Spring 2013 student

Social Studies 98jl – Research Paper Proposal

14 March 2013

I.   Topic, Background, Question

To find my thesis topic, I started with a broad idea: I am interested in the relationship(s) between Islamist political parties and urban refugees. To make this a manageable thesis project, I plan to do a case study examining just this relationship in Amman, Jordan: namely, I hope to document the ways in which the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (JMB) and other Islamist organizations have interacted with the Palestinian refugees. Since Palestinian refugees currently make up over one-third of Amman's population and comprise nearly one-half of Jordan's total population, this question has immediate and large-scale relevance, particularly as refugees continue to stream across the Jordanian border from the crisis in Syria. By examining and contextualizing an instantiation of a phenomenon that has broader implications, I can contribute something to the field.

For my research paper, then, I would like to look at Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood Movement and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front. Jordan's JMB was officially established in 1945 as an extension of the original Muslim Brotherhood, which had been founded in Egypt by Hasan al-Bann in 1928. Unlike its counterparts in other Arab nations, however, the JMB in Jordan has never advocated or participated in violence against the regime. The JMB seeks the establishment of an Islamic state based on shariah law, but through peaceful means rather than revolution.

From 1957-1989, when Jordan was ruled by martial law, the JMB enjoyed legal recognition (despite a ban on political parties) and royal patronage. During this period, the JMB engaged in charity works and social services, building mosques, schools, and hospitals. These efforts, organized by the Islamic Centre Charity Association (ICCA), founded in 1965, became even more extensive during the economic boom of the '70s and '80s. Unsurprisingly, the JMB gained a massive popular following and its members

began to rise to leadership positions in government, trade unions, student associations, etc.

Its virtual political monopoly meant that when martial law was lifted and the first parliamentary elections held in 1989, the JMB won 22 seats, over a quarter of the total. In 1993, members of the JMB founded the Islamic Action Front, an Islamist political party that would represent the JMB in the parliamentary elections. Now wary of the JMB's influence, King Hussein used his influence to stymie the IAF in the 1993 elections, introducing a new electoral law that favored voting along tribal lines and re-districting seats to under-represent large, urban areas that were JMB strongholds. Further tension resulted in the IAF boycotting the 1997 election.

Amidst this growing tension, King Abdullah II decided to completely separate the JMB from the ICCA, the head of the JMB network of social services. Without warning and without much legal basis other than his own autocratic authority, he removed the JMB members serving as ICCA leaders, accused them of corruption, and replaced them with his own allies. Thus, the JMB was completely estranged from the social services network that had been their largest source of political support.

After a disappointing showing in the 2007 elections (which were largely viewed as corrupt), the JMB decided to withdraw from politics and the IAF boycotted the 2010 elections. This tension with the monarchy has continued until the present day; the IAF boycotted the elections held just a few weeks ago (25 January) because King Abdullah II had yet again redistricted the parliamentary seats to massively under-represent urban areas.

I would like to examine the six elections that took place from 1989 to 2013. The JMB has participated three times (1989, 1993, 2003) and boycotted three times (1997, 2010, 2013). I want compare the JMB's decisions to participate or boycott elections before and after their alienation from their social services network and see if and how their decision process changed.

My working hypothesis is that, deprived of their former method of legitimation—i.e. the provision of social welfare services to Palestinian refugees and other lower- to

middle-class Jordanians—the JMB had to identify new ways to portray themselves as a distinct and viable alternative to the state. This, I believe, they found in claims of political repression and unjustified electoral discrimination; that is, they (were forced to) shift to a political advocacy role where they have to embody a serious ideological challenge to the state since they can no longer pursue a material rivalry.

Extending this, I think I can make a strong claim that my examination of these six elections and their political context will reveal a here-to-fore overlooked flaw in the widely-accepted 'inclusion-moderation' model, which holds that allowing Islamist parties to participate in electoral processes leads them to internalize democratic norms and thus, over time, moderate their own positions (Wickham 2004). I believe that this theory fails to take into account the radically repressive natures of nearly all Middle Eastern and Northern African regimes; these electoral autocracies want to allow only minimal, superficial participation by Islamist parties, bringing them into the fold without any real power transferred. Thus, these regimes will pursue strategies of appropriating or otherwise co-opting Islamist policies and structures rather than cooperation or true coalition-building. By thus monopolizing centrist policies, regimes force Islamist parties to adopt liminal positions. Thus, I think that the 'inclusion-moderation' model must be complicated, if not reversed.

II. Case selection and (mini) literature review

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood represents a good opportunity to examine the relationship between Islamist political parties and the social service networks that often undergird their political support. The JMB/IAF is a really interesting instantiation of a movement that is at once part of a larger transnational organization and yet functions in a decidedly independent way. The JMB shares with other MB movements its ideology and goals as well as its method for gaining influence by creating elaborate social infrastructures and providing services to neglected urban populations. Yet the JMB's support of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan and its refusal to engage in violent conflict makes it an interesting anomaly.

First, it is important to acknowledge that, even with the massive upheavals engendered by the Arab Spring, there is not an instance of a true, functioning democracy in the Middle East. With that in mind, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is one of the few examples of an Islamist political party that has participated in (more or less) operative electoral system for an extended period of time; further, it has existed with a pluralist framework, forced to build coalitions with other parties to achieve its political objectives. Thus, it is an excellent example of an Islamist party that has been 'included' in electoral politics. The long, yet recent timeframe also ensures that there will be more material—both primary and secondary—to analyze and engage with.

More importantly, for my question, nowhere else in the region—to my knowledge—has an iteration of the Muslim Brotherhood been thus separated from its social service component. The JMB thus offers a unique opportunity to look at the transformation of the political strategy of an Islamist group; deprived of its social service component, how can the party legitimate itself? Analogously, one might think of the MB movements in Egypt or Tunisia having to assign their social service functions to the state lest they be accused of trying to undermine the very system they are attempting to initiate. The Jordanian example might provide useful insight.

Theoretically, my question touches on three important ideas in social movement theory. The first, which I have already discussed, is the 'inclusion-moderation' model. Previous critiques tend to focus on the model's lack of specific mechanisms: as Schwedler points out, "precisely *how* moderation is produced through inclusion is seldom examined through detailed case studies" (2006:21). Schwedler herself attempts to remedy this by using two rigorously precise case studies of Islamist parties—Jordan's IAF and Yemen's Islah party—to detail "specific mechanisms that produce moderation…over time" (Ibid).

Thinking about the JMB's political strategy pragmatically (rather than as a strict outcome of ideological commitments) necessarily involves considering the traditional political opportunity model. Expanding on Kurzman, Buttorff claims that the opposition's perception of the regime's legitimacy can create political opportunity (2011). This adds

an interesting dimension to the JMB's choice to participate (or not) in electoral politics. Does it find the political opportunity in the regime's seeming weakness or its potential (and probably falsified) strength? Does this answer change with the separation of the political party and its social service provision?

Minkoff provides a useful paradigm of identity-based service provision transitioning into institutional advocacy; looking at the civil rights movement and the women's movement in the United States, she draws on McCarthy and Zald (1977) to argue that an increase in organizations providing both social services and political protest organization led to competition and, inevitably, increased specialization of groups' aims and methods (1994). Although her model is not perfectly applicable to the JMB, it does provide an interesting angle on the JMB's political strategy post-2006.

III. Research Design and Methods.

I plan to use a historical-analytical methodology. To establish JMB intention and strategy for each election, I will examine and analyze contemporaneous JMB publications, including electoral platforms and pamphlets, as well as interviews with JMB leaders (many of which are available online in translation from the Foreign Bureau Intelligence Service and the Joint Publications Research Services). I will also use this archival analysis to look at the JMB reaction to the regime's coercive appropriation of the ICCA. I will complement this examination of original documents with concurrent news articles and analyses from Jordanian, Middle Eastern, and internationally reputable news sources. While I am not interested in pursuing quantitative analyses, I will look at the electoral data of these elections, available from the Jordanian government, as well as any third-hand reports of fraud or electoral tampering. To further inform my research, I will look at secondary anthropological and sociological accounts based on on-the-ground research in Jordan during this time period.

I imagine that I will spend approximately two weeks examining all of the available primary materials (say until the end of March). I will take a week to briefly survey the available secondary materials and then, informed by those analyses and ideas,

return to examine the primary documentation and hone in on the most important pieces of documentation for another week. Throughout, I will be writing (brief and not necessarily elegant) analyses and outlines of all of the work I am pursuing; thus, by mid-April I should nearly have a complete outline of the paper.

Discussion of (Hypothetical) Human Subjects/ Research Ethics Issues

This project looks at the Muslim Brotherhood as a political entity and its strategy. Interviews would likely be at an 'elite' level, i.e. reporters or political observers, politicians, leading MB members, and/or spokespeople. These individuals would almost definitely have had media training or, at the very least, would be familiar with interacting with interviewers (whether from the media or academia). While there would be a potential translation barrier, it is, I think, legitimate to presume that the set of potential interviewees would have a more than adequate understanding of the situation. Observation, particularly if done in a Muslim Brotherhood office/center that was located in a poorer area, might pose more of a challenge. Again, however, since the questions seek to answer systemic/strategic questions, any observations made would likely be about the general demographics of the population that engaged with that particular office. No personally identifiable information would be necessary.

If, however, I wanted to survey the opinions of the Palestinian-Jordanians who live in the camps to try and document the attitude of this population towards the JMB, that would be more ethically questionable. Given the very liminal social and economic space that this population occupies, questioning them about a politically delicate subject could be difficult. The respondents—assuming anyone would actually answer my questions—might not answer me truthfully in order to protect themselves, to try and ensure the continued receipt of benefits, or simply because I am a foreigner asking invasive questions. Further, with the language barrier, there is a definite chance that they could not give completely informed consent to the interview. Even in this case, however, no personally identifiable information would be necessary; thus assured of anonymity, potential respondents might be more willing to discuss their political sympathies.

Bibliography

Primary:

1. JMB documents, including their election platforms and public statements. Translations of these are available as appendices to other works about the JMB and IAF as well as on the official "Ikhwan" website.

2. Interviews with JMB leaders and/or spokesmen, many of which can be found translated into English in the reports of the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) and Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS – now the Open Source Center). Both services monitored, translated, and compiled freely-available information and news; their databases are available online. For example, on 12 August 1991, the Lebanese magazine *Al-Shira'a* published an interview with JMB Official Spokesman Ziyad Abu-Ghanimah by Majda Sabra; this was then translated and published in the 30 October 1991 JPRS Near East & South Asia report.

3. Newspaper articles and analyses written from 1989-2013 in major Jordanian/ Middle Eastern (e.g. *Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Ahram, Al-Shira'a*) and internationally reputable sources (*American Foreign Press*, *AP*, *New York Times*, *Reuters*, *Wall Street Journal*) Many of these exist in English versions already; others are available in translation from the JPRS and FBIS (see above).

Secondary:

1. Bayat, Asef. 2007. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

2. Buttorff, Gail Jeanne. 2011. "Legitimacy and the Politics of Opposition in the Middle East and North Africa." PhD dissertation. Department of Political Science, University of Iowa.

3. Clark, Janine A. 2004. *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

4. El Said, Sabah. 1995. *Between pragmatism and ideology: the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, 1989-1994*. Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

5. El-Said, Hamed and James E. Rauch. Forthcoming. "Education, Political Participation, and Islamist Parties: The Case of Jordan's Islamic Action Front." *Middle East Journal*.

6. Grynkewich, Alexus G. 2008. "Welfare as Warfare: How Violent Non-State Groups Use Social Services to Attack the State." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31(4): 350-370.

7. Hammerstein, Ralf. 2012. *Deliberalization in Jordan: the Roles of Islamists and U.S.-E.U. Assistance in Stalled Democratization*. Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles Verlag.

8. Ismail, Salwa. 2003. *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State, and Islamism*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

9. Minkoff, Debra. 1994. "From Service Provision to Institutional Advocacy: The Shifting Legitimacy of Organizational Forms." *Social Forces* 72(4): 943-969.

10. Pargeter, Alison. 2010. *The Muslim Brotherhood: the burden of tradition.* London: Saqi Books.

11. Robinson, Glenn. 1997. "Can Islamists be Democrats? The Case of Jordan." *The Middle East Journal* 51(3): 373-387.

12. Ryan, Curtis R. 2008. "Islamist Political Activism in Jordan: Moderation, Militancy, and Democracy." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 12(2):1-13.

13. Schwedler, Jillian. 2006. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14. Tal, Nachman. 2005. *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan*. Brighton: Sussex University Press.

15. Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. 2004. "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's *Wasat* Party." *Comparative Politics* 36(2): 205-228.

Research Question:

- Your proposal is to investigate the reasons behind the JMB's decisions to participate or not in Jordanian elections from 1989 to the present as part of the movement's larger political strategy. Specifically, you are interested in how, if at all, the JMB's political strategy regarding elections has changed since in 2006 the movement was separated from its social service arm, the ICCA.
- The written proposal does not actually state research questions in the form of questions, although it offers significant detail in your hypotheses. I think it still would have been helpful to try to articulate at most two research questions, perhaps working back from your hypotheses – and you will want to be able to formulate these in the final paper. You also should decide if you want to frame your questions in terms of any of the theoretical/ conceptual frameworks that you discuss. It sounds to me that the inclusion-moderation model could frame a research question to the extent that you want to make your project an explicit examination of the fit of this model to the JMB.
- Given the many other angles you include, I am not sure the P-O question about whether the pol opp is in the regime's strength or weakness is actually that central or compelling. Perhaps this could be more of an analytical aside than a major research question.

Significance/ Placement in Literature:

- The significance of the overall topic is evident, although I found the comparison on page 4 to other MB movements confusing and I think you could have explained that particular angle of significance better .
- You clearly have been exploring relevant literature both on the case and related cases, and theoretical or conceptual frameworks that may offer insight – this section is a strength of the proposal. However, it seems likely to be too much for a class project to answer both the empirical questions about the JMB that you lay out, and adjudicate the arguments of the three areas of social movement literature you define. Think hard about how you will use each of those in the paper: as something to argue for or against? As a concept or framework that helps you describe and analyze what you see in the data about the JMB? Or …?
- I could use some clarification on the inclusion-moderation model. Is it only for Islamic parties, or is there a similar argument about other "radical" political movements/ parties? I was also unsure whether there is empirical evidence to support this claim, and if so, whether you find it convincing. It sounded like you don't buy the claim that inclusion has resulted in moderation for the JMB, although certainly both inclusion and moderation seem to be happening there, compared to other Islamic movements. I also wasn't sure ultimately what you made of Schwedler's work and how you think you might build on (or counter?) that.

Research Design:

- You propose a very strong and justifiable research design. I'm concerned, though, that it is too much primary and secondary data to work with in the course of the semester. How is this going? I agree that identifying contemporaneous case study research on Jordan would be helpful but you may not be able to actually get through all of it (or maybe it isn't that much).
- The JPRS translations are a great find. However, for this and your other primary sources, you will want to have an explicit discussion of what kinds of selection bias might exist in which speeches, events, articles, etc are collected, and how that might affect your findings.

Paper Components, Structure, and Clarity

- The paper is well-organized and clearly written; very few problems with writing mechanics.

Human Subjects/ Research Ethics

- Thoughtful reflection on possible ethical issues for the thesis. However, I think you could have said more about possible risks to "elite" interviewees.