

## **Project Summary**

This project seeks to clarify whether elections in authoritarian regimes further democratization or sustain authoritarian rule. In order to clarify the role of elections in authoritarian regimes, this project examines the causes and consequences of election boycotts, and the subsequent regime response. Determining the conditions under which governments respond to the demands of boycotting opposition parties, will allow us to identify those elections that further democratization and establish the criteria that distinguish them from those elections that impede it.

Although boycotts occur with increasing frequency, the literature has yet to sufficiently explain the following two questions: (1) Why do political parties decide to boycott an election? and (2) When and why are boycotts a successful strategy? This project argues that in order to answer these questions and better explain election boycotts, we need to account for the institutions under which elections operate (electoral rules) and the existence of factionalism within opposition political parties. In this project, a theory of election boycotts is developed using a game theoretic model. The model is used to develop a causal story for the relationship between electoral rules and election boycotts and between intraparty factionalism and election boycotts. The propositions derived from the model are then tested using both qualitative and quantitative tools. The model was informed from research conducted in Jordan in 2009 and three months of field research will be undertaken in Algeria to evaluate the propositions derived from the model. The propositions will also be tested using a dataset consisting of over 700 national-level elections in both democratic and authoritarian regimes from 1990-2006.

## **Intellectual Merit**

The intellectual merit of this project lies in its ability to bridge a number of important literatures. Firstly, this project will enhance our understanding of the determinants of election boycotts which, in turn, will allow us to explain why election boycotts are increasingly adopted by opposition parties. Secondly, this project will contribute to the growing literature on the role of elections in authoritarian regimes. Given the vast number of countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East that are now holding elections, but have stalled in their democratization efforts, the present study represents a timely addition to the literature. Thirdly, this project bridges the gap between the electoral institution and election boycott literatures. In doing so, it will contribute to both literatures and will enhance our understanding of how electoral systems influence party behavior in non-Western and non-democratic settings. Finally, this project will improve our understanding of the relationship between intraparty organization and party strategy.

## **Broader Impact**

The project also has broader implications for both the historical understanding of Jordan and Algeria, and also our understanding of democratic transition. The broader impact is thus twofold. First, the information and data collected during fieldwork in Jordan and Algeria will increase our understanding of the recent electoral histories of both countries, and explain and clarify how the opposition's recent pattern of participation and non-participation has affected the democratic transition in both states. Second, in determining the consequences of opposition party behavior this project will have more general conclusions about the process of democratic transition. This study, therefore, is important not only for enhancing our understanding of Algeria and Jordan, but also through an extensive study of these countries, the literature will gain an improved understanding of the role elections play in democratic transitions.