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Control the capital: Cities and political dominance

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Abstract

As optimism about the 'third wave' of democratisation has waned in the face of continued and renewed authoritarianism across the world, analyses of authoritarian dominance remain focused primarily on the national scale. We are argue that cities, and especially capital cities, play crucial roles in the production of dominance and the politics of maintaining it, as well as being sites of popular resistance. However, the varying ways in which governing elites deploy their resources and strategies in the urban arena in pursuit of dominance remain underexplored. In this conceptual framing paper for a multi-country comparative study spanning Africa and Asia, we suggest that strategies for urban dominance can be analysed in accordance with two overlapping modalities: interventions that are *generative* by design (their primary intention is to create some new form of support); and those that are *repressive* by design (their primary aim is to destroy or inhibit some form of opposition). We then present a typology of strategies that cut across these spheres of intervention and include co-optation, legitimising discourses, legal manoeuvres, coercive distribution and violent coercion. This framework is designed to inform empirical analysis of strategies of urban dominance, how these change over time and how they are deployed in varying combinations, facilitating a deeper understanding of how struggles for control shape urban outcomes.

1. Introduction

'As politics becomes more and more urban, it becomes less and less stable'
(Samuel P. Huntington 1968: 74).

'Calmness and civility in urban history is the exception not the rule. The only interesting question is whether the outcomes are creative or destructive.'
(David Harvey 2003: 939)

The late 20th century was characterised by widespread optimism about the prospects for progressive democratisation across the world. However, the realities of continued authoritarianism have reasserted themselves in the 21st, alongside active democratic reversals and the proliferation of hybrid or 'semi-authoritarian' rule in a significant number of countries. This has spawned a rich literature attempting to explain the nature of these transitions, the institutional heterogeneity such regimes exhibit, and their varying durability (Policzer 2009; Levitsky and Way 2010; Slater 2010; Svolik 2012). With a few exceptions, transitions to, and persistence of, non-democratic regimes and practices have been treated at the national scale, with little attention to the key roles played by particular subnational places. There is, however, reason to believe that cities, and in particular capital cities, are crucial sites in the production of authoritarian dominance and the politics of maintaining it, as well as sites of popular resistance (Wallace 2014; Glaeser and Steinberg 2017). The latter aspect – urban resistance and mobilisation – is more extensively researched than the former, not least through the sizable literature on urban social movements (Castells 1983; Pickvance 2003; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Nicholls 2008; Uitermark et al. 2013: Mitlin 2018). Yet, just as cities are 'privileged places for democratic innovation' (Borja and Castells 1997: 251), they likewise hold certain advantages for ruling elites attempting to consolidate their control and thwart the potential for effective resistance.

As urban populations continue to expand across Africa and Asia in particular, deepening our understanding of the relationship between cities and political dominance is therefore a pressing concern. We lack systematic analyses of the role played by urban political interventions in whether regimes fall or persist, as well as the urban dimensions of 'structural threats that regimes face and their strategic response to those threats' (Wallace 2014: 18). More broadly, there is a distinct lack of research around the role of urbanisation in promoting or undermining democracy, and recent scholarship has called for this to be the subject of future work (Fox and Bell 2016; Glaeser and Steinberg 2017). This is not to deny the heightened attention recently paid to political outcomes and political geographies in cities of the global South more broadly, including the use of planning as a tool of control (Njoh 2009; Watson 2009; Yiftachel 2009) and the exclusion and dispossession caused by certain forms of urban investment (Goldman 2011; Gillespie 2016). Our concern, however, is with the more directly political acts of ruling coalitions at the national level that appear intended to bolster their position in major cities. Recent literature has

touched on various aspects of urban authoritarian control (LeBas 2013; Resnick 2014b; Goodfellow 2014; 2018; Jackman 2018a; McGregor and Chatiza 2019), but without making the systematic study of urban political interventions by dominant regimes the overarching rationale for research. It is this that we attempt in this research project and this conceptual framing paper.[1]

Crucial to interrogating these issues is the relationship between cities and violence. It has been argued that, globally, violence has become markedly more urban, and we have turned from the 'peasant wars of the 20th century' (Wolf 1969) to the 'urban wars' (Beall 2006) and 'slum wars' (Rodgers 2007) of the 21st. As one commentator puts it, 'urban areas have become lighting conductors for our planet's political violence' (Graham 2011: 16). This is exemplified in contemporary history, not only in the 'Arab spring' (Allegra et al. 2013) and waves of urban protest inspired by it around the world (Estanque et al. 2013; Tuğal 2013), but also in the campaigns of brutal repression unleashed on cities by the Assad regime in Syria, Israeli government in Gaza, and numerous other governments across the Global South. In the context of rapid demographic changes, major cities have emerged as key sites within which struggles over the legitimacy and survival of regimes are played out, and opposition movements seek to gain support and influence (Resnick 2014a). Yet violence, coercion and repression are not the only forms of political intervention that ruling elites prioritise in cities in order to consolidate control. As urbanisation intensifies, often in the absence of widespread employment and economic opportunity, urban populations are becoming more insecure and, in some cases, more poor, making cities central places for meeting development challenges and aspirations. Thus they are spaces in which ruling coalitions can attempt to consolidate their support base through both clientelist strategies and broader developmental interventions, as well as stepping up efforts to repress opposition. The question of when and why ruling elites opt for different levels of repression relative to clientelism, developmental intervention or other strategies remains under-researched.

Our intention in this paper is to introduce a focus on capital cities as central sites in the study of political dominance and the longevity of dominant parties, in this way contributing to the study of authoritarianism within political science (Levitsky and Way 2010; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Slater 2010; Gandhi 2008). Unlike much of this literature, however, we are not specifically interested in parties *per se,* or in classifying and scrutinising the extent to which institutions in a given setting are authoritarian or democratic. Our interest is, rather, in the phenomenon of the *dominance* of a particular coalition of actors and organisations within national politics, how this is achieved and maintained, and the roles of capital cities as key sites for enacting, perpetuating and contesting this dominance.

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[1] This paper provides a conceptual framing for the research project, *Cities and dominance: Urban strategies for political settlement maintenance and change*, funded by the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre. The project explores how political coalitions have sought to achieve and maintain dominance in capital cities, comparing Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Kampala (Uganda) and Lusaka (Zambia).

Our understanding of political dominance is informed by the political settlements approach, which has been rapidly evolving over the past decade (Khan 2010, 2018; Whitfield et al. 2015; Gray 2018), including through the work of the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (Lavers and Hickey 2016; Pritchett et al. 2017; Kelsall 2018). A political settlement refers to the 'distribution of organizational power… [which] reproduces itself over time' (Khan 2018: 641). At the most general level, the political settlements approach provides a way to think about the balance of power between different groups in society, how this contains violence and provides a degree of political stability or order, and how it maps onto the formal political and economic institutions. Various approaches to political settlement analysis now exist, and our intention here is not to reconcile wider debates in this field (Khan 2018; Kelsall 2018), nor to advance any particular theory of political settlements. Rather, we simply use the framework to conceptualise dominance in relation to the broader balance of power in society, so that we can examine elite strategies for dominance, focusing attention on how they target and impact particular urban groups through different kinds of intervention. Indeed, it is the attention to historically constituted *groups* in society with different amounts of bargaining power, and how this constellation shapes strategies of rule and patterns of investment, that differentiates the political settlements approach from a more conventional interest in 'regime type'.

This paper, and the broader project, explicitly builds on recent work starting to explore the relationship between cities, political settlements and political order (Goodfellow 2018; Jackman 2018b). As well as drawing on the political settlements approach to conceptualise dominance, we deploy it as a tool for selecting a suitable range of cases to study, given our specific interest in situations characterised by a high or growing level of dominance by a particular ruling coalition. Beyond this, however, we do not cling to the wider political settlements approach, since our intention is to focus on something much more specific: developing a conceptual framework for understanding the varied approaches that ruling coalitions adopt within capital cities to try to bolster their own position, weaken opposition groups and obstruct processes that might lead to that dominance being undermined. As such, we are focused on the agency and active strategies of ruling groups targeted towards urban populations and urban spaces, rather than on specifying the overall structure of power and its outcomes.

This paper was developed primarily to provide the empirical case studies in the project with a conceptual language through which to interpret and compare the urban strategies for dominance in each particular context. It does not therefore offer a synthetic analysis of how and why particular strategies are used by ruling elites in particular places and times; this will be published elsewhere, after completing the analysis of our full range of empirical cases. The framework developed sees the authoritarian 'toolbox' (Cheeseman and Klaas 2018) available to ruling elites as diverse, including blunt methods, such as violence and intimidation, as well as surveillance, co-optation through public and 'club' goods provision, forms of co-

operative clientelism, and legal changes designed to alter the formal institutional environment with which opposition groups must contend.

We suggest that strategies can be analysed in terms of two overlapping modalities of intervention: those that are **generative** by design – in other words, their primary intention is to *create* some new form of support – and those which are **repressive** by design, in that they aim above all to *destroy or inhibit* some form of opposition. We recognise that the outcomes of such interventions may not be neatly aligned to strategies, and that interventions primarily targeted at generating support may have destructive outcomes, and vice versa – which is partly what makes strategies for dominance and their contestation so dynamic and unpredictable. We also recognise that not all interventions fit neatly into one or other of the above forms; hence we suggest overlapping spheres, with ample scope for generative-repressive hybrids of various forms. The majority of this paper is dedicated to unpacking these various strategies for dominance and control, with particular attention to how they can play out in capital cities and why the latter can be 'privileged spaces' for attempting particular interventions.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines our conceptual framework for understanding political dominance and its relationship to other key concepts; Section 3 situates our focus on capital cities by examining their roles in state building and political contestation; Section 4 lays out in depth the key categories we identify within our overlapping spheres of repressive and generative interventions; and Section 5 concludes

2. Political dominance of ruling coalitions

Political dominance can be achieved through starkly different institutions, yet is most often associated with a dominant political party (as compared to a military junta, monarchy and so on). In many contexts, the emergence of a dominant party is associated with authoritarian practices, whereby such parties 'permit the opposition to compete in multiparty elections that usually do not allow alternation of political power' (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010: 124). Formally, such societies often have the institutions associated with democratic politics; in practice, however, the ruling party has sufficient control over the apparatus of the state, and power more broadly in society, to manipulate elections and scupper any opposition. Dominant party systems are distinct from formal 'one party states', where no party opposition is tolerated. Many terms are used to denote such political arrangements, including dominant party regimes (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010), illiberal democracy, electoral authoritarianism (Gandhi 2008), hybrid regimes, and competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2010).

Although dominant party systems declined with the wave of democratisation associated particularly with the 1990s, the past decade has seen the rise of authoritarian practices and populist figures. According to Freedom House (2019), democracy has been 'in retreat' for the past 13 years. How political dominance is

achieved by such parties is much debated. It has been argued that the strength of dominant parties lies in rulers' capacity to bargain with elites and mobilise the masses (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010). For some, it is the strength of state and party organisations that form the basis of their success, along with their 'ties' to the West (Levitsky and Way 2010). Others have argued that the strength of political parties, in turn, crucially depends on the character of contentious politics that elites face, and which can mobilise them towards collective action (Slater 2010). For others still, politicising public resources is crucial to sustaining such parties, with the ability to draw on the public purse for electoral campaigns and inducements a key variable determining the longevity of dominant parties (Greene 2010).

Notwithstanding the importance of party structures in many contexts, to understand why a certain coalition of actors is able to dominate political institutions and limit the power of rivals over time requires going beyond a focus on parties, particularly since parties have historically often been weakly institutionalised in many parts of the South (LeBas 2011). Going beyond a focus on parties is important, given that the coalition of actors that consolidates control in a given country may, even if constituted within a given party, draw much of its power from organisational sources beyond the party. The concept of a political settlement helps inform the study of political dominance in this broader sense, by enabling analyses of political systems without either resting on assumptions about the strength of parties or resorting to crude distinctions between authoritarianism and democracy, which are of limited use, given that the majority of governing regimes globally today constitute various forms of hybrid (Diamond 2015; Wintrobe 2018).

Fundamental to a political settlement is the role of a 'ruling coalition', the stability of which is essential to political order. A coalition incorporates diverse actors, important among whom are elites, which typically include leaders in the fields of politics, business and religion. We can speak of a collective 'ruling elite', and, despite the difficulties associated with pinning down this term, the collective element is important because: 'Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (Arendt 1969: 44). Elites derive strength in part from their ability to draw on the support of wider groups and networks, together forming a coalition (which is usually built around a political party). A prominent way in which such coalitions have been conceptualised is as a network of hierarchically linked factions joined through patron–client relations (Khan 2010). Power relations among factions are conceptualised as both vertical (the relationship between ruling elites and lower-level factions within the broader ruling coalition) and horizontal (the relationship between the ruling coalition and rival, excluded coalitions). Hence political settlement literature often refers to the roles of higher and lower status factions within a coalition, or, in some variants, the notion of the settlement's 'social foundation' is used to capture this broader sense in which coalitions incorporate groups who in different ways provide support to the ruling elite (Kelsall 2018). Different elements of this social foundation may have greater or lesser potential to disrupt the ruling coalition if they become disillusioned or turn against the

ruling elite (bid), and consequently vary in the extent to which they will be targeted by the ruling elite for inducements or repressive measures.

Central to the ways in which coalitions compete to rule over rivals is the establishment of superior 'organizational power' or 'holding power' (Khan 2018), which can be seen as the ability of an organisation to impose or withstand costs. The characteristics and skills that constitute organisational power are diverse; however, the ability to coerce is central. 'Violence specialists' (North et al. 2009) – actors who are able to use and organise violence – thus play a key role within coalitions. Because the ability to use violence in most societies is neither monopolised by the state nor subject to law and bureaucratic forms of governance, the character of violence specialists operating within coalitions differs dramatically, and can include political factions, militia, gangsters, terrorists, trade unions, labour groups and state security agencies (Jackman 2018a, 2018b). Ruling coalitions thus incorporate a myriad of organisations, which function at different hierarchical levels of society, from the national down to the street corner, and have very different organisational characters, which differ spatially between and within cities, as well as regionally (Jackman 2018a). When in power, the ruling elite has privileged access to a range of rent streams which can be distributed to politically significant groups through both formal and informal institutions, enabling the broader ruling coalition to accrue resources from a wide range of processes (Khan 2018; Goodfellow 2018; Jackman 2018b).

To achieve dominance and maintain stability, a ruling coalition has to then both dominate potential rival coalitions and, equally, maintain the balance of power within its own coalition. Svolik (2012: 4) argues there are two primary threats faced by authoritarian regimes. The first is the potential for a mass uprising, what he terms 'the problem of authoritarian control'. While conventional wisdom holds that this is the dominant threat, in practice he argues that the rule of relatively few authoritarian leaders ends this way. Instead, the vast majority are deposed by the second threat, which comes from 'individuals from the dictator's inner circle, the government, or the repressive apparatus' (ibid: 4). In practice, it should be noted that these two factors often closely relate.

The capacity of a ruling coalition to achieve dominance is shaped not only by the strategies they deploy, but also by the inherited institutional capacities and endowments, including colonial legacies. Historical institutionalist perspectives on the state (see, for example, Pierson and Skocpol 2002) are therefore important in understanding why some ruling coalitions are better able to *realise* their strategies for dominance than others. Also, a ruling coalition may be more or less well placed to instrumentalise whatever coercive capacities they inherit, depending on the extent to which coercive elements of the state can be encompassed within their broader coalition. However, while the role of organisational and coercive capacities are clearly central to a ruling elite's ability to maintain dominance over time, in this particular paper, we are not concerned conceptually with capacities, so much as with the *variable political strategies and tactics* deployed to realise and perpetuate

dominance. In particular, we are concerned with the urban dimension of this, to which we now turn, situating it within the broader literature on cities, state-building and political contention.

3. Struggles for the capital

To date, the literature on political settlements and regime types has been poorly integrated with work on the geography and spatiality of political power, instead taking the nation-state as the given unit of analysis (Goodhand and Meehan 2019). Similarly, while cities are implicit within major literature on authoritarian regimes (for example, Slater 2010), they are not directly examined. More generally, as Allen writes in his book, *Lost Geographies of Power,* we have lost the sense in which 'power is *inherently* spatial and, conversely, spatiality is *imbued* with power' (Allen 2003: 3). Territory matters for the balance of power and for how dominance and efforts to achieve it are constituted. This concern is particularly pertinent in developing countries, where the state often has limited territorial 'reach' (Putzel and Di John 2012). For example, in Africa and some other postcolonial regions, the presence of internationally protected borders since independence limited the incentive to invest in extending power fully across territories (Herbst 2014), leading to 'a centre-periphery divide in which the coercive capacity of states was uneven – high in the capital cities (the centre) but declining with every step into the rural hinterland (the periphery)' (Cheeseman 2015: 17). Cities, and particularly capital cities, are thus unique spaces in which to study state power and analyse the mechanisms through which ruling coalitions seek to establish dominance.[2] In this section, we consider the relationship between cities, states and conflict in the context of developing countries today, and what the implications of this are for the role of capital cities in political settlements.

3.1 Cities and political dominance

The importance of cities to the evolution and consolidation of states is deep-rooted (Tilly 1992). Tilly argues that through European history, state formation stemmed from the accumulation and concentration of both capital and coercion within cities, which have also long had the potential to disrupt and contest the power of wider state authorities. Power-holders seeking to fight wars to consolidate territorial control had to develop relations with urban elites – including by taxing them to fund these wars in exchange for protection, which in turn fuelled the development of state bureaucracies. Thus the relationship between cities, taxation and conflict fuelled the rise of modern states. As centres of government, loci of powerful economic and social organisations, and as places of geographic importance (for example, industrial centres or ports), cities – and particularly capital cities – have been pivotal sites in revolutions, as well as wider forms of contentious politics. As Traugott's (1995) analysis of French revolutions suggests, the importance of a capital city is a function

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[2] We are, in this paper, less interested in the geography of dominance within cities, since our interest is primarily in elite strategies and the particular urban social groups they target for interventions, rather than the spatial arrangement of these within cities (though we do explore this in some of our case studies).

of a national system of governance. Where administration and politics have not been centralised into a modern nation state, the centre of governance can shift without undermining the claim of the ruler to command the territory. When a capital embodies a nation, however, this is not possible. Controlling and dominating capital cities have thus been key objects of war, revolutions and regime changes.

The place of capital cities in the state-building process outside Europe for the most part diverges from the European context in fundamental ways. Schatz (2004: 114) summarises this difference as such: 'Simply put: in Europe, capitals emerged as part and parcel of state and nation building; elsewhere, capitals emerged after legal claims to territoriality had been established'. The relationship between states, cities and conflict in many developing countries differs, not least because of the role of European empire-building and externally driven state formation, and the globalisation of capital flows (Beall et al. 2013). In post-colonial states, although some urban areas had long precolonial histories and often did function as sites of both capital and coercion as well as early state-building, the experience of extended colonial domination transformed the logic of cites. Many of the major cities of Africa and Asia today were either created for, or became defined by, the extraction of resources and the development of infrastructure geared towards the export of primary products, as well as military protection of colonial regimes (Beall et al. 2013).

Consequently, unlike in the historical experience of many parts of the world, in postcolonial contexts, states and cities often were born as conjoined twins, shaped to a significant degree by external forces, rather than co-evolving and becoming entwined through a dynamic relationship over time. However, in this colonially driven relationship between cities and states, the state was clearly dominant; instead of a dynamic and productive interdependence between the two, the city was primarily a site for the projection of state domination (Myers 2003). Capital cities were particularly significant in this regard, because it was in colonial capitals that government bureaucracies, regulatory regimes and systems of policing were largely constructed. Meanwhile, the economic foundations of these cities were weak. In the early postcolonial period, experiments with import-substitution industrialisation were often short-lived and not accompanied by the anticipated expansion of productive capacities and urban employment, particularly after international pressure to open economies intensified from the 1980s (Mkandawire 2005; Whitfield et al. 2015). Consequently, in many parts of Africa and Asia, rapid urbanisation proceeded with neither a substantial urban capitalist class nor an industrial working class that could organise at a large scale to confront the state (Beall et al. 2013).

Capital cities thus embody state authority in distinctive ways in postcolonial contexts, with the stark dualities created in what were initially 'nationally alien capitals' persisting through forms of planning, zoning, architecture and patterns of service provision (Therborn 2017: 145; see also Njoh 2009; Watson 2009). In countries that managed to escape colonialism, meanwhile, the kinds of rule needed to effectively stave off encroachment by colonising powers involved a kind of 'reactive modernisation' from above, which replicated some of the urban effects of colonial

domination (Therborn 2017: 147). Thus, Therborn argues, cities in non-colonised states ranging from Thailand to Ethiopia were shaped by top-down modernisation projects that preserved greater historical continuity than colonial capitals, but were nevertheless marked by state domination and strong dualities between ruling and subservient classes (ibid).

This is the urban backdrop against which we need to understand strategies employed by ruling coalitions to assert dominance in most of the world. Major urban centres, being economic hubs, will play a central role in the political economy of any political settlement, due to the significant resources they embody, and the ways in which different groups attempt to capture and exploit these. Selectively providing access to valuable urban land and property, as well as lucrative trading opportunities, are some of the most powerful levers that ruling elites possess in terms of shoring up their broader coalition in such contexts (Goodfellow 2018). In addition, *capital* cities specifically are 'containers' of sovereignty (Beall et al. 2013); hence demonstrating territorial authority within them is an important signifier for broader sovereign authority, to the extent that in civil wars, control of the capital is often synonymous with victory (ibid). This significance is no less relevant in peacetime, not only due to the need to protect government assets and elite resources, but because of the extreme visibility of capital cities, which plays a significant role in efforts to attain and secure dominance. Given their disproportionate representation in national and international media, capital cities are spaces in which development, security and dominance itself are regularly *performed,* which is part of the process through which dominance is maintained (Goodfellow and Smith 2013; Rollason 2013). They are, to use Putzel and Di John's (2012: 13) term, not just territory, but 'significant territory'; even if formal dominance of institutions in capital cities is challenged by powerful opposition forces, as is often the case, the symbolic demonstration of power and more informal exercise of authority are crucially important. We now turn to the question of urban opposition and how this factors into elite strategies for controlling the capital.

3.2 Capital cities as sites of opposition and political ferment

Capital cities' function as 'containers' of sovereignty makes them central rallying points for struggle and contentious claims (Beall et al. 2013), as well as sites of 'spectacular' violence and resistance (Goldstein 2004), and particularly vehement opposition to the ruling coalition. The roles of cities in fostering revolution have been documented by studies of Western contexts, such as the USA (Carp 2007), and have also been evident in recent years in the events of the 'Arab Spring' and the wave of urban uprisings linked to austerity and economic crisis (Allegra et al. 2013). Given that they are places particularly associated with the state, it is unsurprising that they should also be primary sites of resistance to it, and theatres of violent contentious politics. Being densely populated can mean cities are 'conduits where movements connect and develop' (Uitermark et al. 2013: 2549), where ideas and discourse ferment. Urban populations tend to be more highly educated, and it is important to

remember that notions and claims of citizenship have most often originated in urban contexts (Heater 2004; Holston and Appadurai 1996).

Major cities across much of the Global South, and capital cities in particular, are often opposition strongholds (Diouf 1996; Resnick 2014b; Lambright 2014). When opposition parties come to control municipal authorities, the ensuing situation of vertically divided authority can lead ruling elites to engage in various forms of 'strategies of subversion' to protect their interests in the city (Resnick 2014b; Gore and Muwanga 2014). These involve actions to limit the autonomy of municipal authorities, while also ensuring that local authorities take the blame for poor service delivery (Resnick 2014b). But, regardless of whether opposition parties achieve power, opposition forces make their presence known in distinctive ways in urban areas, exploiting the visibility of urban space for protests, riots and demonstrations, and invoking shared issues of urban collective consumption to realise their critical mass as a force able to challenge the central authority of the state (Branch and Mampilly 2015; Golooba-Mutebi and Sjögren 2017). In response, ruling elites mobilise the apparatus of the state to respond, often violently, to visibly assert their dominance. Significantly, it is not in the extremely authoritarian states that these patterns of urban protest and violent state response are most pronounced, but in hybrid regimes – in other words, those in which democratic forces enable some expression of grievance, even while authoritarian tendencies generate persistent repression (Fox and Hoelscher 2014: Goodfellow 2014). From a political settlements perspective, we can hypothesise that in capital cities where ruling elites are striving to establish or maintain a fragile and strongly contested dominance, usually because horizontally excluded groups are relatively strong, we are likely to see the highest levels of political violence.

Recent work has explored the possibility that urbanisation is related positively to democracy, outlining various causal routes (Wallace 2014; Glaeser and Steinberg 2017). Glaeser and Steinberg (2017) term this the 'Boston hypothesis', stemming from the historical importance of Boston in fermenting revolution in America's history. For Wallace (2014), large urban centres pose particular threats to regimes, for two key reasons: first, because they are more likely to have effective collective action events; and, second, because high levels of urban concentration can lead to a dominant city overwhelming other political forces. Fox and Bell (2016) likewise demonstrate statistically that city size (rather than level of urbanisation) is correlated with urban protest globally.

Moreover, these features of large cities can foster democratisation through the state's responses to these perceived threats. Based on the experience of China, Wallace argues that threats to regime stability stemming from cities led not only to coercion, and limits to where people can and cannot live, but also to other forms of state response, including subsidies and bringing benefits to urban dwellers to improve life in the city. This results in an 'urban bias' in public policy, which through improving urban conditions disproportionately will further incentivise urbanisation,

which ultimately bolsters threats to the regime, for the reasons outlined above.[3] This theory he terms the 'Faustian bargain hypothesis', which he elaborates thus: 'while urban bias might have short-term benefits for leaders, its long-term effects – namely inducing urban concentration – are self-undermining for regimes' (ibid: 44). For Glaeser and Steinberg (2017), there are three possible routes by which urbanisation can undermine authoritarian dominance. First is the idea that population density facilitates collective action. Cities increase the likelihood of rebels meeting each other; the risk of protesting in numbers is reduced as the likelihood of being caught is lower; the geography of cities can offer advantages to rebels; any protest will be visible nationally and perhaps internationally; and these factors are magnified when we focus on capital cities. Second, urbanisation can increase innovation and trade, which over time is generally threatened by dictatorship, hence leading to support for democracy. Third, cities can promote 'civic capital': the ability of citizens to push for higher quality government.

In reality, however, the relationship between cities and democratisation is not always so straightforward. Slater's (2010) work on 'ordering power' suggests that state-building in postcolonial contexts is intimately related not to war-making, as in Tilly's argument, but to internal threats. Urban class-based contentious politics can pose a particular threat to elites, because the population density and diversity means that elites have much less capacity to control the masses than in rural contexts. When urban protest is perceived as sufficiently threatening to a wide range of elites (for example, demanding redistribution or having a communal character), this can incentivise elites to increase support for the state (through taxes) in return for protection, which can also empower the state to discipline internal factions (ibid: 44). These 'protection pacts' may have a state-building function, but can also inhibit democracy and cement authoritarian dominance.

Recognising the centrality of capital cities to political contention and control thus opens up questions about the role that cities play in maintaining wider arrangements of state authority – the strategies and forms of governance that ruling elites utilise in urban settings in order to limit the potential for dissension and unrest. This focus resonates closely with the argument of Uitermark et al. (2013: 2546) that:

> 'the city is a generative space of mobilisations and, because of this, it is also the frontline where states constantly create new governmental methods to protect and produce social and political order, including repression, surveillance, clientelism, corporatism, and participatory and citizenship initiatives.'

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[3] It is important, however, to note that urbanisation, even when rapid, does not in itself necessarily promote 'urban bias' (Jones and Corbridge 2010). Where regimes in power have a strong rural base, and particularly where they have evolved out of rural guerilla struggles, they may be much more concerned to appease rural constituencies than urban ones. Even as urbanisation gathers pace, it can be some time before a tipping point is reached that results in more concerted efforts to distribute urban benefits. There is significant evidence that this was the case in Uganda, for example, where the capital suffered decades of neglect prior to a major turnaround in priorities from 2010 (Goodfellow 2010, Gore and Muwanga 2014).

Contention and control, these authors go on to argue, exist in a 'dialectic' (ibid: 2552), dynamically interacting as governments deploy strategies to mitigate the particular threat posed by urban contentious politics. This dialectic is one that should be understood over time, with interaction shifting power within coalitions, altering the forms of contention and control possible, and potentially even shaping the national political settlement. In sum, capital cities have a unique importance to national political settlements and thus studying them can offer deeper insights into the critical question of how settlements are maintained over time. While in this project we are focusing primarily on one half of this equation – elite strategies for urban control – this attention to the dialectic reminds us that we must always keep the other half, i.e. dynamics of resistance to urban dominance, in view.

3.3 The repertoire of contemporary urban protest

The past decade has demonstrated the importance of urban mobilisation beyond conventional political boundaries, with new actors and instigators of protest that attempt to undermine the legitimacy of authoritarian states, occupy public space and galvanise popular sentiment against their rule. Anti-government protests have marked cities across the world, both in the Global North and South, most iconically in recent years in the 'Arab Spring' and Occupy movements in major Western cities, but also other contexts, such as parts of sub-Saharan Africa over the last decade (Branch and Mampilly 2015; Philipps 2016) and pro-democracy protests in Turkey and Hong Kong. Such movements should be understood in tandem with the organisation of new coalitions, and there are indications that the processes by which such coalitions emerge may be changing as new technologies, strategies and discourse come to the fore. There is now a large body of literature examining this wave of protest, as well as broader contemporary social movements, which we cannot do justice to here. However, it is sufficient to raise three characteristics that have emerged as prominent within the contemporary scene: the role of social media; the sense that new coalitions, and particularly the youth, are critical to such movements; and the occupation of prominent public spaces.

The technology and infrastructure that define modern cities, and which are utilised by state actors to repress the opposition, also pose a major weakness and threats to ruling elites (Graham 2011). Transport hubs and routes can be utilised or exploited by opposition forces – as, perhaps most critically, can communication channels. The clearest recent example of the power of such technologies and the significance of new urban interest groups was the so-called 'Arab Spring', the period starting in 2010 that saw significant unrest, violence, revolution and civil war across much of North Africa and the Middle East, most notably impacting Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria. As well as having a very obvious urban dimension, an arguably key factor in catalysing small urban protest events into a regional movement was the role of social media. In Egypt, rulers in office for decades in the region were 'tossed out of power by a network of activists whose core members were twenty-somethings with little

experience in social-movement organizing or open political discourse' (Howard and Hussain 2011: 40).

The significance of social media (most notably Facebook and Twitter) along with messaging services (such as WhatsApp and Viber) is debated, with differing opinions about the precise role and magnitude of the technology in fermenting such anti-authoritarian movements; however, the fact that it is ubiquitous and widely used is clear. A number of factors have played into the rapid use of social media and the internet to ferment political discussion and mobilisation, including the sheer accessibility of technology, rapidly reducing costs, the potential for freedom from government interference, the possibility of building wider and even transnational networks (Howard and Hussain 2013). The advantages of online communication in authoritarian states are clear: it is rapid, efficient, without intermediaries other than digital platforms themselves, potentially provides a degree of anonymity, and provides a quantity of information and data that would otherwise be impossible to obtain. It is important, however, to remain cautious about the role that social media played, and to be aware that its role may be in spreading and publicising movements, rather than instigating them (Wolfsfeld et al. 2013).

A further key characteristic to the 'Arab Spring' was the mobilisation of disparate groups who do not, in these contexts, traditionally organise on the streets together, for example the middle classes and women (Howard and Hussain 2013), as well as the urban poor. In some countries touched by the Arab Spring, the political coalitions between different groups were less effective, as was the case in Morocco, which drew less from marginalised urban groups (Beier 2018). In the wave of protests that followed in some sub-Saharan African countries, such as Uganda, despite limited success in dislodging ruling regimes, there was also evidence of middle-class activists concerned with citizenship and democracy joining forces with disillusioned unemployed youth (Goodfellow 2014).

A further aspect of the North African uprisings, the Occupy movement and subsequent waves of protest across the world has been the iconic role of central public places, such as squares close to the administrative, political and cultural heart of the nations. This was critical to the visibility of the protests and to confronting the ways in which dominance is 'performed' in capital cities. One response to such uprisings since has been the transformation of urban planning, either through attempts to improve local governance in urban areas or through more repressive measures and efforts to further securitise public spaces, which has been the approach, for example, in Istanbul's Taksim Square. As Beier (2018: 233) argues, 'the way specific city structures have shaped the social movement has, in return, remarkably strengthened authorities' focus on the city'. Hence in Cairo's Tahrir Square, which was occupied by tens and later hundreds of thousands of protestors prior to the 2011 revolution, blockades and gates now guard key entry points, government offices have been relocated and there are plans for a new administrative capital itself being built to the east of Cairo (Beier 2018).

The uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East over the past decade provide just a taste of the kinds of contention that can evolve in contemporary, hyper-connected urban spaces – and of the varying degrees of success and brutal suppression that these movements can result in. It is clear that in the context of the rapid demographic change and high levels of socioeconomic, ethnic and religious diversity that characterise most capital cities, urban dwellers' responses to elite strategies for dominance can be highly unpredictable in their outcomes, even if they are often similar in their repertoires of contention (LeBas 2011). Potential urban antagonisms often lie below the surface, and only 'crystallise' into solid, us-versus-them conflicts through the agency of particular 'political entrepreneurs' that frame different social groups as bounded entities situated in clear opposition to one another (Philipps and Kagoro 2016). Oppositional politics thus depends on mobilising people along lines of actual or potential oppositional cleavages (ibid). While essentially unpredictable, these efforts to crystallise social conflicts and mobilise opposition do not occur in a timeless vacuum, and successful mobilisation may depend on tapping into past experiences in ways that generate rapid and coordinated action. Both authoritarian ruling elites and those seeking to mobilise rival coalitions against them will operate, consciously or unconsciously, against the backdrop of recent and more distant histories of mobilisation, which can either bolster or hinder their efforts. In this way, we need to understand elite strategies for dominance not just as constructed in a given moment, based on an assessment of the contemporary balance of power, but also as a reflection of historical learning and past experiences of bargaining and contention. Returning now to these elite interventions, in the following section we set out the overarching categorisation of strategies for urban political dominance at the core of our conceptual framework.

4. Seeking and maintaining urban dominance

The literature on authoritarian rule is replete with examples of the different strategies and tactics used by authoritarian regimes to attempt to achieve dominance. Some forms of the exercise of power work through the explicit threat of negative sanctions or the use of violence, while others involve forms of suggestion and persuasion, sometimes with intent concealed (Allen 2003). Authoritarian rulers have generally always experimented with different combinations of control and participation, with varying degrees of depth and success (Cheeseman 2015), almost always as part of a broader strategy. In order to understand in a more concrete sense the strategies that ruling elites use in the pursuit of dominance, we suggest that these can be situated within the two overlapping modalities of intervention that we term *generative* and *repressive*. We define these terms in the following ways:

- *Generative* interventions involve efforts to create or bolster sources of support through appeals that actively proffer something to urban residents: e.g. through including them in a political party position, making public investments to win over large urban constituencies, or distributing selective 'club' goods or private goods to key groups.

- *Repressive* interventions are explicitly intended to destroy or undermine some source of opposition. This broadly captures forms of expulsion and population dispersal, surveillance, closure of political space, legislation against political activism, arbitrary arrest and state-sanctioned violence used to undermine political opposition.

These are ideal types and we need to qualify their use a number of ways. First, they are not mutually exclusive and in practice the strategies and actions deployed by ruling elites can often incorporate elements of each (Gerschewski 2013), hence our framing around overlapping spheres that allow for hybrid forms. We also recognise that some interventions constitute attempts to shape public opinion, manipulate opposition or obstruct reform in ways that are neither straightforwardly repressive nor serve to cultivate specific poles of support. Second, while the terms 'generative' and 'repressive' are ways of characterising strategies and actions, the outcomes of these are rarely straightforward and are experienced differentially by different groups. For example, a generative strategy designed to co-opt the elite within a particular social group or economic sector may have the effect of repressing other members of that group. A repressive intervention for one actor can also be generative for another. The effect of such actions may also change over time – for example, what appears to be a generative intervention can take a markedly more repressive turn as it plays out. Third, it is important to acknowledge also that the objects of such repressive and generative interventions are not only actors outside the ruling coalition. Very often, actors within a coalition attempt to disrupt elites or others to improve their status, while elites in the coalition rely on repression to contain lower-level factions. Ruling elites will use these in differing measures and combinations, depending on the nature of actually or potentially 'disruptive groups', both inside and outside the ruling coalition.

Despite these important qualifications, distinguishing between interventions targeted at actively building support and those focused on undermining opposition can be analytically useful, since this distinction has real-world implications for the politics of urban development outcomes. Bearing the above caveats in mind, we therefore present five categories of strategies for dominance that embody and sometimes transect generativity and repression. These also go beyond the categories prevalent in the literature on the main pillars of authoritarian rule, including Gerschewski's (2013) recent work that uses categories of legitimation, co-optation and repression. While our framework overlaps closely with this, we also introduce other categories, in part because, unlike Gerschewski, we are not concerned with authoritarian *stability*, but rather with dominance. Indeed, some of the strategies we outline can be quite destabilising, even as they work to increase dominance. But our framework also differs because of our particular focus on the urban scale, which introduces the need for some slightly more fine-grained interpretive tools to analyse how strategies for dominance play out.

4.1 Violent coercion

A key repressive strategy utilised by ruling coalitions to reduce the threat of rival actors and coalitions is the use and threat of violence. We use the term 'violence' in a deliberately broad way, to include also the ways in which people are coerced. In this sense, violence need not be enacted to be real. Often the threat of violence itself is sufficient to coerce (Tilly 2003) and, deeper still, the interests supported by violence may be so evident that they simply shape the possibility for action without even needing to resort to threats (Jackman 2019). People are thus coerced in varied ways, which differ in 'intensity' (Levitsky and Way 2010), including through direct intimidation and acts, but also through techniques such as surveillance, government programmes and urban design. Although central to how states achieve dominance, the organisation of coercive institutions has been neglected by existing literature (Greitens 2016).

The character of the violence specialists prominent within ruling coalitions relates to the particularities of the urban political economy of cities, as well as the available ways in which violence can be deployed by elites to achieve dominance (Jackman 2018a; Lebas 2013). Cities typically contain a wide array of actors using violence entrepreneurially to seek power at different scales. These range from gangsters and mafia, to militia, defence forces, political factions and state security agencies. Very often, such figures are interlinked and interdependent, such that actors such as gangsters can be considered part of the ruling coalition (ibid), although it is acknowledged that the precise relationship between state and non-state violent specialists differs widely between and within cities (Arias 2017). Ruling coalitions need to demobilise and suppress potential rivals from utilising their organisational power to confront them in capital cities, which may be achieved by empowering and disempowering particular forms of violent specialist. The ability of elites to control such actors may be one factor that influences such processes, to mitigate the possibility that such actors switch coalitions and mobilise on behalf of potential rivals. Attention then needs to be given to who precisely within the ruling coalition is the source of violence and coercion, and how the organisation of this changes with authoritarian practices and the transition towards party dominance. At the same time, where the state enrols violence specialists in the form of urban gangs, vigilantes and ethnic militias, it is important to recognise that these organisations are also *local* in the way that they operate. As Lebas (2013) notes, shared ethnic identity, popular legitimacy, or other forms of embedding in local culture can act as constraints on local armed actors' behaviour, though it is precisely these that are undermined, the more that such groups are drawn into national political struggles.

The coercive tools deployed by coalitions may then be clear and blunt, in the form of arrests, intimidation, disappearances, killings and the suppressions of protestors; however, alongside these sit more complex approaches relating, for example, to surveillance and similar tools to measure and track populations. The threat of urban violence, and particularly terrorism, has created worldwide what Graham (2011) describes as a 'military urbanism', a militarised response to controlling urban spaces,

involving the 'radical ratcheting-up of techniques of tracking, surveillance and targeting' (ibid: 21). As modes of warfare have shifted with the growth of terrorism and insurgency, cities have become a primary battleground, such that contemporary warfare increasingly 'takes place in supermarkets, tower blocks, subway tunnels, and industrial districts rather than open fields, jungles or deserts' (ibid: 14-15). The state response has been to blur the traditional boundaries between military, intelligence and policing. New technologies are developed to track potential threats – monitoring behaviour at airports, developing profiles, 'intelligent' CCTV, drones, satellites and large datasets. These often build on existing datasets and technologies used for corporate and transport purposes (ibid: 25). Such technologies are transported – often through Western companies – to cities across the world (ibid), and such technologies can 'boomerang' back to Western cities (as Graham terms it, following Foucault), often developed by the same corporation in both contexts, housed in large Western financial centres.

Urban planning and design can itself also be a tool for coercion of population groups. Urban planning is influenced by the design of Western cities to enable the effective countering of urban insurgencies. In 19th century Paris, barricades of rubbish, furniture and street paving became a common tool in the repertoire of contentious politics, sheltering the city's many narrow streets and alleyways against the authority of state (Scott 1998; Traugott 1995**)**. As such, the barricade and the city's design itself posed a threat to urban order. In response, much of the city was rebuilt in the now classic Haussmannian boulevards, which were harder to barricade, thus making it easier to assert state power (Scott 1998: 60-61). Following the Mumbai riots in the early 1990s, when the Muslim community effectively barricaded a neighbourhood, new infrastructure has been built to counter this (Gupte 2017). These examples form part of a more general pattern of 'infrastructural violence', through which urban infrastructures form part of the repertoire of urban coercion (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012). Forms of administration, such as censuses, can similarly support the ability of a ruling coalition to track and manipulate its population (Scott 1998; Wallace 2014), countering the inherent complexity of cities, which by virtue of architecture and density offer places to hide and mobilise.

4.2 Coercive distribution

To provide for nuanced analyses of the ways in which coercion can play out in strategies for dominance, we introduce a distinction between violent coercion itself and forms of what have been termed 'coercive distribution' (Albertus et al. 2018). This is the idea that authoritarian states often deploy widespread distribution of resources as a means of bolstering their strength, having the effect of 'cultivating dependence and curtailing subjects' exit options' (ibid: 2). This is distinct from the forms of violence identified above, because it does not necessarily involve acts of violence, or even the threat of this, and – importantly – has a generative as well as repressive dimension. Forms of administration such as censuses and surveillance (increasingly through digital means), as noted above, can also provide the foundations for coercive distribution, by enabling the state to 'know' its population in

greater detail and thereby target forms of distribution that could engender dependency on, for example, dominant party institutions. In some cases, security provision itself can also be seen as a form of coercive distribution, with the 'public good' of urban security effectively depending on party membership or allegiance. Social policies can be used to this effect.

Recent work on 'globalised authoritarianism' similarly argues that ostensibly inclusive urban development programmes targeting the urban poor can in fact serve as the means to control potentially disruptive urban constituencies, and adapt the population and geography of cities to neoliberal globalisation and authoritarian rule (Bogaert 2018). In the Moroccan context, slums had been a source of violence and contentious politics – particularly 'bread riots' in the early 1980s and jihadi suicide bombings in the 2000s. In response, attempts at urban renewal have been implemented, partly in partnership with international donors, for example in the 'Cities without slums' (VSB) and 'national initiative for human development' (INDH) programmes. Bogaert argues that such programmes have two aims: first, to control a potentially dangerous population group; and, second, to create a citizen in the image of a neoliberal entrepreneurial figure. As such, they constitute a 'technique' of government control. State authoritarianism is then constituted not only by more conventional sources of authority and loyalty, such as patrimonialism, but also 'lies in the class projects of urban renewal, slum upgrading, poverty alleviation, gentrification, structural adjustment, market liberalization, market integration, foreign capital investment, and the creation of a good business climate' (ibid: 253). In a context where rulers can rely on direct coercion to control urban constituencies, these tools thus represent an important alternative that can emerge in the context of a 'liberalised' economy, and the movement of foreign capital.

4.3 Co-optation

Violence and coercion are costly for the ruling coalition, with significant potential consequences for their perceived legitimacy, both domestically and abroad (though in some cases, coercion of certain groups can be generative of support among other groups, intentionally or otherwise). A softer strategy used to placate potential opposition is co-optation, essentially meaning the process by which some benefit is conferred to a potentially threatening group incentivising them to cooperate. As Kelsall (2018: 7-8) argues,

> 'Assuming the repression of large groups is costly, we hypothesise that the broader and deeper the society's potentially disruptive groups, the more likely it is that the government will make co-optation its dominant strategy'.

Co-optation (also known as co-option) takes many different forms, relating to factors including the character of the actor or group involved, the ways in which they organised, whether the threat they pose is manifest or potential, and what precisely they can bring to the coalition. Co-optation can then include processes as diverse as the distribution of formal political power through (for example) the creation of

government jobs, ideological concessions relating to the place of religion in society, and the informal 'buying off' of key groups with disruptive potential through promises of future benefits and favours.

A fundamental tool for co-optation, even in authoritarian states, is elections, which can provide an opportunity for the re-distribution of access to state and market resources to actors, by bringing them into the ruling coalition. Even beyond elections, the elevation of people from key constituencies into positions of power to create a sufficiently inclusive 'elite bargain' to maintain stability is an often crucial modality of co-optation (Lindemann 2008). As the organisational power of groups shifts over time, such adjustments can be made necessary to ensure balance within the ruling coalition. This occurs at different scales, relating to micro negotiations within political constituencies, as well as large political parties or ethnic groups. However small, such negotiations can be crucial, as coalitions are built of such groups and these negotiations ultimately have wider affects within the coalition. Policy concessions can also represent an important tool for co-optation (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006), and one form these can take is placating particular ideological interests – for example, appealing to a religious or ethnic group by promoting their beliefs and identity in public ways.

Others have directly measured co-optation in terms of government spending (Fjelde and De Soysa 2009), and this does represent a prominent and often relatively transparent way in which advantages can be conferred onto specific groups. In addition to official social protection programmes, such as those in Ethiopia or Rwanda (Lavers and Hickey 2016), facilitating access to other kinds of private and 'club' goods can also operate as effective means of co-optation. In the urban context, the provision of housing accessible to particular groups, for example, can help to maintain a political settlement (Croese 2017; Planel and Bridonneau 2017). Given the potential threat that the broader 'public' pose to the ruling coalition, capable of mobilising independently on the streets or providing new support to potential opposition, public policy driven towards improving general life conditions (be they economic, health, security, and so on), can have the effect of co-opting key elements of the population.

A concept closely related to that of co-option is clientelism,[4] which is central to the achievement and maintenance of dominance in many, if not most, states the world over. Clientelism is a system through which benefits are conferred by people in positions of political power, conditional on recipients returning these favours with votes or some other form of political support (Stokes et al. 2013). It thus involves particularistic institutions of reciprocal exchange based on asymmetric power relations (Kitschelt 2000; Hicken 2011). Despite its ubiquity, we do not include clientelism as a strategy for dominance, because it is an institutional modality of reciprocal exchange, rather than a strategy as such. Indeed, as noted by Josua (2016: 36), 'clientelism cannot be seen as being equivalent to co-optation, as the

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[4] Some literature uses the two terms virtually interchangeably; see e.g. Cross (1998).

former denotes a general pattern of social organization (patron–client relations), while the latter is a strategy of political rule'. Co-optation is thus a strategy that can generate new forms of clientelism, but the two are conceptually distinct.

Reflecting on the relationship between co-optation and clientelism serves as a reminder that the nature of the power relations in a patron–client relationship can differ substantially, with very different degrees of leverage for the client group and varying degrees of active agency in constructing the patron–client relationship. In some cases, the client group plays a significant role in initiating a clientelistic relationship, which they use to try and leverage benefits from politicians (Goodfellow and Titeca 2012). Often the benefits leveraged may not be in the form of financial resources, but rather 'forebearance' – defined as the 'intentional and revocable nonenforcement of law' (Holland 2016), through which politicians withhold sanctions and facilitate the breach of regulations in their pursuit of political support.

The question of differing degrees of agency in initiating a clientelistic relationship also leads us to draw a distinction within the 'co-optation' category between *passive* co-optation and *co-operative empowerment.* Definitions of co-optation imply a degree of assimilation by the ruling elite – i.e. that the co-opted person or group should use their resources 'in line with the ruling elite's demands ' (Gerschewski 2013: 22). Co-optation therefore refers to a situation in which the initiators do not want the advice of the co-opted, merely his or her endorsement' (Kotter and Schlesinger 1979: 111). Co-optation is also often used to refer primarily to the 'buying off' of other elites, or the leaders of particular groups (Gerschewski 2013), rather than to more subaltern groups with less institutionalised power. Yet in some cases a clientelist relationship is co-created both by a ruling elite strategising to expand its coalition and a group seeking to gain greater voice or access to resources. The idea of 'co-operative empowerment' thus attempts to capture situations in which those targeted by a strategy are not only assimilated or 'bought off' by the ruling elite, but actually manage to gain some increased leverage for their own agendas through this interaction. This could involve the group in question playing a significant role in initiating a co-operative endeavour with the ruling coalition, which is possible by virtue of the potential power or value that it represents to the coalition. In this regard, rather than being brought into the coalition and losing independent power in the process, both the ruling coalition and the group in question gain in power through this process.

There is thus a subtle but important difference between 'passive co-optation', in which those co-opted yield to the co-opters' agenda in exchange for continued access to benefits, and these more empowering and agenda-shaping forms of co-operation. Both can be broadly thought of as generative, rather than repressive strategies, in that they create opportunities and bring groups into a broader coalition, rather than merely repressing opposition forces. The point is to allow for a distinction between subsuming people into an existing elite agenda and actually building on shared interests between dominance-seeking elites and groups whose support they desire and who possess some degree of power, often latently by virtue of their

numbers and/or disruptive potential. In some cases the exertion of interests by a client group might be highly informal, resulting in 'forebearance' by savvy elites seeking votes through favours; in others, co-operative empowerment may be more formal, for example where an organised urban group lobbies for and manages to gain inclusion in particular decision-making or gain access to certain resources.

4.4 Legal manoeuvres

The law is used in many different ways in the pursuit of dominance, most obviously through forms of repression and inducement. Legal manoeuvres can thus comprise repressive interventions, such as new constraints on freedom of assembly, as well as generative interventions, such as the relaxing of land use regulations or strengthening of a particular minority's rights. However, our category of 'legal manoeuvres' is intended to capture something that also goes beyond measures obviously intended to either repress or co-opt. Legal processes and instruments sometimes constitute hybrid strategies that, through repressing or threatening particular social groups, intentionally give out political signals to bolster support among other groups. In some cases, it is possible to argue that particular laws deliberately stimulate resistance or violence on the part of certain groups, in order to stigmatise them (Goodfellow 2014). Moreover, strategies for dominance may also utilise legislative processes to shift the balance of legal powers between different tiers of the state under conditions of decentralisation. This can be particularly relevant in urban areas that have many tiers of government present simultaneously, some of them often controlled by opposition.

This subcategory of legislative processes to restructure institutional relations is a distinctive aspect of the broader category of legal manoeuvres, and one which is neither necessarily coercive nor co-optive; instead, such a strategy aims specifically at creating obstacles, delays and institutional frustration that limit the organisational capacities of rival coalitions without overt repression. This can involve central governments attempting to disable and discredit local authorities run by political opposition. Drawing on Resnick's (2014b) analysis of 'strategies of subversion', these kinds of manoeuvre can be political (e.g. central governments increasing their ability to place central appointees in positions of power over local authorities), administrative (central governments divesting local authorities of responsibilities previously decentralised to them) and fiscal (limiting the tax-raising capacities, and therefore the authority, of opposition-run councils).

Some legal manoeuvres operate in more nuanced ways, seeking to produce outcomes indirectly, with their political intent concealed behind official discourses. As demonstrated in the case of Uganda, legal manoeuvres can involve the use of the legislative process itself, and other democratic institutions, to enact carrot-and-stick modalities of control (Goodfellow 2014). This involves allowing an element of democratic process and debate, which can influence the political climate, before ultimately exerting authoritarian control over the process (ibid; LeBas 2011). In apparently allowing democratic 'voice', legislative processes that are undermined

through informal structures of power can constitute an important means of manipulating, and thus weakening, groups that threaten the ruling coalition.

The decision to accord certain urban areas the administrative status of 'city' can also serve political functions, creating new patronage opportunities as well as an enhanced legal commitment to infrastructure and services in those areas. At the more dramatic end of this kind of intervention is the surprisingly common decision by elites to entirely move a nation's capital, often to a distant and remote location. It is estimated that worldwide since World War I, such an event takes place on average every six years, with examples from every continent, as diverse as Myanmar, Brazil and Kazakhstan (Campante et al. 2015: 6-7). Up to 30 percent of capital cities are today outside of society's largest city (Potter 2017). The rationale for moving capital cities differs for many developing nations, but centres around the needs of state-building to marginalise or disempower rivals and consolidate authority through patronage networks. Recent econometric analyses have also suggested a relationship between capital cities and the concentration of intrastate violence; hence an occasional strategy deployed by fearful governments is to move the capital itself, often to a remote and secure location (Campante et al 2015). Given the association between cities and opposition groups, an outcome of relocating capital cities away from a society's primary city can be the weakening of the hold that interest groups associated with that city have on state power, and equally the empowerment of other groups within society, increasing the ability of a state to resolve civil conflict. It has been argued that there is a correlation between this arrangement and reduced civil conflict (Potter 2017), and an association between moving capital cities and authoritarianism (Schatz 2004: 118).

4.5 Legitimising discourses

Achieving dominance requires the weakening of the organisational power of rivals to such an extent that they are unable to significantly challenge the ruling coalition. The capacity for coercion is necessary, but insufficient, for this – indeed, 'No government exclusively based on the means of violence has ever existed' (Arendt 1969: 50) – and combinations of coercion and co-optation may also not do the job on their own. Crucially, dominance also requires discourse and ideology to render an elite's rule moral, and thereby provide a legitimacy to their actions. This is not to relegate the importance of ideology to simply bolstering the organisational power of a coalition, but to recognise that this is one important role it can play. We therefore include a category of 'legitimating discourses', in recognition of the significance of such discourses for the maintenance of dominance, and in so doing are building on Gerschewski's (2013) call to reincorporate a focus on legitimation into the study of authoritarian rule. Too often, legitimacy is associated specifically with democratic legitimacy, when in fact no governing coalition can survive for long without a legitimation strategy.

In some respects, the more authoritarian the governing regime, the more legitimation is required, because of the absence of the legitimating meta-narrative of democracy

itself, although many authoritarian states continue to deploy the veneer of democracy to legitimise their rule (Cheeseman and Klaas 2018). In many parts of the postcolonial Global South, governments were bequeathed quite limited coercive capacity over their territories, and leaders of both one-party states and military dictatorships therefore often seek to tap various forms of democratic legitimacy as one way of overcoming this limitation (Cheeseman 2015: 39). Hence Bertrand de Jouvenel's claim in 1952 that 'The king, who is but one solitary individual, stands far more in need of the general support of society than any other form of government' (de Jouvenel, 1952: 98). For the purposes of our conceptual framework, we identify three particularly prominent legitimising discourses beyond that of democracy – sometimes deployed in combination, with different target audiences – that ruling elites commonly make recourse to, in seeking to justify and normalise their strategies for dominance.

The first is a discourse of developmentalism. This is particularly prominent in states which, for reasons structural/historical reasons, find themselves in situations where they urgently need to generate developmental progress (Leftwich 1995; Doner et al. 2005). The extensive literature on 'developmental states' explores in depth the conditions under which regimes are motivated to vigorously pursue goals of inclusive economic growth, as well as the reasons why these approaches have for the most part been highly authoritarian.[5] The point here is that this *association* of rapid developmental success with authoritarianism also provides a basis on which to justify authoritarian behaviour, regardless of the likelihood of such behaviour actually producing developmental outcomes. Focusing on positive development outcomes (or the aspiration to achieve them) provides a powerful discourse of 'output legitimacy' (Schmidt 2013), thus distracting from a lack of democratic 'input' into government.

A second legitimising discourse in the pursuit of dominance is that of populism. This can in some regards can be contrasted with developmentalism, given that the latter accords substantial importance to elite leadership, expertise and formal institutions – the very things that populist discourses reject. Populism can be defined as a political strategy based on anti-elite rhetoric, an appeal to the masses, and the pursuit or exercise of power by a personalistic leader based on direct, unmediated support from mostly unorganised followers (Weyland 2001: 14). In this discourse, direct, personal connection takes precedence over concrete developmental outcomes. Populism is by no means confined to the sphere of authoritarian rule, and many democratising developing countries are drawn to populist strategies to build support through democratic means (Boone 2009; Resnick 2014a). Yet the ideas underpinning populism do not depend on democratic processes or institutions, so they exert substantial appeal for authoritarian rules seeking to legitimise their strategies. They can also be effective in urban areas with highly informalised economies, where collective mobilisation against elites and the wealthy gain a particular resonance, due the latter's proximity and visibility.

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[5] See, for example, Amsden (1989), Doner et al. (2005) and Leftwich (2000).

The third legitimising discourse of particular relevance here is that of securitisation. This is relevant in contexts afflicted by major civil conflict, where 'conflict fatigue' has placed a large premium on the goal of securing territory, but can also be powerful in societies where urban areas are affected by high levels of violent crime. While securitisation is central to the legitimising narratives of many military dictatorships, it can also be used to great effect by civilian governments, particularly in cases where crime, sectional or gang warfare are used to justify heavy levels of repression and aggressive policing. Even everyday elements of urban life, such as informal street trading, are commonly cracked down on by governments in the name of enhancing 'security', when often the motives are as much about dispersing potential opposition (Goodfellow 2013; Resnick 2019).

In trying to understand how regimes seek to achieve and maintain dominance, the role of legitimising discourses such as the three highlighted above is central. Such discourses are not mutually exclusive, and can be combined; it is common, for example, to find the rhetoric of developmentalism and securitisation employed concurrently by ruling elites seeking to maintain dominance against a backdrop of both devastating violence and deep poverty (Goodfellow and Smith 2013). As will be explored in our empirical cases, the nature of the threats to ruling coalitions in urban areas shape, and are shaped by, the discourses that ruling elites deploy to accompany other forms of repressive and generative intervention.

Figure 1: Strategies for urban dominance
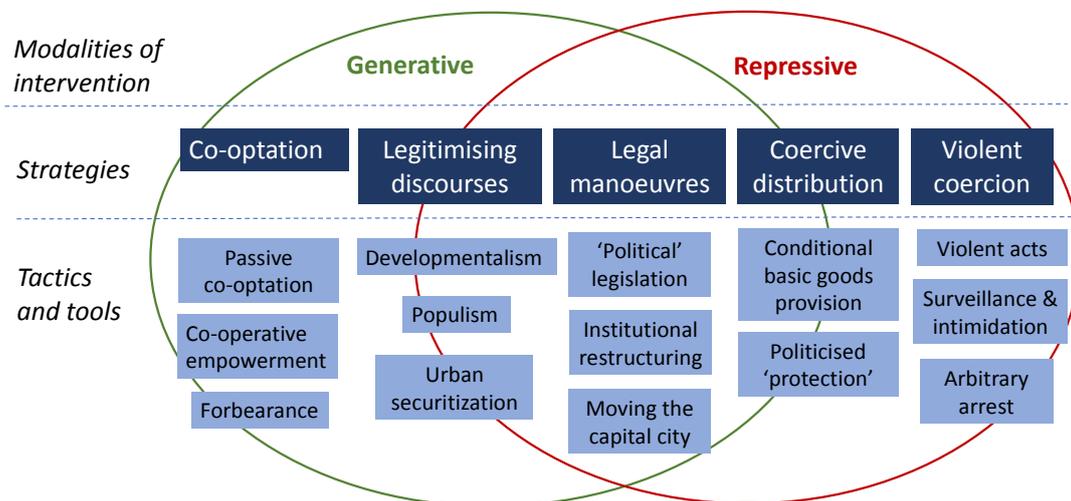
Having outlined these five categories, through which we can understand strategies for dominance (summarised in Figure 1), it is also important to highlight the value in seeing these not only as strategies for dominance, but relational categories that can inform our understanding of the dialectic between control and contention. In other words, groups who contest dominance can also employ forms of violent coercion (for example, through street battles, riots and destruction of state property), coercive

distribution (such as gang-based goods provision), legal manoeuvres (through petitioning and symbolic law-breaking), co-optation (for example in relation to bringing in other excluded groups), and the mobilisation of discourses to legitimise their contentious actions. Indeed, the ways in which ruling elites deploy the strategies for dominance above can influence the choice of modalities of contention, and vice versa. As such, the above can be seen not only as top-down strategies, but as *terrains of negotiation* in the dialectic between the ruling coalitions and rival groups and factions.[6] Given our focus on strategies of dominance, we have not explored in detail here how these same strategies can be used by opposition forces to contest dominance – but through our empirical case studies we may explore this further as appropriate, feeding this into analysis and potentially further theory development.

5. Conclusion

This paper has aimed to make two primary contributions to the study of authoritarian dominance. First, it has argued the need for closer analysis of the role of capital cities in the evolution and maintenance of dominance in political settlements, particularly in places where rapid urban growth is coinciding with the rise and persistence of authoritarian forms of government in many parts of the world. Second, it has offered a framework for exploring the how ruling coalitions seek to gain and perpetuate their dominance through actions within capital cities. Rather than proposing explanatory hypotheses, as this a relatively new field of study we have instead offered a conceptual 'toolbox' and analytical language intended to inform empirical exploration and inductive analysis. The theoretical validity of this framework has been established through successive iterations developed in dialogue with our wider project team and through several project workshops. It is rooted in a distinction between two overlapping modalities of generative and repressive intervention, and a typology of five categories of strategy that map onto these and can in turn be broken down into particular approaches, tools and tactics. What remains now is to empirically examine when and how particular ruling coalitions deploy such strategies in particular combinations, with the aim of synthesising the project findings into a broader explanatory account.

In working towards such an explanatory synthesis, a crucial question relates to the role of coercion and the conditions under which violence and coercion become (or cease to be) the primary means through which dominance is achieved, maintained and contested. Here it is worth recalling Arendt's formulation that 'Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What can never grow out of it is power' (Arendt 1969: 53). This is the centrepiece of her argument that 'violence and power are opposites', and 'violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance.' (Arendt 1969: 56). Thus, in our terms, violence can be deployed in the pursuit of dominance, but cannot in itself generate the power needed to secure continued dominance over time; hence it tends to reach its pitch when dominance is slipping from a ruling coalition. Though violence can

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[6] We are grateful to Adrienne LeBas for this point.

wield unparalleled repressive force, the maintenance of dominance over time always requires generative interventions as well. This is especially the case in urban areas, in which the density of social organisation can enhance the capacity for groups to mobilise demands and, simultaneously. heightened visibility limits the extent to which violence can be the sole mechanism of control.

The balance between strategies ultimately depends on the nature of the political settlement, as well as the proclivities and backgrounds of the ruling elite. But also, inevitably, this balance changes over time, because political settlements themselves invariably change over time, in response to the growing or diminishing power of particular groups. Moreover, experimentation with different strategies and tactics can create positive and negative feedback loops that shape future interventions. Thus, shifts in strategy may simply be a consequence of a previous approach yielding decreasing returns, running out of steam or being fiercely contested; but it may also be a consequence of changing demographics, electoral cycles, or a shift in international influence within a country. Through our framework, empirically interrogating different strategies of dominance, how they change and how they are deployed in different combinations is a way of deepening analysis of the various shades of 'semi-authoritarianism' that analysts now suggest characterise most regimes (Ottaway 2003; Tripp 2010; LeBas 2011). Yet it is also a route to deepening our understanding of the drivers of different forms of urban governance, given that the politics of dominance can have a huge influence on concrete urban outcomes, from the delivery of services to the capacity of different groups to exercise collective voice.

This paper serves as a starting point for analysis of our own case studies, through which we explore the varying modalities and strategies deployed in a number of cities in Africa and Asia. Through this work, we aim to explain not only why certain contexts have produced particular elite approaches to controlling the capital, but also (where possible) how this has dialectically generated forms of urban contestation that respond to and feed into these strategies. We also hope that others will take forward this research agenda, by building on, elaborating or challenging the conceptual framing here, in order to better enhance our understanding of the mutual and dialectical evolution of cities and political settlements.

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