Jordanian Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation:
An Analysis of Media Coverage from 2000-2004

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A DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Georgia State University

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Abstract

The term "civil society" remains the focus of attention in conceptualizing democratic movements all over the world. While civil society is thought to play different roles at different stages of the democratization process, its potential role in democracy is of abiding interest for communication scholars as well. This dissertation examines the potential role of civil society institutions in consolidating Jordanian democratic experiment within a communication context, with specific relation to Jordanian political developments as they have been covered in the local mass media.

The dissertation focuses on four key players of the Jordanian civil society, on their potential contributions to consolidating democracy, and on the extent to which their activities are regularly covered in the Jordanian mainstream media. These players are political parties, the Parliament, the Islamic movement, and the women's movement. To achieve these objectives, the dissertation contextualizes civil society and democratization activities within the context of discourse analysis of Jordanian press coverage of related topics over a four-year period. The project analysis is conducted based on an assumption that "journalism is the argumentative and should be studied as an argumentative discourse genre" (Richardson, 2004, p. 227).

The following issues received the most attention in the Jordanian press and is thus the subject of the closest textual analysis: parliament elections, controversy centered on the slogan "Jordan First," and the larger prospects for democracy consolidation in Jordan.