Michael Hoffman

Arab Barometer Panel, Friday, March 4th, 5:30-6:15

Paper 1: Michael Robbins (Princeton University), Amaney Jamal (Princeton University) and Mark Tessler (University of Michigan), "Passive Support for the Islamic State in the Middle East and North Africa: Evidence from a survey experiment."

This paper discusses the ongoing data collection for the most recent wave of the Arab Barometer, with a focus on a survey experiment aimed at estimating levels of support for the Islamic State.

The experiment aims to evaluate the effectiveness of three types of "appeals" presented by IS. The first type of appeal ("Sunni dominance") relates to protecting the "purity" of Islam. This appeal emphasizes the importance of maintaining Sunni dominance in an era of heightening sectarian tensions. The second appeal ("religious appeal") focuses on protecting Islam from secular forces. The final appeal ("anti-West") presents IS as protecting against Western forces.

Respondents are presented with either a control prompt (no prompt) or one of these three appeals. They are then asked a series of questions about their support for IS and its tactics. Differences in responses between treatment groups will shed light on the relative effectiveness of each of these types of appeals.

Paper 2: Justin Gengler (Qatar University), Bethany Shockley (Qatar University) "Qualification or Affiliation? Revealing Arab Voter Preferences via a Conjoint Experiement."

Gengler and Shockley's paper analyzes the determinants of vote preference in Qatar. It addresses the puzzle that surveys in the Arab World typically show high levels of emphasis on candidates' objective qualifications, but in many cases, voters seem to vote for candidates based on their ascriptive characteristics rather than their qualifications.

The authors use a phone survey on a random sample of Qatari respondents and conduct a conjoint experiment to estimate the importance of different traits in determining voter preferences. Respondents were given candidate profiles with random variation on candidate's name, education, work experience, and level of religiosity. They were then asked about their willingness to vote for that candidate as well as their evaluation of the candidate's competence in promoting Islamic values. Finally, after the experimental module was complete, voters were asked directly about the importance of different types of characteristics in determining their vote choice.

The direct survey results indicate a preference for objective qualifications such as education and issue agreement; tribal and family affiliations are not reported to be important. The conjoint experiment revealed different patterns: education is an inconsistent predictor of candidate support, and work experience is not a significant predictor at all. Ascriptive factors (particularly, the candidate's last name) have a strong effect on vote choice. Presumed tribal and sectarian affiliation are highly important factors in influencing support for the hypothetical candidates in this experiment. In both the direct and indirect tests, religiosity is an important predictor.