I: Preliminary Information

Power of the Periphery:
Examining Islamic political movements outside the Arab World and the role of Transnational Muslim Networks

Abstract:

A theory known as the “edge phenomenon” asserts that the development of the Islamic tradition was the consequence of movements on the periphery of the early Muslim community\(^1\); periphery, meaning places such as Persia in the 9\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) centuries, and not the Arab world (considered the core and birthplace of Islam). The overarching objective of this research initiative will be to appraise the applicability of the “edge phenomenon” on the backdrop of the contemporary Muslim world. This research will reveal the extent to which non-Arab Islamic movements have radicalized the Islamic community as a whole. In order to realize this objective, several specific case studies will be examined, including South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan), the United Kingdom, and Egypt. More importantly, this research project will attempt to track, analyze, and database transnational Muslim networks: pervasive channels of communication that allow for the geographic dispersion of radicalizing philosophy between the center and the periphery.

Background:

I can say with a degree of confidence that I have utilized my time at Elon, thus far, as a medium for dissecting and scrutinizing the world that exists beyond my immediate perspective. Such an objective was undoubtedly introduced into my

consciousness when, at the age of twelve, I overlooked the Pentagon still smoldering just days after the attacks of 9/11. Upon entering this institution, I pledged to devote my time and energy towards tracking and analyzing the behavior of individuals, groups, and states on the international theater, specifically within a region incomprehensible to many; the Middle East.

My devotion to learning the Arabic Language is a reflection of this endeavor. I have successfully completed three semesters of Arabic at Elon, while additionally teaching myself during the summers through the use of the Rosetta Stone program and the al-Kitaab textbook series. Currently, I am one of only two students at Elon enrolled in ARB 291 (Practicum in Spoken Arabic). During the summer of 2009, I will attend a summer intensive Arabic Language immersion program in Rabat, Morocco. Moreover, in the fall of 2008, I founded the Arabic Language Organization on Elon University’s campus.

I studied abroad as a freshman and a sophomore to regions of the world either affected by, or intimately involved in Middle Eastern affairs. Through Model United Nations, I attended conferences at both Georgetown and Princeton that required individuals to comprehend considerable amounts of information (often relating to Middle Eastern politics), and then apply it in crises and debate. The second half of the semester, I will be interning at the DA’s office in Graham, NC. I hope to expand my examination of the US judicial system to an examination of comparative justice systems, specifically within states that are predominantly Islamic.

My course work exemplifies a drive to become increasingly adept in Middle Eastern studies and U.S. Foreign Policy. I have successfully completed courses such as
INT 373 (International Security) and REL 361 (Islam); courses that have worked to focus my interests, contributing greatly to my proposed project and my fascination with regionally based Islamist movements. As a freshman, I enrolled in POL 220 (Research Methods), producing a 55-page research paper on identity politics, religion, and violence in developing countries, with special emphasis placed upon Arab States. My course work has augmented my ability to execute substantial amounts of reading and writing, as well as my capacity to perform scholarly research.

Perfectionism is an integral component of my personal outlook. It can be exemplified through Phi Kappa Phi honor society’s recent invitation to induct me as a member. Receiving the Lumen Prize will undoubtedly culminate in the realization of many aspirations. Subsequent to such an honor, I intend on pursuing national grants, graduate study (masters in international policy, masters in foreign language, or JD in law), as well as job and internship opportunities (ideally with the foreign service stationed overseas).

**Part II: Narrative** (1499 words)

**Focus:** Modernizing the “edge phenomenon” through understanding transnational networks

Richard W. Bulliet often speaks of “the view from the edge,” a concept which states that the Islamic tradition was shaped and molded by the innovations of non-Arab converts, subsequent to the Arab conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries. This occurred in places far from the supposed nucleus of Islam in present day Saudi Arabia. While Professor Bullet’s work is unprecedented, there has been little scholarly consideration of the theory’s relevance to contemporary trends in Islamic history. Research has led me to hypothesize that the “edge phenomenon” continues to affect the Muslim community as a
whole. Evidence suggests that regionally based Muslim movements outside the Arab world have worked to radicalize the Muslim communities within Arab states.

Some contend that jihadi movements among Pashtu Muslims in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1980s provided a channel for radical Arab outcasts, including Usama bin Laden and Abu Mus’ab al-Suri\(^2\). Others maintain that the Islamization of Pakistan worked to focus and validate the frustrations of Arab Muslims, often living under highly secular and totalitarian governments such as the Nasser, al-Sadat, and Mubarak governments in Egypt\(^3\). Also compelling is the Indian organization known as Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic puritanical organization that includes Arabs as some of its most prominent members and beneficiaries\(^4\).

However, there is room to surmise that a reverse phenomenon has occurred, meaning that movements within the Arab world have succeeded in disseminating radical Islamic language to, for example, Malays in Southeast Asia and Muslim immigrants in the United Kingdom. Scholars continue to inquire into the aggressive and “intrusive” role of Arab countries – including Libya and Saudi Arabia – in forging global Muslim solidarity in the Muslim minority states of Thailand and the Philippines (meaning that they fund and foster Muslim insurgencies)\(^5\). Moreover, my preliminary research suggests that radical Indonesian movements have not only been heavily influenced by Salafi and


Wahhabi rhetoric out of Saudi Arabia, but have actually undergone what one scholar referred to as “Arabization.”

Social unrest among the Muslim populations of Europe, the persistent influence of Islamic revisionists in Arab states, and the attack on Bombay by Pakistani Islamists – Lashkar-e-Taiba – provide an opportune backdrop from which to launch this inquiry. I plan to spend the next two years working with Dr. Michael Pregill to augment my understanding of radical Islamic philosophy and the “edge phenomenon.” I plan to meticulously track and dissect existing regionally based movements. My objective will be to identify the effects of these movements on the global Muslim community. South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan), the United Kingdom, and Egypt will likely be appropriate case studies from which I will make broader generalizations. Bulliet’s “edge phenomenon” has yet to be expanded upon in this manner.

I will fulfill these tasks by utilizing scholarly research on Islamic fundamentalism and new-age radicalism, governmental and nongovernmental-sponsored databases such as Haverford College’s Global Terrorism Resources Database, and Arabic language texts (news and written media). I will also enhance my understanding by studying abroad in Arab countries, participating in relevant internships, and interviewing experts at nearby universities.

I would be remiss if I ignored to mention the necessity of a second prong to this query. This would involve understanding the transnational networks that allow the radical

---

6 Saiful Uman, Radical Muslims in Indonesia: The Case of Ja’far Umar Thalib and the Laskar Jihad (Manoa, Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2006), 8 – 12
philosophies of, for example, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen in Bangladesh, to be broadcast throughout the Muslim world. Islamic Social Institutions (ISIs), often non-profit entities such as clinics and workshops, seem to be a potential source of an Islamic worldview that sometimes fosters activism and revisionism, as well as a channel for the dissemination of ideas and money. An examination of former al-Qaeda strategist, Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, seems to implicate news and written media as channels for fundraising and information dissemination. Richard W. Bulliet has asserted that Islamist organizations are not only conscious of one another’s existence, but sometimes purposefully and sometimes inadvertently partake in a variety of exchanges. I also look forward to delving deeper into an anthology called Muslim Networks: From Hajj to Hip-Hop, edited by Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence (Duke).

The next two years I will track the flow of ideas and money throughout the Muslim world by utilizing the tactics stated above. Understanding the idiosyncrasies of Islamic networking, and the manner in which ideas are disseminated throughout and between places like the UK and Pakistan, will undoubtedly enhance my ability to present the “edge phenomenon” against a 21st century backdrop.

Radicalism is just one of many terms that are commonly used but rarely understood. While experts such as Bulliet and Carl Ernst (UNC) have done much to de-

---

7 Janine A. Clark, Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-class networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004), 2, 33, 34
10 Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence, Muslim Networks: From Hajj to Hip-hop (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2005)
mystify Islam, long-term research is still required. As a Religious Studies and International Studies student, the prospect of publishing research on this subject, and on behalf of Elon University, is absolutely thrilling. The study of the Middle East, Arabic Language, and Islamic tradition must be augmented on this campus. The Lumen Prize will allow me to contribute to this process over the next two years.

**Proposed Experiences:**

**Collaborate with members of my support system** – I plan to meet with Dr. Michael Pregill on a frequent basis (initially weekly or bi-monthly). The objective of this collaboration will be to strengthen my understanding of radical Islamic philosophy, enhance my ability to locate valuable resources, and reinforce aspects of research methodology. I will also continue to work with Dr. Shereen Elgamal as a means of improving my Arabic Language skills.

**Collect resources** – In order to obtain valuable electronic and non-electronic resources, I will subscribe to relevant search engines, including [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com), [MEMRI](http://www.memri.org), and [Ajeeb](http://www.ajeeb.com).

**Further develop and utilize the Arabic Language Organization, and contact experts in the field at other institutions** – The continued development of the Arabic Language Organization is integral to generating the products of this research initiative. As founder and president of this organization, I will attempt to sponsor several experts in the field of Islamic studies as guest speakers at Elon. Utilizing my mentor’s extensive networking, I will attempt to contact Carl Ernst (UNC), as well as Bruce B. Lawrence and Miriam Cooke (Duke). I hope that this endeavor will allow me to utilize these experts as additional resources.
Enroll in courses that will promote my objectives – As a junior and a senior I will enroll in independent study/research courses. In the fall of 2009, I will use such a course to complete a literature review, establishing a comprehensive background on radical Islamic philosophy and transnational Islamic networking. I will also complete a case study on South Asia, which I will start this semester in Jason Kirk’s *India, Pakistan, and South Asia* course. In the fall of 2010, I will use an independent study course to begin a case study on the UK, and to solidify and review the completed research paper on transnational networking and Islamist movements (effectively tying the case studies together). An International Studies/Religious Studies course load will also be utilized.

Study abroad and participate in internships – In the summer of 2009, I will attend an intensive Arabic Language immersion program in Rabat, Morocco. In the spring of 2010, I will spend a semester at American University in Cairo to coincide with the drafting of a case study on Egypt. In the summer of 2010, I will preferably intern with the FBI through the Middle East Foreign Language Honors Internship Program or the CIA through the Undergraduate Internship Program. In the winter of 2011, I will study abroad in London with Elon to coincide with the drafting of a case study on the UK. These experiences will provide the opportunity to, 1) augment language skills, 2) enhance research capabilities and utilize Arabic Language resources, 3) partake in on-site research and course work, and 4) actively apply my research in a professional setting.

Present my research – SURF, NCUR, and SECSOR will allow me to present my research in the spring of 2011. This will include my collective research on transnational networking and the radicalizing effects of regionally based Islamist movements, as well as the South Asia and Egypt case studies.
Proposed Products:

- A single-authored, scholarly research paper on regionally based Islamist movements and transnational Muslim networking, which will include the South Asia, Egypt, and UK case studies
  - Spring of 2011 submission of this research paper for publication in an Islamic studies or foreign affairs scholarly journal
- A multimedia presentation that will allow me to creatively exhibit the findings of my research initiative
  - Spring of 2011 SURF, NCUR, and SECSOR research conferences
- Individual submission of case studies in the Fall of 2009 (South Asia), the Fall of 2010 (Egypt), and the Spring of 2011 (UK) to small-scale publication outlets such as Elon’s *Visions Magazine*
- Guest speakers on Islamic studies sponsored by the Arabic Language Organization
  - Reports on consequential interview analysis will be completed for small-scale publication in a relevant magazine or newsletter
- An electronic portfolio of my cumulative research, writings, personal reflections, creative displays, and travel photography

III: Feasibility

Feasibility Statement:

While this research initiative may seem quite ambitious, I am confident that it is well within the realm of feasibility. The guidance of Dr. Michael Pregill is a vital component of this feasibility. Dr. Pregill has extensive experience in Islamic studies and its corresponding subfields. His knowledge base will provide a good foundation from which I will launch my research. Dr. Pregill and I have constructed a rigorous schedule by which we will meet and correspond over the next two years. Acquiring valuable resources, with the guidance of my mentor, is also extremely viable.
The utilization of Arabic Language skills is also feasible. Dr. Pregill, an Arabic speaker, has informed me that conducting interviews in Arabic will require many years of study. However, the utilization of speaking skills and colloquial comprehension are unnecessary for the purposes of my research. I will be utilizing reading and listening skills for news and written media. An intensive language program in Morocco and reading-focused Arabic courses in Egypt make this plausible. Both Dr. Pregill and Dr. Shereen Elgamal have offered to work with me on improving my reading comprehension skills. They have also expressed their willingness to help me translate dense Arabic Language texts.

Sponsoring guest speakers is also a very practical ambition. Dr. Pregill has extensive contacts within the Islamic studies field. Bringing experts from UNC and Duke University would not require extensive logistical planning or funds. Carl Ernst (UNC), a renowned Islamicist, and a candidate for guest presentation, is already working with Elon to establish a Middle Eastern Studies curriculum. Moreover, the Arabic Language Organization will work as the medium from which these speakers are contacted and sponsored.

I have already met with Paul Geis, Brian Digre, and others to discuss the feasibility of participating in a non-Elon study abroad program. I have been assured that it is not only possible, but that a number of students have already studied abroad in this fashion (many to the American University in Cairo). Interning with the CIA or the FBI is also a practical endeavor considering my proximity to Langley and FBI Headquarters (I live in Northern Virginia). Moreover, because I have prior experience with composing
large-scale research papers and utilizing scholarly research methods, generating the research paper and consequential case studies will not be an unfamiliar undertaking.

**Timeline:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proposed Experiences</th>
<th>Proposed Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2009</strong></td>
<td>- Collect electronic and non-electronic resources</td>
<td>- Preparation to begin a literature review the following fall on the overarching subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Meet with Dr. Pregill weekly</td>
<td>- POL 388 (India, Pakistan, and South Asia) will be used as a medium to begin researching and drafting a case study on South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue to development the Arabic Language Organization (ALO)</td>
<td>- Review of research methods and scholarly writing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contact Carl Ernst, Bruce B. Lawrence, and Miriam Cooke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- POL 388’s independent research project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2009</strong></td>
<td>- Attend an intensive Arabic Language program in Rabat Morocco, courtesy of AMIDEAST, Incorporated</td>
<td>- Developed Arabic Language skills will ideally enhance my research capabilities through augmented reading and listening skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- REL 499 (Research) 4 sh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enrollment in courses relevant to Islamic studies and International Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ALO development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue to pursue experts in the field as guest speakers and potential mentors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Apply to internships for the Summer of 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2009</strong></td>
<td>- Semester at American University in Cairo</td>
<td>- Completion of a literature review, establishing a comprehensive background on radical Islamic philosophy and transnational Muslim networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- One Arabic Language Course (either Reading and Writing,</td>
<td>- Completion of the South Asia case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter/Spring 2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Considerable time will be spent drafting a case study on Egypt, its interaction with “edge” movements, and the products of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printed Media, or Political Text</td>
<td>these interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relevant courses (<em>Muslim Political Thought, Modern Movements in Islam, The Making of the Arab World, and/or Terrorism</em>)</td>
<td>- Utilization of valuable Arabic Language resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Strengthened foundation in subject matter and enhanced Arabic skills (for the use of foreign language resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Summer Internship in Washington, DC (very near my home in Northern Virginia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- REL 499 (Research) 2 sh</td>
<td>- Completion of the Egypt case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- COE 310 (Developing Portfolios) 1 sh</td>
<td>- Improved understanding of international networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- REL/INT course work</td>
<td>- Improved foundation in Middle Eastern affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Submit completed research paper (which will include the South Asia and Egypt case studies) to SURF, NCUR, and SECSOR</td>
<td>- Real world application of my research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Realize the goal of bringing renowned Islamicists to Elon as guest speakers</td>
<td>- Improved Arabic language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Begin drafting a case study on the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Solidify and review the completed research paper on transnational networking and regionally based Islamist movements that will tie case studies together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Take a step towards presenting my research at local, regional, and national conferences (creative display)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Begin constructing an electronic portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Buttress and complete a case study on the UK and the “edge phenomenon”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- INT 461 (Senior Sem.) and REL 499 (Research) 2 sh</td>
<td>- Presentation and publication of my two-year research initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- SURF/NCUR/SECSOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Submit research paper, including the consequential case studies, for publication in a religious studies/foreign affairs publication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Budget:** $15,000
- **Electronic and non-electronic academic resources:** $1150
  - A *Kindle* (a devise that will allow me to purchase, store, and read electronic readings) will be extremely useful for when I travel to Morocco, Egypt and London ($400)
  - Electronic readings purchased with the *Kindle* devise ($300)
  - Non-electronic resources, specifically Arabic Language texts and relevant readings purchased in Egypt and Morocco ($300)
  - Materials needed to craft a creative presentation of my research ($150)

- **Arabic Language immersion program courtesy of AMIDEAST, Incorporated:** $5244
  - **Tuition:** Covers the cost of attending Muhammad V University – Agdal, room and board, transportation, personal expenses, books, and health insurance ($3695)
  - **Airfare:** $1549

- **Semester in Cairo:** $2621
  - ICCIS non-Elon program fees ($500)
  - Airfare ($1600)
  - Small living stipend ($521, roughly equaling 3180 Egyptian Pounds)

- **London Study Abroad:** $3100
  - Application fees ($400)
  - Trip cost ($2700)

- **Research Conferences:** $1735
  - **NCUR ’11**
    - Airfare ($675)
    - Hotel accommodations ($160)
    - Conferences fees ($250)
    - Additional expenses ($75)
  - **SECSOR ’11**
    - Gas expenses ($90)
    - Hotel ($160)
    - Conference fees ($250)
    - Additional expenses ($75)

- **Islamicists from other institutions as guest speakers:** $150*
  - Gifts for experts from local institutions, such as Wake Forest, UNC (preferably Carl Ernst), and Duke (preferably Miriam Cooke) ($150)

---

*I am confident that the Arabic Language Organization will be able to subsidize these costs with the budget provided by the Student Government Association. If ALO cannot subsidize these costs, $150 will have already been sequestered.*
- **Contingency fund/tuition relief:** $1000

Supplementary materials (additional letters of support, prior writings and research) can be made available upon request. Being nominated by Dr. Pregill, and being granted such a momentous opportunity, has been an honor. Thank you.

**References:**


**Personal Information and Signatures:**

Name: ___________________________ Datatel ID #: ___________________________
Major(s): International Studies  Minor(s): Religious Studies, Political Science

Local Address:

Elon University
Campus Box
Elon, North Carolina
27244

Primary telephone:  Elon email:

Started at Elon: 08/2007  Expected Graduation: 05/2011

The student’s typed name below serves as his/her electronic signature and indicates that the information contained in the application is accurate, and reflects his or her best faith plans for scholarly activities during the remaining two years at Elon. Applicant hereby gives the Selection Committee permission to obtain a copy of current transcript and to verify that student is in good standing at the university. Recipients of the Lumen Prize will be asked to sign a Letter of Agreement indicating their commitment to uphold the standards associated with being a Lumen Scholar.

Monday March 9, 2009

Michael Pregill  Monday March 9, 2009