and ideologies pertaining to the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees. Van Dijk and Fairclough’s approaches to CDA are chosen because their framework can be applied to news reports in Arabic.

## VI. RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

### A. The Representation of Social Events: The Macro-structural Level

Van Dijk (1989; 2006) considers that the meaning of discourse may be conveyed at the “local” or “global” levels of language; whereas the former deals with expressing meaning with the help of certain discursive lexical and syntactic structures, the latter focuses on the topics and themes selected in presenting information to an audience. In the media, the topics selected in news reports, form a sequential semantic structure that summarizes the text content and uncovers the “hidden” meanings and ideologies that journalists want to convey to their readers. To achieve these goals, text producers can emphasize or de-emphasize topics and themes, foreground or background prominent incidents and specify or generalize information (van Dijk, 2006). Along the same lines, Fairclough (2003, p. 139) considers that there are a number of “principles” that are used to represent “social events;” these “principles” utilize a variety of strategies, such as exclusion, inclusion, evaluating, explaining and legitimizing to “filter” events, and hence portray them in different ways.

Overall, the results of the analysis reveal that on the “global level” *Al-Ghad* focuses on certain topics and themes to cover the Syrian refugee crisis during the 2012-2015 period. One of the predominant themes reported on the aforementioned “social event” was the scale and pace of the number of refugees entering the country. Although reference to this theme was highest in the years 2012-2013, news reports continued to mention this issue, to a lesser extent, in the years 2014 and 2015. In the years 2012-2013, the number of Syrian arrivals to Jordan on a daily, weekly or monthly basis was emphasized, while the net number of refugees residing in the country was highlighted in the remaining two years. In fact, out of the 183 articles analyzed for the 2012-2013 period, 51% of the reports refer to the scale and pace of the refugees fleeing to Jordan. Headlines like "756 لاجئا سوريا يجتازون الحدود" (756 Syrian refugees cross the border); and "9532 سوريا يلجأون إلى المملكة خلال أسبوع" (9532 Syrians seek refuge in the Kingdom in a week) were common.<sup>1</sup> This extensive coverage probably took place because the Jordanian government was unprepared for such a flow, and the Jordanians were bewildered by the intensity of the influx. Nevertheless, the news reports provided “positive self-presentation” of the Jordanian government and the Jordanians who “welcomed” the newcomers and were “tolerant” of the consequences of the refugee influx on the country (van Dijk, 2006). News reports that foregrounded and provided general and specific details on the “positive actions” of the Jordanian authorities and the Jordanian public were prominent in the 2012-2013 coverage. The type of activities carried out by the Jordanian government and the Jordanian public during the Syrian refugee crisis was underlined, for information such as "قوات حرس الحدود ما زالوا يستقبلون" (Border guards are still receiving hundreds of refugees fleeing the developments in their country); and "المفرق: الأمن يفض احتجاجا ضد السوريين" (*Al-Mafraq*: “Security forces” stop protests against Syrians) represent examples of incidents that were frequently referred to and included in the news reports.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, the negative repercussions of this unprecedented “social event” were excluded and de-emphasized; negative topics about the Syrian refugees and the burdens their presence imposed on Jordan were minimal. Out of the 183 news reports studied in 2012 and 2013, only 5% refer to the economic, societal and medical burdens imposed by the Syrian presence on the Jordanian economy.

Concurrent with the coverage on the scale and pace of the Syrian influx to Jordan, the newspaper emphasized the services that the Jordanian government, the public and the private organizations offered to the refugees. In 2012, when the number of refugees started to rise dramatically, the Syrian refugees were looked upon as “guests” that fled their homeland looking for security. For this reason, these people started receiving services and donations that included the

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ghad* 20/9/2012; 26/4/2013; respectively

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ghad* 22/10/2012; 10/3/2013; respectively

erection of makeshift camps, medical treatment and educational support. Details, such as حملة لتطعيم 90 ألف لاجئ سوري (Campaign to vaccinate 90 thousand Syrian refugees against polio and measles); and اضطرت مديرية التعليم إلى إخلاء المستودعات لاستعمالها كغرف صفية في سبيل مواجهة الاكتظاظ جراء تزايد عدد الطلاب السوريين (The Education Directorate had to evacuate warehouses to use them as classrooms to overcome the overcrowding of classes due to the increase in the number of Syrian students) appeared in 2012 and 2013.<sup>3</sup> Out of the 183 articles examined in 2012-2013, 44% acquaint readers with the services given to the Syrian refugees. As for the donations given to the refugees, they came in all forms: financial aid, food rations, clothes, bed covers and heaters, to name but a few. When reporting on these donations, the donating body, the nature and quantity of help provided were foregrounded. Information like الكتاب والسنة (Al-Kitab wa Assunah distributes 1000 gas heaters to Syrian refugees); and 10 ملايين دولار مساعدات سعودية للاجئين السوريين في المملكة (Saudi aid worth \$10 million to Syrian refugees in the Kingdom) was frequent in 2012 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of 2014, a shift in the themes reported was observed and the “evaluation” of the crisis started to take a different turn. The Syrian refugees in the country were considered a “burden” and negatively impacted the economic, medical and educational sectors as well as the country’s infrastructure. The challenges facing the government, and the expenses incurred to sustain these sectors were underlined. In 2015, out of the 85 articles analyzed, 18% of the news reports investigated tackled the economic burdens encountered by the Jordanian government. The reports that discussed the medical burdens amounted to 13%, while 15% of the reports investigated the educational burdens. Reports like 5.8 مليار دينار تكلفة اللجوء السوري على الأردن (Syrian asylum seekers cost Jordan 5.8 billion dinars); and أفدرت كلفة الطلبة السوريين (The cost incurred due to the Syrian students’ attendance of public schools estimated at \$193 million) were frequent.<sup>5</sup>

The role the Syrian refugees played in escalating the unemployment levels among the Jordanians was also foregrounded in the 2014 and 2015 coverage. The news reports attributed the rise in unemployment rates to the low wages the Syrians accept, as well as their willingness to undertake all kinds of jobs. For instance, السوريون يقبلون بأجور قليلة وبساعات عمل طويلة (Syrians accept low wages and long working hours)<sup>6</sup> reveals the negative impact this group of people had on the Jordanian labor force. The differentiation between the Us/Them relationship started to surface, and the polarization of society into “Jordanians” and “Syrians” gradually gained momentum, arousing bitter feelings and sentiments among all the parties involved in the crisis (Zayda, 2013).

The needy refugees depicted in the 2012 coverage were portrayed and underscored as security and demographic threats in the 2014 and 2015 reports. With regards to security, two kinds of challenges had to be addressed: (1) the infiltration of “illegal” refugees across the border; and (2) the internal threats emanating from the difficult living conditions experienced by the refugees. The demographic threats were clearly articulated in reports that mention the total number of Syrian refugees residing in Jordan. For instance, one of the reports stated that the refugees represented “21% of the total demographic make-up of the country;”<sup>7</sup> an alarming figure if one takes into consideration the persistent flow of refugees. Other reports focused on the demographic imbalance in the northern governorates where most of the Syrian refugees sought refuge. *Al-Ghad* readers were informed that the “number of Syrian refugees in *Al-Mafraq* exceeds the number of Jordanian nationals;”<sup>8</sup> a comment that can raise resentment among the Jordanians, especially if the economic, medical and educational hardships facing the city are born in mind.

The Syrian refugees were also associated with crime in the reports that covered the 2014-2015 period. The reports revealed that the crime rate increased in Jordan after the arrival of the Syrian refugees for “6 thousand crimes” have been committed since “the beginning of the crisis.”<sup>9</sup> Specific information on the crimes committed was given, and readers were informed that robbery, drug smuggling, rape, begging and clashes with the police were the most prominent “criminal activities” performed by the Syrian refugees. Also, specific crime incidents were reported and emphasized, creating a sense of “disgust” with the refugees.

The analysis of the themes covered between the years 2012-2015 in *Al-Ghad* reveals that the “tone” of the coverage has changed over the years. The shifts in representation can be visualized as points along a scale, with refugees viewed at one extreme as “guests” fleeing war and destruction, and hence worthy of compassion and support. On the other extreme, refugees are looked upon as “intruders” that have put additional burdens on a country that is suffering from limited resources and economic hardships. As Matar rightly states (2017, p. 293), the negative narrative used to depict the refugees has helped in constructing “the refugees as a collective “other” whereby a divisive line is drawn between “us” and “them;” an end-result that has helped in alienating the “other” (the refugees) and in creating friction between the Jordanian citizens and the “foreigners.” According to Zayda (2013), the inflammatory repertoire that dominated the news reports in the Jordanian print media negatively influenced the public’s attitudes towards the refugees and helped disseminate hate against them. Gradually, the level of resentment against the newcomers increased, making them “unwelcome” constituents of the Jordanian society. Such an outcome indicates the significance of examining how

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Ghad* 15/4/2013; 16/9/2013; respectively

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Ghad* 24/10/2012; 12/1/2013; respectively

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Ghad* 20/5/2014; 2/8/2015; respectively

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Ghad* 11/2/2014

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Ghad* 10/3/2014; 8/4/2015; respectively

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Ghad* 11/10/2015

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Ghad* 11/2/2014

refugees, migrants and asylum seekers have been represented and classified in the print media since the news not only reflects the ongoing events, but actively contributes to, and constructs our understanding of the meaning of current events (Hall, 1997).

### B. The Representation of Social Actors: The Micro-structural Level

In the past few years, CDA has revealed that journalists use language differently not only in the way they report events but also in the manner they portray the actors involved in these events. To van Dijk (1989; 2006) and Fairclough (2003), this aim is fulfilled using a number of “variables” that allow journalists to choose between a group of syntactic structures in order to “reflect” the ideological affiliations of the media outlet and “shape” and “construct” the receiving audiences’ attitudes and beliefs. The choices made may focus on the use of one or more of the following structures in the representation of social actors: inclusion/exclusion; pronoun/noun; activated/passivated; personal/impersonal; named/classified; specific/generic; and nominalization (Fairclough, 2003: 145-146).

The micro-structural analysis of the news reports in *Al-Ghad* during the 2012-2015 period indicates that the linguistic structures most frequently used to portray the Syrian refugees (the social actors) include, in order of prominence, the following variables: named/classified; activated/passivated; and nominalization. Although other “variables” are employed in the selected corpora, they are only noted in a limited number of reports; consequently, they are not considered worthy of analysis.

The most noticeable discursive structure employed by the journalists to represent the social actors in the Syrian refugee crisis is the named/classified variable (van Dijk, 1989; 2006; Fairclough, 2003) which is noted in 46% of the data analyzed. According to Fairclough (2003, p. 146), the participants in an event “can be represented by name or in terms of class or category.” In 90% of the news reports analyzed during the 2012-2015 period, the social actors are “classified” under the following labels: “Syrian brethren,” “Syrian refugees,” “Syrian families,” “refugees” and “legal and illegal refugees.” The members belonging to these classes are rarely “quoted or referred to as speakers who voice facts and opinions” (van Dijk, 1989, p. 214). On the contrary, they are considered anonymous “masses” that “poured” into the country in the form of “waves” and are collectively depicted as “individuals” who found Jordan a safe haven away from the bloodshed widespread in Syria. Van Dijk (1989, p. 215) is of the viewpoint that “this bias in the distribution of speaking roles” may be attributed to the “subjective” role associated with such speakers who are not believed to be credible enough to describe their experiences. Although quoting the social actors by name is noted in 10% of the reports, the horrendous experiences these “speakers” encountered crossing the border to Jordan are ignored, and their grievances are mainly undermined. In general, when the names of these speakers are identified, the information they provide about their life and experiences in Jordan is “filtered” to meet the agendas of the media outlet.

The second most used discourse structure that takes place at the “local level of syntax” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 373) involves the use of the active or the passive voice to transmit a specific message to the receiving audience. Arabic, like English, employs the active voice to emphasize the doer of an action and reverts to the passive voice when the agent is unknown, and there is no need to identify it. The analysis of the data reveals that the active voice is used in 30% of the news reports, specifically when the Syrian refugees are involved in certain events and activities.

In the 2012-2013 coverage, the Syrian refugees are active actors that occupy subject position under three circumstances: (1) when reference is made to the number of refugees entering the country; (2) when the refugees praise the Jordanian government as well as the public and private organizations for providing them with the necessary services; and (3) when reference is made to the services and facilities offered to the refugees. Examples like "اجتاز زهاء 378 لاجئا" (اجتاز زهاء 378 لاجئا سوريا الشيك الحدودي) (378 Syrian refugees cross the border); and "يجمع اللاجئون السوريون في مخيم الزعتري على كفاية المواد التي توزع" (Syrian refugees in the *Zaatari* camp unanimously agree on the availability of foodstuffs in the *Zaatari* camp)<sup>10</sup> represent 80% of the news reports published in 2012 and 2013. The Syrian refugees mainly occupy subject position when they are looked upon as “beneficiaries” who are grateful for the services, facilities and aid they receive from the Jordanian government and other national, regional and international organizations.

In the 2014 and 2015 coverage, the Syrian refugees occupied subject position when they were explicitly portrayed as agents responsible for protests, crimes, rise in unemployment, the unavailability of housing and the deterioration of the country’s infrastructure. In short, the role they played as agents witnessed a drastic change, for their presence in the country is “perceived as causing problems” to the government and the society at large (van Dijk, 1989). Such representation coincides with other research results conducted on minority groups whereby the active voice is adopted when these groups are associated with negative incidents taking place in the host countries (Fowler et al. 1979). Out of the 117 news reports analyzed in the abovementioned period, 42% present the Syrian refugees as active agents that have participated in the deterioration of the economic, social, educational and medical conditions in the country. This “negative-other-presentation of the opposition as opportunistic” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 379) is clearly noted in sentences like "طالب العديد من اللاجئين السوريين بتوفير وظائف خدمية داخل مخيم الزعتري" (A number of Syrian refugees demand service jobs in the *Zaatari* camp); and "نفذ العشرات من اللاجئين السوريين داخل مخيم الزعتري مسيرة احتجاجية على تردي الأوضاع الإنسانية ونقص الخدمات" (Dozens of Syrian refugees living in the *Zaatari* camp protested against the deteriorating humanitarian conditions and lack of services in the camp).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Ghad* 18/9/2012; 8/9/2013; respectively

<sup>11</sup> *Al-Ghad* 8/10/2014; 22/3/2014; respectively

The third most frequently used discursive structure in the portrayal of the social actors in the crisis is nominalization. Fairclough (2003) considers nominalization a “grammatical metaphor” that transforms verbs into nouns. It is a structure that “excludes social agents in the representation of events” (p. 220); consequently, the “doer” of the action or process is obfuscated (Fowler et al., 1979). In Arabic, nominalization, referred to as *al-maṣḍar*, is also used when people initiating an action or process are absent, contributing to the mystification of agency.

In the 2012-2015 coverage, there is a tendency to use nominalization in headlines to elide the agents responsible for certain activities that are conducted against the Syrian refugees. These include incidents that are associated with acts of deportation, instances of death and injury as well as services offered to the refugees in the form of material aid. Although the obfuscated agents are sometimes identified in the news report content, especially when the entity is a government body or a charitable organization that has donated aid to the Syrian refugees, some agents are left unspecified.

The analysis shows that nominalization is used in 24% of the news report headlines that cover the 2012-2015 period. In the 2012-2013 period, *Al-Ghad* utilizes “constructive” labels and frames to portray the Syrian refugees who are considered “guests” looking for refuge in Jordan to avoid the dire conditions in their homeland. Therefore, the agents elided are those responsible for inflicting suffering on the refugees as well as the Jordanian citizens and government officials and representatives; these groups are “suppressed” and are made anonymous since nominalization “obfuscates agency, and therefore responsibility, and social divisions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 144) as exemplified in the following headline: إصابة 26 رجال أمن في أعمال شغب في الزعتري (Injuring 26 policemen in riots in the *Zaatari* camp); a linguistic choice that is in concordance with the state of affairs prevalent in Jordan during 2012 and 2013. As for the entities that repeatedly provide services and financial aid towards the well-being of the refugees, they are obfuscated because they can be identified by *Al-Ghad* readers, especially if the donating body is affiliated to the government as can be noted in the following excerpt "تجهيز 220 مطبخا لصالح اللاجئين السوريين في مخيم الزعتري" (Equipping 220 kitchens for the Syrian refugees in *Zaatari* camp).<sup>12</sup>

The 2014-2015 period witnessed a shift in the attitude adopted by the government and the people towards the refugees, for they explicitly announced the negative consequences of the Syrian refugee presence in Jordan, and articulated the measures undertaken against the refugees living in the country. However, *Al-Ghad* journalists choose nominalization to elide the parties involved in implementing such measures. The Jordanian entities responsible for deporting, arresting and injuring the refugees were not identified, and therefore the “sufferings” they might be inflicting on the refugees were ignored. Examples of such instances of nominalization include: وفاة 3 لاجئين سوريين وإصابة 4 أثناء اجتيازهم الحدود (The death of 3 Syrian refugees and the injury of 4 as they cross the border); and ضبط 40 متسولا غالبيتهم من اللاجئين السوريين (Arresting 40 beggars most of whom are Syrian refugees).<sup>13</sup> Excluding the agents performing the aforementioned actions is a discursive strategy that is used not only “for generalizing and abstracting” but also for “obfuscating responsibility” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 220).

The analysis of the data shows that the discursive devices selected to portray the Syrian refugees indicate that language is not an “innocent” medium of communication and can be “molded” to fulfill the agendas adopted by the different media outlets. As Schnellinger & Khatib (2006, p. 36) rightly state discursive manipulation plays “an important role in defining messages, and in shaping opinions and perspectives.”

## VII. CONCLUSION

The role of the media in disseminating information and shaping public opinion has been given the attention it deserves over the years. There is unanimous agreement that media coverage is a combination of hard facts and evaluations that reinstate particular frames and themes about ongoing events with the aim of fulfilling the agendas of the “powers” that run the media outlets.

To test this premise, CDA is adopted to examine the macro and micro structures employed by *Al-Ghad* journalists in the portrayal of the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian refugees. The analysis reveals that these journalists choose specific themes, topics and discursive structures to represent the aforementioned event and actors. On the macrostructural level, the depiction of this social event went through two phases. Journalists in the 2012-2013 coverage adopted a positive framing of the event and the actors endowing a “human touch” on the reporting. In the 2014-2015 coverage, the “picture” presented to *Al-Ghad* readers about the crisis and the refugees was predominantly one-sided; the stories depicted reflected the opinions of government officials and the perspectives and experiences of the journalists reporting the events. Reinstating the stereotypical images about the “foreign” newcomers has contributed in alienating this group and creating a rift between the two opposing parties involved in the crisis.

On the micro-structural level, three variables are used predominantly in the representation of the Syrian refugees: the named/classified, the active/passive and nominalization. These structures confirm the images and framing presented at the macro-structural level arousing both reconciliation with and resentment against the newcomers which indicates that the print media is not always detached in its depiction of controversial issues. Rather, it influences how we understand and perceive the world through narratives that support and enhance existing assumptions. The linguistic structures used

<sup>12</sup> *Al-Ghad* 25/9/2012; 23/9/2012; respectively

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Ghad* 20/1/2014; 10/3/2014; respectively



in the 2014-2015 coverage were responsible for igniting hatred and suspicion against the refugees, and with the passage of time, Jordanians explicitly expressed their resentment of the Syrian refugee presence in the country.

The results of the analysis reveal that developing a media culture that expresses different views regarding the same event should be emphasized to secure a narrative that is balanced and that counteracts misconceptions about events and peoples involved in a certain crisis or conflict.

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