

IS BOYCOTT THE BEST WAY TO PARTICIPATE?

**A study of the possible democratizing effects of election boycotts
in the Arab world: 1990-2010**

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

MASTER THESIS

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MAY 2011

Abstract

This thesis aims to determine if election boycott is a sound strategy if the opposition in Arab states aspires democratization. No scholars have conducted research focusing on this specific subject up to date, despite the recent increase in the numbers of parliamentary elections being boycotted in the Arab region. The general research question is: “What are the democratizing effects of opposition boycott of parliamentary elections in the Arab world?”

Studies on election boycotts do not abound, but generally speaking, there are two opposing camps. On the one hand, one finds those scholars who support the arguments following Staffan I. Lindberg’s theory of democratization by elections. On the other hand, there are those who argue for the possible democratizing effects of certain types of boycotts, namely major boycotts. Based on the fact that the Arab world evidently has not democratized due to the various regimes’ electoral openings, I anticipated democratizing effects of major boycotts.

In order to identify possible boycott effects on the democratization process in Arab states, the thesis employed the method of comparative historical analyses, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to test possible effects on specific democratizing variables. The analyses were conducted utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data, including my own collected data, Judith Kelley’s dataset, monitor reports as well as other secondary sources.

The quantitative results showed that there were no democratizing effects from minor election boycotts or election boycotts in general, while there were positive correlations between major boycotts and some of the dependent variables. The likelihood for causal correlations, however, was weakened by the qualitative study. The qualitative analyses indicate that if major boycotts have effects, it is in interaction with other more important contextual factors. These findings are also strengthened by the strong correlation between non-hegemonic regimes and the effect of boycotts. However, these results are tentative, and cannot be confirmed without more extensive research.

In conclusion then, this thesis suggests that the democratizing potential of boycotting parliamentary elections in the Arab world is not substantial, although possibly higher when major boycotts are interacting with other crucial external or internal contextual variables.

Acknowledgements

Writing the acknowledgements means that numerous years of education has finally come to an end. It also signifies that I eventually managed to get away from Twitter, with its hashtags, retweets, and arguably pointless (some would say meaningful) discussions, and finish the thesis. Although I think I should get credit(s) for all the social media knowledge I have acquired the last 10 months, I do recognize that it was a smart move to simultaneously work on my thesis. However, I am not the only one to thank for this achievement, and I would therefore like to express gratitude to a number of persons that have provided me with insightful comments, suggestions, and not least encouragement and support.

First of all I would like to thank my supervisor, associate professor Michael Alvarez at the Department of Comparative Politics, for his guidance and encouragement throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank professor Sheila Carapico, Chair of the Political Science Department at the American University in Cairo, for her suggestions and feedback in the beginning of the process as well as for her inspiring course *Comparative Politics in the Middle East*, which introduced me to the topic of my thesis. I am also thankful for the help associate professor Judith Kelley at Duke University has provided me, by giving me the permission to cite her working paper and by giving me access to her newest dataset. Thank you to everyone I have discussed the thesis with, and especially to Asle Sætre, for taking the time to comment on the thesis and giving me grammatical advice.

There are many who have helped me during all these years at Høyden, not least fellow students, professors, and friends. There is not enough space to mention them all, but I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mom Anne Marie and my sister Rebekka, for all their love, support, and never-ending faith in me. I would also like to thank Else for her encouragements, belief in me, and for being there when I needed it the most.

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Karl Aage. I know he would have been proud.

Roger Valhammer
Bergen, May 2011

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Abbreviations

AUC = American University in Cairo

Fatah = Palestinian National Liberation Movement

FIS = Islamic Salvation Front

GPC = General People's Congress

Hamas = Islamic Resistance Movement

JSA = Justice and Spirituality Association

NDP = National Democratic Party

NGO = Non-governmental Organization

PA = Palestinian Authority

PJD = Justice and Development Party

PLO = Palestine Liberation Organization

UNDP = United Nations Development Programme

YSP = Yemen Socialist Party

1.0 Introduction

Although they might disagree on the causes, most scholars agree that the Arab states the last decades have been stable and persistently authoritarian. After what has been labeled the “third wave” of democratization, and especially following the end of the Cold War, many academics merely supposed that all authoritarian states worldwide would be replaced by democratic regimes. However, as the political reality in the Arab world¹ has shown: If the process of democratization is a law of nature, the Arab leaders obviously have found a way to cheat nature, a fact the overview of regime types in table 1 evidently substantiates². This does not mean that there have been no political and institutional changes in the region over the last three decades. On the contrary, most of the Arab regimes have been liberalizing their policies on political rights and introduced elected multiparty parliaments and legalized opposition parties. Nonetheless, this liberalization has not led to democratization. Instead, most Arab states have consolidated the power of the regime (Selvik and Stenslie, 2007; Posusney, 2002; Lust-Okar, 2009b). Another increasingly common tendency in an environment where participation in elections does not seem to further democratize the Arab states is the use of boycott strategies by the opposition. In fact, two-thirds of the latest parliamentary elections in the region experienced boycotts. Few scholars, if any, have studied the relationship between election boycott as a means to pressure for democratization of authoritarian Arab regimes and concrete democratic progress up to date. My thesis thus intends to explore this field of research, both to acquire new knowledge about the effect of these boycott strategies as well as to contribute with necessary basic research that can be further build upon in future research on the subject. More specifically, the thesis will attempt to disclose if election boycott is a sound strategy if the opposition is aiming for democratization. To accomplish these objectives, I set forth the following general research question for the thesis:

What are the democratizing effects of opposition boycott of parliamentary elections in the Arab world?

¹ The Arab world refers to the 16 states where the majority of the populations are Arabs. These countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Stepan and Robertson, 2003). In addition, I have included the Palestinian Territories, which for simplicity reasons will be labeled Palestine for the rest of the thesis.

² Obviously, the recent developments in the region indicate that this is about to change. However, the outcome of these uprisings are yet to be decided, and moreover, many Arab states are still largely unaffected and several regimes appear to be succeeding in their attempt to crack down on the demonstrators (Al Jazeera, 2011a). Most importantly, this thesis will investigate the past, not the present, and the ‘revolutions’ are consequently too recent in time to be taken into account.

Table 1: Arab regime types 2010³

Democratic	Semi-authoritarian	Authoritarian
None	Morocco, Lebanon, Kuwait	Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Bahrain, Palestinian Territories, Yemen, Jordan

Source: Freedom House (2011).

Obviously, as the theoretical chapter will discuss in length, various scholars have studied election boycotts, also in a democratization perspective, and many more have done research on the lack of democracy in the Arab world. To my knowledge, however, no scholar has tested the effect of election boycotts in the regional context of Arab states. Below, I will introduce the reader to this Arab context as well as point to why it may be of particular interest with regards to democratizing effects of election boycotts.

“Liberalization can exist without democratization” (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 10). In other words, liberalization in authoritarian states does not necessarily lead to a democratic regime. The main reason for this is that liberalization is a process that provides a greater tolerance for autonomous organizations and independent activity in the civil society, as well as an expanding of political and social rights, without changing the power structures in a society. A liberalization process can thus either lead to a more democratic regime or a reversal of the liberalization policies (Przeworski, 1992; Huntington, 1991; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). Hence, the development in the Arab world is not exceptional per se, but the fact that almost none of the states moved substantially toward increased democratization during the last two decades is. Several Arab states have for a shorter period of time been characterized as semi-authoritarian during the last two decades, but in 2010, with the exception of Morocco, Kuwait, and Lebanon, all of the Arab states are defined as authoritarian (see table 1). This realization has led an increasing number of scholars to ask the question: What explains the authoritarian persistence in the Arab world? Their theories and hypotheses are very divergent and range from cultural and religious exceptionalism (Lakoff, 2004; Haynes, 2001; Karatnycky, 2001) and the theory of so-called “rentier states”⁴ (Ross, 2001), to more

³ These definitions are based on Freedom House's (2011) scale, which runs from 1 to 14 and where 1 is the most democratic score. The labels coincide with Freedom House's classifications 'free', 'partly free', and 'not free'.

⁴ States that receive more than 50 percent of its budget revenues from sources other than taxes, typically, oil revenues (Ross, 2001).

institutional explanations (Bellin, 2004; Posusney, 2002; Kamrava, 2009; Lust-Okar, 2008). These and other perspectives have all contributed to a certain amount of scholarly insight into why there is a lack of democracy in the Arab countries (Hinnebusch, 2006). However, the many research results vary, some are even contradictory, and most explanatory models fail to include all Arab countries.

This theoretical framework forms the backdrop for my thesis. If there has been none or little democratizing progress in the Arab world during two decades of liberalizing policies and electoral openings, perhaps other means of participation than voting can be more effective? There is a sizeable number of literature on informal participation in the region, such as the importance of activism and social movements as well as what Asef Bayat (2009) labels non-movements⁵. However, most of the changes and improvements the activists achieve are either personal (politically, socially or materially) or merely for *a* distinctive group or local community rather than genuine political transformations. This is arguably also the case for the political act of participating in parliamentary elections: “Where the regime appears to have an unchallenged monopoly over resources, elections are likely to remain competitions over patronage” (Lust-Okar, 2008: 92). Given the strong state monopolies in most Arab states, this description of the ‘competitive clientelism’ in Jordan is paralleled across the Arab region (Lust-Okar, 2008). In such controlled authoritarian environments, it seems plausible to raise the question of whether or not boycott of elections by the opposition would have greater democratizing effects than participation?

The study therefore sets out to identify if election boycotts have positive effects on the democratization process in Arab states. The time period under investigation is 1990-2010, and only Arab states with elected parliaments are included in the study⁶. In order to answer the research question, the thesis will utilize comparative historical analyses, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to test possible effects on specific democratizing variables, such as political reform, the invitation of international monitors, and improved pre-election campaign conditions. Additionally, improvements in the Arab state’s general democratic level will also be tested. Moreover, the thesis aims to clarify if the size of the

⁵ In his book *Life as Politics*, Asef Bayat introduces the concept of “quiet encroachment” which means “...the silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied, powerful, or the public, in order to survive and improve their lives” (Bayat, 2009: 56).

⁶ This denotes that these five states could not be included: Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. Methods for the data collection are explained in chapter three (see table 2).

boycott as well as specific regime type characteristics, as defined in the theoretical chapter below, matter for the possible democratizing effects of the boycott. Based on the quantitative findings, relevant cases will be further qualitatively examined to control for other variables that may influence the variation in the dependent variables.

1.1 Justifying the thesis

All research projects within the field of social science can be said to be dependent on a good research question to be successful. Ideally, all research questions should thus satisfy two general criteria. The question should contribute to the cumulative knowledge within the relevant literature and at the same time be of importance to the world (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994; George and Bennett, 2005; Skocpol, 2003).

The first criterion is identified by King et al. as the following: "...a research project should make a specific contribution to an identifiable scholarly literature by increasing our collective ability to construct verified scientific explanations of some aspect of the world" (1994: 15). In other words, research must be anchored in the existing literature both to gain new knowledge, to avoid a reproduction of current research, and to generate theories that are fruitful for new hypotheses and research questions. As will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, the thesis makes use of existing research and academic work with regards to both election boycott and democratization theories, the latter employed with a special focus on the Arab region. This is achieved through conducting of literature reviews and by utilizing accessible research as the foundation for my hypotheses. In many respects, this thesis takes active part in the relevant scholarly discussions, and furthermore, its pioneering regional focus will provide supplementary information to the cumulative knowledge within these two fields of study, as well as being a possible starting point for more comprehensive research. By drawing on existing theories, the thesis is thus mainly theory testing in its approach, although the qualitative aspects of the research are more inductive in character.

The second criterion implies that research projects should possess a topic that has significance for our understanding of events that affect the world economically, politically or socially – what Theda Skocpol refers to as "first order questions" (Skocpol, 2003: 409; see also King et al., 1994). Arguably, research questions focusing on democratization possibilities in the Arab states are of importance to the people living in the region as well as to the world as a whole – both socially, economically, and not least politically. The demonstrations all over the Arab

world the last few months, which all also focus on social and economic policies as well as demanding democracy, might be the best illustrative example in this respect (Al Jazeera, 2011b; New Statesman, 2011). Although concentrating on possible democratizing effects of election boycotts in the Arab region only, I will argue that the thesis' topic still is of relevance and importance to the world.

However, taking the limited time and space of a master's thesis into account, the most important aim of this research project is for the thesis to be a small contribution to the cumulative knowledge of the relevant scholarly literature.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

In chapter two, the theoretical framework, which forms the basis of the thesis, will be presented. First, the chapter starts off with a definitional debate regarding the concept of democracy and democratization. Second, democratization theories focusing on the Arab region as well as the theory of democratization by elections will be accounted for. Third, the concepts of boycott and election boycott will be defined, and theories regarding democratization effects of election boycotts discussed. Finally, based on these theoretical discussions, my hypotheses will be constructed.

In chapter three, I turn to the methodological discussion and present the framework most suitable for my research question. First, I review the methodological debate between the two opposing "camps", namely the qualitative versus the quantitative methods. Then, I present and justify my methodological choices, which include both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a framework of comparative historical analysis. Finally, after accounting for the data sources and procedures for the data collection, I end the chapter by explaining the operationalizations of the variables and describing their measurement validity.

In the fourth chapter I present the research results and carry out the analyses. First, I account for the quantitative table-tabulations for each variable. Then, based on the analyses of those results, I set forth to qualitatively investigate the cases of particular interest for the research question more thoroughly.

The fifth and final chapter will summarize and conclude my findings through a discussion of the theoretical hypotheses in light of the quantitative and qualitative results in chapter four.

On the basis of this I will answer the general research question, before ending with some perspectives on how this thesis has contributed to the literature as well as providing suggestions for future research.

2.0 Theory

In this chapter, I aim to map out the theoretical arguments behind the possible democratizing effects boycotts of elections have in Arab authoritarian systems. To be able to fully grasp the background for why boycott may be an effective strategy for the opposition, it is necessary to first review and discuss the existing literature and theories on democratization in the region. This chapter will thus consist of three separate sections. The first section will focus on democracy and democratization theories, and will include a definitional debate regarding the concept of democracy, the theory of democratization by elections, and a review of the political situation in the Arab states in a democratization perspective. The second section introduces the concept of boycott and presents the current theories of boycott effects on democratization. Based on these theoretical discussions, I will construct my hypotheses, which will be outlined in section three.

2.1 Democratization: Definitional debate

Before one can discuss democratization theories and test democratization effects, one has to define democracy and democratic change. The concept of democracy and the definition of what it constitutes is in itself a separate discipline. It may therefore be a challenge to find an exclusive and exhaustive concept of democracy as, among others, Giovanni Sartori (1970) and Robert Adcock and David Collier (2001) highlight as important to be able to measure accurately. In general, democracy is understood as a political system in which the people choose how and by whom the country should be governed. This description is, however, quite broad, and as a result there is scholarly debate over which political systems should be regarded as democratic.

Perhaps the most known and used definition of democracy is the one of Robert Dahl. In his influential work, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, he alleges that no true democracy exists and will never exist. Therefore, Dahl (1971) describes the most democratic regimes as “polyarchies”. Although he does not believe there are any true democracies, he does give eight necessary, though not sufficient, institutional requirements for a democracy. These guarantees include:

“Freedom to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative

sources of information, free and fair elections, institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference”⁷ (Dahl, 1971: 3).

Held together, these requirements would, according to Dahl, ensure the people’s opportunity to formulate preferences, signify them, and have their preferences weighted equally in conduct of government. In short, the more of these guarantees a state enjoys, the nearer it is to being a democratic country. Furthermore, he also emphasizes two equally important theoretical dimensions of democratization, namely inclusiveness and competition. The former upholds that all people should have equal civil and political rights, which guarantees the right of participation. The latter is referring to public contestation for public offices, which ensures the alternation of power by the people. Dahl argues that both dimensions must be met in order to be able to define the regime as democratic (Dahl, 1971).

Other democratization scholars have defined democracy much narrower. Their focus has been solely on one of Dahl’s dimensions, namely public contestation. Moreover, only one of his guarantees has been defined as a prerequisite for democracy: Free and fair elections. For example, Alfred Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson defined a regime as democratic⁸ if ”1) the government sprang from reasonably fair elections; and 2) the elected government was able to fill the most important political offices” (2003: 31). Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi define democracy procedurally as “a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections” (2000: 15). However, they all emphasize that it is not sufficient to hold elections, the elections must also be free and fair for the state to be defined as a democracy, and the government must be held accountable to the people who elected them.

Minimal procedural definitions are not without problems, and they have been criticized for ignoring Dahl’s inclusiveness dimension, and thus becoming biased or even racist or sexist (Doorenspleet, 2004)⁹. Samuel P. Huntington (1991) points out two problems with procedural definitions: Neither does free and fair elections give an indication of the stability of the political system, nor does it guarantee that the elected government actually possesses the power of the state. On the other hand, “empirically, most countries in which elected leaders

⁷ This is not an accurate citation. In Dahl’s (1971) book, these guarantees are listed in a table. Nevertheless, they are exact reproductions of what he wrote and how he formulated the guarantees.

⁸ They do, however, emphasize that this definition applies to what they label electoral democracy (Stepan and Robertson, 2003).

⁹ She uses Switzerland and South Africa as examples to show how restrictions on universal suffrage can be sexist or racist (Doorenspleet, 2004: 321).

are not actually in charge, and/or the system is unstable, also have problems meeting the basic democratic standard of free and fair elections” (Beaulieu, 2006: 120). Furthermore, Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that broad definitions of democracy, which include accountability, inclusiveness, equality, participation, and the like, may end up excluding all democracies. Besides, procedural definitions focusing on electoral democracy provide the researcher with a tool to conduct systematic, empirical comparisons. In other words, free and fair elections may not be a sufficient condition for democracy, but it is nonetheless the most important comparable measure and definitively a necessary one.

In this research project, I will as a consequence rely partially on such a procedural definition of democracy. In addition, I will consider Dahl’s list of democratic guarantees, to ensure that important inputs associated with electoral democracy are included when studying the effects of election boycotts. Democratization, then, is defined as any move toward this procedural definition, or any increase in the number of Dahl’s requirements for a democracy. As the introduction has shown, political liberalization and the introduction of parliamentary elections have not necessarily made the Arab region significantly more democratic. Before I discuss the possible reasons for this, a review of the theories that argue for the democratizing effects of elections will be presented.

2.1.1 Democratization by elections

Since Huntington (1991) labeled what happened after the fall of the Soviet Union for the *third wave of democratization*, the study of elections has had renewed attention from political scientists. Huntington argued that an election was not only an ingredient in a democracy, but also a means by which democracy could be achieved. In other words, holding elections is an important component to make democratization possible. This means that even flawed and façade elections in authoritarian countries is seen as a positive step towards a more democratic political system: Elections will facilitate a more democratic environment in the long run, or produce liberalizing electoral outcomes (Howard and Roessler, 2006; Marinov and Hyde, 2009). Moreover, according to Nikolay Marinov, even sham elections may give some opportunities for the opposition to hold the ruling incumbent accountable to the people. “By participating in the elections and providing a clear signal that they were, essentially, robbed at the polls, opposition parties may be able to coordinate an attempted overthrow, or at least enough of a threat to extract compliance from the ruler” (Beaulieu, 2006: 39).

Staffan I. Lindberg (2009) has developed a theory of elections as a mode of transition, using the work of O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) as a starting point. Lindberg's transition by elections is nonetheless quite different from the contributions made by them and other authors operating within the "transition paradigm". Neither Przeworski (1992), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), nor Linz and Stepan (1996) viewed elections as part of the transition process, instead, holding elections was seen as *the* hallmark of the successful removal of an authoritarian regime, after the transition had taken place. Lindberg, on the other hand, provides new perspectives focusing on how "...repetition of elections in less-than-democratic regimes of various types can affect the "metagame"¹⁰ of regime reproduction and change" (Lindberg, 2009: 341). In this perspective, boycotts, for instance, are not seen as the measure that pushes the democratization process forward, it is more likely to be the indicator of a failed election (Pastor, 1999).

It should be noted that Lindberg's theory of democratization by elections is not complete; Lindberg himself calls it a "sketch". Moreover, he emphasizes the many steps in elections as the mode of transition, and that the empirical data suggest that it might also lead to further "autocratization", meaning a more authoritarian regime, or preserving status quo (Lindberg, 2009). Even so, his main argument in the book is that repeated elections affect democratic rights and processes in a positive manner. He makes use of Robert Dahl's classic formulations and arguments regarding the importance of the cost of oppression and toleration for the likelihood of democratization. More precisely: "...the more the cost of suppression exceeds the costs of toleration, the greater the chance for a competitive regime" (Dahl, 1971: 15). However, the focus of Lindberg is the other side of the coin: "How can opposition groups increase the cost of oppression and decrease the cost of toleration so to enhance the prospects of democratization?" (Lindberg, 2009: 321f). Without reproducing his entire game theory, the answer relevant for this thesis can be summarized by stating that the iteration of multiparty elections adds a third actor, namely the collective voters, whose choices have impact on the benefits and costs for both the opposition elite and the ruling incumbent. Hence, elections can affect the "metagame" of possible regime changes or regime reproduction.

¹⁰ "The metagame is about the question of regime change, meaning the rules of how political power is distributed and exercised" (Lindberg, 2009: 318).

Indeed, many scholars find convincing and substantial evidence in their data material supporting Lindberg's thesis. Not least, Lindberg's own research from Africa¹¹ shows a strong empirical correlation for the democratizing power of elections. Jan Teorell and Axel Hadenius (2009) find support both for the claim of democratizing effects of one single election and repetitive elections in their study. The same is true for the study of the post-cold war political regimes examined by Marc Morjé Howard and Philip G. Roessler (2009). On the other hand, there are also examples where the theoretical mode of transition does not fit the empirical data. Neither studies conducted in Latin America nor in the Middle East come up with the same conclusions. "Our review of Latin American countries over the recent past indicates little relationship between electoral processes and democratic deepening..." (McCoy and Hartlyn, 2009: 70). Ellen Lust-Okar (2009a) has similar findings in the Arab region of the Middle East and North Africa, although not due to the same causes. This illustrates that the theory of democratization by elections has its regional differences and is not "proven" without doubt.

Ellen Lust-Okar is not the only scholar who has stressed the difference between political liberalization and democratization in Arab states. In his article about the region, Daniel Brumberg says the following: "Democracy and political liberalization are not the same thing" (2004: 47). That may seem like a platitude, but it is more to it than that. He underlines the important fact that political liberalization in this region does not equal democratization. Anoushiravan Ehteshami puts it even clearer: "...more, and frequent, elections, or even some political liberalization, is not synonymous with democratization. Where elections have become a feature of the political system, we still find some disturbing evidence of de-liberalization as well" (1999: 199). However, a scholar such as As' Ad Abukhalil (1997) emphasizes the democratization potential of political parties in the Arab world, using Kuwait, Lebanon, and Jordan as examples of countries where participation in parliamentary elections has resulted in a changed political structure. Nonetheless, his article was focusing on the 1990s, and although the political systems definitively have changed in the region over the two last decades, it would be incorrect to suggest that there have been significant democratization processes. The political situation in the Arab world, and the possible explanations for why "democratization by elections" does not seem to work in this region, will be elaborated more upon below.

¹¹ Excluding North Africa.

2.1.2 The Arab world: Democratization theories

Within the field of democratization theories there are many different "schools", from the modernization and dependency theory to the more historical-structural and actor-oriented approaches (Hinnebusch, 2006; Doorenspleet, 2004). All of them have, one way or the other, been applied on the Arab region as well. In fact, this region has been a puzzle to political scientists because it can to a certain extent be described as the last bulwark against democracy in the world. For the sake of this study, a review of the literature on why the Arab authoritarian regimes have been resistant to democratic change is highly relevant. Both because it shows why the effects of a boycott strategy can arguably be of academic interest, and because it will be helpful in determining which factors among the Arab states themselves that are relevant to the effect of boycotts. Hence, academic discussions focusing on the modernization theory (1), the theory of exceptionalism (2), the importance of the international context (3), and institutionalism and structural factors (4) will be elaborated upon.

Although moderated, Seymour Martin Lipset's modernization thesis, stating that "the more well-to-do a country is, the better will be its prospects for gaining and keeping democracy" (Diamond, 2010: 97), is still considered to be valid¹². "What we learn (...) is that higher per capita incomes increase the likelihood of a movement away from autocracy as well as decrease the likelihood of a movement away from democracy" (Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen, and O'Halloran, 2006: 552). Furthermore, some Middle Eastern scholars uphold that far-reaching socioeconomic changes will lead to democratization in the region (Spinks, Sahliyah, and Calfano, 2008). Even the UNDP¹³ (2004) Arab Human Development Report's measurement of development is partially based on Lipset's thesis. On the other hand, the Arab states are doing relatively well economically speaking, some of them being as rich as Norway, France, and South Korea (Diamond, 2010). To explain this abnormality, many scholars emphasize that the countries democratically underperforming relative to their economic level, are all major oil-exporting states. Consequently, it can be explained by the theory of so-called "rentier states" (Ross, 2001). But not all states are oil exporters, and besides, Larry Diamond (2010) also points out that democracy can develop even at low level of socioeconomic development. In other words, the modernization theory alone cannot explain the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world.

¹² There are, of course, also some scholars who oppose the modernization theory, or at least challenge it. For instance Przeworski et al. (2000).

¹³ United Nations Development Programme.

As will be further demonstrated below, there are several other theoretical approaches as well, such as institutional factors and international contexts (King, 2007). Nonetheless, "...the failure of democratization to take root has given greater credibility to those...who argue in favor of Middle East exceptionalism" (Pratt, 2006: 1). Diamond (2010) claims that the most frequent explanation to the continuing authoritarian persistence is the culture and/or religion of the Arab world. After all, the Arab countries more or less share the same language, cultural beliefs, and religion. Or as Eva Bellin ironically expresses it: "Surely culture must explain some of the region's exceptionalism, especially since Islam is presumed to be inhospitable to democracy" (2004: 141). Those who perceive this as an important reason for the lack of democracy argue that Islam is a religious system that contradicts democratic forms of government; that the very concept of democracy is alien to the Islamic mindset (Lakoff, 2004; Haynes, 2001; Karatnycky, 2001). Furthermore, some scholars suggest that the situation of "pseudo-democracies" we find in the Arab region today is the Islamic version of democracy (Volpi, 2004). According to the political scientist Elie Kedourie, this is due to the fact that Islam emphasizes the group over the individual and that government leaders are regarded as appointed by God (Hinnebusch, 2006; Bellin, 2004; Pratt, 2006). Indeed, the high number of Muslim countries not being democratic suggests that there is an Islamic exceptionalism. On the other hand, Stepan and Robertson (2003) managed to substantiate that it is the Arab countries that stand out as authoritarian, not the Muslim states. Moreover, also other regions, such as Asia and Africa, have been lacking a democratic culture and still gone through a democratic transition (Diamond, 2010; Bellin, 2004).

Most scholars who focus on the Arab region have, however, dismissed the idea of exceptionalism. Furthermore, many research projects focusing on the relationship between Islam and democracy and attitudes towards democracy in the Arab world uncover the opposite findings (see for instance Harik, 2006; Ottaway and Carothers, 2004; Tessler, 2002; Tessler and Gao, 2005). Instead, they assert that the international context may contribute to elucidate more on Arab authoritarianism. Diamond (2010) holds that the economic support states like Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan receives¹⁴, give them both political legitimacy as well as revenues with the same effect as the oil revenues of the Gulf states (see also; Bellin, 2004). Furthermore, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict provides the states with means of diverting the

¹⁴ During the cold war the Soviet Union supported many Arab countries financially. Now, the U.S. is the core provider (Diamond, 2010).

frustration and anger of corrupted and coercive regimes (Diamond, 2010; Hinnebusch, 2006). The UNDP (2004) Arab Human Development Report also put emphasis on this conflict as well as the Iraq-war to explain authoritarianism and the lack of development. Without speculating about the goals of the US led invasion of Iraq, the result was nevertheless what is conceived as an attempt to coercively democratize the country. The idea is that if one state democratizes, others will follow¹⁵. The problem with Iraq, according to Laurence Whitehead, is that not only is Iraq not likely to become democratic, but the imperial means of an invasion has severely damaged what he calls “the force” of the Western promotion of democracy. In other words, the war has increased the skepticism of Western ideas and delegitimized the “cause” of democratization (Whitehead, 2009). Other scholars focus on the failed Western policies with regards to aiding the civil society (see more below) for the purpose of enhancing democratization in the region. Nevertheless, most of them criticize the international efforts to bring about democratic change also in more general terms, not least because of the military funding of so-called allies (Cook, 2005; Dalacoura, 2005).

The more institutional approaches consider the institutional configurations of a regime as crucial to its survival. Although Eva Bellin also highlights the international factor of military aid to for instance Egypt, her major concern is the robustness of the Arab states’ coercive institutions. As long as they have the will and means to suppress democratic initiative, there will be no transition. Moreover, “in the absence of effective state institutions, removing an oppressive coercive apparatus will lead, not to democracy, but rather to authoritarianism...or worse, chaos” (Bellin, 2004: 153). Marsha Pripstein Posusney (2002), James N. Sater (2009), Mehran Kamrava (2009), and Ellen Lust-Okar (2009b) all stress the negative effect of institutional engineering of elections in the Arab authoritarian states. The incumbent regime makes sure the electoral arrangements benefit the ruling party or the society’s elite. This gives the regime democratic legitimacy at the same time as they set constraints on the opposition; thus being able to control them. Instead of a step towards greater democracy, political liberalization in the Arab world therefore seems to be reinforcing the authoritarian regimes (Posusney, 2002; Lust-Okar, 2009b; Hinnebusch, 2006; Schedler, 2002a).

Even in countries such as Morocco, where elections have been held for decades, the electoral process is decreasing the democratic values among the population (Sater, 2009). One major

¹⁵ Even Diamond (2010) supports such an idea; he even posits it as one of the means to change the game of the region, though not through coercion.

reason for why oppositional forces cannot exploit the space created by the electoral opening is the fact that they are heavily divided, especially between secular and Islamic parties, making the former align with the regime instead of the Islamists (Ottaway and Hamzawy, 2007). In addition, Lust-Okar (2009b) argues convincingly that what she labels ‘competitive clientelism’ helps explaining why elections reinforce the incumbent regimes in the Middle East: Elections in Arab states are nothing more than a way of providing “...elites and their supporters an opportunity to compete over special access to a limited set of state resources that they can then distribute to their clients” (Lust-Okar, 2009b: 122). Lust-Okar’s study demonstrates how elections are part of the patronage system of the state. Nicola Pratt (2006) elaborates further on how the relationship between the civil society and the state has been institutionalized into cooperative arrangements¹⁶. This leaves the organizations with little or no autonomy from the state. Besides, the fact that there are few or none associations with a prodemocracy agenda, as well as their inability to build coalitions, further aggravates the possibility for the civil society to play a democratizing role (Hawthorne, 2004). Hence, the state – civil society interactions have contributed to and still help sustaining the current situation¹⁷ where authoritarianism is the hegemonic form of organizing a society. This is also why international aid channeled into the civil society and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in an attempt to help the democratization process in Arab states are not working very well (Langohr, 2004; Hawthorne, 2004; Carapico, 2002). Moreover, Stephen King (2007) emphasizes how institutions can provide resources for elites to drive the outcomes of political liberalization in the direction of reinforced authoritarianism.

In other words, although they might disagree on the causes, most scholars agree that the Arab states the last decades have been stable and persistently authoritarian: “The continuing absence of even a single democratic regime in the Arab world is a striking anomaly — the principal exception to the globalization of democracy” (Diamond, 2010: 93). It seems quite acceptable, especially taken the recent events into consideration, to describe the theories of exceptionalism as inadequate. The same can be said about modernization perspectives and to a certain extent the international context and the focus on structural causes. What makes the Arab region different from any other region is probably a combination of these factors.

¹⁶ The civil society has been co-opted by the regimes, a process which has created new social and political hierarchies underpinning authoritarianism (Pratt, 2006).

¹⁷ Again it has to be emphasized that the recent events in the region have neither been incorporated in this study, nor in the literature reviewed in this subsection.

However, finding the causes of the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world lies beyond the limits as well as the intention of this thesis. On the other hand, this review of the democratization literature illustrates the importance of institutionalism in explaining why the introduction of elections has not proven successful yet. Of course, this is the case in many authoritarian regimes, but as we will see below, there are certain striking features in most Arab states that ensure the failure of democratization by elections.

2.1.3 The true Arab exceptionalism

In the chapter, *Legislative Elections in Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes: Competitive Clientelism and Resistance to Democratization*, Ellen Lust-Okar (2009a) attempts to explain why elections in the Middle East and North Africa reproduce rather than undermine the regimes, and under what circumstances they do so. First, she argues that in most of these countries, elections are merely an arena for competition over access to the state's resources. This is due to the parliamentarians' lack of control over policymaking; the parliaments are not lawmaking bodies. Instead, a parliament is a body where its members can use their position and influence to put pressure on bureaucrats, ministers, and others into giving state resources, such as jobs and licenses, to their constituencies. Citizens recognize this and elections thus turn out to be merely "competitive clientelism" (Lust-Okar, 2008; 2009a; 2009b).

Second, Lust-Okar demonstrates "...how this competitive clientelism drives the behavior of voters and candidates in systematic ways and, more importantly, how this behavior promotes inherently pro-regime parliaments" (2009a: 227). Voters realize that the elections are just about access to state resources, and therefore choose not to vote or to vote for candidates who they believe can deliver services to them. Normally, those who can are the candidates not opposing the regime. Hence, elections "...help to maintain the status quo" (Lust-Okar, 2009b: 126).

Third, because of this competitive clientelism, she argues, the incumbent elites can manage the elections by using institutional mechanisms rather than straightforward manipulation, oppression, and fraud (Lust-Okar, 2009a; see also Schedler, 2002a). "Manipulating electoral systems provides authoritarian elites with a subtle mechanism for controlling immediate electoral outcomes and partisan politics" (Posusney, 1998: 12). There are many methods available to the regimes. One of them is the tactic of gerrymandering, which can make sure that more seats are given to districts that contain traditional supporters of the ruling elite.

Another method is electoral rules. By drafting the constitution and electoral legislation in certain manners, the elite secures a result benefiting the incumbent regime. These rules might differ from one authoritarian regime to another, but the commonality is the preservation of the regime (Ehteshami, 1999; Posusney, 2002). In other words, “ruling elites manage electoral outcomes predominantly through institutions and the logic of competitive clientelism, which is inherently biased toward returning conservative, pro-regime parliaments” (Lust-Okar, 2009a: 241).

Finally, and of the indisputable interest to this study, Lust-Okar (2009a) shows that what matters the most for the possibility of democratization by elections is whether or not the regime has an unchallenged monopoly over the financial resources as well as the military/security forces: “Where the regime appears to have an unchallenged monopoly over resources, elections are likely to remain competitions over patronage” (Lust-Okar, 2008: 92). When this is not the case, elections may serve the purpose of elite turnover, but they rarely (never) produce a regime turnover. Günes Murat Texcür (2008) suggests that this is the case in Iranian elections¹⁸, and Lust-Okar uses the example of the 2006 legislative elections in Palestine to prove her point. Nonetheless, “given the strong state monopolies in the Middle East and North Africa...” and as long as “the state elites’ monopoly on resources remains unchallenged” (Lust-Okar, 2008: 93), the stability of the nondemocratic regimes are unlikely to change. Eva Bellin (2004) argues along the same lines, claiming that the main reason the Arab region has not democratized is the massive coercive apparatus at the hands of many of the rulers. This strengthens Lust-Okar’s notion of the importance of state monopoly over resources in determining the likelihood for democratization. As the recent events in the region has demonstrated, this monopoly has been challenged in many Arab states, but the outcome of these “revolutions” are yet to be seen. In any case, the knowledge from Lust-Okar’s research identifies one interesting feature concerning the Arab cases: the importance of state elites’ monopoly over resources. This aspect will be discussed further under independent variables in subsection 2.3.1.

Does the fact that the introduction of elections in the majority of Arab states during the last two decades has not fostered democratization suggest that there are no difference between having elected parliaments and not holding elections? The theory reviewed above does not

¹⁸ Although this is not an Arab state, Iran shares many characteristics with their Middle Eastern neighbors.

suggest so, but it does imply only a somewhat limited effect of parliamentary elections in an area such as the Arab region. This theoretical framework forms the backdrop for an important question in this thesis: Perhaps boycott strategies are more successful in countries where the mere act of holding elections is not sufficient for enhancing the democratization process? In the following section, the theoretical arguments for why election boycotts may or may not be an effective means for the opposition to democratize an authoritarian regime will be presented. First of all, though, the concept of boycott itself needs to be clarified.

2.2 In the name of Boycott

Boycott was a person's name before it became a term describing certain types of actions or protests. Charles Cunningham Boycott was a British estate manager refusing to yield to demands for land reforms, put forward by Irish nationalists, in the late 1800s. As a response, tenants of the Irish Land League withdrew all services to Mr. Boycott and his family in 1880. He soon found himself in a situation without servants, workers, mail, or stores to shop in. In other words, he was boycotted (Boycott, 1997; Keep Military Museum, 2011).

In this initial form of the concept, boycott meant an isolation of an individual. Later, the term got a more general definition describing its non-participatory nature, including labor boycotts and such. Harry W. Laidler gave a well-known definition already in 1913: "...an organized effort to withdraw and induce others to withdraw from social or business relations with another" (Laidler and Seager, 2010: 27). Obviously, the introduction and the new academic awareness of the term "boycott" does not indicate that these kinds of protests did not happen before 1880. The most famous one might have been when merchants decided to boycott British trade goods during the time of the American Revolution in the late 1700s. This was at the time seen as a means to achieve both representation and less tax, best summarized in what later became a slogan for the colonial subjects: 'No taxation without representation' (Ward, 2004).

Nonetheless, compared to known historical cases the more contemporary examples abound. They vary from consumer boycotts of products, companies, and countries, to political boycotts conducted by states. Examples of the former are boycotts of multi-national corporations such as McDonalds and Coca Cola, as well as boycotts of products produced in a particular country, for example Jaffa oranges from the state of Israel. Boycotts conducted by

states do not happen very often, but the contemporary American economic embargo towards Cuba, the American-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the subsequent boycott of the 1984 Olympics by the Soviet Union, and the international boycott of the apartheid-regime in South Africa, can serve as examples (Dagbladet, 2006; Tyner, 1984; Levy, 1999).

In between these types one finds political boycotts, such as the Gandhi initiated boycott of British goods in India. This was one of Gandhi's peaceful "weapons" used in the Indian struggle for independence. Another case in point is the American civil rights movement, best exemplified by the Montgomery bus boycott campaign, which started in 1955 when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white person (Berg, 2009; Flournoy, 2003).

None of these cases represent the kind of boycott relevant for this thesis. On the other hand, they do illustrate that boycotts can take many forms and may have many causes. Furthermore, they exemplify that although boycotts may be directed towards, and conducted by, persons, organizations, and countries, they all share a commonality: They are usually a form of activism and protests that have social and/or political reasons.

Before discussing the characteristics of boycotts in more depth below, it will be helpful to define the concept in broader and more general terms than Laidler's century old definition. Boycott means to "withdraw from commercial or social relations with (a country, organization, or person) as a punishment or protest". This includes refusing "to cooperate with or participate in a policy or event" (Oxford Dictionary, 2011).

2.2.1 Boycott characteristics

The foregoing instances have shown that while the conditions for a boycott can vary widely, all boycotts share certain core characteristics, as this section will further demonstrate. The examples put forward here are not the only possible common features of boycotts, but they constitute the main elements of most boycotts around the world.

First, all boycotts and boycott initiatives aim to invoke and involve the broadest possible group of (non-) participants. This is also crucial to the likelihood of success, compared to other types of political actions (Kelly, 2005). For a boycott cause to have legitimacy and be effective, it has to have a broader popularity than the individuals, groups, organizations, parties, or states that originally coined the idea of a boycott protest. This particular point will

be elaborated more upon under subsection 2.2.2. For now, I will only mention a few cases to illustrate the argument. Firstly, it seems quite safe to state the obvious: Without some kind of mass-participation, the regime, corporation, or state one is seeking to affect will most likely not notice or care about the boycott protest (Beaulieu, 2006). A consumer boycott will only work if the company or country is economically affected by it. Secondly, those of the boycott examples mentioned above which truly succeeded, such as the American civil rights movement and the international boycott of South Africa, were all eventually successful in their attempts to invoke mass participation.

Second, the groups undertaking boycotts are normally weak compared to the object(s) they are protesting to have an effect on (Beaulieu, 2006). There might be some exceptions to this characteristic, especially political or economical boycotts carried out by states. It is hard to argue that the international boycott of the Hamas led government of the Palestinian territories (now only Gaza) was done by a weaker group of states than the affected part (Hroub, 2006). Nonetheless, in general, those organizing and taking part in a boycott are often doing so because they are relatively weak; either the object of the protest is a law, a colonial power or a multi-national company.

Moreover, those taking on a boycott appear to have a moral objective in mind (Beaulieu, 2006). People boycotting McDonalds and KFC most likely do so because they consider these corporations to be unethical and/or immoral in their behavior. The boycott of South Africa was conducted on the moral ground of anti-racism and on the perception that all men are equal. The same can be said about the American Civil Rights movement (Levy, 1999; Berg, 2009). Indeed, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. claimed that their struggle for justice was part of a worldwide trend where oppressed people stood up against systems of oppression (Montgomery Advertiser, 1956a).

On the other hand, the interpretation and understanding of the motivations of a boycott differ based on the opinions of those observing it. They might be seen as actions with selfish aims that would cause more harm than good. This perspective is not uncommon at the time of a given boycott. For instance, American labor and consumer boycotts in the 19th century were often declared illegal because they were perceived as damaging to the market (Laidler and Seager, 2010). The American civil rights boycotts, which are currently viewed as a legitimate and probably necessary method in the fight for freedom and equal rights, were at the time

seen as an attempt from the “negros” to ruin the social stability of the American society (Montgomery Advertiser, 1956b; Flournoy, 2003). This illustrates that the presence of a moral perspective is evident in most boycotts. On the other hand, whether or not the boycotters do actually hold the moral high ground might be more debatable.

Finally, boycotts are characteristically peaceful. John D. Kelly (2005) argues that this type of protest tends to be passive-aggressive with a deliberate aspect of nonviolence. Furthermore, a boycott is typically based on a cooperative, collective will. One main reason for this peaceful approach of most boycotts is related to the previous characteristic of moral. If boycotters engage in violence, their moral appeal will be weakened. Another aspect, related to the mentioned commonality of weakness, is the fact that there usually exists a situation of power unfairness between the boycotted and boycotter, which excludes the option of violence (Beaulieu, 2006).

Even so, the academic acceptance of the peaceful nature of boycotts may be overly influenced by the acts of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, who led the two most famous boycotts of the 20th century. They were and are known for their philosophy of nonviolence. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that violent boycotts do occur. This happens more often when the boycotters are more equal in strength to the boycotted, and when they prefer the tactic of threatening a regime or a landlord to the moral high ground (Beaulieu, 2006).

2.2.2 Election boycotts: Two types

The previous section describes general characteristics of boycotts, but they are also accurate when examining the type of boycott relevant for this thesis: Election boycotts. In this subsection, a brief discussion about the content of an election boycott, as well as when it is more likely to occur, will be conducted. More importantly, however, is the definitional and final part, which attempts to distinguish between minor and major boycotts.

Election boycotts are, as the name indicates, politically motivated boycotts of some kind of election, typically presidential or parliamentary elections, or referendums. Individuals, groups, organizations, and political opposition parties can be the ones performing a boycott. Nonetheless, when studying election boycotts, scholars usually refer to boycotts by opposition parties (Beaulieu, 2006). That is also the case in this research project. Whenever employed, the term boycott will thus be applied with this connotation for the rest of the thesis.

The actual boycott act consists of abstaining from voting on Election Day, but when conducted or encouraged by political parties the act of boycott also includes a public condemnation of the election, due to a range of varying motives. In other words, opposition parties publically reject to participate in protest. The timing for the proclaimed boycott may vary, but it is always initiated after elections have been announced by the incumbent regime. It is important to note, though, that; “as a form of protest, election boycotts are distinct from instances when opposition parties threaten to boycott and later participate in an election. They are also distinct from (and usually more costly than) post-election complaints or protest” (Beaulieu and Hyde, 2009: 396).

Election boycotts worldwide are not very common. When they do occur, they tend to take place in authoritarian regimes and so called developing democracies. Put differently, opposition parties are less likely to boycott elections when they are free and fair (Lindberg, 2006a). Unlike elections in consolidated democracies, elections in developing democracies and more authoritarian regimes are battlegrounds between incumbents and opposition over fundamental rules and legitimacy of the game (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). This increases the likelihood of boycotts. Another striking commonality is the fact that they with few exceptions only come about in developing countries. In the time period between 1990 and 2002 approximately fourteen percent of the multiparty elections in developing countries experienced boycotts (Beaulieu and Hyde, 2009). Moreover, the percentage of the elections being boycotted has gone up substantially in the period, from an average of ten percent in the early 1990s to an average of eighteen percent in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Beaulieu, 2006). In the Arab world, the number of boycotted parliamentary elections, which is the type of elections studied in this research project, in the time period from 1990 till 2010 was twenty-five¹⁹. The same tendency is clearly evident in this region as well: An increase in the frequency of boycotts in the 2000s. In fact, almost two-thirds of the Arab states that hold parliamentary elections, experienced boycotts in their latest elections.

The causes of these election boycotts will be discussed in greater length under boycott theories in subsection 2.2.3. As will become evident, the reasons parties have for choosing a

¹⁹ The number is based on my own research, and includes two elections where banned parties have conducted the boycott (Algeria 1997 and Morocco 2002). The methods for this collection as well as justifications for including two banned parties are described in chapter 3.

boycott strategy can affect the outcome of a boycott as well as the type of boycott in question. In this study, I will follow Emily Ann Beaulieu's (2006) example and distinguishing between two types of boycotts, namely minor and major boycotts. Obviously, there is a significant difference between a boycott conducted by a marginal party and a main opposition party, which was also noted by Staffan I. Lindberg (2006a), who labeled them partial and full boycotts. Moreover, it seems plausible to assume that a boycott will have greater impact if it is carried out by a majority of the opposition. The possible causation between reasons for a boycott, type of boycott, and outcome is not clear-cut. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to test the effects of both types of boycotts and compare it to the results if such a differentiation had not been made.

It is almost impossible to find a perfect and objective way to define these two types of boycott. Hence, in order to make my definitions as reliable as possible, I will base them on Beaulieu's (2006) work in her doctoral dissertation: *Protesting the Contest: Election Boycotts around the World, 1990-2002*. Her analysis of election boycotts was the first to reconcile the competing explanations to why boycotts occur by distinguish between two types of boycotts, namely minor and major. Previous research, on the other hand, has tried to explain election boycotts in general. Beaulieu defines it as a major boycott if it involves a majority of the opposition. This means that if the main opposition party initiates a boycott, and it can arguably be said to enjoy a majority of opposition support, it will be sufficient. If not, it has to be a majority of opposition support behind the parties boycotting an election. "Unified opposition election boycotts are the clearest examples of major boycotts, but these boycotts are also quite rare" (Beaulieu, 2006: 29). Even when the opposition seems unified in their determination to boycott an election, a few smaller parties often end up participating after all, usually due to some sort of promises from the incumbent regime (Beaulieu, 2006).

In some of the Arab states, such as Lebanon, ethnicity and/or religion play significant roles on the political scene. In these cases, a unified boycott carried out by ethnic or religious lines may signify a crucial boycott although it may not enjoy an absolute majority of opposition support. In such cases, it might still be right to define them as major boycotts. Nonetheless, in this thesis, such boycotts will be defined as minor boycotts to make sure the reliability of the data collection is not questionable. If any of the boycott cases in this study should turn out to be hard to define, for instance because of the involvement of illegal parties, an explicit explanation will be provided for the choice made.

“Minor election boycotts, on the other hand, are launched by one or more small parties, which do not amount to a majority of the opposition. Compared to major boycotts, the parties involved in minor boycotts are more homogeneous, with stronger religious, ethnic, territorial, or ideological orientations, usually representing minority populations within the country” (Beaulieu, 2006: 30).

Furthermore, they are usually carried out to press for the particularistic interests of the party elite or the group taking part in the boycott. Hence, smaller, “single-issue” parties conduct minor boycotts, while major boycotts are the work of larger, more general, opposition parties.

2.2.3 Election boycott theories

There have not been many academic studies of election boycotts to date. In general, these relatively few research projects have either aimed to find the causes of boycotts or they have been focusing on the effects of the boycotts. “In regard to the consequences of election boycotts, the existing literature has focused solely on the boycott’s immediate effect on the democratic legitimacy of the boycotted election” (Beaulieu, 2006: 3). Most of them have had a regional focus, while a few have looked at the world as a whole. First in this subsection, the existing literature on why election boycotts occur and how that may correlate to the two types of boycott will be reviewed. Second, the general debate regarding effects on democratization will be addressed.

With regards to the domestic factors causing parties to choose a boycott strategy, most of the existing literature points out one particular reason as the primary cause: Fraud. A boycott of an election is mainly a means to protest fraud and to demand or enhance reforms. The act of boycott can attract attention to this fraud. Hence, if the opposition detects unfairness in the pre-election period, the opposition parties may threaten to boycott (Bratton, 1998; Lindberg, 2006b; Pastor, 1998):

“...Boycotts should generally occur when the electoral rules and laws are poor, when the incumbent abuses government resources or restricts campaigning by opposition parties, when the media is biased, or (...) other procedural matters with elections become apparent during the pre-election period” (Kelley, 2012: 4).

In addition to election problems, Staffan I. Lindberg (2004; 2006b) adds political violence during elections to the causes that correlate with boycott. In other words, in an environment of violence and electoral injustice, the opposition may use boycotts to object the election and to protest the regime, which is in need of wide participation to ensure the legitimacy of the elections (Schedler, 2002b).

However, the strategy of boycotting an election is costly. Incumbents usually accuse opposition parties boycotting an election to do so because they know they cannot win. If the public accepts this as the cause of the boycott, the protest can cost them future support. In addition, by boycotting the parties are risking marginalization because they are out of parliament for the next election cycle. Moreover, the opposition parties often have incentives to avoid boycott. This is also why the opposition frequently participates despite conditions of unfairness (Pastor, 1998; 1999; Frankel, 2010). By participating, the opposition can gain visibility and experience as well as strengthen their organization. Even in fraudulent elections, the opposition may win some parliamentary seats, which can give them some influence and access to state resources. “It seems that their calculation says they are better off in the long run participating than not competing” (Lindberg, 2006a: 76).

Nonetheless, the opposition parties do sometimes boycott elections. As already noted, in his various works on Africa, Staffan I. Lindberg (2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2009) finds that opposition participation strongly correlates with their judgment of the election being free and fair or not. If the opposition perceives an election as not free, they are more likely to boycott (see also Schedler, 2002b). “It has also been suggested, however, that election boycotts might occur not because of unfairness, but rather because opposition parties know they are going to lose and wish to save face” (Beaulieu, 2006: 17). When Beaulieu, among others, questions Lindberg’s thesis, she argues that unfairness might be the causation in many instances, but not necessarily all. First of all, (observer) statements of the fairness of the election come after the election is finished, while boycotts are announced in the pre-election period, and the actual boycott happens on the day of the election. Whether or not the reports in the aftermath of an election truly reflect the conditions in the country, or if they are influenced by the fact that parties boycotted due to unfairness, are not possible to determine with certainty. Therefore, it is “...possible that the boycott itself affected the observers’ assessment of the fairness of the election (Beaulieu, 2006: 19).

Robert Pastor presents an explanation along the lines of Beaulieu for why parties boycott independent of unfairness: "...the opposition parties boycotted or protested because they were weak and knew they would lose a free election" (1999: 1). Also Michael Bratton (1998), based on his work on elections in Africa, found that many opposition parties decided to boycott because they were small and quite likely to lose. Instead of facing the voters, these opposition parties masked their weakness by announcing and conducting a boycott. This implies that not only do incumbents use this explanation to discredit boycotts; sometimes it might even be correct or at least partially correct (Bratton, 1998).

Consequently, "the most recent investigation of election boycotts incorporates elements of both unfairness and certain loss, and also emphasizes the importance of international involvement in the election process" (Beaulieu, 2006: 17). In fact, much of the recent research on boycotts has been focusing on the role of international monitors in elections. The discussion runs along the lines of whether or not the presence of international monitors influences the probability of the opposition boycotting. Emily Ann Beaulieu and Susan D. Hyde (2009) find that when international observers are present, the opposition is more likely to boycott the election. In fact, it is twice as common. This might appear somewhat strange, because monitors should normally increase the likelihood of discovering possible fraud on the regime's part (Kelley, 2012). Beaulieu and Hyde (2009) explain this with what they call prudent manipulation. Another way to describe it could be strategic manipulation. The incumbent regime will invite observers to create an appearance of fairness, and then make sure that they stay in power by using other more sophisticated methods of fraud than the unconcealed measures often employed (Scheideman, 2010). The opposition anticipates this prudent manipulation and fears the international monitors might endorse a flawed election, which will make it harder to convince others of the fraud. In other words, Beaulieu and Hyde also accept certain loss and unfairness as causes of boycotts, but they argue that the presence of international observers makes it even more likely that the opposition parties will boycott (Beaulieu and Hyde, 2009).

Judith Kelley (2012) gives an alternative explanation to the correlation between monitors and boycotts in her forthcoming paper on the subject. To my knowledge, she is the first to contradict previous research on the role of monitors and the likelihood of boycotts. Her core argument is that "observers tend to go to elections with many problems and it is primarily these, rather than monitors, that drive boycotts" (Kelley, 2012: 1). Furthermore, she argues

that the presence of international observers can improve the quality of the election, and the opposition may thus abandon boycott as a strategy. Indeed, recent research has shown this positive effect of deploying international observers, with an enhanced overall election quality (Hyde, 2007). Whether or not the opposition boycotts depend on their anticipations about the quality and reputation of the observers. In her article, Kelley (2012) shows that international election monitors can discourage boycotts, but only if the monitors are of good reputation. Her argument is strengthened by the work of other scholars as well, although they are not discussing the correlation between boycott and monitors. Douglas D. Anglin (1998) criticizes the work of international monitors in Africa in the 1990s, claiming they were not qualitatively good enough to be trusted. Or to quote *The Economist*: “The ways in which [tyrants control elections] are rarely picked up by foreign monitors, who often arrive only to observe the actual polling” (Economist, 1996: 20, my parenthesis).

This thesis will not test the causes of boycotts, but rather the effects on democratization. Nevertheless, knowledge about the possible causes for why a party chooses a boycott strategy is important for the understanding of possible outcomes of it. Beaulieu (2006) has shown that the outcome of minor and major boycotts in a democratization perspective is very different, and the same can be said about the causes of minor vs. major boycotts. In the next subsection, I will further examine and discuss the literature arguing for why election boycotts can be a good strategy for the opposition in authoritarian environments.

2.2.4 Boycott as a democratizing factor

Following the logic of democratization by elections, where does that leave boycotts? As pointed out earlier, there have not been many academic studies of the effects of election boycotts. Based on the discussion of the scholarly work in the previous subsections, one could be led to believe that there are no particular positive effects on the democratization process coming from election boycotts. Moreover, in his article *Threaten but participate: Why boycotts are a bad idea*, Matthew Frankel argues that “although threatened boycotts in high-profile elections can pay dividends, the results of the study indicate that actual boycotts almost always end in failure” (2010: 4). Most research on boycott effects has concluded in similar terms.

However, these studies have been criticized for a number of deficiencies. First, they have had a regional focus or only examined a few cases at the time, which reduces their generalization

potential. Moreover, different regional studies have given results at odds with one another, as shown above. Second, most of the conducted studies up to date have been focusing on a few elections. Third, most of the research on boycotts treat all boycotts as one variable, neither distinguishing between types of boycotts nor the different causes leading up to a boycott and how that might influence the outcome. There are of course exceptions to this, however, for instance when Lindberg (2006a) makes a distinction between partial and full boycotts. Fourth, when boycott effects on democratization have been reduced to none or even possibly negative, those scholars have mostly looked at the immediate effect on general indicators of the democratic level. A scholar who has challenged these shortages is Emily Ann Beaulieu. Below, her results of a worldwide study will be presented.

Beaulieu's (2006) study, *Protesting the Contest: Election Boycotts around the World, 1990-2002*, was the first to "state a condition under which boycotts are associated with seeking reform and a condition under which they are seeking more targeted benefits" (2006: 2), and it demonstrated that these conditions are useful for the understanding of the variation that exists between types of boycotts. More precisely, she argues that major boycotts, as defined earlier, come about because elections are rigged and basically fraudulent. Minor boycotts, on the other hand, do not. Beaulieu shows how smaller parties often boycott because they do not have much popular support, meaning their position before an election is weak. Nonetheless, even if only a minority of the opposition boycotts, it does not denote that the election is fair, but it simply implies that the reason they boycott might not be unfairness. "Minor boycotters are not concerned with fraud and electoral unfairness, as their size does not allow them to internalize the benefits of fairness. For minor boycotters the decision is essentially a choice between boycotting an election or participating and accepting the election results" (Beaulieu, 2006: 53f). Furthermore, independent of the cause, minor boycotts do not have the same ability to discredit the incumbents, which is why they do not have much democratizing effect.

This does not mean, however, that boycotts are the death throe of democratization in developing countries. According to Beaulieu's research, the true reform-seeking boycotts are the ones conducted by a majority of the opposition, constituting a major boycott. The explanation for this logic is simple: "Major boycotts comprise a portion of the opposition that is large enough to internalize the benefits of increased fairness" (Beaulieu, 2006: 41). The probability of affecting the rules of the game increases proportionally with the size of the opposition participating in the boycott. Hence, majority boycotts are more likely to bring

about change than minority boycotts. More importantly than the theoretical arguments for this assumption, are the results Beaulieu finds in her study: Not only do election boycotts have observable effects generally speaking, but they also have positive consequences for democratization. Countries experiencing major boycotts have not necessarily become democracies, but they have experienced improvements regarding certain features of democracy, such as electoral reform and the future presence of international observers (Beaulieu, 2006).

In other words, some boycotts have an effect on the democratization process, and some do not. According to Beaulieu (2006), the most important distinction is among major and minor boycotts. She also looks into violent versus peaceful boycotts, but this difference seems less important, especially since violent boycotts are not very common in the Arab world. As will be further explained in the next section, where the justifications for the included testable variables and hypotheses are laid out, the notion of major and minor boycotts will be an important distinction also in my study.

2.3 Variables and hypotheses

The independent variables in this study are based on the theoretical discussions in section 2.1 and 2.2 above. The four combinations that will be used are illustrated in figure 1 and further explained below. The dependent variable is level of democracy, or democratization. The essential question asked is what the democratizing effects of boycotts of parliamentary elections in the Arab world are? In other words, do election boycotts play a role in the process of democratization in Arab states, and if so, which one? Does it have any effect at all, and is it positive?

The answers to these questions may differ based on how one defines democracy and democratic change. Perhaps certain aspects of what constitutes a democratic political system will be affected, and others not. Moreover, some boycotts may have a positive (or negative) effect on democratization in the long run, while others might have short-term implications. With the exception of Beaulieu (2006) and Kelley (2012), most of the existing literature on boycotts has focused exclusively on the immediate effects a boycott has on the democratic legitimacy of that same particular election. This thesis, on the other hand, will focus on the more long-term democratizing effects of election boycotts in Arab states. This will be achieved through the testing of boycott effects on the democratic level of the subsequent

election instead of the effects on the election that is being boycotted. Furthermore, the dependent variables will not merely consist of a country's general democratic level, but crucial factors necessary to achieve democratic change in an authoritarian political system will also be included.

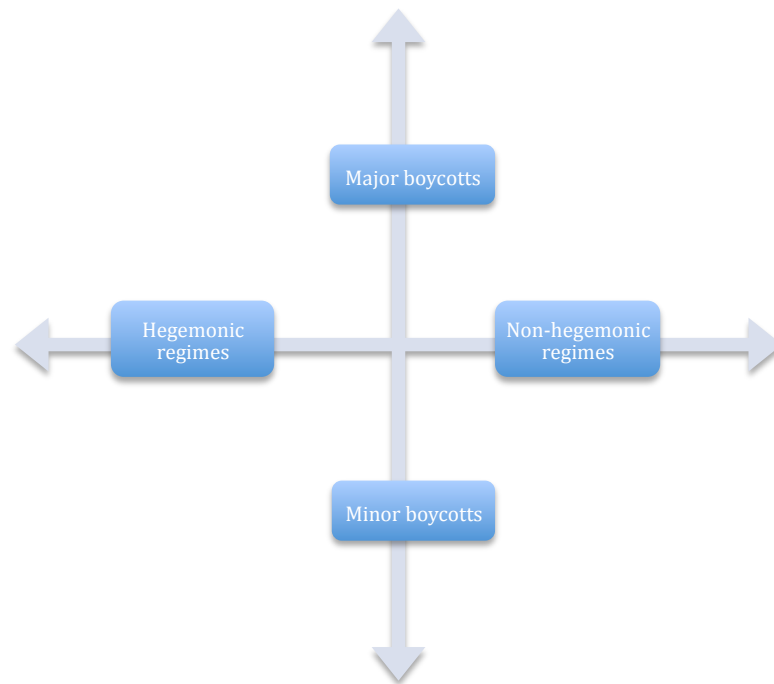
2.3.1 Independent variables: A typology

The independent variable in this study is first and foremost the act of election boycott by the opposition. As the literature review has shown, however, election boycotts can vary greatly based on who conduct them, and so can their democratizing effects. This is why minor and major boycotts will be tested separately in this study.

Moreover, the first section of this theoretical chapter has revealed that participation in elections is not producing any democratic progress in the Arab region, and especially not in "monopoly over resources"-states (Lust-Okar, 2008; 2009a; see also Bellin, 2004), or what I will label hegemonic states. Perhaps a boycott will have a greater impact there than in states where elections might produce at least an alternation of elites? As far as I am aware, nobody has studied the impact of boycotts using this distinction to date. What is more, no one has studied the effect of minor and major boycotts on democratization in the Arab region.

Based on the literature review on these subjects in this chapter, I will argue that these two factors, or distinctions, are important if one wishes to find the possible effects of election boycotts in the Arab region. As shown in figure 1 below, by distinguishing between minor and major boycotts, and between hegemonic and non-hegemonic states, it is possible to consider four combinations of election boycotts, and what effect on the democratization process each of them could have. The first distinction is between types of boycotts and the other is between types of states/regimes.

Figure 1: A typology of election boycotts



Each boycott will thus be defined by type, and each state based on whether or not the state elites' have a monopoly over the state resources. On the basis of the literature reviewed, a general thesis can be postulated: A major boycott will be more likely to succeed in positively affecting a state's democratization process than a minor boycott, and a boycott will be more likely to have an impact in hegemonic states than in non-hegemonic states.

2.3.2 General democratic level

Based on the literature review of the democratization theories in this chapter, it is possible to conclude that the Arab region has seen little transformation when it comes to substantial change in a democratic direction. Hence, the democratizing effects of participating or boycotting elections in Arab states should not be overestimated. This is particularly true when measuring democratic change on a "deeper" lever, or based on a broad definition (see Dahl, 1971). Nonetheless, democratic performance on a general level should still be tested from one election to another, whenever boycotts occur. Although it seems unlikely that a boycott will have an impact when democratization is broadly defined, it has to be tested before it can be ruled out. Whichever combination of the boycott typology presented in figure 1 is applied, the outcome will probably be the same.

On the basis of this I set forth my first hypothesis:

H1: *Neither minor nor major boycotts have any effect on the general democratic level of the Arab states.*

2.3.3 Political reform

“There are multiple causal pathways to achieving democracy (or a more democratic government). All these paths to democratic change, however, pass through at least one of the following two changes: changes to existing laws, or increased compliance with existing laws” (Beaulieu, 2006: 121). The latter is related to the variable discussed under 2.3.4, while changes to existing laws is the dependent variable of interest in this subsection. The problem of institutional engineering is evident in all the Arab states holding elections. As previously pointed out, many of the Arab states do not use force (at least not only) or adhere to obvious cheating. Instead, they make sure the constitution and electoral laws benefit the ruling elite or party. In the Arab monarchies, the same methods are used to get the wanted results, but what is beneficial for the ruling family may be a more fragmented parliament, rather than a strong loyal party. Whatever the aim is, the methods are similar and they are strongly related to institutional engineering, as explained more thoroughly before (Lust-Okar, 2009b; Sater, 2009; Kamrava, 2009; Hourani, Naaman, Assidon, Karam, Kassis, 'Aziz, and Khaled, 1998). When the laws are flawed, political reform is a crucial element in improving the fairness of an election. This is also highlighted by for instance the Freedom House (2011) when they measure freedom and the level of democracy around the world, as well as in guidelines for international election observation and monitoring²⁰.

Moreover, election boycotts can be a means to pressure the incumbent regime to adhere to political reform. This is more likely if the opposition boycotting wins support of either the domestic electorate or the international community (which promotes democracy), or both (Beaulieu, 2006). Either way, this process of changing the existing laws is dependent on the participation of the incumbent elite: “Depending on the extent to which the pressure exerted by the boycott has been successful, the incumbent may enact reform (...) to the next election”

²⁰ Among the monitor guidelines mentioning the importance of political reform, one finds the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights: <http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/nordem/publications/manual/> [08.03.2011], and the Handbook for European Union Election Observation: http://eeas.europa.eu/_human_rights/election_observation/docs/handbook_en.pdf [08.03.2011].

(Beaulieu, 2006: 123). If, indeed, the incumbent regime does enact political reform, it can arguably be seen as an important democratic improvement, following the definitions of electoral democracies (see for instance Stepan and Robertson, 2003; Przeworski, 2000). However, as the history of political liberalization in the Arab world has shown up to date: Reform may also be a maneuver by the incumbent to maintain power. Either by amending existing laws in a way that does not really make a difference, or by not adhering to the new laws in future elections (Posusney, 2002; Hinnebusch, 2006). Hence, the presence of international monitors may be necessary to make sure the laws are followed, especially after electoral reforms. Nonetheless, political reform is a necessary step towards a more democratic political system, and will thus be tested in this study. Beaulieu (2006) found a strong causal correlation between major boycotts and political reform in her statistical study of boycotts around the world. More precisely, she "...found that major election boycotts increase the probability of political reform" (2006: 212). On the other hand, she could not find this causation when looking at minor boycotts.

Based on this and the previous discussions regarding minor and major boycotts as well regime type, I set forth these hypotheses:

H2a: *Minor boycotts will not affect the likelihood for political reform in Arab states.*

H2b: *Major boycotts have a positive effect on the likelihood for political reform in Arab states.*

H2c: *The positive effect of boycotts on the likelihood for political reform will be more extensive in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic Arab states.*

2.3.4 International monitors

"Compliance with existing laws is slightly more difficult to measure, but the invitation of international election observers (to the next election) seems to be a reasonable signal that existing laws will be followed more closely. Observers are neutral third parties whose presence at an election is not intended to help the government write new electoral law but whose purpose is simply to observe the extent to which the existing law is upheld" (Beaulieu, 2006: 123).

As mentioned briefly above, the abolishing of existing unjust and undemocratic laws and enacting political reform is not sufficient to conclude that the country has moved to a more democratic stage. It is also essential that the regime adheres to the electoral laws, whenever they are more or less democratically designed. The presence of international monitors can increase the probability of this being the case. Indeed, recent research has pointed out this causation: The presence of observers during an election is associated with less fraud and cheating at the polling stations as well as an improved quality regarding other elements of free and fair elections (Hyde, 2007; Kelley, 2012). Additionally, some scholars argue that monitoring an election can raise the confidence of the opposition in those particular elections, which can arguably be said to be positive for their performance in the pre-election period (Elklit and Reynolds, 2002; Chand, 1997). “Monitors could also improve elections by helping opposition parties address their grievances before the election. Organizations often arrive well in advance of the election day and encourage reforms in preparation for the election” (Kelley, 2012: 9).

However, why would incumbent authoritarian regimes invite international monitors if this would force them to play by more democratic rules? Most likely it is because the international benefits of holding democratic elections, or what is perceived as such, are comprehensive enough for the ruling elite to “take the risk”. The ruling elites often risk political extinction if they lose an election, and that is why they will continue to cheat even with international monitors present (Scheideman, 2010). The use of strategic manipulation is intensified, and if they succeed, the election might be internationally certified (Carapico, 1998). In fact, “electoral system engineering seems likely to increase in direct proportion to the success of domestic and/or foreign election monitors’ ability to prevent the time-honored practices of interference and fraud” (Posusney, 1998: 12). Hence, the risk increases for the opposition to lose a fraud election, which will be internationally accepted as reasonably free and fair. According to Beaulieu and Hyde (2009), this is why the probability for an opposition boycott increases when international observers are present. Kelley (2009) has shown, on the other hand, that this is only true when the international monitoring organizations are not credible; when the likelihood for them to overlook fraud, strategic manipulation, and institutional engineering is high. Some organizations are more likely to endorse fraud elections than others. Hence, “opposition parties should only expect credible organizations with a record of criticizing fraud to help their cause” (Kelley, 2012). Nonetheless, in general, most scholars agree that the presence of international monitors is good for the probability of a more

democratic election than when they are not present.

Whether or not this also increases the likelihood for election boycotts is not what this study is about, and it will thus not be tested. Whether or not election boycotts increases the chances for monitors being invited to the next elections is, on the other hand, of great interest. According to Beaulieu's (2006) worldwide study of election boycotts, major election boycotts can pressure the regime to invite election observers to future elections. Again, she demonstrates how minor boycotts do not hold the same legitimacy as a representative of the opposition, and thus do not have the same effect. There is no obvious reason for why this should not be the case in Arab authoritarian states as well. Moreover, the effect in hegemonic states should be more extensive than in non-hegemonic states:

H3a: *Minor boycotts will not affect the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election in Arab states.*

H3b: *Major boycotts have a positive effect on the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election in Arab states.*

H3c: *The positive effect of boycotts on the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election will be more extensive in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic Arab states.*

2.3.5 Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning

While political reform and international monitoring of elections may improve the quality of the laws concerning the elections as well as the actual adherence to those laws on the day of the elections, the importance of pre-election conditions is also essential for the fairness of the election itself. This variable labeled free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning incorporates several of Dahl's (1971) necessary guarantees in a democracy, but is also crucial for being able to determine the fairness and freeness of an election. Many factors influence this pre-election atmosphere. Three of the most important features will be included in this study: Pre-election violence, restrictions on the freedom for the opposition to conduct their campaigning, and restrictions on media or misuse of the media by the incumbent.

These types of pre-election conditions are not as easily captured and evaluated by monitors as what happens on Election Day, and in addition, their presence has less influence on possible improvements, although they usually do arrive earlier than the day of the election (Kelley, 2009; 2012). For this reason, although my definition of democracy in this study mainly focuses on electoral democracy, these aspects of pre-election ‘Dahlian’ guarantees should be tested separately from the two previous variables. Since the importance of this variable to the democratic level of a state is not very contested (see for instance Dahl, 1971; Haynes, 2001; Midgaard and Rasch, 2004; Lindberg, 2009; Levitsky and Way, 2002; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986), I will proceed to discuss the possible effects of election boycotts.

As pointed out before, few scholars have studied the effects of election boycotts on particular democratic qualities of the political system. Most of the research has been based on broader concepts of democracy. Beaulieu (2006) is an exception, but she has not studied the pre-election conditions. She has, however, tested the effect of major boycotts on violence in the same election as the one being boycotted. Her findings are not conclusive, because the cases where the violence correlates positively with boycotts, the boycotts are turning violent. In other words, boycotts increase the violence in an election when the opposition boycotting the election is representing what she names a Fearonian boycott²¹. Violent boycotts are not very common, and the conclusion is very self-explaining. However, it does reveal an important distinction, and that is the difference between opposition initiated violence and violent behavior/oppression carried out by the regime and its apparatus. Nevertheless, violence during an election period is an indication of low fairness in the electoral system.

The fact that few scholars have studied the possible impact of boycotts on free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning may indicate that it is because the theoretical arguments suggesting such causations are too weakly founded. On the other hand, the threat to boycott is very often spelled out early in the campaign period. Although it occasionally is not carried out on the day of election, this implies that it is not only a protest against the possible cheating conducted on Election Day but also in the pre-election period. Sometimes, this is also explicitly expressed as the reason for encouraging people to boycott an election (Beaulieu, 2006; Frankel, 2010). If a major boycott has the legitimacy and support to pressure changes

²¹ “Such boycotts are labeled “Fearonian” as they personify actors in opposition to the government in Fearon’s model of (...) Fearonian boycotters are trying to threaten the regime with the possibility of future rebellion” (Beaulieu, 2006: 33).

on reform and monitors, it might also have the same impact when it comes to undemocratic pre-election conditions. More importantly, however, is the fact that it will be academically interesting to test the effect of boycotts in ways that have not been prioritized before, not least to see if there are differences between a boycott's influence on electoral laws and the adherence to them, and other important features of a free and fair election, such as violence and media freedom. Since there are few theoretical guidelines, the natural assumption would be none or little effects of boycotts on democratization.

On the basis of this I thus set forth the following hypotheses:

H4a: *Neither minor nor major boycotts will have any effect on how free and fair the atmosphere for political campaigning in Arab states in the subsequent election is.*

H4b: *Whether or not the Arab state experiencing a boycott is hegemonic or non-hegemonic will not have any effect on how free and fair the atmosphere for political campaigning in the subsequent election is.*

2.3.6 Boycotts in general

None of the literature reviewed or the hypotheses set forth in this section have indicated any general positive effect of boycotts, due to the theoretically low expectations for any democratizing effects of minor boycotts. Neither scholars focusing on democratization by elections (see for instance Lindberg, 2009; Howard and Roessler, 2006; Marinov and Hyde, 2009) or election boycotts theories (see for instance Beaulieu, 2006; Frankel, 2010) anticipate democratizing effects of boycotts in general. Although the expectations of effects are low, such a test needs to be performed before it can be ruled out:

H5: *Election boycotts will in general not have any democratizing effect on the subsequent election in Arab states.*

2.4 Summary of the theoretical argument

Throughout this chapter I have presented theoretical arguments for why testing the democratizing effects of election boycotts in the Arab world is of academic interest. The chapter started off with defining democracy and democratic change, before discussing the theories of democratization by elections, with a special focus on Staffan I. Lindberg's theory

and book with the same name (2009). The main argument is that the mere act of holding subsequent elections in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes will enhance democratization. In many cases and regions this is true, but not for the Arab states. The first section of this chapter demonstrates that the Arab region in many ways could be said to be the world's last "bulwark" against democracy. Additionally, political openings and an introduction of elected parliaments have not had any significant democratizing effects. This is even more so in the cases of what I have labeled hegemonic states, meaning regimes that have a monopoly over the state resources. Since participating alone is not sufficient to influence the rules of the game in a more democratic manner in Arab states, what about the effects of boycotting these fraud elections? The fact that the opposition in the region today to a greater extent than before makes use of the boycott strategy also highlights the importance of such a research project.

The second section consequently focuses on boycott as a phenomenon as well as a strategy for nonparticipation in parliamentary elections. After defining boycott, I set forth to describe its core characteristics: All boycotters have an aim of a broadest possible appeal; the group initiating a boycott is usually weak compared to the objects they are trying to affect; and most boycotts have a moral objective in mind. Then, the current boycott theories as well as the different types of election boycotts are presented. The most important lesson for this thesis is the distinction between minor and major boycotts, as well the empirical evidence indicating democratizing effects from major but not minor boycotts.

The third and last section deals with my variables and my hypotheses, which are constructed on the basis of the two theoretical sections described above. My hypotheses can be summarized as the following: A major boycott will be more likely to succeed in positively affecting a state's democratization process than a minor boycott, and a boycott will be more likely to have an impact in hegemonic states than in non-hegemonic states.

The next chapter will outline the methodology, operationalizations and data for the analyses of the thesis.

3.0 Methodology

“The content of science is primarily the methods and the rules, not the subject matter ...” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 9). Not everyone will necessarily adhere to such a firm statement, but it is nevertheless true that a good research project depends on thorough methodological work. It is important to be aware of the most suitable method as well as being able to conduct it properly. This chapter will thus first describe and explain my methodological choices. Second, the data used in the thesis will be covered, and finally, I will account for my operationalizations of the variables and describe their measurement validity.

3.1 Research strategy: Quantitative versus Qualitative methods

Methodological approaches are usually divided into two opposing camps within the field of political science. Generally speaking, a scholar can either choose a strategy of a large-N generalizing, quantitative approach, or a small-N in-depth, qualitative approach. This methodological debate is heated and it is hard to determine which method is the best. Even so, the scholarly debate reveals certain guidelines for when a quantitative method is appropriate and when a more qualitative approach may be more suitable. Thus, first, a short review of this debate will be conducted. Second, based on this review, a justification of my methodological choices will be presented.

“If at all possible one should generally use the statistical (or perhaps even the experimental) method instead of the weaker comparative method” (Lijphart, 1971: 685). In other words, Lijphart strongly supports quantitative methods over the qualitative methods, such as the comparative method. Charles C. Ragin, on the other hand, takes the opposite stand and states the following: “The comparative method is superior to the statistical method in several important respects” (Ragin, 1987: 15). First of all, he argues, many social science concepts are difficult to measure. Thus, in-depth case studies can to a bigger extent take contextual considerations into account, which also strengthens the measurement validity (George and Bennett, 2005; Ragin, 1987). Secondly, one of the strong points of the comparative method is its ability to more closely comprehend the causal complexity in a society. First and foremost, this is because the researcher must conduct in-depth analyses of each case, and thus get to know them in a way a statistician could never accomplish. Also, the statistical method may be best suited to make generalizations, but the case-oriented comparative methods are better suited to develop new theories (George and Bennett, 2005; Ragin, 1987; 2004). Thirdly,

another criticism of the quantitative method is how it relates, or often fails to relate, to what Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett (2005) calls the “equifinality” of a research design and theory building. The term refers to the fact that the same outcome can come from different sets of independent variables. In addition to the fact that a quantitative analysis will not have the means to address this methodological problem, George and Bennett (2005) have criticized the method for not being able to properly determine if other not-included explanatory variables can explain as much as the ones included. According to Ragin (2004), the case-oriented researchers expect such combinations of causal relationships and are thus better equipped to take these into consideration.

Arend Lijphart (1971) pioneered what has become a classic critique of the comparative method, namely that it operates with too many variables and too few units. Furthermore, the latter increases the problematic sides of the former. King et al. criticize the comparative method for not having the ability and tools to evaluate (test) whether the dataset is lacking important variables and thus risking getting “...omitted variable bias” (King et al., 1994: 169). Another issue is the exact opposite problem: A qualitatively oriented scholar risks including trivial causal factors due to a desire of finding holistic explanations. However, according to Ragin (2004), critics fail to recognize that the in-depth knowledge of each case characterizing qualitative research actually makes it easier to avoid the bias associated with omitted variables. Nonetheless, one of the strongest criticisms of qualitative studies is their inability to derive generalizations from the results, due to the few units/cases included. John Gerring does not accept this view and defines case studies as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (2004: 342). Others, for instance Peter Hall (2003), have argued along the same lines. Still, it must be recognized that a consequence of studying cases in-depth is that you can say less about the broader and general aspects of the world.

King et al. (1994) argue that a scholar must be explicit on whether she is conducting a descriptive or an explanatory study. Moreover, “... descriptive inferences alone is often unsatisfying and incomplete” (King et al., 1994: 75). Statisticians generally support this view, while a general research goal of always seeking to find causal inferences is challenged by qualitatively oriented researchers. John Gerring (2004) makes the case that such an ambition is overreaching and, furthermore, that many classics within the field of political science are conducted with the aim to derive descriptive inference. According to Przeworski and Teune

(1970), truly excellent research is incorporating the two incompatible ideals of generalizability and accuracy. Hopefully, that is what my thesis will eventually do. It aims to discover possible effects of boycotts on the democratization process in Arab states. In other words, my thesis is seeking to find causal inference. However, being a relatively small-N study, possible generalization of the results should be done with caution.

As the methodological scholarly debate, or at least a portion of it, presented above has shown, there are some studies and some purposes that preferably should adapt a quantitative research design, and some studies and purposes that would be better examined with a qualitative approach. I will argue that a comparative historical analysis will be the most suitable approach for my thesis, although the total number of cases examined²² challenges the notion of in-depth analyses. In fact, the coding of some of the variables is quantitative in style, and so are the table analyses. "Comparative historical social scientists (...) repeatedly find themselves making the case for broad-minded and pluralistic scholarly agendas" (Skocpol, 2003: 411). Skocpol urges the researcher to break away from conformist rules when choosing research design. This thesis will to some extent attempt to do so by including both quantitative table analyses where all the cases are included and more qualitative analyses of the most interesting cases in the same research design.

The nature of my research question constitutes a relatively small-N, due to my regional focus and limited time period. Possible problems based on how these cases are chosen are discussed further in subsection 3.3.2. For now, the actual number of cases, or units, is the relevant factor. There are sixteen Arab states and one Arab territory included in the study. Five of them have no elected parliament. Of the twelve remaining countries, all of them have experienced at least one election with one or several parties boycotting since 1990, which is the first year included in the study. Many of them cannot be included as cases because they are boycotts of the latest election in the respective countries. In fact, two-thirds of the states had boycotts in their latest elections. Even though it is difficult to measure the effects of these particular boycotts, the high number of recent boycotts certainly indicates the need for, and relevance of, a study of boycott effects. However, even when these recent cases are excluded there are still seventeen boycott cases out of a total of thirty-nine elections left to study. Only when all of them are included could it be possible to test any effects statistically, but even

²² There are seventeen cases of boycotted elections and twenty-two elections with no boycotts included in the study. The latter are included to control the possible effects of boycotts with elections that are not boycotted.

then it would be difficult to get statistically significant results. Following King et al. (1994) and their notion of increasing the number of observations to get as close to the statistical method as possible, I should have conducted a regression analysis of all the boycotts without any distinction between minor and major boycotts, although the literature suggests that minor boycotts will not have any effect. However, based on theory and the relatively low number of cases, this does not seem like a recommendable method for my study. Moreover, such a method could only be applied to test one single hypothesis, and would not be compatible if the cases were distinguished based on the typology in figure 1. I will therefore make use of non-statistical methods in this thesis. Not necessarily because “the nature of the method limits the number of cases (...) the investigator is able to consider” (Ragin, 1987: 51), but rather due to the fact that the number of cases rules out the statistical method for most of my hypotheses.

On the other hand, more qualitative methods may be the best option either way. The effects of election boycotts are not very extensively tested up to date. Neither is the possible distinction of effects based on hegemonic versus non-hegemonic Arab states. Hence, although this is a deductive and theory testing research project, the qualitative method will be better equipped to also generate new theories and hypotheses. Moreover, the effects of election boycotts are rarely straightforward causations. Potential explanatory variables can behave differently depending on other factors and the context. In other words, a variable might not have an effect if seen and tested as the only factor, but the result could be different if “...an additional condition, one not included in the original study, was also present” (George and Bennett, 2005: 156). Furthermore, a variable may have different effects in different contexts, i.e. that boycotts will have an effect in hegemonic states but not in non-hegemonic countries. “Such contextualization of the causal importance of different conditions is the rule (...) in most case-oriented studies” (Ragin, 1987: 49).

Nonetheless, as already briefly mentioned and further explained in section 3.2, the utilization of the method of comparative historical analysis will not be purely qualitative. Following Skocpol (2003), I will combine quantitative and qualitative elements in this research project. However, the statistical method will not be employed.

3.2 Comparative Historical Analysis

“I see it not as a theory or a specific method or technique, but as an approach that has been undertaken by scholars with varied academic, theoretical, and methodological affiliations and

preferences” (Amenta, 2003: 93). This is how Edwin Amenta describes the essence of what he calls comparative and historical causal research. Although my thesis and my method is more comparative than historical, it is still possible to argue that in general, the methodological choices made are within the wide range of possibilities of a comparative historical analysis approach. First in this section, I will discuss the content of this method. Then, I will explain how it is applied in my research design.

As already mentioned, the methodological approach labeled ‘comparative historical analysis’ is not tied to or unified by one particular method or theory, but nonetheless, “...all work in this tradition does share a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: 10). In other words, if a study does not involve all of these three elements, it does not fall in under the umbrella of comparative historical approaches. The first characteristic, the causal argument, refers to causal inference and the importance of discovering explanations for the particular political or social outcome of interest in a study: Only research with causal propositions, which are testable, can truly be said to be a comparative historical analysis (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003). Moreover, the study must have a historical approach, which means that historical sequences and relevant processes unfolding over time must be part of the analysis. Simply put, one must be conscious of the time aspect of a causal relationship. Paul Pierson (2003) argues that researchers all too often only look at the causes and outcomes that are close in time, which often results in the exclusion of important, slow-acting factors. “Finally, comparative historical inquiry is distinctive because its practitioners engage in systematic and contextualized comparisons of similar and contrasting cases” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: 13). This is what really separates this method from statistical analytical tools, because the systematic comparisons are contextualized, an exercise which is impossible for statisticians. “Above all, the approach makes possible a dialogue between theory and evidence of an intensity that is rare in quantitative social research” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: 13).

This definition of the comparative historical analysis approach demonstrates one of its (in my opinion) most appealing features, namely the fact that it is arguably situated between the two extreme positions of the methodological debate reviewed in section 3.1. Moreover, notwithstanding that the boundaries of what such an approach means is clearly defined, its advocates wholeheartedly emphasize the importance of pluralistic scholarly agendas

(Skocpol, 2003). These agendas incorporate combinations of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and consider both induction and deduction as valuable components in the same research project (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003; see also Ragin, 1987). As will be shown below, this is exactly what I will do in my thesis. Although a comparative historical analysis does not adhere to just one theoretical framework or indicate only one mode of analyzing, it does offer distinct analytic tools for how the researcher should study the world. I will thus give more details on how the comparative historical analysis approach is applied in this thesis in the next subsection.

3.2.1 Comparative historical analysis applied in this thesis

First of all, does my approach fulfill the three distinctive characteristics of a comparative historical analysis? I will argue that it does. My research question refers to possible causal effects between election boycotts and democratization, and the aim of this thesis is to determine and explain what these effects are, if any. Moreover, this is done in a systematic comparative manner over time, but not statistically. Hence, by integrating contextualization as well as historical changes and processes, I am arguably carrying out research within the framework of the comparative historical approach. Moreover, I am open-minded when it comes to which methods are best suitable for what purposes. In fact, I employ a quantitative approach and tools for the analyses of possible effects of boycotts through a systematic quantitative comparison of all of the elections, while more thorough qualitative analyses of the most relevant and interesting cases are included to control for other variables and possible effects of diverse contexts. By combining these two approaches, it is possible to be both systematic and to undertake a dialogue between theory and empirical evidence in the same methodological design.

My methodological choices will be further illustrated in the next two sections, where my data and my operationalizations will be described and explained.

3.3 Data

“Data are systematically collected elements of information about the world. They can be qualitative or quantitative in style” (King et al., 1994: 23). The data collected for this study are both quantitative and qualitative in style. The data used for testing the hypotheses are quantified and compared in table analyses, while the analyses of the most interesting cases, based on those data, are qualitative. The data in this thesis consist of my own collected data,

other scholars’ research and datasets, and qualitative data from secondary sources such as newspapers, academic articles and books, as well as election monitoring reports wherever applicable.

For the independent variables *Boycotts*, *Minor boycotts* and *Major boycotts*, I have collected my own data, following the procedures described in table 2. It has been important to make sure the collection is qualitatively acceptable as well as replicable. The method employed is thus comparable to other researchers’ methods when collecting similar data (see for instance Beaulieu, 2006). Moreover, the same procedure for searching has been applied on different sources and databases, as explained in table 2. If only one of these “search engines” or databases had been drawn on, it may not have been sufficient to make sure that all boycotts were identified. That is why LexisNexis Academic, Google, and the American University in Cairo (AUC) library resources all have been made use of. I thus feel confident that the data collection has been conducted in an academic manner. The actual sources of information vary from newspapers, scholarly articles, election monitor reports, and books. The independent variable *Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes* is based on the description of Arab states in Ellen Lust-Okar’s (2008) chapter about Jordan in her and Saloua Zerhouni’s book *Political Participation in the Middle East*, and the data are consequently collected from the same source.

Table 2: Data sources

Variable	Source
<i>Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes</i>	Ellen Lust-Okar (2008).
<i>Major boycotts</i>	<p>The author’s own collection from <i>LexisNexis Academic</i> (World News, Major Papers). Each country was searched twice for every year in the period 1990-2010, first using the search terms [country] and <i>election</i>, and then [country] and <i>boycott</i> and <i>election</i>.</p> <p>Further collection was performed based on the <i>American University in Cairo library resources</i>, using the same search terms as for the second search in LexisNexis. Only the years with parliamentary elections were searched for.</p> <p>Finally, a general search was carried out in <i>Google</i>, using [country] [year] and <i>election</i> and <i>boycott</i> for each country for the years with</p>

	<p>parliamentary elections.</p> <p>After this process of collection, boycotts were sorted into minor and major.</p>
<i>Minor boycotts</i>	See above.
<i>Boycotts</i>	<p>See major boycotts.</p> <p>This variable includes both minor and major boycotts, and distinguishes between the elections experiencing boycotts and those that did not.</p>
<i>General democratic level</i>	Freedom House (2011): <i>Freedom in the world</i> , country results from 1990 till 2010.
<i>Political reform</i>	<p>The author's own collection from <i>LexisNexis Academic</i> (World News, Major Papers), using the search terms [<i>country</i>], [<i>year</i>], and <i>reform</i> for the period between elections in the period 1990-2010.</p> <p>Further collection was performed based on <i>The American University in Cairo library resources</i> as well as <i>Google</i>, using the same search terms as for LexisNexis Academic.</p>
<i>International monitors</i>	<p><u>Before 2004:</u> Judith Kelley's dataset "Quality of elections data" (Appendix 2). The variable is named <i>Siemass: International observers</i> in that particular dataset.</p> <p><u>After 2004:</u> The author's own collection from <i>LexisNexis Academic</i> (World News, Major Papers) and <i>Google</i>, using the search terms [<i>country</i>], [<i>year</i>], and <i>international monitors</i>.</p>
<i>Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning</i>	<p><u>Before 2004:</u> Judith Kelley's dataset "Quality of elections data" (Appendix 2).</p> <p>By combining the variables <i>sr11cheat: Overall pre-election political conditions</i>, and <i>sr13viol: Pre-election Violence and Unrest</i>, I could determine whether or not the pre-election conditions had improved from one election to another.</p> <p><u>After 2004:</u> The author's own collection from the same source used for Kelley's dataset, namely</p>

	“Country Reports on Human Rights Practices” ²³ , 2004-2010, the U.S. State Department, sections 1 through 3. The coding process followed the same manual as described in the dataset’s codebook (Kelley, 2010).
<i>Qualitative control variables</i>	<p>The author’s own collection of data through extensive searches in the <i>American University in Cairo library resources</i>, <i>LexisNexis Academic</i>, and <i>Google</i>. The time period of interest was between the two elections in question.</p> <p>The search terms were [<i>country</i>], [<i>year</i>], and the term(s) of interest based on the variable(s) of interest.</p> <p>Where election monitor reports were available, these were also used.</p>

The dependent variables also come from different sources. Data for the *General democratic level* consist of Freedom House’s (2011) ranking of freedom in the world. The problem with Freedom House is that their ranking lacks records for Palestine in the 1990s, including the year of the general elections in 1996. However, other renowned democracy rankings, such as Polity IV Project²⁴, also lack data from this case. More importantly, they also lack information on other states relevant for this study. Hence, the Freedom House dataset is probably the best one available. For the variable *Political reform*, I have collected the data myself. The procedures and sources are further described in table 2, and the method is similar to the one used on minor and major boycotts, although this variable obviously operates with other search terms. In other words, I also believe these data have been collected in an academically satisfactory mode.

The data for the variables *International monitors* and *Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning* are both partially derived from Judith Kelley’s dataset “Quality of elections data” (Appendix 2), collected for her forthcoming research project *Do international election monitors increase or decrease opposition boycotts?* (Kelley, 2012). She is currently an assistant professor at Duke University and she got her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2001. Since then, Kelley has published a book and many scholarly articles in renowned

²³ The reports are accessible on the website of the U.S. Department of state: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>

²⁴ Their rankings can be downloaded here: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

journals²⁵. In other words, her research should be of good quality. What is more, the procedures for collecting and coding the data are well documented in the codebook (Kelley, 2010). The weakness of Kelley's dataset is that it only covers the cases up to the year 2004. Hence, for the period after 2004 I had to find data from other sources or collect them myself. With regards to the variable international monitors I chose to use the same procedures as for the boycott variables and political reform, due to the simplicity of the information I was seeking: Whether or not international monitors were present in the various elections or not. The methods employed are described in table 2, and although the data came from two different sources and methods of collecting them, the utilization of these data is unproblematic. The reason for this is the character of the variable and the fact that both methods are replicable and highly reliable.

The collection of data after 2004 for the variable free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning, on the other hand, is more problematic. First of all, the data consist of two variables independent of each other (see table 2 for supplementary information). Second, it is demanding to ensure that the collecting procedure is exactly the same as the one used by Kelley and her associates. Finally, these data are coded from 0-3 (see table 3), and it is not possible to guarantee that the coding will be identical, although the coding procedures are thoroughly described in the codebook (Kelley, 2010). On the other hand, by making use of the same source as the one the dataset "Quality of election data" is drawn from, and with a strict duplication of the methods for collecting and coding, as described in the codebook manual, it should be possible to fill in the missing data for the period 2005-2010. Nonetheless, these concerns with regards to the data collection should be kept in mind when applying and analyzing the results of this particular variable.

As will be discussed in greater length in section 3.4 below, the most interesting cases, based on the results from the analyses of the variables already discussed, will be studied more thoroughly. Either to try to explain why the effects were not as anticipated in the theoretical chapter, or to control for other factors that might have influenced the outcome if the table analyses indicate correlation between some of the independent and some of or all of the dependent variables. These *Control variables* are not defined in advance, due to the complexity of possible important factors in general, but also because some factors may

²⁵ These professional details are based on her own CV online: <http://www.duke.edu/~jkkelley/>

influence the outcome differently in one case than another. Hence, the actual data sources are not as simple to define at this stage. Nevertheless, the method of collecting them is. The procedure is explained in table 2, but it is important to stress that only cases, or more precisely elections, of interest are examined and analyzed qualitatively and only in those cases are additional control data collected.

In general, the data for this thesis are of good quality. Even so, the reliability of the data collected will be further discussed below, before concentrating on the measurement validity and operationalizations of the variables in the final part of this chapter.

3.3.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two of the most crucial concepts in all social science research, and achieving good levels of validity and reliability is underlined as the key elements of how to obtain good data quality by most scholars. In short, “validity refers to measuring what we think we are measuring”, and “reliability means that applying the same procedure in the same way will always produce the same measure” (King et al., 1994: 25).

Reliability is, simply put, thus referring to how reliable your data is. According to Sigmund Grønmo (2004), there are primarily two types of reliability, namely equivalence and stability. The former refers to the degree of “agreement” between collections of data conducted independent of each other, but at the same time. Hence, the reliability would be improved if several scholars would get the same results using different data. In other words, the reliability is a measure of the quality of the data collection, which means that poor data collections could affect the results and give variation in the data that does not reflect variations in the actual population. Stability is referring to the degree of accordance between data collected with the same tools, but at different points in time (Grønmo, 2004).

Validity can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the quantification or operationalization of the variables, making sure they correspond to the theoretical concept (Adcock and Collier, 2001; Midtbø, 2007). “The unemployment rate may be a good indicator of the state of the economy, but the two are not synonymous” (King et al., 1994: 25). External validity says something about whether the observations are actually reflecting the population they were drawn from. Therefore, one must avoid selection bias: “Choosing observations in a manner that systematically distorts the population from which

they were drawn” (King et al., 1994: 28). This is why Lijphart (1971), among others, emphasizes the importance of random selection.

As shown above, the reliability of the data collected in this thesis is good. Either I have used data from other researchers where the procedures are documented in the corresponding codebook, and thus replicable, or I have thoroughly documented my own methods of data collection whenever applicable, which also makes it possible for others to replicate. I will also argue that both the internal and external validity of this thesis are good. Both subjects will be discussed in length in the subsequent subsections, and will thus not be elaborated upon here.

3.3.2 Case selection

The Arab cases in this thesis are partly selected on the basis of geographical area. This can lead to bias if the regional focus is correlated with the dependent variable (Geddes, 1990). Indeed, the Arab countries are partially chosen because they correlate negatively with level of democracy. This is what makes the region so puzzling for political scientists. That Arab states have been able to resist democratic change while all other parts of the world have seen substantial democratization, at least among some of the countries. Ragin (2004) rejects this criticism altogether, saying a case-oriented researcher should select the cases she considers to be interesting to explain a phenomenon, independent of possible selection bias. Moreover, he emphasizes that the selecting of cases at the beginning of a qualitative study is no more than a working hypothesis that assumes that the cases are similar enough to be comparable. In dialogue with both the empirical facts and theoretical arguments, cases could be replaced or added (Ragin, 2004). Such a simplified and non-critical relation to the method of selection and modification of the selected cases is strongly criticized by many scholars, especially those operating within the range of statistical methods (King et al., 1994).

However, the selection of Arab states is not only chosen because they share similarities on the level of democracy. In fact, the intention of this study is to make an attempt of discovering differences in the dependent variable by distinguishing between dissimilar indicators of democracy, such as political reform and the presence of international monitors. If the variation on the dependent variables would be the same in all the Arab states, this thesis would be pointless. Furthermore, unless one finds support in the theories of exceptionalism, the regions common cultural features should not be the cause of this lack of democracy. Hence, the explanations must be found elsewhere, and this research project will hopefully be

a small contribution to the democratization literature focusing on the Middle East and North Africa. Most importantly, however, is the fact that within the time period of 1990-2010, all the parliamentary election observations have been included in the study, as long as they have been followed by another election. In other words, all the cases, which can possibly be included in the study, are taken into account. The cases not included are the elections before 1990. The justification for why 1990 has been chosen as the first year of study is simply because that year is seen as the beginning of what Huntington (1991) labeled the third wave of democratization. Moreover, the political liberalization processes in the Arab region also truly began in the early 1990s (Brumberg, 2004; Langohr, 2004; King, 2007). Presidential elections are excluded due to the many monarchies in the region, as well as the fact that several of the presidential elections were mere referendums with one candidate only. The five Arab countries without elected national parliaments are by natural causes also excluded from the study. This kind of missing data may indicate a methodological problem (Pennings, Keman, and Kleinnijenhuis, 2006), but since there are no elections to boycott in these five states, possible generalizations of the results to the Arab context are neither relevant for Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, nor United Arab Emirates. Hence, excluding these states is fairly uncomplicated.

3.4 Operationalizations

The process of operationalizing concepts is one of the most critical steps in an analysis. In their article about measurement validity, Adcock and Collier (2001) portray the possibility of getting a validity problem when going from the theoretical to the operational concept, if a scholar does not make sure that she indeed measures what she intended to. In other words, the validity of the variables is of principal importance in all research projects. Below, I will therefore account for how I have operationalized the variables in this thesis and explain why their internal validity are good. Information about the construction of the variables and the coding process are summarized in table 3.

3.4.1 The dependent variables

The goal of this thesis is to shed some light on the possible democratizing effects of an opposition boycott of parliamentary elections in the Arab world. The dependent variable should thus measure democratization or the level of democracy from one election to another. However, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, this region is generally authoritarian and has not experienced much democratization the last two decades. This is partially why boycott

effects is a relevant subject to study. This is also why I argue that the dependent variable should be divided into several variables, to be able to measure possible changes in important features of a democratic political system. The argumentation regarding which elements should be included in this study is elaborated upon in chapter 2. In this subsection, I will go through each of these four variables and explain the logic behind the operationalization processes.

The first variable is labeled *General democratic level*. It is supposed to measure general changes in the democratic level of a country. I have chosen to use Freedom House's (2011) definition and their democracy index when they measure freedom in the world every year. They base their index on Dahl's definition of democracy, and it could arguably be said to be an appropriate ranking for this purpose. The scale, which ranges from one to fourteen, is based on various issues associated with political and civil rights: The lower the score, the higher the level of democracy. The measurement validity should be good, based on the fact that Freedom House is a renowned actor. However, all index variables can easily become all encompassing, which means that it is difficult to assess if you actually measure what is intended. Some would also argue that all such indexes could possess ideological biases. In her paper about Arab exceptionalism, Iliya Harik (2006) has put forth similar critique against the Freedom House. Given that the concept of democracy is a multifaceted concept and that this variable should incorporate many aspects of democratization, however, I choose to keep a democracy index for this particular variable. Because of low expectations of change on a deeper level of democracy, an improvement of one is seen as sufficient to measure positive effects from one election to another.

The variable *Political reform* has been constructed from an exhaustive search of news sources in LexisNexis Academic, the AUC library resources as well as complementary searches using Google. For each of the thirty-nine elections, I searched for proof of political reform up until the subsequent election. Only passed legislation of electoral or constitutional reform was counted as political reform. This means that an effect is measured in an election if there is evidence of implemented reform before the next election. This way of operationalizing the variable and this method of collecting data involve some level of discretion on my part, which means a risk for potentially poor judgment. However, this depends on the reliability of the collection procedures, accounted for above, not the validity of the variable itself. Whether or not implemented reform is actually followed by the regime is another issue of concern, but that is rather a discussion about the importance of the variable in a democratization

perspective, than a critique against how it is measured. In other words, I will argue that the operationalization of the variable political reform is done in a way that secures high validity.

The variable *International monitors* is measured based on one simple principle: Whether or not international monitors are present in the election. They must be officially invited monitors, not unofficial observations, to be counted. Again, the possible effects of an election boycott are measured based on the invitation of monitors to the next election, following the intention of the thesis, namely to test more long-term effects rather than the immediate effects on the same election. The validity of this variable is without question high.

The decision on how to measure the final dependent variable, *Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning*, is more difficult to make. This is due to the complexity of the variable, including pre-election violence, media freedom, and fairness of campaigning conditions for the opposition. Fortunately, Judith Kelley (2012) has collected relevant data for her forthcoming research paper on boycotts and monitors. I thus combine two variables from her dataset “Quality of election data” (Appendix 2) when I measure this variable. One of them, *sr13viol: Pre-election Violence and Unrest*, captures “...the level of violence reported in the pre-election period” (Kelley, 2010: 10). The other one, *sr11cheat: Overall pre-election political conditions*, includes “...a number of behaviors that violate the international standards of a proper pre-election environment” (Kelley, 2010: 7). This includes restrictions on or misuse of the media, restrictions on the freedom to campaign as well as other measures of unfairness when it comes to campaigning opportunities for the opposition. In other words, it measures those factors I intend to test the boycott effect on. On the other hand, not only does these two variables individually include a variety of aspects of the pre-election campaigning atmosphere, which can imply similar problems as with the Freedom House democracy index, I also have to combine them to determine possible change. To compensate for this possible problem, only a total improvement of two (both variables’ scales range from 0-3) is counted as sufficient to measure democratizing effects, as further explained in table 3. All in all then, the validity should be relatively good also for this variable.

Table 3: Construction of the variables

Variable	Construction
<i>Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes</i>	1 if the state is defined as hegemonic, 0 if it is not.
<i>Boycotts</i>	1 if opposition boycotted the election, 0 otherwise.
<i>Major boycotts</i>	1 if majority of opposition boycotted the election, 0 otherwise.
<i>Minor boycotts</i>	1 if less than a majority of the opposition boycotted the election, 0 otherwise.
<i>General democratic level</i>	1 if there has been improvement in the overall democratic level of the country in the successive election, 0 otherwise. This is based on a scale from 1 to 14, where 1 is the most democratic/free, and 14 the least democratic/free. Improvement of 1 is sufficient.
<i>Political reform</i>	1 if there has been political reform enacted before the subsequent election, 0 otherwise.
<i>International monitors</i>	1 if international monitors attended the next election, 0 otherwise.
<i>Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning</i>	1 if there has been improvement in the pre-election atmosphere for political campaigning for the successive election, 0 otherwise. This coding is based on two independent variables (see table 2 for more information) ranging from 0-3, where 0 means no problems and 3 connotes major problems. A total improvement of 2 is sufficient.
<i>Qualitative control variables</i>	Not coded, due to their qualitative nature.

3.4.2 The independent variables

Logically, the independent variables in this thesis include the variables for election boycotts. There is also a variable determining regime type in the different states when it comes to monopoly over the state resources. In addition, although they are not accounted for in the theoretical chapter, control variables must be included in a deductive study. Otherwise, it would be impossible to determine if boycotts do have effects as well as to indicate how major the effects of a boycott may be (King et al., 1994). The latter variables will be dealt with in subsection 3.4.3, while the independent variables will be discussed below.

I have, as described in chapter 2, used Emily Ann Beaulieu's (2006) definitions of boycotts as a starting point for my own definitions when measuring the variables *Boycott*, *Minor boycotts*,

and *Major boycotts*. As long as one recognizable party of the opposition carries out a boycott, it is counted as a boycott. Whether or not it is also counted as a minor or major boycott depends on their size of oppositional support, as defined in the theoretical chapter. However, in a few countries, no parties are allowed to officially operate or run for parliament, while in some countries there are restrictions on certain types of parties, typically Islamist parties. This complicates the operationalization of these variables. The former problem is evident in Kuwait, and partially in Syria, where no true opposition parties are permitted (Yetiv, 2002; Haddad, 2005). The latter problem is apparent in Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria (Tessler, 2002). In Kuwait, there only exists one (illegal) party, the other candidates belong to different political groups or run on an ideological program similar to a party program (Assiri, 2007). In any case, this banned Islamist party conducted the boycotts in Kuwait, and hence, whether or not to include Kuwait in the study comes down to the question of whether or not to accept illegal parties as an opposition party, which is also relevant for the Moroccan and Algerian cases (the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has mostly participated as independents, at least up until the 2010 election). I have chosen to incorporate banned opposition parties in this thesis, due to Islamist parties' importance as part of the opposition in many Arab countries (Hinnebusch, 2006; Esposito, 1998; Ottaway and Carothers, 2004). Syria is the state included in the study with the most obvious façade elections, not least because the Baath party and their allies are secured a two-third majority in any election. Nonetheless, Syria has also experienced an increase in boycotts, both from the opposition in exile, political groupings within Syria, and from banned parties, such as the Kurdish party (CNN, 2003; IPU, 2007), and it will thus also be tested.

The last independent variable is *Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic states*. The justification for this variable is mostly based on the different works of Ellen Lust-Okar, and her notion of states with a monopoly over the state resources, both financially and coercively. Consequently, it is natural to use her definition when measuring which states that are hegemonic and which that are not. In her chapter about Jordan, she explicitly names the hegemonic states (Lust-Okar, 2008). It is therefore quite safe to state that the measurement validity for this variable is very high.

3.4.3 Control variables

When conducting statistical research projects one has to formulate control variables before the process of data collection, based on theoretical arguments, to make sure the regression entails

the necessary variables that might influence the outcome on the dependent variable (Midtbø, 2007; Skog, 2007). In this thesis, I have not formulated control variables before the first step of the analyses, but that does not mean they are not important. The reason for this is that the qualitative methods, described in subsection 3.2.1, are not only compatible with mere testing of hypotheses, but are also investigatory in style. The region under investigation in this study shares many similarities, but also entails many differences, especially when it comes to the settings and contexts the various elections are held in. Moreover, factors such as regime type, international context, a country's composition of religious and ethnic groups, and relevance of the parliament do not only vary among the Arab states, they are subject to change over time in one state as well.

Hence, with only eleven states and one territory under examination, controlling for some of these variables will not be sufficient. Instead, the methodological choices made opens up a possibility for studying some of the most interesting cases more thoroughly. Based on the results from the comparative table analyses on each dependent variable described above, those cases constituting a positive correlation between the independent and the dependent variables will be controlled for. The aim is then to disclose which processes affect the outcome besides, or instead of, election boycotts. It is not possible to operationalize these variables at this stage of the process, but they will of course be defined whenever used in the analytic and conclusive chapters. This part of the thesis is thus partially inductive, since very little of the processes or contextual factors that may affect democratization are described and explained in advance. This means that the control variables will largely be based on the exploration of and in dialogue with the empirical data in the appropriate cases (Ragin, 1987). King et al. (1994) prefer a deductive approach while a scholar such as Timothy J. McKeown (1999) argues strongly for the use of induction and points out that new theory is necessary to ensure thorough understanding of a phenomenon. However, as my thesis has shown, the two types are far from mutually exclusive. The study as a whole has a deductive approach, but inductive means are incorporated to make sure that the relevant factors are controlled for in each case.

4.0 Results and analyses

In this chapter, I will present the results of the quantitative cross-table analyses as well as the qualitative analyses of the cases of particular interest for the research question. First, some definitional choices will be accounted for. Second, the results of possible boycott effects on all of the dependent variables will be described and analyzed. Third, based on these table analyses, which cases that are of special interest will be discussed and determined. Finally, these particular cases will be studied more thoroughly to control for other possible influential variables.

4.1 The quantitative analyses

In this section, all the collected data on the independent and dependent variables are structured in tables to be able to establish possible correlations. Each variable is discussed and analyzed separately. Before it is possible to present the results, though, it is necessary to make a few definitional clarifications.

4.1.1 Definitions: Minor or Major boycotts?

The decision to include banned Islamist parties in this thesis was discussed and justified in the methodological chapter. On the other hand, whether or not some of these boycotts, which involve Islamist parties, are to be defined as major or minor is debatable, and my choices will thus be explained below.

In total, there have been twenty-five election boycotts in the Arab states in the period between 1990-2010. However, as explained before, only seventeen of these were followed by another election, and as a result only those have been included in this study. Of the seventeen election boycotts, ten have been defined as minor while seven have been identified as major boycotts. In table 4, the election boycotts have been categorized based on the typology in figure 1.

Table 4: Overview of the election boycotts

	Minor boycotts	Major boycotts
Hegemonic regimes	Algeria 2002 Jordan 2003 Syria 2003 Tunisia 2004	Algeria 1997 Egypt 1990 Jordan 1997 Morocco 2002

Non-hegemonic regimes	Iraq 2005 ²⁶ Kuwait 2006 Lebanon 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005	Bahrain 2002 Palestine 1996 Yemen 1997
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Source: See appendix 1.

For five of the major boycotts, identifying them as boycotts conducted by a majority of the opposition is rather unproblematic. This is true for the Bahraini 2002 election, where the four main Shiite political parties/societies as well as secular groups boycotted the election (Niethammer, 2008); the Egyptian 1990 election, where an almost unified opposition boycotted (Auda, 1991); the Jordanian 1997 election, where the major portion of the opposition, including the Islamic Action Front, boycotted (Moaddel, 2002); the Palestinian 1996 election, where Hamas, the chief oppositional party, boycotted (Andoni, 1996); and for the Yemeni 1997 election, where the majority of the opposition boycotted, including the at the time biggest opposition party, Yemen Socialist Party (JIOGY, 1997).

The 1997 Algerian and the 2002 Moroccan elections, on the other hand, are more problematic to define. The Algerian case is first and foremost classified as a major boycott due to the position the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party enjoyed before the civil war. They won the 1991 elections before the army intervened to keep the Islamists away from power. In other words, FIS had a majority of the popular support six years before the election in question. Naturally, they did lose some support during the war because of all the casualties, government propaganda, and the high level of conflict in the country (Viorst, 1997; Bouandel, 1998). Nonetheless, being the first election since they won an outright majority, it is hard to justify not categorizing their boycott as a major case.

The Moroccan 2002 boycott case is even more demanding to determine. Morocco has both a legal Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), which is participating in elections, and an illegal (but tolerated) Islamist movement, the *Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan* or Justice and Spirituality Association (JSA), not participating in the electoral process. The latter is recognized as the most popular organization in the country and seen as a major oppositional force (Willis, 2004). The JSA perceives the political system as being neither democratic nor representative, and would therefore not take part in the elections even if they were allowed to

²⁶ This election was held in January 2005. There was another election in December 2005 as well, but the opposition did not boycott that election (see appendix 1).

(Cavatorta, 2006). Nevertheless, the JSA has only officially boycotted the elections once: In 2002 it called on supporters to boycott the election. They refused to run in the elections or to support the legal Islamist party in the polls. In addition to the JSA, other smaller parties also boycotted this election (Willis, 2004).

It may be controversial to argue that this boycott case is a major boycott, since most of the parties participated, including the PJD. On the other hand, during the years of parliamentary elections the electoral processes in Morocco have led to the inclusion of most of the major parties in government. Not necessarily at the same time, but most of them have been part of the government for a period of time. Moreover, this has probably led to a decrease in the voter turnout (Sater, 2009). Most importantly, however, the JSA boycott most likely had a major influence on the voter turnout as well as on the outcome of the 2002 elections, particularly in regards to the support of the Islamist PJD (Willis, 2004). Hence, although being somewhat in doubt, I identify the boycott of the Moroccan 2002 elections as a major boycott case.

Altogether, then, there are seven major and ten minor boycott cases included in the results presented below.

4.1.2 General democratic level

As one can observe from table 5, there were eleven cases where the general democratic level improved from one election to another, and twenty-seven times when there was no change or negative change in the democratic level of a country. Out of sixteen²⁷ election boycotts, seven of them correlate with a more democratic state within the next election, while this is the case for only four out of twenty-two elections with no boycotts. This equals 43.75 percent of the boycotted elections and 18.2 percent of the not boycotted elections. Moreover, half of the major boycotts correlate with democratic improvement, while forty percent of the minor boycotts do the same. In addition, we know that the Palestinian elections in 2006 have been categorized as one of the freest elections in the Arab world ever (NDI, 2006). This indicates an even stronger correlation for the major boycott cases, but as I do not have comparable data that case cannot be incorporated in the analysis below.

²⁷ Because Freedom House (2011) has not released a report rating Palestine previous to the year 2002, that boycott case had to be excluded from this analysis. It was a major boycott case.

Table 5: General democratic level

	Boycott²⁸	No boycott	Minor boycotts	Major boycotts²⁹
More democratic	7	4	4	3
No change or less democratic	9	18	6	3
Percentage more democratic	43.75%	18.2%	40%	50%

Source: See appendix 1.

The tendency is rather unambiguous when it comes to boycotts in general; the percentage of more democratic cases is almost forty-five, while it is less than twenty percent for boycott free elections. The correlation difference between minor and major boycotts is only ten percent, but there is still a tendency of a stronger democratizing effect from the latter. It is necessary to consider the results of the other variables before discussing whether this is a general trend or not.

However, it is not possible to determine whether or not these correlations reflect true causations before the ‘more democratic’ cases are controlled for other variables. In subsection 4.1.7, I will discuss which cases ought to be investigated more comprehensively, and the actual control variables will be accounted for in section 4.2.

4.1.3 Political reform

For the variable political reform, the results are completely the opposite of what was expected based on the theoretical considerations laid out in chapter two. Only four of seventeen boycotts correlate with enacted political reform before the next election. Moreover, only one, or 14.3 percent, of the major boycott cases has been followed by political reform. Elections that have not been boycotted, on the other hand, appear to have a stronger positive correlation with reform, although this possible causation is not very significant either. All of the results on this variable are summarized in table 6 below.

²⁸ See above.

²⁹ See note 27.

Table 6: Political reform

	Boycott	No boycott	Minor boycotts	Major boycotts
Political reform	4	7	3	1
No reform	13	15	7	6
Percentage reform	23.5%	31.8%	30%	14.3%

Source: See appendix 1.

All in all, it appears to be no correlation between election boycotts and political reform in the Arab region, nor do these results indicate any significant negative correlation between boycotts and reform.

4.1.4 International monitors

While the results from the table analysis on political reform give little evidence for any effect of election boycotts, table 7 does demonstrate certain boycott effects on the variable international monitors. Overall, 41.2 percent of the boycotted elections correlate with the presence of monitors in the subsequent election. For the elections experiencing no boycotts the number is 27.3 percent. Furthermore, a majority of the major boycott cases were followed by an election observed by international monitors. For the minor boycotts, the number is thirty percent.

Table 7: International monitors

	Boycott	No boycott	Minor boycotts	Major boycotts
Monitors	7	6	3	4
No monitors	10	16	7	3
Percentage monitors	41.2%	27.3%	30%	57.1%

Source: See appendix 1.

Because the number of cases in this study is not sufficient to get truly indisputable results, it is consequently not attainable to conclude without doubt. However, table 7 suggests a strong correlation between major boycotts and the presence of international monitors in the next election, and a somewhat strong correlation for boycotts in general. Minor boycotts, on the other hand, seem to have the same effect as no boycotts. Accordingly, whether or not the

election boycott is major or minor matters for the probability of a democratizing effect of the boycott.

4.1.5 Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning

The last dependent variable under investigation in this study is the variable free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning. The results are inconclusive, leaving both boycotted and not-boycotted elections with a percentage for improved pre-election campaign condition below thirty. What is more, the correlation between better campaign conditions and both not boycotted and boycotted elections is more or less exactly the same, as shown in table 8. In spite of this, major boycott cases do to a certain extent stand out, with 42.9 percent of the cases, or three of seven, correlating with improved conditions.

Table 8: Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning

	Boycott	No boycott	Minor boycotts	Major boycotts
Better campaign conditions	5	6	2	3
Same or worse campaign conditions	12	16	8	4
Percentage better campaign conditions	29.4%	27.3%	20%	42.9%

Source: See appendix 1.

This strengthens the general image of better democratizing effects of major than minor boycotts, but on the other hand, the results from this particular variable are not indisputable and should consequently be interpreted with caution.

4.1.6 Hegemonic versus Non-hegemonic regimes

Above, each dependent variable has been studied based on the possible effect of both minor and major election boycotts. The effect of the last independent variable, hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes, however, has yet to be analyzed. The general hypothesis was that the boycott effects were bigger in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic states. In table 9, the results of the possible boycott effects on the variable political reform are presented, while the results on international monitors are shown in table 10, and the results on free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning in table 11.

Table 9: Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes: Political reform

	Hegemonic: Boycott	Hegemonic: No boycott	Non- hegemonic: Boycott	Non- hegemonic: No boycott	Hegemonic Regimes	Non- hegemonic Regimes
Political reform	0	5	4	2	5	6
No reform	8	9	5	6	17	11
Percentage reform	0%	35.7%	44.4%	25%	22.7%	35.3%

Source: See appendix 1.

As one can undoubtedly observe from table 9, the effect of election boycotts on political reform was not greater in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic regimes. Rather, it seems to be the other way around. In fact, no boycotts in hegemonic states were followed by political reform while 44.4 percent of the boycotts in non-hegemonic states did. Moreover, the correlation between not boycotted elections and reform seems higher in hegemonic regimes than non-hegemonic states. However, since table 6 indicated no correspondence between boycotts and enacted political reform in the first place, the results in table 10 and 11 must be analyzed before effects of this independent variable can be determined.

Table 10: Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes: International monitors

	Hegemonic: Boycott	Hegemonic: No boycott	Non- hegemonic: Boycott	Non- hegemonic: No boycott	Hegemonic Regimes	Non- hegemonic Regimes
Monitors	2	4	5	2	6	7
No monitors	6	10	4	6	16	10
Percentage monitors	25%	28.6%	55.6%	25%	27.3%	41.2%

Source: See appendix 1.

Both tables do, however, confirm the pattern from table 9 when it comes to the effect of regime type. The type of regime appears to matter less on the effect of election boycotts on the pre-election campaigning conditions, but also on this dependent variable the boycott effect appear to be bigger in non-hegemonic than hegemonic states. It should be noted, though, that the difference between the two, as presented in table 11, is not considerable. Nonetheless, the tendency of greater democratizing effect of boycotts in non-hegemonic states is strongly

supported by the results in table 10, with a correlation of 55.6 percent against twenty-five percent in states with hegemonic regimes. In other words, if there is a causal correlation between hegemonic regimes and the effect of boycotts, it is evidently negative.

Table 11: Hegemonic or Non-hegemonic regimes: Free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning

	Hegemonic: Boycott	Hegemonic: No boycott	Non-hegemonic: Boycott	Non-hegemonic: No boycott	Hegemonic Regimes	Non-hegemonic Regimes
Better campaign conditions	2	5	3	1	7	4
Same or worse campaign conditions	6	9	6	7	15	13
Percentage better conditions	25%	35.7%	33.3%	12.5%	31.8%	23.5%

Source: See appendix 1.

This section has presented the descriptive results from the research on the independent and dependent variables carried out in this thesis. In addition, a simple table analysis has been conducted for each variable. Below, these results will be discussed further to determine which cases it is necessary to look closer into to verify or dismiss possible election boycott effects.

4.1.7 Quantitative results: What do they suggest?

In the methodological chapter, I argued for the inclusion of control variables *after* the presentation of the quantitative table analyses was completed. Based on these results alone, it is possible to conclude that some of my hypotheses were wrong, for instance the two which predicted a positive effect of the variable hegemonic or non-hegemonic regimes. On the other hand, some of the results indicate positive correlations between election boycotts and democratization variables, especially major boycotts. Hence, before it is possible to answer the hypotheses and the research question, those cases must be studied more thoroughly, to control for other possible influential variables. In this subsection, I will discuss and determine which cases should be examined more closely.

In general, I would argue that all the major cases might be of interest. Either to control for other factors in those cases where there seem to be democratizing effects of the boycott, or to look into why a major boycott did not have any effect. Furthermore, the cross-tabulations suggest that certain minor boycotts may have effects as well. If so, they should be discussed, both to see if the boycott actually did have an effect, and to control for other variables. Table 12 includes all the major boycott cases and the corresponding coding³⁰ of the dependent variables, while table 13 presents the equivalent information for the minor boycotts.

Table 12: Boycott effects of major cases

Major cases	General scale	Political reform	Monitors	Campaign conditions
<i>Algeria 1997</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>Bahrain 2002</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Egypt 1990</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Jordan 1997</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>Morocco 2002</i>	1	0	1	1
<i>Palestine 1996</i>	-	1	1	1
<i>Yemen 1997</i>	1	0	1	0

Source: See appendix 1.

As we can see, two major boycotts have apparently had no effect, namely the Egyptian 1990 boycott and the Bahraini 2002 boycott. Furthermore, the Jordanian 1997 boycott has only possibly influenced the free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning variable, which had the weakest correlation of effect besides political reform, which had no results. These three cases should thus be discussed briefly to see if there are similar reasons for why the major boycotts did not have any effect. However, since finding the answers to why a boycott does not have democratizing effects is not the primary objective of this research project, only one of those three cases will be examined in section 4.2. Academically speaking, it is difficult to decide on which one to study, but it seems reasonable to select one of the two cases with absolutely no effect, namely Egypt 1990 or Bahrain 2002. When comparing those two cases I ended up choosing Egypt. This was due to the country’s importance in the region, the apparently unified boycott, as well as more resemblances to the other election boycott cases, which had democratizing effects, with regards to regime type and political context. The other

³⁰ See table 3 for coding information.

four major boycott cases, which appear to have democratizing effects, will also be examined more comprehensively to control for other variables in the next section.

For the variables international monitors and general democratic level, there were evident correlations for boycott effects in general, and for the latter also for minor boycotts alone. This suggests possible effects of some of the minor boycotts as well, particularly with regards to these two variables. In table 13 below, all of the minor election boycott cases are presented using the matching coding explained in table 3.

Table 13: Boycott effects of minor cases

Minor cases	General scale	Political reform	Monitors	Campaign conditions
<i>Algeria 2002</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Iraq 2005 Jan</i>	0	1	1	1
<i>Jordan 2003</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Kuwait 2006</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>Lebanon 1992</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Lebanon 1996</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Lebanon 2000</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>Lebanon 2005</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Syria 2003</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Tunisia 2004</i>	0	0	0	0

Source: See appendix 1.

Four of the minor boycotts have no visible democratizing effects at all and three cases only correlate on the variable general democratic level or political reform (Kuwait). Based on the theoretical assumptions and the results presented above, I do not see that as sufficient to be further studied. The minor election boycotts of the Lebanese 2000 and 2005 as well as the Iraqi 2005 January elections³¹, on the other hand, should be examined for other possible explanatory factors.

³¹ As table 13 demonstrates, the Iraqi case does correlate on three variables, but not on the relevant variable general democratic level. The reason for still choosing this case to study more closely, in addition to the fact that it correlates on three variables, is that both elections in question were held in 2005. Hence, change in the Freedom House ranking is not possible to achieve. However, the score Iraq achieved for the year 2006 was lower than for 2005 (Freedom House, 2011), and that is why the variable has still been coded as 0 (see appendix 1).

In the next section, this qualitative part of my thesis will be accounted for.

4.2 Control variables: The qualitative study

The examinations and analyses of the quantitative results presented in this chapter advocate further investigation of seven cases and six countries. In addition, the analyses suggest a concise discussion of a major case with no significant democratizing effects. First, that case will be elaborated upon in subsection 4.2.1. Second, each of the four major boycott cases with effects will be studied separately in the subsequent subsections. Finally, I will examine the three minor boycotts with democratizing effects before summarizing the findings.

4.2.1 Major boycotts with no effect: Egypt

First of all, there may be no particular reason for why this or the Jordanian and Bahraini cases are in opposition to the theoretical assumptions, or why they are different from the other major election boycotts under investigation in this thesis. It might be pure coincidence. On the other hand, if there were certain explanatory factors in these cases that could explain the lack of effect, this would strengthen the results that established democratizing effects of major boycotts. Still, for the reasons mentioned above, only the Egyptian case will be further explored in this subsection.

The Egyptian case from 1990 has not been written extensively about, at least not with a focus on the boycott and possible effects of it. However, both the results presented above and the fact that the opposition since has been participating³² indicates that the act of boycotting was futile. One major reason for the unsuccessful boycott may have been the fact that many of the candidates from the boycotting parties did run as independents. The election resulted in a parliament where approximately eighty percent of its members were from the regime's National Democratic Party (NDP), including those who originally ran as independents, and about twenty percent who were genuine independents, most of whom were associated with the boycotting opposition parties (Auda, 1991). This will usually weaken the arguments put forward by the opposition, which included demands regarding the electoral law as well as judicial supervision of the election, and thus possibly reduce the effect on the voter turnout as

³² Some parts of the opposition did boycott the second round of elections in 2010, after it became clear that the regime probably cheated more than usual and was thus winning a huge majority of the seats (Hamzawy, 2010).

well as influence how effective the boycott will be on pressuring the incumbent regime to change (Jerusalem Report, 1990; see also Beaulieu, 2006). On the other hand, the actual turnout was low compared to previous elections, and although some candidates did run as independents the official and unofficial (Muslim Brotherhood) parties stayed united behind the boycott message on the day of the election.

To be able to shed more light on why it had no effect it is necessary to ask what kind of context this boycott was conducted in? One thing in particular was the Gulf war and Egypt's role in it. This affected politics in Egypt both before and after the election (Abdalla, 1991). However, this alone cannot explain how and why Mubarak's regime ignored the demands of the opposition following the 1990 boycott. "The single most important reason for the failure of limited democratization is the legacy of Nasserism. Nasser equipped the state with massive bureaucratic capabilities for the mobilization and control of people and resources. The ruling party is the critical element in this scheme" (Auda, 1991: 77). In other words, as long as the NDP can control or at least benefit from these resources of mobilization – and consequently being the state party as well as the governing party – a pseudo-democratic system without true democratization is sufficient for the regime to continue to control the political system and at the same time appear to moderately democratize. "The elections of 1990 vividly highlighted the limited nature of democratization in Egypt. At the same time, however, they showed that the authoritarianism of the government is limited as well" (Auda, 1991: 77). The regime cannot completely control the political process, while the opposition does not manage to open it entirely, nor is it willing to because the opposition is afraid that a real opening of the process would invite opposition forces aboard that could threaten the democratic experiment altogether. This analysis of Gehad Auda (1991) turned out to be very predictive, and other scholars have later labeled the system he to some extent described in 1991 as a 'hybrid regime'. The term refers to a permanent, stable system that shares both liberal and somewhat democratic as well as authoritarian features. More specifically, being "less oppressive than the pure authoritarian model, this mixed polity draws a sharp line between political expression and political action..." (Springborg, 2009: 7).

Obviously, the hybrid state portrayed in the 2000s is in some measures different from the Egyptian political system in the early 1990s. At the same time, the analyses from 1990-1991 and the later descriptions seems to match, or more precisely, the processes leading up to the current hybrid state started in 1990, or possibly even before, with the intifah (opening)

policies of president Sadat and the economic liberalization in the 1980s (Kienle, 1998; Auda, 1991; Springborg, 2009). Hence, the institutional arrangements and the flexibility of the political system is the best “guard” against democratization for the Egyptian regime³³, because the opposition in many ways gives legitimacy to the system and the Egyptian state. Of course, the 1990 boycott should contradict this notion, but the problem was that with the exception of the militant Islamists, most of the oppositional forces were co-opted by the regime one way or the other in the early 1990s and beyond (Albrecht, 2005). This has proved to be a successful strategy for the regime, not least because “...by tolerating controlled opposition, societal dissent can be better observed, channeled and moderated” (Albrecht, 2005: 378). It should be noted that when applying the term hybrid state in this thesis, it refers to Springborg and Albrecht’s definitions based on the Egyptian case, not a general definition on competitive authoritarianism similar to the term pseudo-democracy, suggested by for instance Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way (2002) and Larry Diamond (2002).

Another important factor in Egypt, perhaps especially in the beginning of the 1990s, is the existence of Islamists and militant Islamists in particular.

“Restrictions of liberties in Egypt in the 1990s have been viewed largely as the effects of the conflict between the regime and armed Islamist groups such as the Jama'at Islamiyya (Islamic Groups), which turned increasingly violent in 1991-92 and enabled the regime to categorize all Islamist opposition forces as “terrorists”” (Kienle, 1998: 221).

In general, the period between the boycotted elections in 1990 and the parliamentary elections in 1995 was plagued with sectarian conflict and violence, and violent and deadly attacks by “terrorists” thus led to the erosion of liberal liberties as well as the introduction of more and more authoritarian laws, such as authoritarian media laws. Moreover, the emergency law, in place since the assassination of Sadat, was increasingly used to trial people in military courts instead of civil courts, and so forth (Kienle, 1998). As already mentioned, the opposition did accept this deliberalization, to a certain degree, despite their own boycott in 1990, due to their skepticism towards militant Islamists and other oppositional forces that may not have democratization as their primary goal.

³³ This was at least true up to the year 2011. Although the recent events in Egypt weaken any argument for the sustainability of the Mubarak regime, it did hold for three decades. Moreover, the changes came about through uprisings, not first and foremost because the opposition did or did not boycott, which is the issue of interest for this thesis.

This examination of the political situation in the early 1990s reveals a few factors that may help explaining the lack of democratizing effects of the 1990 boycott, as discussed and demonstrated above. On the other hand, it is nevertheless not possible to conclude that other contextual factors is the only reason this major boycott did not influence the regime positively with regards to democratization. However, this qualitative study of the Egyptian 1990 case does show that other factors, such as the regime's utilizing of institutional co-opting of the opposition, the international context with the Gulf war as the prevalent, the breach of the unified boycott on Election Day, as well as the regime's effective exploitation of the Islamist terrorist threat in the period after the election, were used to impose illiberal policies and to ignore the boycott. It is therefore not reasonable to rule out all possible effects of major boycotts in other Arab countries. Moreover, theoretically speaking, this could also be true for Egypt if the political context was substantially different before and after the (boycotted) election.

4.2.2 Algeria

The major boycott in 1997 correlates positively with the democratizing variables international monitors and general democratic level. Whether or not this is caused by the boycott will hopefully be easier to determine after this section on the Algerian political context.

Even before looking at other variables, merely based on the variable international monitors, it is feasible to argue against the democratizing effect of the boycott on that particular factor. As appendix 1 confirms, international observers also officially monitored the boycotted election in 1997 (see also NDI, 1997). Additionally, for the 2007 elections, which was the first election after the minor boycott case of the 2002 elections, no monitors were invited by the regime. Hence, it can arguably be difficult to defend that the results are mainly caused by the 1997 boycott. On the other hand, there is both a theoretical and empirical difference between the effect of minor (2002) and major (1997) boycotts. Furthermore, the results in table 7 include all elections, and even so, major boycotts still correlate stronger with the presence of international monitors than cases with no boycotts or minor boycotts. The presence of monitors in 1997 then, does not rule out the possibility of a boycott effect for the presence of monitors also in 2002. Moreover, the only improvement of the general democratic level in the studied time period came after the 1997 boycott.

The banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party predominantly carried out this boycott. When determining the effect of their boycott, the support they enjoyed in 1997 as well as in the period after the election and up to the 2002 elections is of critical interest. Since the FIS party cannot run in the elections themselves, the voter turnout is also of importance when measuring whether or not the population acted upon the boycott. FIS lost some of the support they enjoyed in 1991 during the civil war, due to the violent means of its military branch, the Islamic Salvation Army and its offshoot Armed Islamic Group (Viorst, 1997). Moreover, the two other Islamist parties which did participate in the election, won almost forty percent of the seats in the parliament. Hence, the existence and electoral involvement of these Islamist parties probably led to a splitting of the FIS party's support. This diminishing of support may have weakened the effect of their call for boycott; an assumption supported by the voter turnout of sixty-five percent nationwide³⁴ (NDI, 1997; Bouandel and Zoubir, 2003). The image of weakened influence on Algerian politics is strengthened by the development after the 1997 election as well. According to the monitor report of 2002, FIS did not only lose followers during the period between the two elections, their military wing was reduced in size, and the party was becoming more and more fragmented. On the other hand, a divided FIS did also encourage a boycott of the 2002 election, and then the voter turnout dropped to forty-six percent. Whether or not this was due to the FIS' boycott is relatively uncertain, particularly since the turnout in some of the Berber areas was as low as two percent, which can probably be explained by the fact that two major Berber oriented parties boycotted the 2002 elections too (ICG, 2002).

Regardless of the actual support of the FIS party, there are some other factors that might have influenced why the regime engaged in democratizing from 1997 to 2002. First of all, the regime needed democratic legitimacy after the coup d'état following FIS' electoral victory in 1991. Thus, as soon as the civil war ended, the government focused on constitutional and electoral changes to facilitate elections and introducing an elected parliament (Bouandel, 1998). Although it was not flawless, all parties except the FIS party accepted the results of the election, and the monitors, who were probably invited to secure the democratic legitimacy, did review the election as a significant move "toward democratic and pluralistic government" (NDI, 1997: 2). Encouraged by this evaluation, and not least because the regime never saw FIS as a legitimate part of the opposition, the incumbents may have re-invited the

³⁴ However, it was as low as 25 percent in Algiers (NDI, 1997).

international monitors and improved certain aspects of the political system not because, but in spite of the boycott of the 1997 elections.

The other dependent variable improving was the general democratic level. The difference was one, and Algeria went from being given the score twelve to eleven. On a scale from one to fourteen the variation from 1997 to 2002 is not very substantial, and more to the point, both ratings equal what the Freedom House labels as ‘not free’ states. However, this is arguably more of a general critique against my way of measuring the variable rather than a comment on the Algerian case in particular. This point may nonetheless be exceptionally relevant in the Algerian case because of the civil war. According to Freedom House’s own rationalization, the pro-democracy demonstrations in 2001 and the fact that the Islamist initiated violence and killings continued to wane on its tenth year in 2002, accounted for much of the democratic changes that justified the improved Algerian score³⁵. Hence, the decrease in violence is one of the grounds (of several) for why Algeria received a better ranking in 2002. In other words, the boycott does not appear to be *the* major cause of this enhancement.

More possible factors could be examined, but the information from the discussions above makes it superfluous. Based on the decreasing support of the FIS party; the general national context following the 1991 elections due to the civil war, and the need to legitimize the post-war regime; the violence factor; the presence of monitors also in 1997; and the explanations for democratic improvement given by Freedom House, it seems unlikely that the 1997 boycott had a decisive effect on the democratizing measures conducted by the regime between 1997 and 2002. It may have played a role, however, but most likely not a major one.

4.2.3 Morocco

The Moroccan 2002 major boycott correlates positively with all of the dependent variables, with the exception of political reform. “Overall, coming into the [2007] election period there was a sense that (...) Morocco had made significant progress on human rights and democracy in previous years” (NDI, 2007: 8, my parenthesis). Although changes in Moroccan laws did not qualify as enacted political reform by my definitions, it should be mentioned that there were still enacted other progressive laws in the period between the 2002 and the 2007 elections. The variable political reform will nonetheless not be included in this qualitative

³⁵ The explanations for the different years are found on their website. This is the link to the ranking for 2002: <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2003&country=331>

case examination. Instead, this subsection will discuss possible answers to the following question: How much of the observable democratizing effect on the other variables can be credited the major election boycott and how much can be explained by other variables?

I have already argued why this is a major boycott case despite the fact that the main opposition party is illegal and does not participate in the electoral process (see Willis, 2004). Still, as with the Algerian case, the effect of boycotts conducted by banned groups and parties are not as easily qualitatively measured as boycotts carried out by legal parties. What is more, the Algerian case in fact indicates less influence of banned than legal parties. On the other hand, there is one major difference: While the support and influence of FIS was declining, the JSA enjoyed and still enjoys great support. Furthermore, it is seen as the most popular and influential oppositional Islamist organization (Cavatorta, 2006). Nevertheless, before concluding, a further exploration of the political context is required.

The most essential factor is probably the accession of King Mohammed VI to the Moroccan throne in 1999. He was and is seen as a much more liberal regiment than his father, and the small political openings initiated by King Hassan II were quickly accelerated in the following years³⁶. For instance, Mohammed VI reformed the electoral laws previous to the 2002 elections³⁷ (NDI, 2007; Sater, 2009). There were no boycotts of the 1997 elections, and still it correlates positively with political reform. This was obviously regardless of the participation of the opposition, and would probably have happened regardless of a possible election boycott in 1997. This implies that the change of the head of state in 1999 may as well be the reason other features of democratization, as the variables in this study, have improved as well, both before and after the 2002 elections. In fact, many scholars point to the fact that King Mohammed VI introduced a lot of liberalization policies after taking office, particularly in the beginning of the 2000s, when describing the Moroccan political system (see for instance Hamzawy, 2007; Maghraoui, 2002; Sater, 2009).

Another important aspect is that almost all of the key parties, including the main opposition parties, have been included in governmental coalitions in the period between the 1997 and

³⁶ However, the democratization process was stalled from 2007 onwards, followed by an increase of evidence of more setbacks than progress (NDI, 2007; Sater, 2009).

³⁷ Although there was political reform in the period 1997-2002 it should be noted that these reforms did not weaken the powers of the monarch himself (Sater, 2009; Hamzawy, 2007).

2007 elections (Sater, 2009; Willis, 2004). Although the monarch in most aspects has absolute powers, his inclusion of several parties in the government, with changes in coalitions based on electoral results, can arguably be resulting in a push for democratization from within the government. Both parties in the governing coalition and the main opposition parties benefit from further political openings. Hence, it is not unlikely that those participating in the elections influence the political outcomes more than those boycotting.

On the other hand, if most of the opposition benefits from the existing system, that could also signify that elections end up as a competition over the elite positions, instead of being an arena for genuine competition over political power. This tendency would evidently be reinforced by the fact that the monarch controls most of the political powers, and as a consequence, opposing the monarch may not be beneficial in the long run (Sater, 2009; Hamzawy, 2007). Such an argument is strengthened by the extreme low voter turnout in 2007 as well as the setbacks of the democratization process since the 2007 elections (NDI, 2007). For this reason, scholars such as Francesco Cavatorta (2006) and Henri Lauzière (2005) argue that opposition on the outside of the system, such as the JSA movement, has great democratizing potential. They do not discuss the possible democratizing effects of the JSA boycotting elections, but emphasize their position as a political and social movement in Morocco. Moreover, both Cavatorta (2006) and Lauzière (2005) stress the importance of being in true opposition to the entire political system as a whole, and King Mohammed VI in particular, and regard the JSA as the best suited movement in this respect.

There are of course many other factors influencing the outcome of the democratizing process in Morocco than the ones I have discussed here. These factors include for example international pressure, forces in the civil society, economical aspects, variations of Berber uprisings, and so forth (NDI, 2007; Sater, 2009; Maghraoui, 2002; Silverstein, 2005). All of them as well as the ones mentioned above, especially the role of King Mohammed VI, are evidence of important factors affecting the dependent variables in this thesis. In other words, the 2002 boycott did not solely cause the invitation of international monitors or the positive result on the two other democratizing variables. On the other hand, when being aware of the importance of the JSA movement in Morocco, it would be equally wrong to rule out its influence altogether.

4.2.4 Palestine

The Palestinian 1996 major boycott case, which was conducted by the main oppositional parties, including Hamas (NDI, 1996), correlates positively on all democratization variables, except general democratic level. Whether or not this is due to lack of democratic progress cannot be truthfully determined, since there is no available data for the year 1996. However, based on the fact that there have been changes for the better on all of the specific democratizing factors tested in this thesis, it appears plausible to assume that the general democratic level has advanced too. Regardless of that specific variable, which after all cannot be included as long as there are no data, the democratic improvements have been substantial from the elections in 1996 till the ones held in 2006. Can this transformation be attributed to the Hamas boycott alone, or have there been other more important variables at play?

First of all, the mere fact that there were ten years between the elections indicates that several other factors and incidents could have influenced the game of politics during such a long time period. But perhaps the most striking factor when it comes to the Palestinian case is that it is not a state. The areas under control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) are really under control of the occupying power, which is Israel. Both Israel and the international community play major roles in Palestinian politics, through the position of being the occupying power (Israel), through peace negotiations, international aid, and other influencing means held by the international community. In fact, the PA and the 1996 parliamentary elections came out of peace negotiations later known as the Oslo accords in the early 1990s (Shikaki, 1996; NDI, 1996; NDI, 2006). It is not the aim of this thesis to examine and discuss the development of negotiations and international pressure the last two decades, but rather to discuss how these factors may have influenced the democratization process between 1996 and 2006. The international community has definitively pressured the PA to foster democratization and to act upon the recommendations provided by the international monitors of the 1996 elections (Hroub, 2006; Usher, 2006; NDI, 1996). Furthermore, the 1996 elections were the first elections under the new PA administration, and one could argue that the second attempt may be of better quality than the first. Of course, no authoritarian regime is required to democratically improve, but seen in the context of international pressure such a statement seems plausible.

Another argument against significant effects of the Hamas boycott, which is consistent with the Algerian case, is that there were also monitors in the 1996 elections. In other words, it was

probably not the boycott that led to the re-invitation of monitors to the 2006 elections. Moreover, the voter turnout was almost identical in both elections, approximately seventy-four percent (NDI, 1996; NDI, 2006). This indicates that the boycott of the 1996 elections did not discourage people to vote. Another relevant aspect worth mentioning is that while the pre-election period in 1996 was characterized by a great deal of uncertainty and fear of violence, the fact that Hamas participated in the 2006 elections reduced this concern and insecurity, and to a certain extent also the actual violence and pre-election violations compared to the 1996 elections (NDI, 1996; Andoni, 1996; NDI, 2006).

Some of the pressure for more democratization may also have come from within the incumbent regime itself, or more precisely within the Fatah movement or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It is common to distinguish between the young and the old guard within the PLO and the Fatah. According to Khalil Shikaki (2002), even the second intifada in 2000 was to a great extent about protesting against the old guard. The youth insists on more liberties and more democratic rights, among other things. This split within the PLO and Fatah may also have given Hamas better opportunities to thrive, and hence, the change of strategy from 1996 to 2006 elections (Usher, 2006). This development within the Hamas, which ended up with them participating in 2006, is discussed by many scholars, and Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela (2002) described this ongoing process already in 2002. These organizational processes in the years before the 2006 elections, the weakening of and tendencies of fragmentation within Fatah combined with a strengthened and more popular Hamas, may have increased the pressure on the PA to promote democratization (Hroub, 2006; Usher, 2006; Klein, 2007). On the other hand, but still related to the previous argument, the participation of Hamas was arguably important for the legitimacy of the elections, which indirectly implies that the boycott did have an effect; that the PA now had to listen to Hamas' demands. In fact, PLO/Fatah wanted Hamas to participate also in 1996, and president Arafat worked hard for it to happen, but without success (Andoni, 1996).

This brief examination of the Palestinian case has demonstrated that many other variables in all probability affected the democratization process more than the 1996 boycott. Among them one for instance finds the international context, the peace negotiations, and the internal strife within the Fatah movement. However, the importance of Hamas in Palestinian politics, not least evident through their victory in the 2006 elections, illustrates that the boycott might have carried some weight as well.

4.2.5 Yemen

Yemen had international monitors observing the election following the major boycott of the 1997 elections as well as an improvement in the general democratic level from 1997 to 2003. Again, the question remains: Was this due to the major boycott of the 1997 elections or were other factors equally or possibly more important? Below, I will examine the Yemen case more thoroughly and discuss other relevant variables.

As was also the situation in many of the other major boycott cases, international monitors were present in the election experiencing the major boycott in Yemen. Furthermore, there have been monitors observing all of the Yemeni elections that have been held since the unification in 1990 (see appendix 1). Hence, when it comes to the invitation of international monitors, the effect of the boycott may not be the most essential factor. Regarding the other variable, it should be noted that the improvement was from eleven to ten on the Freedom House scale, after it had dropped from nine in 1993. In other words, this was not a very extensive democratic change.

Yemen's political context was exceptionally unique in the 1990s. First of all, until 1990 it was two countries, North and South Yemen. The former was governed by the General People's Congress (GPC) and the latter by the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). In many ways, the unified Yemen was no more than a coalition of the two separately governed countries, between the two governing parties (Halliday, 1997). In the 1993 parliamentary elections, the two governing parties won many seats in their respective areas, and the post-election period saw a coalition of the two plus some other parties. The previous president of North Yemen and leader of the GPC, Ali Abdullah Saleh, also became the president of the unified Yemen (Carapico, 1993). However, the new Yemen experienced tensions from the outset, which eventually resulted in the outburst of a civil war in April 1994. Without reviewing the causes for this, the interesting point for this thesis is the fact that the larger North won the war and then gained control of the whole country. Furthermore, the YSP experienced internal dissension and strife in addition to losing more and more control of the southern part of the country during the next couple of years (Halliday, 1997).

When the YSP decided to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections then, it was as a weakened party, yet still the major oppositional party at the time. The further weakening of the party in

the period between the 1997 and 2003 elections, and the expected reduced influence that came with it, suggest that the regime did not favor its opinion, nor listened to the party's demands. This insubstantial position was also confirmed by the fact that the YSP only won seven seats in the parliamentary elections in 2003, combined with an overall decrease in votes for the opposition (NDI, 2003). Consequently, the most apparent effect of their boycott was the eradication of parliamentary influence, not only in 1997 but also after they once again joined the electoral process. However, if one studies the voter turnout, it increased from approximately sixty-one to seventy-six percent from the 1997 to the 2003 election, which indicates that a substantial amount of people, especially in the south, did follow the call for boycott (NDI, 2003). Moreover, the number of seats won by the rest of the opposition decreased considerably in 1997 compared to the 1993 elections.

One feature of Yemeni politics that makes it relatively different from many other Arab states is thus the North-South conflict, which was especially prevalent in the 1990s. The YSP was the most important party in the sparsely populated south. Hence, although the YSP was the major oppositional party, the GPC could democratize after the 1997 elections without fearing to lose the next election. Consequently, when assessing the factors of the civil war and the subsequent consolidation of power to the GPC and president Saleh together with the fragmentation and weakening of the YSP before but especially after the 1997 elections, it does not appear very likely that the boycott was the most influential democratizing factor. The development of Yemeni politics after the 2003 elections also confirms this notion of little or no effect of the boycott. The southern parts of the country have been increasingly overlooked and Yemen has become more authoritarian over the years. The elections scheduled in 2009 were postponed and the country has experienced much unrest and protests the last decade, also before the recent uprisings demanding president Saleh's resignation (Blumi, 2009; Phillips, 2008). These developments illustrate how the northern part has taken over the political control of the country, and that neither the YSP boycott in 1997 nor their participation in 2003 have weakened the position of the president and his party. Consequently, the YSP has probably not been in a position where it could force the regime to democratize either.

Obviously, there are other factors at play in Yemeni politics as well, such as the importance of tribalism (see Egel, 2009), but the contextual factors already studied are sufficient to indicate that the boycott did not have a major effect on the democratization variables international

monitors and general democratic level. On the other hand, none of these factors entirely rule out a boycott effect, but it does strongly weaken its explanatory strength.

4.2.6 Minor boycotts with effect: Lebanon and Iraq

The Lebanese elections in 2000 and 2005, and the Iraqi 2005 January elections, were the three minor boycott cases standing out, with presumed effect on several dependent variables. The former had correlation on the general democratic level and international monitors, the Iraqi case on all but the general democratic level, while the Lebanese 2005 elections correlated positively on all variables. The theoretical assumptions did not indicate any effect of minor boycotts, and nor did most of the results from the cross-tabulations presented above. These cases seem to be exceptions, and the question is whether or not the boycott did affect the democratizing outcome in these cases, or if the correlations are the result of randomness? First, I will look closer into the Lebanese cases. Second, the Iraqi case will be examined.

Lebanon has not only experienced boycotts in 2000 and 2005. In fact, a minority of the opposition, mainly the Christian parties and thus the Christian electorate, has boycotted every election under investigation in this thesis. The exceptions to this “rule” are the 2005 boycott, which was carried out by a Sunni Islamist party, and the 2009 elections, which experienced no boycotts at all³⁸. The democratizing effects of the boycotts in the 1990s, however, were none (see table 13). Theoretically speaking, because of the electoral system, which entitles half of the parliamentary seats to Christian candidates, a unified boycott by the Christian parties could be more effective than an “ordinary” minor boycott (Salem, 1997; Khazen, 1992; Langohr, 2005). Adding the fact that especially the Christian boycott in 1992 was massive and unified, resulting in the absence of hundreds of thousands of Christian voters on Election Day (Khazen, 1992), one could expect certain democratizing effects. When that was not the case, neither for the 1992 nor the 1996 boycotts, it implies that the causes for the changes seen in the period between 2000 and 2009 may be others than the minor boycotts in the respective elections. This logic strongly applies to the 2000 boycott, because the boycotters were more or less unchanged from the 1992 and 1996 elections, with Christian parties and anti-Syrian sentiments of the political spectrum as the strongest articulators of the boycott (IPU, 1992; 1996; 2000). If the boycotts did not lead to the improvement of the

³⁸ However, as explained before, the effects of this election are not tested and all the tested Lebanese elections have thus experienced minor boycotts.

democratization process in Lebanon, what changes in the political context did Lebanon experience in the period after year 2000?

Simply put, Syria withdrew from Lebanon. A lot have been written on how and why the Syrian troops left the country in April 2005 (see for instance Salloukh, 2005; Haddad, 2005; Ajami, 2005), but the importance of them leaving is what is of interest for this study. Before leaving Lebanese soil, "...Syria exercised near total control over Lebanon's domestic and foreign politics" (Salloukh, 2005: 18). In many ways Lebanon was occupied by Syria, and since the boycotting parties were strongly opposing this Syrian influence, it is not surprising that they did not have any effect as long as Syria controlled much of the domestic policies of Lebanon. Although the Christians did push for the withdrawal of Syrian troops as well as called for less Syrian political influence, it seems naive to argue that the boycotts mattered much when the decision to withdraw was made (Ajami, 2005; Salloukh, 2005). The boycotts in the 1990s and in year 2000 did not affect the democratizing variables tested in this thesis, nor did they affect the events leading up to the withdrawal in April 2005. An independent Lebanon naturally got a better score on Freedom House's ranking, an improvement from the score eleven to nine, which meant that Lebanon went from being defined as not free to partly free³⁹. Moreover, Lebanon could for the first time independently decide to invite international monitors to the elections in 2005 (EU, 2005). Within the time of the 2009 elections, on the other hand, Lebanon also improved on the other two tested variables. Is this also first and foremost related to the Syrian withdrawal? It is my unambiguous perception that it is.

In 2005, only the Sunni Islamist movement Jamaa Islamiya called for a boycott. They protested against the fact that the 2000 electoral law was used in the elections in 2005 (IPU, 2005). Indeed, this law was changed in 2008, and thus before the 2009 elections, although most likely not due to their boycott, at least not their boycott alone. The period between 2005 and 2009 has not been without political conflicts, but the positive changes of the "new" Lebanon were still substantial, as my results also illustrate. There are many factors influencing these developments, the most important being the Syrian withdrawal (Carter center, 2009). However, this does not completely exclude the boycott factor as part of the explanatory variables affecting democratization in Lebanon. But it does, nonetheless, indicate

³⁹ The score as well as the explanation can be found on their website: The results for the year 2004 (before the withdrawal): <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2005&country=6773>, and the results for the year 2005: <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6999>.

that if (minor) boycotts have an effect, it strongly depends on other contextual factors to be influential.

Although the other way around, also Iraq experienced external changes influencing the political context. Arguably, these transformations correlate strongly with the democratizing efforts put forth in the year 2005. More precisely, the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003 totally transformed its political landscape (Langohr, 2005). Hence, a lot of the changes of the political system before and after the 2005 January elections were imposed on the country as a result of foreign, namely American, pressure (Whitehead, 2009). However, within the democratic framework the ‘coalition forces’ designed, the Iraqi politicians and parties could influence the political system and the path to possible democratization. This was especially true for the elections in 2005, because the elected parliament in January 2005 was supposed to draft the new Iraqi constitution (Langohr, 2005). In other words, effects of the 2005 January boycott cannot be entirely ruled out.

On the other hand, international observers monitored both the 2005 January and the 2005 December elections. Furthermore, since the whole purpose of the January elections was to choose a parliament that could draft and determine the new constitution, the positive correlation on political reform is quite easily explained. However, the boycott was conducted by a relatively unified Sunni population (initiated by the Sunni parties), due to the problems of violence in the Sunni areas. Additionally, Sunnis worried about losing political influence, due to the Shiite majority in Iraq. Indeed, the Shiites have gained power, and so has the influence of neighboring Shiite Iran (Nasr, 2006; Walker, 2006). The argument for a democratizing effect of the boycott is thus strengthened by the low voter turnout in the Sunni districts.

The results from the Iraqi case also show that the pre-election campaign conditions were improved in the December elections, and the Sunnis were not overlooked in the drafting of the new constitution, although they were barely present in the parliament after their boycott. This suggests that the boycott may have had an impact, but there were and are so many factors at play in Iraq that it is quite hard to determine how much the boycott possibly explains.

4.2.7 Summary of the control variables

The aim of this section was not to cover all possible variables influencing democratization processes in Arab states, nor was it to determine exactly how much impact boycotts may have in the variation of countries examined. It was rather to assess if the results from the quantitative cross-tabulations in section 4.1 would hold when controlled for other variables. There were neither time nor space to study each case in-depth, but each case of interest has still been qualitatively investigated to see if the political context of that specific case affected the results in general or possibly the effect of the boycott. Therefore, it is not possible to produce definitive conclusions of these explorations. Nonetheless, there are some interesting and relevant qualitative findings, which will be briefly presented below.

All of the cases studied in this section have experienced more comprehensive changes in the political context than the major (or minor) boycotts that correlate with some or all of the dependent variables. In other words, the results, which detected democratizing effects in section 4.1, have been weakened. They have not been contradicted, however, and some of the cases investigated here confirm that the boycott may have played a role in the pressure for further democratization. On the other hand, its explanatory effect should not be overestimated, and moreover, it seems the effects from boycotts interact with contextual factors. This means that when controlled for other variables, general statements about boycott effects on democratization are not supported. However, when other contextual variables facilitate it, a boycott may have greater impact than when they do not. In any case, these qualitative studies indicate that comprehensive external or internal changes in the political context explain more of the democratization improvements than boycotts, and at the same time those contextual factors may interact with election boycotts in ways that make the boycotts more effectual on the democratization variables.

5.0 Final analysis and conclusive thoughts

This final chapter will summarize and conclude my findings through a discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter. The first section will thus evaluate and discuss all of the hypotheses outlined in chapter two. Then, I will provide a conclusive part, where the general research question of this thesis is answered. Also, this last chapter will include perspectives on how my results have implications for future research, as well as viewpoints on strengths and limitations of this thesis' contributions to the literature of both democratization theories in the Arab region and general election boycott theories.

5.1 Answering the hypotheses

Although strictly based on the quantitative analyses, the qualitative results were in chapter four presented separately. In order to fully understand and being able to interpret all of these results accurately, they must be discussed in the light of the theoretically founded hypotheses. Through answering the hypotheses, the results can be interpreted and evaluated, and consequently, this discussion will also form the basis for concluding with regards to the research question.

The first hypothesis put forth was the following:

H1: *Neither minor nor major boycotts have any effect on the general democratic level of the Arab states.*

I based this assumption on the review of democratization literature presented in chapter two, as well as the fact that the Arab region has seen little transformation when it comes to substantial change in a democratic direction during the two decades under investigation in this thesis (Selvik and Stenslie, 2007; Lust-Okar, 2009b; Hinnebusch, 2006). Or as Larry Diamond articulates it: “The continuing absence of even a single democratic regime in the Arab world is a striking anomaly — the principal exception to the globalization of democracy” (Diamond, 2010: 93). When measuring democratic change on a “deeper” level based on a more extensive definition of democracy, following Robert Dahl’s (1971) two dimensions and list of democratic guarantees, one would expect little or no positive change from one election to another in such an authoritarian region. Hence, I did not anticipate any effects of election boycotts on a state’s general democratic level.

The results summarized in table 5 do, however, suggest a positive correlation between election boycotts and the general democratic level. This is true for both minor and major boycotts, but the correlation is strongest for the latter⁴⁰. Indeed, the correlation is more than twice as high for boycotted elections than for elections experiencing no boycotts. However, the qualitative study of relevant cases for this variable indicates that other factors matter more for the improvement of the democratic level within the subsequent elections. All of the major cases with effect on this variable were further studied, as well as two of the minor cases. Every single one of those examinations confirm the same pattern, namely that the boycott may have influenced the outcome, but only when other more important internal or external factors changed the rules of the political game. Moreover, if the major boycotts did influence the change of a country's general democratic level, the causation is relatively weak.

Although weak, a possible causality may be explained by the same theoretical logic that anticipates positive democratizing effects on particular features of democratization, such as political reform. Major boycotts usually come about due to genuine unfairness and they represent a portion of the opposition large enough to possibly influence incumbent regimes (Beaulieu, 2006). If major boycotts do positively affect the democratization process on single issues, the boycotts may have effects on the totality as well. However, as the evaluations of the other hypotheses below show, these causal correlations on specific aspects of democratic changes are tentative at best. Nonetheless, if one builds on Beaulieu's (2006) empirical results and theoretical argumentation, a positive boycott effect on general democratic level could also be feasible.

However, another aspect worth discussing when it comes to this hypothesis is of a more methodological character. In chapter three I justified utilizing Freedom House (2011) as the data source and an improvement of one as sufficient to be coded as a 1 (see table 3 for supplementary information). Perhaps the strong correlation can be at least partially explained by these choices? On the other hand, I do not consider Freedom House's ranking a poor methodological choice, and the justification expressed in chapter three is still valid. However, the argumentation for how to measure a better general democratic level, or more precisely what should be sufficient to be counted as an improvement, may be open to criticism.

⁴⁰ Even without data from Palestine in 1996, which meant that this major boycott has to be excluded from the analysis.

Conversely, the same criteria apply to both boycotted and not boycotted elections. Hence, if the variable measures change in the democratic level too easily, democratizing effects should be evenly overestimated in both elections with and without boycotts.

Regardless of the methodological discussion, the results from the quantitative and qualitative research combined do not rule out possible effects of election boycotts on the general democratic level. The likelihood of effect on the variable seems to be higher for major than minor boycotts. Since the hypothesis anticipated no effect whatsoever, it must be rejected.

H2a: *Minor boycotts will not affect the likelihood for political reform in Arab states.*

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that minor boycotts do not have any democratizing effects, which is also the case for hypothesis H3a (see below). When reviewing the literature on election boycotts, one finds those who advocate that election boycotts in general have no effect (see for instance Frankel, 2010). However, even the scholars who argue that boycotts do have a positive effect on democratization distinguish between minor and major boycotts, rejecting any influence of the former. This is due to the fact that minor boycotters are not truly concerned with fraud, because their size does not allow them to internalize the benefits of free elections (Beaulieu, 2006). Hence, not only does the size of the minor boycotts itself indicate little effect, the causes for choosing to boycott are often not the unfairness of the elections but their weak electoral position. Instead of facing the voters, some minor boycotters mask their weakness through boycotting the election (Pastor, 1999; Bratton, 1998).

The results, which are to be found in table 6, do to a great extent verify these assumptions. On the variable political reform, there appears to be no effect of minor boycotts. Two of the three minor cases with apparent effect on this variable were tested qualitatively, namely Iraq and Lebanon in 2005. These investigations confirmed the expected image of minor boycotts, that the parties boycotting were electorally weak. Furthermore, as disclosed in chapter four, the political reforms in these particular cases came after the Syrian withdrawal of Lebanon and the American led occupation of Iraq, and were most likely not caused by the minor boycotts. The hypothesis is therefore confirmed.

H2b: *Major boycotts have a positive effect on the likelihood for political reform in Arab states.*

This hypothesis stems from the same assumption as the former, namely that minor boycotts do not have democratizing effects, while major boycotts may. Emily Ann Beaulieu (2006) tested the effect of major boycotts on enacted political reform, and she revealed a casual correlation using the whole world as population: "...major election boycotts increase the probability of political reform" (Beaulieu, 2006: 212). The reason for this is that major boycotts, representing a majority of the opposition, can be a means to pressure the incumbent regime to adhere to political reform. Beaulieu's time period was not the same as in this study, and she did not provide regional analyses, but it seemed plausible to presume the same effect in the Arab region.

My analyses do, however, not support this hypothesis. In fact, the results presented in table 6 show that the correlation between major boycotts and political reform is much lower than for no boycotts and minor boycotts. This is contrary to what was theoretically expected, but since the quantitative analyses demonstrate no substantial difference between boycotted and not boycotted elections when it comes to political reform, this fact should not be given too much attention. There may be several reasons for why the major boycotts did not have effect. The most obvious is that boycotts do not have democratizing effects, as articulated quite recent by for instance Matthew Frankel (2010). Another reason might be due to lack of support by the international community or the domestic electorate (Beaulieu, 2006). However, at least some of the major cases that were qualitatively examined had significant lower voter turnout, so this cannot be the only explanation. It could also be because the regimes might amend existing laws in a manner that does not really make a difference (Posusney, 2002; Hinnebusch, 2006), and the changes have thus not been categorized as true political reform in the quantitative analyses. Either way, the hypothesis must be rejected.

H2c: *The positive effect of boycotts on the likelihood for political reform will be more extensive in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic Arab states.*

The background for this hypothesis is Ellen Lust-Okars's (2008; 2009b) notion of the importance of state monopoly over resources in determining the likelihood for democratization. "Where the regime appears to have an unchallenged monopoly over

resources, elections are likely to remain competitions over patronage” (Lust-Okar, 2008: 92). In countries where this is not the case, here labeled non-hegemonic regimes, elections at least have the potential to become matters of elite turnover. Lust-Okar did not focus on boycotts, but she did anticipate greater possibility for democratization through elections when the states did not control all the fiscal and coercive resources. Her theories were backed up by other scholars as well, as reviewed in chapter two (see for instance Bellin, 2004; Texcür, 2008), and it thus seemed plausible to argue that democratizing effects of election boycotts were more likely in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic regimes. Hence, when I expected a boycott effect on variables such as on political reform and international monitors (see below), I assumed it to be stronger in states with hegemonic regimes.

However, when assessing the results in table 9, it becomes clear that the empirical evidence do not support these suppositions. In general, non-hegemonic regimes come out with a stronger correlation to the variable political reform, and only boycotts in non-hegemonic regimes correlate with reform. In other words, no boycotted elections in hegemonic states were followed by enacted political reform within the next election. These findings must be interpreted with caution, though, because there were no correlation between election boycotts and political reform either. Regardless, the hypothesis must be rejected.

H3a: *Minor boycotts will not affect the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election in Arab states.*

Moving on to the variable international monitors, I put forth the same assumption for the effect of minor boycotts as was expected on political reform, and the arguments for the lack of effect are identical for this variable as well. This implies that minor boycotts should not have any effect on the incumbent regimes’ likelihood of inviting international monitors to the subsequent elections, an anticipation that was confirmed by the work of Beaulieu (2006) as well as articulated by most scholars who work on election boycotts. The latter group of researchers does not necessarily focus on this variable or minor boycotts particularly, but they anticipate little effects of boycott in general compared to participation (see Lindberg 2004; 2006b; Schedler, 2002b).

While the prior measure of democratization showed no correlation with election boycotts at all, the results illustrated in table 7 indicate a general relationship between election boycotts

and the presence of international monitors in the subsequent election. This correlation is not very strong, however, and is not due to the minor boycotts tested in this thesis. Hence, this hypothesis is predictably confirmed.

H3b: *Major boycotts have a positive effect on the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election in Arab states.*

Just like the hypothesis H2b, the supposition that major election boycotts may positively influence democratizing variables is first and foremost based on the work of Emily Ann Beaulieu (2006). She found a casual correlation between major boycotts and the variable international monitors in her research project. According to her worldwide study of election boycotts, major election boycotts can pressure the regimes to invite election observers to future elections. Again, it seemed plausible to expect the same effect of major boycotts in the Arab region as in the rest of the world, especially because participating alone evidently does not contribute to further democratization in the Arab world (Lust-Okar, 2009a).

Indeed, the empirical results seen in table 7 could arguably be the evidence needed to support my hypothesis. There is a strong positive correlation between major boycotts and the presence of international monitors in the next elections, compared to both minor boycott cases and elections which were not boycotted. On the other hand, the presumed democratizing effect of this variable had not been controlled for other factors when presented in table 7. When the relevant major (and minor) cases were more thoroughly investigated, the picture unquestionably changed with regards to the effect of the boycotts.

First, all of the major and minor boycotts with effect on this variable, according to the quantitative analyses, were examined qualitatively as well. The most striking similarity among the cases is the fact that international monitors also observed the boycotted elections with apparent democratizing effect. This is true for all of the major boycott cases and two out of three minor boycotts with assumed effect (see appendix 1). These findings indicate that Hyde and Beaulieu's (2009) research, which demonstrates causal correlation between the presence of monitors and the probability of election boycotts, may be correct. On the other hand, the correlation may also be related to the possibility that the monitor organizations were of bad reputation, as suggested by Judith Kelley (2012). This has not been tested in this thesis,

however, and these findings do nevertheless not exclude a casual democratizing effect of the major boycotts, but they robustly weaken the probability for such causal correlation.

Second, the qualitative study of both the minor and major cases in question further undermined the likelihood of causal correlations. All of the cases have experienced more comprehensive changes in the political context than the major (or minor) boycotts correlating with the variable international monitors. For some of them the rules of the game were transformed due to or in relation to external factors such as intervention/occupation or international pressure. For others the crucial factors have been internal, such as new leaders or civil wars. Which factors influencing democratization in each case are not of importance to this particular discussion, what matters is that there in all of the cases were several other factors at play. And most importantly, they all appear to matter much more than the major election boycotts. Finally, if the major boycotts do have an effect, it seems clear that they only do so in interaction with other contextual factors. In other words, when other contextual variables facilitate it, a major boycott may have greater impact than when they do not.

Do the results from the quantitative and qualitative studies then suggest that the hypothesis is confirmed or that it should be rejected? The answer depends on the interpretation of the qualitative data discussed in section 4.2. When the empirical evidence are indecisive, explanatory theory should be incorporated in the analysis to give an accurate interpretation. Beaulieu (2006) argues that because major boycotts usually come about due to genuine election fraud and electoral unfairness, the demands of the boycotting opposition are often met with the invitation of international monitors to the next election to “prove” the alleged democratic improvements, if the regime has been pressured to improve. Her study also confirmed this argument (Beaulieu, 2006). This should, as explained in the theoretical chapter, arguably also be the case in the Arab states. Moreover, it is most likely incorrect to reject the assumption that major boycotts have positive effects on the likelihood of monitors in the next election, because none of the analyses suggest a negative effect, and possible democratizing effects when interacting with contextual factors cannot be completely ruled out.

On the other hand, it seems equally mistaken to conclude that the results and analyses confirm the hypothesis, which would be the same as stating that there does exist a positive causal correlation. Especially since many scholars do argue against democratizing effects of even

major boycotts (see for instance Lindberg, 2006b; Frankel, 2010). Furthermore, perhaps the Arab region is an exception to the rule also with regards to the effects of major boycotts Beaulieu (2006) found in her worldwide study, as it is to Lindberg's (2009) democratization by elections theory. After all, participating in elections definitively does not seem to democratize the Arab states (Lust-Okar, 2009a; Ehteshami, 1999; Posusney, 2002).

The potential effect of major boycotts in Arab states must be more extensively studied, with a special focus on interacting variables, before this hypothesis can be confirmed without reservations. Hence, it must be rejected. At least until further studies have been conducted.

H3c: *The positive effect of boycotts on the likelihood for the invitation of international monitors to the following election will be more extensive in hegemonic than in non-hegemonic Arab states.*

The logical assumption behind this hypothesis follows the same theoretical considerations as H2c, which also focuses on the independent variable hegemonic or non-hegemonic regimes, using Ellen Lust-Okar's research on legislative elections in hegemonic authoritarian Arab regimes as the basis for the hypotheses (2008; 2009b). Unlike the variable political reform, major boycotts have a strong positive correlation with international monitors in the quantitative analysis. One would therefore expect that if boycotts really had a better probability of success in hegemonic regimes, the empirical evidence would be prevalent on this variable in particular. However, this is definitively not the case.

When interpreting the results in table 10, it becomes evident that the tendency of greater democratizing effects of boycotts in non-hegemonic states suggested above is soundly supported. In other words, if there is a causal correlation between hegemonic regimes and the effects of boycotts, it is unmistakably negative. Although not as apparent, this is also the case for the variable free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning, which is further evaluated below. How could my theoretical assumptions be so mistaken?

When the empirical data do not fit the theoretically based postulations, it may be because the theory was not based on adequate discussions, or perhaps even erroneously interpreted. Evidently, it could also be because of methodological errors or changed conditions and/or suppositions, which makes old theories outdated. As explained in chapter three, I consider

both the data and the data collection for this variable as reasonable. Since the assumptions are based on relatively new theory and are specific for the Arab region, this form of possible errors can also be “eliminated”. Instead, it looks as if I may have interpreted Lust-Okar’s notion of monopoly over state resources and the possible implications for boycott effects in an unsatisfactory manner. Her argument is that participation in elections in what I have labeled hegemonic states do not bring about democratization, while elections in states with non-hegemonic regimes at best can produce alternations of the elites. Hence, the democratizing potential of holding elections in the latter regime type is arguably higher than in hegemonic states (Lust-Okar, 2008; 2009b; Texcür, 2008). The logic behind hypotheses H2c and H3c is in consequence that election boycotts are more effective as a means for democratization when the elections are unfair and not free. Furthermore, in hegemonic states, where elections are not playing a democratizing role, this is arguably more the case than in states where they at least can produce an alternation of the political elite. This is also in accordance with the argumentation regarding causes of boycotts as formulated by for instance Staffan I. Lindberg (2004; 2006b; 2009) and Emily Ann Beaulieu (2006). Nevertheless, the results demonstrate that this is incorrect reasoning and the empirical data suggest the opposite inference. Evidently, this denotes that my theoretical analysis should be criticized, and furthermore, that the reasoning behind these two hypotheses is too weak.

Academically speaking, however, the inclusion of this independent variable has still been fruitful. The results do indicate correlation between this independent variable and the effect of an election boycott, although surprisingly for the non-hegemonic instead of the hegemonic regimes. The variable has not been controlled for other possible variables yet, so it is not possible to prove causal correlation. Still, the results presented in table 9 and 10 indicate that regime type, as defined in this thesis, may matter for the effect of election boycotts. Hence, it should be further investigated in the future. Notwithstanding, the hypothesis must be rejected.

H4a: *Neither minor nor major boycotts will have any effect on how free and fair the atmosphere for political campaigning in Arab states in the subsequent election is.*

While the variables political reform and the presence of international monitors may improve the quality of the laws concerning the elections as well as the actual adherence to those laws on Election Day, the variable labeled free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning is included in the study to incorporate important pre-election conditions. As explained in chapter

two, this is also essential for the fairness of the election itself (Kelley, 2009; 2012; Dahl, 1971). The reason the hypothesis is not predicting democratizing effects of neither minor nor major boycotts is simply because few scholars have tested this variable before. Hence, since there are few theoretical guidelines, the natural assumption would be none or little effects of election boycotts on democratization.

The results of the quantitative research, as shown in table 8 in chapter four, do not suggest any correlation between improved pre-election conditions and neither boycotts in general nor minor boycotts. They do, however, indicate positive correlation between major boycotts and the dependent variable, although not as strong as for the variables general democratic level or international monitors. Two of the three major boycotts with presumed effect as well as both minor boycotts were examined more thoroughly in the qualitative part of this thesis. For both of the minor boycotts there were observable changes in the political context due to major transformations in external factors. For the major boycotts the variables that seemed to matter most were by and large internal, but they still led to substantial political changes. This weakens the probability for a causal correlation. Since the cases under investigation here are similar to the ones discussed under the hypotheses above, the same conclusions seem to apply, probably due to the fact that many of the countries that experienced democratizing changes did so on several variables. Hence, it is not possible to ascertain that major boycotts lead to better pre-election conditions in the subsequent election, nor to totally rule out the possibility of an effect.

When I nonetheless argue that the hypothesis is confirmed, it is with the basis in the fact that the effect on this variable, according to the table analysis, is weaker than the other ones with correlating results, with less than half of the major boycotts showing democratizing effects. Moreover, as discussed in the methodological chapter, there were some uncertainties related to the data sources and methods of data collection for this variable, and rigorous rules should therefore be applied when analyzing the results.

H4b: *Whether or not the Arab state experiencing a boycott is hegemonic or non-hegemonic will not have any effect on how free and fair the atmosphere for political campaigning in the subsequent election is.*

This hypothesis is similar to H2c and H3c, but because the expectations to democratizing effects of election boycotts on the dependent variable were none, so were the anticipations for regime type effects. This does not, however, change the fact that my general reasoning on this independent variable was incorrect, as was more thoroughly discussed above. Nonetheless, this hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the results, which are summarized in table 11. There is a tendency of more effects of the boycotts in non-hegemonic states for this dependent variable as well, but it is not strong enough to be counted as a significant correlation, and even less a causal correlation. Hence, the hypothesis predicting no effect is confirmed.

H5: *Election boycotts will in general not have any democratizing effect on the subsequent election in Arab states.*

This final hypothesis is included in the thesis to make sure possible democratizing effects of election boycotts in general are revealed, although the theories reviewed in chapter two do not indicate any such effects. Neither scholars arguing against boycott effects in general (Lindberg, 2004; 2006b; Frankel, 2010; Schedler, 2002b), nor scholars anticipating effects of certain types of boycotts (Beaulieu, 2006) hold the likelihood for positive boycott effects on democratization particularly high. That is also why the hypothesis did not expect any effect on the different dependent democratizing variables.

On the variables political reform and free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning there are logically no evident effects of boycotts in general (see table 6 and 8). For international monitors there is a stronger correlation for boycotts in general than for no boycotts. However, this is due to the strong correlation for major boycotts (see table 7). The variable general democratic level is the only factor where the results can be said to suggest a relationship between boycotts in general and democratization (see table 5). On the other hand, the qualitative studies of the minor boycotts, which have been further examined because of correlation on this variable, did not indicate a direct causation. Moreover, parties representing various minorities in states divided along sectarian lines carried out most of the minor boycott cases with presumed effect. Whether or not minor boycotts are more effective in those countries is not being tested per se, but this fact does strengthen the argument against effects of boycotts *in general*. After all, the hypothesis supposes that election boycotts *in general* will not have democratizing effects, and possible effects of one type of minor boycott is

nonetheless not sufficient to contradict this assumption. I will thus argue that the hypothesis is confirmed, as was theoretically expected.

5.2 Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to reveal possible democratizing effects of opposition boycotts of parliamentary elections in Arab states. My interest for this theme was spurred by studies of the authoritarian nature of Arab regimes and by knowledge about how democratization theories were applied to the Arab region. Furthermore, the unmistakable increase in elections being boycotted in recent years made me ask if this could be a sound strategy if the opposition was aiming for democratization. By utilizing comparative historical analyses, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, I set forth to disclose if boycotts do have democratizing effects. For this to be feasible in practice, I tested effects of both minor and major boycotts operating in different types of regime on four dissimilar democratizing variables. Some of the results were as anticipated, while others proved to be more unexpected. This concluding section has three objectives. First, I will recapitulate the most important findings and answer the general research question. Second, the thesis' contributions to the literature on both democratization theories in the Arab region and general election boycott theories will be explained and accounted for. Finally, I will end the thesis by providing some suggestions for future research.

5.2.1 Democratizing effects of election boycotts

The cross-table analyses established positive correlations between major election boycotts and three of four dependent variables. This is true for the variables general democratic level, international monitors, and free and fair atmosphere for political campaigning, while there were no effects either way for political reform. Moreover, although weaker, the results also suggested a positive correlation between minor boycotts and general democratic level. For the independent variable hegemonic or non-hegemonic regimes, the results of the cross-tabulations strongly imply a correlation between non-hegemonic regimes and positive democratizing effects of election boycotts.

However, the likelihood for these correlations to be caused by the boycotts is weakened when controlling for other relevant variables through qualitative investigations. All of the cases that have been studied qualitatively have experienced more comprehensive changes in the political

context in the relevant time periods, due to internal or external factors, than the major (or minor) boycotts that correlate positively with the respective dependent variables. Furthermore, for the dependent variable where major boycotts appear to have the biggest effect, which is international monitors, the more thorough examinations disclose that most of the cases also experienced monitors in the boycotted elections. However, possible democratizing effects of major election boycotts have not been indisputably contradicted by the qualitative research. What does this mean, then, for the general research question, which was formulated as follows:

What are the democratizing effects of opposition boycott of parliamentary elections in the Arab world?

Neither the number of cases under investigation nor the chosen methodology allow for firm conclusions regarding the causality of correlations. Hence, answering the research question must be done with caution. Nonetheless, there are certain findings that are relatively definite and there are some findings that are more tentative. As expected, the research conducted in this thesis has rejected any democratizing effects from minor election boycotts or election boycotts in general. Likewise, though unpredicted, the analyses do not support any effect from major boycotts on the variable political reform. Finally, the results show no positive correlation between hegemonic regimes and the likelihood for boycott effects.

More surprising was the fact that the same analyses indicate strong positive correlation between non-hegemonic regimes and the probability for democratizing effects from boycotts. Although contrary to the theoretically expected, these findings do strengthen the notion that a boycott may have different effects in dissimilar contexts. The major boycotts may have played a role in the pressure for further democratization, but its explanatory effect should not be overestimated. This is due to the fact that the qualitative studies demonstrate that comprehensive external or internal changes in the political context explain more of the democratization improvements than boycotts. At the same time, those contextual factors may interact with election boycotts in ways that make the boycotts more effectual on the democratization variables.

Overall, then, these findings could be said to indicate that boycotting the elections is not a rational strategy if the opposition is aiming for democratization. In consequence, Lindberg's

(2009) theory of democratization by elections should arguably be more fruitful in a democratization perspective than not participating also in the Arab world. However, as mentioned in chapter two, the Arab region is one of the exceptions to his general theory (Lust-Okar, 2009a). Moreover, although the results are unconfirmed, Beaulieu's (2006) theories of effects of major boycotts on certain features of democratization in a long-term perspective, such as from one election to another, have not been disproved by this thesis. More research is thus needed before definite conclusions can be made about the democratizing effects of major boycotts in the Arab world.

Nonetheless, this thesis and previous research combined indicate that neither the acts of participating in parliamentary elections nor boycotting them have substantial democratizing potential in the Arab region, or at least not up to 2010, which was the last year of investigation in this thesis.

5.2.2 Contributions of this thesis

By conducting both quantitative and qualitative analyses I have been able to shed light on possible democratizing effects of elections boycotts in Arab states. In a situation where the strategy of boycotting the elections has been increasingly employed by the opposition in the region, my findings are fairly relevant. Especially with regards to the results confirming the theoretically expected lack of effect of minor boycotts, but also the tentative findings regarding when major boycotts may have democratizing effects. I have not been able to determine whether or not the correlation of effects with major external or internal factors is due to interaction between those factors and major boycotts, or merely because those contextual factors matter while major boycotts do not. However, with the recent major developments in the region in mind, this thesis indicate that if the opposition finds it necessary to carry out a major boycott, which are mostly done when elections truly are rigged (Lindberg, 2006b), it may have a better effect now than it had before these political changes. On the other hand, my thesis has disclosed that between 1990 and 2010 even a major election boycott was not a very efficient strategy for democratic change in the Arab world, and my regional research does not support Beaulieu's (2006) findings of straightforward causal democratizing effects of major boycotts.

This thesis has also contributed by an extensive data collection process for several of the variables, which in consequence can be utilized by other scholars in future research. This

thesis has provided some definite results, but equally important, the more tentative results could also be built further upon to acquire more comprehension about the appropriateness of using boycott as a strategy for more democratization in an authoritarian region such as the Arab region.

Therefore, although this thesis has contributed with some evident results, its largest contribution to the literature on election boycotts as well as Arab democratization theories may arguably be as a starting point for more comprehensive research on the subject.

5.2.3 Suggestions for future research

My thesis has certain limitations due to the number of cases under investigation as well as the methodological consequences of this fact. This has led to tentative instead of conclusive results with regards to the causal effect of major boycotts. There was not enough time and space in this thesis to truly study all of the relevant cases in-depth when I first had to conduct a quantitative analysis as well as undertake an extensive data collecting process. Nor was that the intention when choosing the research design. Since there has been done practically no research on this subject with focus on the Arab region before, the work of this thesis can be defined as necessary groundwork for future research. Hence, with the basis in this thesis' results, there are many ways in which the topic of democratizing effects of election boycotts can be further studied.

First, in-depth qualitative studies of only a few of the cases where major boycotts appear to have democratizing effects should be conducted. This type of research will to a greater extent be able to determine causal and interacting effects for those particular cases. Since the total number of major boycott cases is relatively low, it may be possible to generalize these results and thus also state something about the Arab region as a whole. Second, a more statistical approach is needed to establish significant results. As mentioned before, eight of the twelve latest elections experienced boycotts, and when those cases can be included in a future study in a few years, statistical methods may be applicable. Finally, more studies of what the effects of election boycotts in general are, also outside of the Arab region, should be encouraged. Today, this type of study does not abound, and the contribution of this thesis only stresses the need for a better understanding of boycott effects in a democratization perspective.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Dataset 1990-2010 – All variables

Independent variables

ID	Country	Year	Month	Boycott	Minor Boycott	Major boycott	Hegemonic
1	Algeria	1991	12	0	0	0	1
2	Algeria	1997	6	1	0	1	1
3	Algeria	2002	3	1	1	0	1
4	Algeria	2007	5	1	1	0	1
5	Bahrain	2002	10	1	0	1	0
6	Bahrain	2006	11	0	0	0	0
7	Bahrain	2010	10	1	1	0	0
8	Egypt	1990	12	1	0	1	1
9	Egypt	1995	12	0	0	0	1
10	Egypt	2000	10	0	0	0	1
11	Egypt	2005	11	0	0	0	1
12	Egypt	2010	11	1	1	0	1
13	Iraq	1996	3	0	0	0	1
14	Iraq	2005	1	1	1	0	0
15	Iraq	2005	12	0	0	0	0
16	Iraq	2010	3	0	0	0	0
17	Jordan	1993	11	0	0	0	1
18	Jordan	1997	11	1	0	1	1
19	Jordan	2003	6	1	1	0	1
20	Jordan	2007	11	0	0	0	1
21	Jordan	2010	11	1	1	0	1
22	Kuwait	1992	10	0	0	0	0
23	Kuwait	1996	10	0	0	0	0
24	Kuwait	1999	7	0	0	0	0
25	Kuwait	2003	7	0	0	0	0
26	Kuwait	2006	6	1	1	0	0
27	Kuwait	2008	5	0	0	0	0
28	Kuwait	2009	5	1	1	0	0
29	Lebanon	1992	8	1	1	0	0
30	Lebanon	1996	9	1	1	0	0

31	Lebanon	2000	9	1	1	0	0
32	Lebanon	2005	5	1	1	0	0
33	Lebanon	2009	6	0	0	0	0
34	Morocco	1993	6	0	0	0	1
35	Morocco	1997	11	0	0	0	1
36	Morocco	2002	9	1	0	1	1
37	Morocco	2007	9	1	1	0	1
38	Palestine	1996	1	1	0	1	0
39	Palestine	2006	1	0	0	0	0
40	Syria	1990	5	0	0	0	1
41	Syria	1994	8	0	0	0	1
42	Syria	1998	12	0	0	0	1
43	Syria	2003	3	1	1	0	1
44	Syria	2007	4	1	1	0	1
45	Tunisia	1994	3	0	0	0	1
46	Tunisia	1999	10	0	0	0	1
47	Tunisia	2004	10	1	1	0	1
48	Tunisia	2009	10	1	1	0	1
49	Yemen	1993	4	0	0	0	0
50	Yemen	1997	4	1	0	1	0
51	Yemen	2003	4	0	0	0	0

Dependent variables

ID	Country	Year	Month	Democratic level	Reform	Monitors	Pre-Election conditions
1	Algeria	1991	12	0	1	1	1
2	Algeria	1997	6	1	0	1	0
3	Algeria	2002	3	0	0	0	0
4	Algeria	2007	5				
5	Bahrain	2002	10	0	0	0	0
6	Bahrain	2006	11	0	0	0	0
7	Bahrain	2010	10			0	
8	Egypt	1990	12	0	0	0	0
9	Egypt	1995	12	1	0	0	0
10	Egypt	2000	10	0	1	0	1
11	Egypt	2005	11	0	0	0	0
12	Egypt	2010	11				

13	Iraq	1996	3	1	1	1	1
14	Iraq	2005	1	0	1	1	1
15	Iraq	2005	12	0	1	1	0
16	Iraq	2010	3				
17	Jordan	1993	11	0	0	0	0
18	Jordan	1997	11	0	0	0	1
19	Jordan	2003	6	1	0	0	0
20	Jordan	2007	11	0	1	1	0
21	Jordan	2010	11				
22	Kuwait	1992	10	0	0	0	1
23	Kuwait	1996	10	1	0	0	0
24	Kuwait	1999	7	0	0	0	0
25	Kuwait	2003	7	1	1	0	0
26	Kuwait	2006	6	0	1	0	0
27	Kuwait	2008	5	0	0	0	0
28	Kuwait	2009	5				
29	Lebanon	1992	8	0	0	0	0
30	Lebanon	1996	9	0	0	0	0
31	Lebanon	2000	9	1	0	1	0
32	Lebanon	2005	5	1	1	1	1
33	Lebanon	2009	6				
34	Morocco	1993	6	0	0	0	0
35	Morocco	1997	11	0	1	1	1
36	Morocco	2002	9	1	0	1	1
37	Morocco	2007	9				
38	Palestine	1996	1	-	1	1	1
39	Palestine	2006	1				
40	Syria	1990	5	0	0	0	1
41	Syria	1994	8	0	0	0	0
42	Syria	1998	12	0	0	0	0
43	Syria	2003	3	1	0	0	0
44	Syria	2007	4				
45	Tunisia	1994	3	0	0	0	0
46	Tunisia	1999	10	0	0	0	0
47	Tunisia	2004	10	0	0	0	0
48	Tunisia	2009	10				

49	Yemen	1993	4	0	0	1	0
50	Yemen	1997	4	1	0	1	0
51	Yemen	2003	4				

Sources: See table 2. For coding, see table 3.

Appendix 2: Kelley's dataset 1990-2004

Country	Year	Datateg	Sr11cheat	Sr13viol	Siemass
Algeria	1991	12	1	3	0
Algeria	1997	6	0	2	1
Algeria	2002	3	1	3	1
Bahrain	2002	10	1	0	0
Egypt	1990	12	1	0	0
Egypt	1995	12	1	2	0
Egypt	2000	10	3	2	0
Iraq	1996	3	3	3	0
Jordan	1993	11	0	0	0
Jordan	1997	11	3	0	0
Jordan	2003	6	1	0	0
Kuwait	1992	10	2	0	0
Kuwait	1996	10	1	0	0
Kuwait	1999	7	2	0	0
Kuwait	2003	7	2	0	0
Lebanon	1992	8	1	3	0
Lebanon	1996	9	1	2	0
Lebanon	2000	9	1	3	0
Morocco	1993	6	0	0	1
Morocco	1997	11	3	1	0
Morocco	2002	9	0	0	1
Palestine	1996	1	2	3	1
Syria	1990	5	3	3	0
Syria	1994	8	2	2	0
Syria	1998	12	3	2	0
Syria	2003	3	3	1	0
Tunisia	1994	3	2	0	0
Tunisia	1999	10	2	0	0
Tunisia	2004	10	3	0	0

Yemen	1993	4	1	0	1
Yemen	1997	4	1	0	1
Yemen	2003	4	1	2	1

Source: Assistant professor Judith Kelley's own data, obtainable by request. Email: jkelley@duke.edu. Codebook, see Kelley (2010).