

After the Arab Spring:

Why is it Summer Time in Tunisia and Winter Time in Egypt?



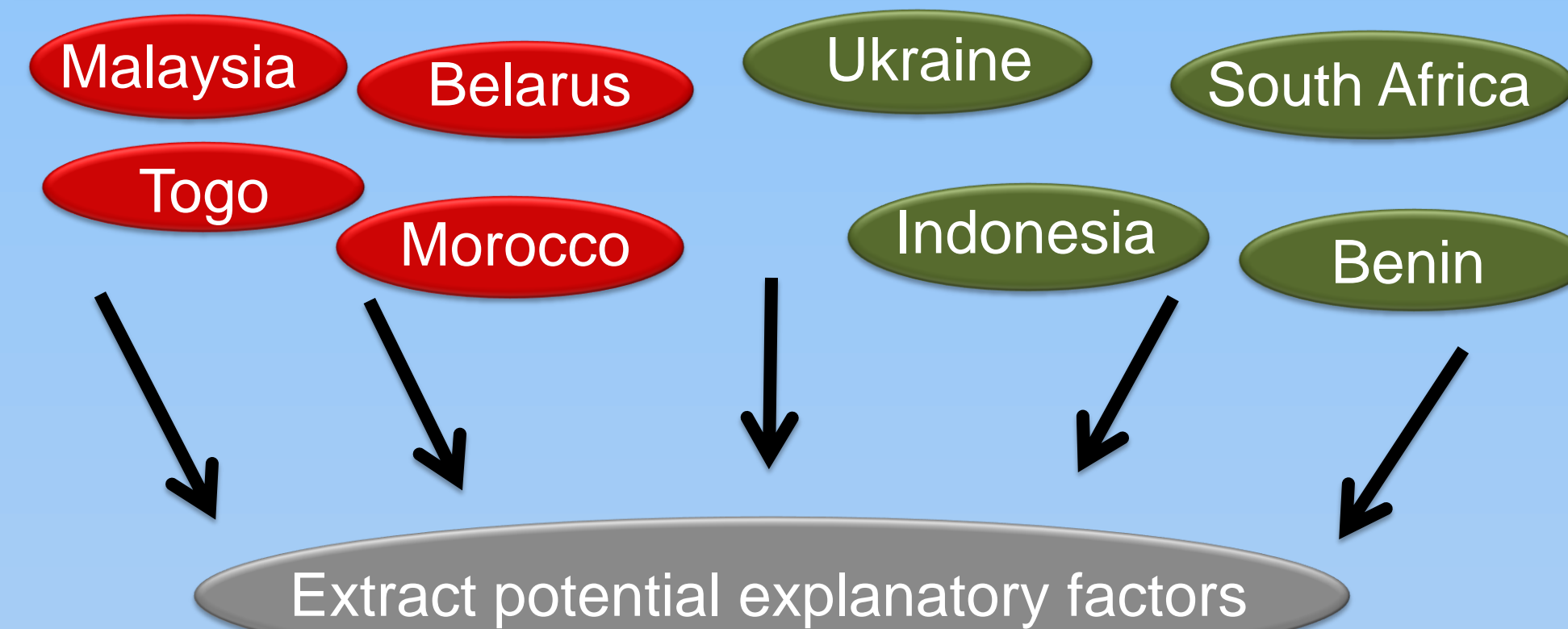
Presented by Alana Couvrette, under the supervision of Professor Cedric Jourde (University of Ottawa)

Introduction

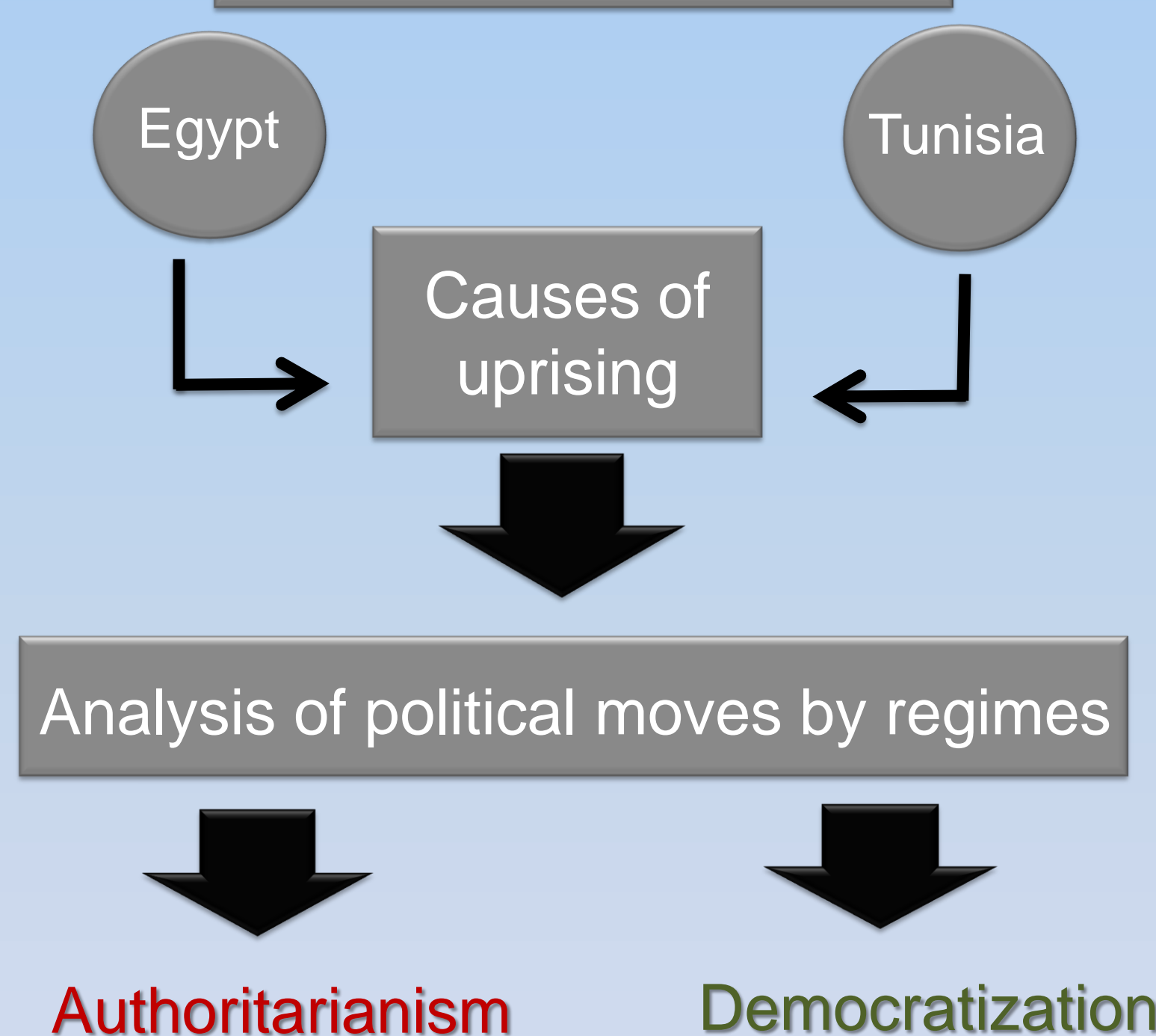
This research project examines the outcome of the 2011 popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East: Tunisia and Egypt. Both regimes were confronted with similar levels of civil unrest, but each took a distinct trajectory: Tunisia successfully transitioned towards a democratic form of regime; Egypt fell back into a strongman, military rule. The project explains why, when confronted by strong popular pressure, some authoritarian regimes survive while others fall.

Methodology

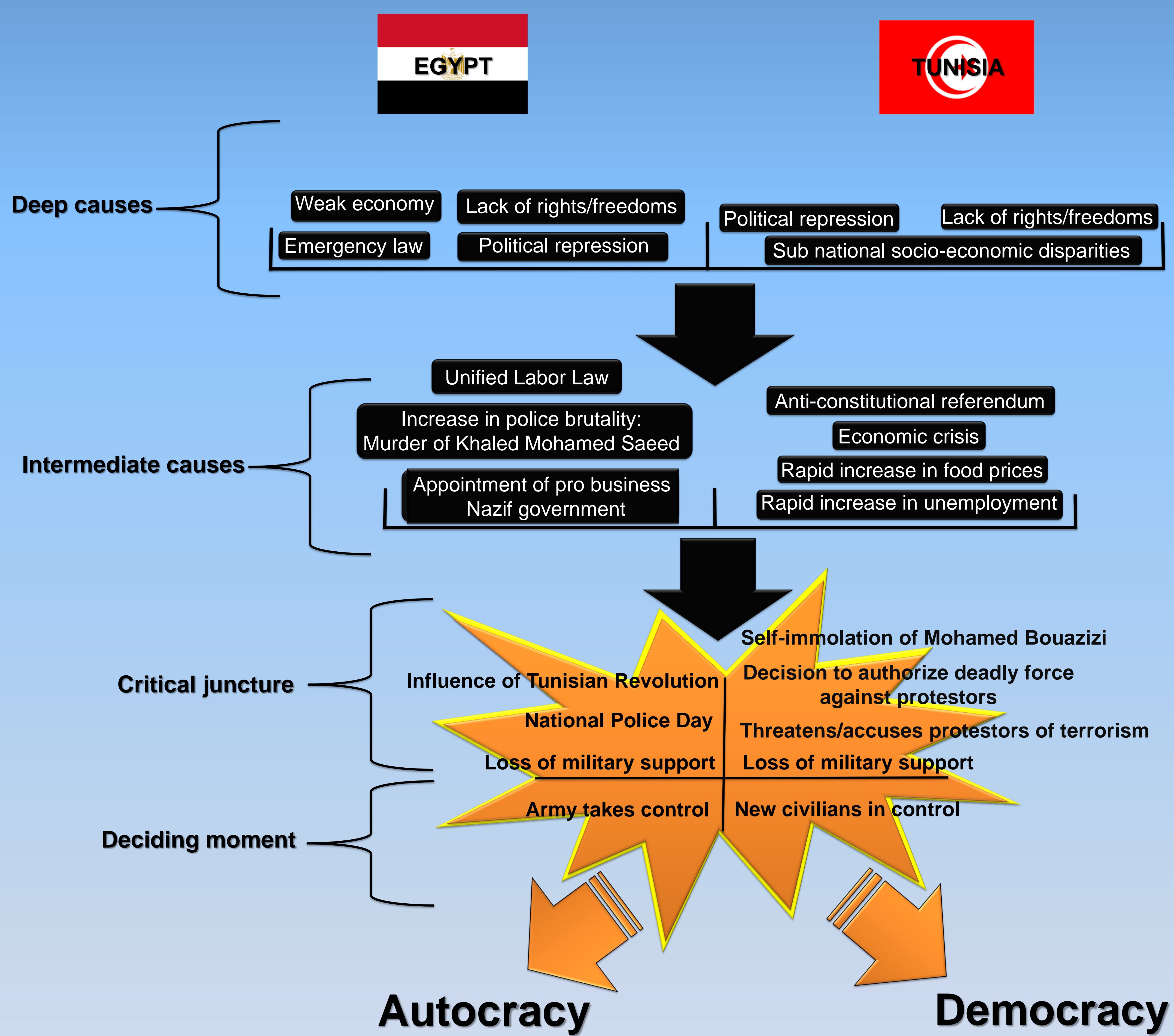
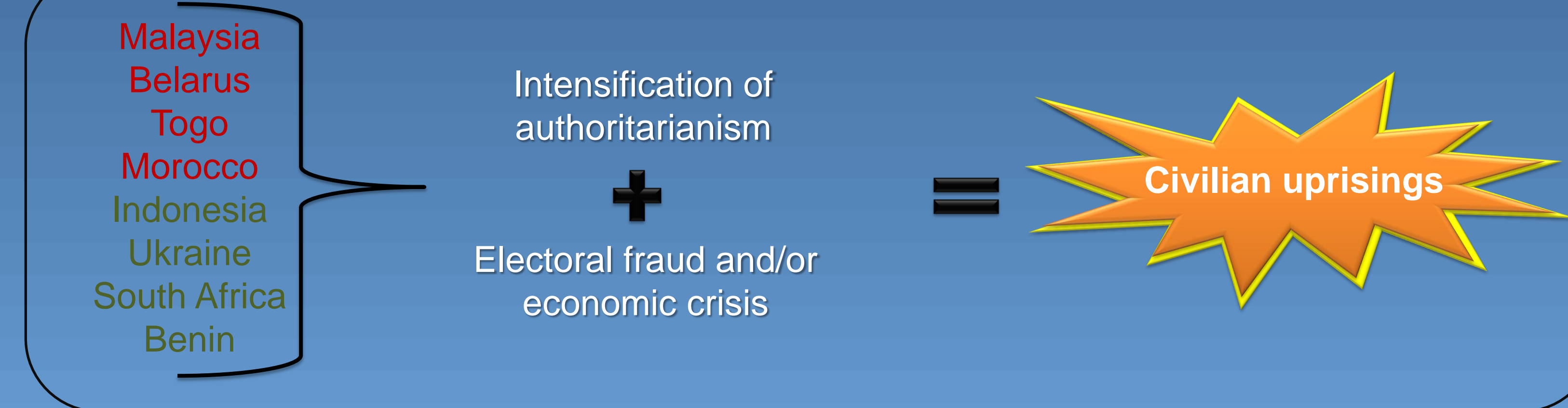
1. Analyze literature on causes of civilian uprisings



2. Conduct case studies



Results



Conclusion

I analyzed the literature on civilian uprisings in 8 countries and extracted explanatory factors. All 8 countries had various underlying deep causes for civil revolt, but they all shared similar intermediate causes: an intensification of authoritarianism combined with an economic crisis and/or electoral fraud. As for why four of them transitioned towards democracy while four others remained authoritarian despite the uprisings, the research highlights the capacity of the hegemonic party, the role of the military, external support, and the availability of financial resources. I have found that these patterns matched to a certain extent the Egyptian and Tunisian experiences which shared similar deep and intermediate causes, including the intensification of authoritarianism coinciding with an economic crisis (Tunisia) or the threat of an economic crisis (Egypt). But what accounts for the post-uprising situation? This project found that one key to understanding why Tunisia and Egypt took distinct trajectories is the degree of military integration in the regime and foreign support. Tunisia's military was overshadowed by security agencies run by the Interior Ministry. Ben Ali's predecessor, Habib Bourguiba, effectively banned military from joining the ruling party. On the other hand, Egypt's military was a key support base for Mubarak and were privileged in a way Tunisia's military never were. Though in both cases, the military contributed to the downfall of autocrats by withdrawing their support and initially letting the transition begin. Egypt's military refused to return to the barracks because of their longstanding tradition in politics and their numerous economic interests at stake, whereas Tunisia's military, being already outside of politics, had no such motive. Meanwhile, the Egyptian military benefitted from external (Western) support while the ousted Tunisian clique found no foreign support. More analytical tools are needed to better understand why unrest sometimes translates in real democratic transition while at other times it proves unable to erode the strength of authoritarian regimes.

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Contact Information

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