Divide and Distribute: Authoritarian Distribution Under the Threat of Economic Sabotage

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October 18, 2013

Abstract

Contrary to conventional wisdom, few autocrats rely exclusively, or even principally, on repression to survive. Instead, they exploit a variety of distributive strategies, buying popular support and co-opting elite challengers as necessary. According to existing theory, however, none of these strategies should involve targeted goods to politically disenfranchised minorities or other marginalized groups. Yet in some regimes, we find this very practice, begging the question: why provide benefits to the marginalized? In answering this question, I explore the puzzling case of Qatar, where the regime regularly targets distributive goods to otherwise marginalized groups. Such targeting is simply inexplicable for existing theories of authoritarianism. To explain this behavior, I offer a novel theory of authoritarian support-buying under the threat of sabotage. Even groups marginalized from traditional venues of power can influence distributive policy by threatening to destroy capital or undermine its growth. In testing my theory, I draw on a unique dataset of GIS data from Qatar. My empirical strategy exploits the spatial segregation of groups to evaluate the relationship between distributive targeting and the location of marginalized communities. Ultimately, I show how the regime appears to target distributive goods to different communities, favoring citizens over non-citizens and potential saboteurs over groups with a lower sabotage potential.

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*This draft prepared for the Comparative Politics Workshop at the University of Michigan. Please do not cite without author’s permission.
In March 2008, Barwa Real Estate announced plans for an ambitious new housing project. Part community development and part luxury resort, the Barwa al-Baraha project would be located on the outskirts of Doha, Qatar, and house over 53,000 people. Among the many planned amenities, include “cricket fields, tennis and basketball courts...dining halls and restaurants, an auction area, a workshop, playgrounds, cinema halls, a modern medical centre, petrol station, fire station and maintenance workshops.”\(^1\) While estimated to cost $1.1 Billion, the project’s scale and extravagance is hardly rare by Qatari standards these days. After more than a decade of soaring energy prices, Qatar, like other Gulf states, have amassed vast reserves and built incredible wealth for their rulers and citizens alike.\(^2\) Such incredible wealth has helped finance massive expenditures and development projects throughout the region and beyond.\(^3\) Yet even in the face of these many impressive projects, Barwa al-Baraha remains distinct. Whereas other projects clearly and ostentatiously target citizens or mobile Western expats, this project is designed for the explicit use and enjoyment of migrant workers. No country in the Gulf has ever invested so heavily and deliberately in the welfare of such a socially marginalized and politically disenfranchised community. This targeting is simply unprecedented, raising important questions about distributive policies and the role of the marginalized within authoritarian regimes.

For most observers of the Gulf, this project’s announcement had to be shocking. The project represents a stark departure from the prevailing narratives on the treatment of migrant workers in the Gulf (for a review, see Gardner 2011, 10). For decades, the Gulf states have depended on the importation of foreign workers whose lack of exit options, labor rights and other protections have made them vulnerable to systematic abuse and exploitation. Having been socially and politically marginalized, these workers, like other domestic minorities in the Gulf, have had little recourse for redress (Gardner et. al. 2013). And yet despite such rampant abuse, we find the Qatari regime deliberately targeting this vulnerable population with distributive goods and services. Moreover, throughout the Gulf we find a similar and growing trend, albeit not to this extent. From Kuwait’s non-citizen bidoon population to foreign workers in the UAE and Bahrain, we find increasing evidence of distributive targeting of marginalized groups. This targeting leads to the simple yet previously unexplored question: why do some autocrats provide benefits to the marginalized?

The provision of distributive goods to marginalized groups represents a fundamental challenge to canonical theories of authoritarianism. Prevailing models of authoritarian politics tend to derive from a coalitional framework (Bueno de Mesquita et. al. 2003; Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin 2008, 2009). Autocrats build narrow elite coalitions, maximizing their personal rents by targeting supporters and excluding all others. Within such a framework, any provision of goods to the marginalized diverts resources away from the ruler and these supporters. Such a diversion appears to violate the underlying logic of authoritarian rule, which is predicated on mass exclusion for

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\(^1\) Barwa Online Promotional Materials, March 2008. barwa.com.qa

\(^2\) Leading the region, Qatar has the second highest GDP per capita in the world, estimated at $98,329 in 2011 (IMF 2012).

\(^3\) This is most readily seen in the countless investments made by these regimes’ sovereign wealth funds over the past decade. Until the recent recession, when even the Gulf states had to resort to relative austerity, these regimes were actively pursuing ambitious investment strategies throughout the West and Asia.
elite benefit. Qatar’s targeting of goods thus challenges some of our most basic assumptions about authoritarian regimes, leading to a series of unresolved questions that motivate this project: Why are some marginalized groups targeted but others not? How does the means (i.e. goods) of targeting vary across groups? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, under what political, social and economic conditions should we see the distributive targeting for marginalized groups?

To answer these questions, I develop a theory of authoritarian distributive politics under the threat of sabotage. Sabotage refers to the myriad of ways a marginalized group can challenge the regime by exacting costs on the autocrat and his support coalition. Even as they suffer systematic political and social exclusion, marginalized groups can influence the political economy of the state by destroying capital or impeding its growth. Such costly action not only decreases the autocrat’s rents, but may jeopardize his very survival. Autocrat survival fundamentally depends on elite support-buying. To purchase this vital support though, the autocrat must continuously raise state revenues, making his survival dependent on production and the actors critical to this process. Such a dependence makes these rulers potentially vulnerable to sabotage. Sabotage suggests that however marginalized some groups may be, they are not powerless. This threat provides marginalized groups with a potential bargaining power that is simply nonexistent in traditional theories of authoritarianism. To explain the targeted provision of distributive goods, we have to move away from conventional coalitional models, better incorporating the marginalized and the threat of sabotage.

The theory generates a series of testable hypotheses predicting which groups will receive goods and how the regime differentiates among communities. In testing these hypotheses, I return to the motivating case of Qatar. I draw on a unique dataset of state-collected Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data. The data include measures for different groups (based on housing type) and spatially located goods and services. My empirical strategy exploits the spatial segregation of groups to evaluate the relationship between distributive targeting and the location of marginalized communities. Ultimately, the results are consistent with my prediction that the regime differentiates among groups by selectively targeting goods and services. The Qatari state appears to favor citizens over non-citizens and potential saboteurs (e.g. migrant groups) over groups with a lower sabotage potential (i.e. Western expatriates).

The remainder of this paper will proceed as follows. In Section 1, I survey existing theory and coalition models of authoritarian distributive politics. These theories, while impressively fecund and generalizable, do not sufficiently differentiate among groups, nor do they account for these groups’ varying capacity to influence authoritarian survival outside of elite bargains. Building on this literature, Section 2 develops my theory of support-buying under the threat of sabotage. I introduce an alternative framework for conceptualizing autocrat survival, which better captures the role that the marginalized may play. In moving from the general to the specific, Section 3 situates this theory in Qatar, teasing out a series of hypotheses which I test using GIS data. Finally, I conclude with Section 4, summarizing my main findings and discussing avenues for future work.
1 The Promise and Perils of Support Coalitions

The targeting of marginalized groups represents a significant challenge to prevailing political economic theories of authoritarianism. The canonical model analogizes authoritarian survival to coalition formation. Remarkably flexible, this model provides incredible explanatory power across regime types, placing regimes as diverse as monarchies and military juntas within a single framework. Unfortunately, such expansive applicability also comes at a cost. Coalition models often require significant reduction, stripping away the rich context that may distinguish one particular regime from another. For many general questions, this may not be problematic at all. For explaining the puzzle motivating this paper, however, it is crucial. Coalition models focus on elite bargaining, leaving little space or role for the marginalized. As a theoretical framework, there are several problematic assumptions that do not necessarily hold Qatar. Consequently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve the puzzle with a traditional coalition model.

Before exploring the specific assumptions that make coalitions problematic analogies, let us briefly consider these models and their major insights into authoritarian rule. These theories begin by analogizing autocrats to coalition leaders, who construct, manage and regulate some elite cabal, cadre or court that governs society (Tullock 1987; Bueno de Mesquita et. al. 2003; Brownlee 2007; Svolik 2009; Boix and Svolik 2011; Egorov and Sonin 2011). This premise, if only obliquely, borrows from a long tradition studying the politics of coalition-making across democracies. In most democratic systems, the coalition-formation process is fairly transparent and relatively predictable. Based on their respective seat shares, legislative parties bargain amongst themselves for portfolios and other coalition benefits. Given such a well-defined strategic environment, it is hardly surprising that these institutional theories have come to dominate the study of coalition-making (see Laver and Schofield 1998).

While certainly appropriate for the study of democracy, this coalition framework faces significant challenges as we begin to apply it to authoritarian regimes. However rich these theories may be, they often become muddled when exported to alternative contexts, where such pellucid institutional rules do not always prevail. Beginning with the coalition itself, the very process that generates an autocrat’s support coalition does not follow the same kind of predictable rules as in democracies. Decision-making within authoritarian regimes operates behind closed-doors, obscured by opaque institutions whose existence may represent but the patina of democracy. Depending on regime type, it may be the royal family, military junta, dominant party or some different group altogether who makes the critical decisions governing the state. Without a clear rule for adjudicating between these potentially competing institutions, it is impossible to determine how exactly decisions are made within authoritarian regimes. Worse yet, these institutional rules, or lack thereof, cannot tell us who will be in the winning coalition, or how this outcome should influence basic distributive dynamics within the state. Taking this analogy too seriously can thus be problematic, especially

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4Recent political economic models have even made this coalition framework explicit. Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin (2008, 2009) argue that authoritarian rule can best be conceptualized as a process of dynamic coalition formation, as sub-coalitions and juntas compete with each other until a stable, self-enforcing group emerges.
given two critical assumptions. Let us consider each of these assumptions in turn.

Coalition theories begin by first assuming that there exists a clearly defined, fixed and known survival threshold. Just as democratic politicians endeavor to meet legislative or electoral thresholds, autocrats strive to meet some support threshold that determines their survival. Having met this threshold, the autocrat is thus assured of his survival and enjoys no further utility from additional support. In other words, the marginal value of support reaches zero at the threshold. In practice, however, defining this threshold can be nearly impossible without a clear voting rule or some other institutionally induced benchmark. Absent these institutional rules, the threshold is not only context-dependent but likely to change over time. This is problematic since the threshold effectively sets the size of the coalition itself. Selectorate theory makes such a claim and assumes that political survival depends on the ruler’s ability to reach some winning coalition size (Bueno de Mesquita et. al. 1999, 2002, 2003). The assumption of a known, exogenously fixed threshold also animates Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin’s (2008) model, serving as a minimal benchmark for any eventual ruling coalition. In a similar vein, Boix and Svolik (2011) assume that dictators must meet some effective power threshold. This threshold implicitly defines how many elites the autocrat must win over, given his own share of power.

These models help us understand how authoritarian power struggles and elite bargaining affects distributive outcomes. The answer to the classic distributive question of “who gets what” directly follows from these bargaining games. Problematically though, this answer crucially depends on the assumption of coalition thresholds, which may not always apply. We may have little reason to believe that, in practice, the autocrat’s calculus at all resembles that of a coalition leader, scrambling to ensure that he has just enough support to survive a confidence vote. Although the power structure of some authoritarian regimes justifies the coalition analogy, others do not. This is certainly true of the last great bastion of authoritarianism, the Persian Gulf. With the exception of Kuwait, these countries have no meaningful legislative bodies or other institutional checks. While the coalition logic may hold for internal royal family dynamics, it fails to capture the broader support these regimes seek (and receive) from their societies. Most importantly, these countries have large foreign-born populations that fall outside the traditional coalition game. Despite their marginalization, they are not irrelevant and can greatly influence elite bargaining. In these countries, as in many other authoritarian regimes, leader survival plays out in a far less organized or formal way, and often depends on actors outside the traditional elite-driven coalition game.

This problem leads to the second critical assumption: only some groups within society (i.e. elites) count towards the threshold. Suppose that we could define the survival threshold. The question then becomes, how is this threshold met? If not explicitly, coalition theories generally assume that only a subset of society counts. In essence, society is divided between those who count and those who do not. In contrast to democratic systems, where one person’s vote is equivalent to any other’s, individuals are clearly differentiated in authoritarian regimes. In simplest terms, we

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5 A few years ago, Bahrain would have also been an exception. With the recent uprising, however, and the consequent repression, the early-2000s liberalization has come to a halt as the regime has become increasingly autocratic.
can reduce this distinction to those who can best be described as elites, and everyone else. And it is strictly these elites who count towards the autocrat’s survival threshold.

Just as studies differ in terms of the threshold autocrats must meet, the identity of these elites can vary widely. General theories tend to leave this group largely undefined. Magaloni focuses on “select members of the ruling clique” (2008, 2), while Boix and Svolik refer to them simply as “notables” (2011, 1). Typologically based theories begin by classifying autocracies (see Geddes 1999), which determines the relevant elites according to regime characteristics and other institutions (e.g., military junta, single-party or monarchy). More narrow or case-oriented studies can be even more specific when characterizing this group. In Egypt, for example, a coalition including “influential family heads, businessmen elite, and senior bureaucratic appointees” comprised Hosni Mubarak’s “selectorate” (Blaydes 2008, 2). Whatever the name given this group or however defined, the logic is the same across these theories: the support coalition strictly comprises elites. For countries like those of the Gulf, this elite-focus is problematic, as it ignores the vast majority of society. Over 80 percent of Qatar’s population are foreign-born, non-citizens. Even models as general as the selectorate theory have little to say about a population that is systematically disenfranchised and marginalized. Their numbers alone mean that they have some role to play in the functioning of society, even if they have no immediate influence on the selection and survival of leaders.

The two central premises of coalition models lead to a simple and inevitable conclusion: the autocrat will build a minimum-winning coalitions comprising elites. This prediction, moreover, has profoundly consequential implications for authoritarian distributive politics. To ensure the loyalty and support of these elites, the autocrat will deliver a mix of distributive goods along coalition lines. Those within the coalition should receive targeted goods, while those excluded will not. In other words, given the elite composition of the autocrat’s support coalition, no marginalized group should enjoy any form of targeted good or selective distributive benefit. By assumption, these marginalized groups do not count towards the survival threshold, making any targeted goods to them an unnecessary diversion.

Coalition theories of authoritarian regimes are extremely useful for a range of cases, answering specific questions about elite politics and the provision of goods along these lines. Ultimately though, they are less useful when we think of cases like Qatar, where the vast majority of the population falls outside these traditional elite coalitions and yet still receive goods. To explain the provision of targeted goods to marginalized groups, we need an alternative framework for conceptualizing authoritarian rule. The next section takes up this task.

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Blaydes (2006) is an exception to these elite-driven theories. Focusing again on Egypt, Blaydes argues that electoral budget cycles induced broader spending and transfers beyond the elite stratum. In this case, however, the focus is not on the marginalized. The groups receiving targeted transfers are traditional allies and pillars of the regime, comprising public sector workers and rural Egyptians.
2 Support-Buying Under the Threat of Sabotage

Rather than assume there exists some known threshold autocrats must meet to stay in power, I propose a simplification: leave the threshold undefined, or at least unknown. After all, in practice, autocrats do not strive to reach some razor-edge threshold and then stop. Oftentimes, they provide benefits more broadly in an attempt to maximize their chance of survival. The key word here being chance. Neither autocrats nor their supporters, or even challengers for that matter, know what exactly is needed to ensure survival. This uncertainty may simply be driven by the changing nature of the threshold itself. Absent the well-defined institutional rules that govern democracies, autocrats cannot presume that the previous threshold will necessarily hold into the future. Therefore, rather than concentrate on some arbitrary coalition size—which may or may not be sufficient to guarantee survival—I suggest we re-focus on what autocrats are actually maximizing: support. Given their respective constraints, and under the shadow of uncertainty, autocrats seek to maximize support to increase their expected probability of survival.\(^7\) For the autocrat, the question then becomes, whose support must be bought and how will this purchase be financed?

2.1 The Mechanics of Support-Buying

Departing from the coalitional framework, we can begin to focus on the autocrat’s true maximand, support. Rather than make assumptions about which particular institutions are pivotal or how they may influence the provision of support, I begin as simply as possible. At the most basic level, we may think of autocrats as purchasing support from groups within society. The pursuit of survival resembles an exchange found in any marketplace. Reducing authoritarian survival to a market-like exchange is hardly novel. It does, however, establish a few basic premises on which we can build a more elaborate framework. First, and most importantly, autocrats depend on support to survive. Leaving for now the question of what exactly this support entails, we can begin by assuming that, all things being equal, the autocrat looks to maximize his support subject to whatever budget constraints he may face. Second, the autocrat acquires this support by “purchasing” it from groups within society.\(^8\)

As a theoretical framework, this simple exchange is a good start but lacks the precision necessary for our purposes. Most importantly, we have to better define the actors in this exchange. Continuing with the market analogy, the autocrat—and any would-be challenger—represents the buyer. The

\(^7\)To simplify the narrative, I have focused on survival (and thus support) as the autocrat’s sole maximand. In reality, autocrats are not simply maximizing their probability of survival but rents from office. While survival is a first-order problem for the autocrat—justifying the simplification here—the pursuit of rents introduces a basic trade-off for the autocrat.

\(^8\)While the threat of repression always remains, it is a second-best option. Repression is costly and generally a less preferred option to outright co-optation. If unsuccessful, it may even be counterproductive and have the unintended effect of enflaming tensions or growing the opposition. By contrast, when most effective at stamping out opposition, the autocrat’s reliance on future repression introduces a host of additional problems for the regime. The autocrat will be forced to provide greater benefits to the military and must worry about a potential coup (Svolik 2012). Simply put, if possible, the autocrat would rather purchase support than rule by fear, which introduces a host of additional long-term problems.
sellers would then be any group or individual in society who has support to offer. This is the first significant departure from existing work. Formal models of authoritarianism tend to assume that only certain groups within the population or society have support to offer. Consequently, the market is a relatively limited and elite one, with the majority of society being excluded from this exchange. By imposing this exclusion from the outset, elite coalitions become an inevitable result for any coalition-based theory.

Instead of making such a restriction, I begin by allowing for any group to enter the market. From the entrenched elite to the most marginalized minority, all groups in society can participate, at least in principle, in the exchange. This does not mean, however, that every individual or group is equivalent to any other or as equally likely to participate. We usually differentiate groups for good reason: they vary in systematic and consequential ways. Different groups enjoy distinct advantages or endowments that may make them more or less likely to participate in exchange. Whether this is driven by wealth, nationality or even employment status, these characteristics influence the relative bargaining position of different groups vis-a-vis the autocrat. Given such diversity– and the advantages this confers to some groups– we may very well expect “elites” to disproportionately benefit from exchanges with the autocrat. This outcome, however, should come out of the analysis, rather than be assumed by restricting participation of certain groups at the outset.

Even more important than who participates, we need to better define what goods are exchanged. First consider what the autocrat receives in this transaction. When framed as a simple coalition game, it is easy to overlook this important question and ignore what coalition members actually offer the autocrat. After all, it is not so much the members of the coalition that matter, but what they bring to the coalition and the autocrat’s pursuit of survival. And if membership in the coalition is meant to represent the support the autocrat receives, then we should focus explicitly on that support. Up until this point, the term support has been left a bit imprecise and undefined. Formally, support can be defined as the pledged assistance or expressed approval for a leader. The autocrat’s probability of survival is ultimately a function of the support he enjoys across society. Without getting into the exact functional form of this relationship, we can assume that as support increases, so too does the autocrat’s probability of survival.

Describing support as if it is a simple quantity to maximize can obscure the qualitative features that are no less important. In fact, authoritarian survival may not hinge so much on the question of how much support the autocrat can aggregate, but the quality or nature of that support. By these terms, we can think of support as both a matter of degree and kind. First consider the added value of treating support in terms of degree. Unfettered from the coalitional framework– where an individual’s support is roughly equivalent to a single vote– we can think of support as a continuous choice. After all, groups do not face some simple binary choice of pledging their complete fidelity or defecting. Rather, they can select from a range of possible support. Thus, when no longer treated as a one-time, discrete action, we can begin to differentiate among groups according to how much support they provide, instead of whether they support at all.

In exchange for this support, the autocrat provides these groups with some set of distributive
goods. The autocrat controls the state, and thus the goods and services that the state provides. By channeling these goods and services to different groups or segments of the population, the autocrat can purchase their support. These goods can take a variety of forms, from pure public goods to discrete private transfers. In practice, however, the distinction between public and private goods is much more complicated than simple theory would suggest. Few goods are truly public in the classic sense, giving the autocrat a vast range of targetable distributive goods under his control. Private transfers and restricted club goods are especially useful, as the autocrat can deliberately and conditionally reward– or in the terms of exchange, compensate– supporters. Public goods are classically defined as non-excludable and non-rivalrous. In most authoritarian regimes, it is this former criterion that does not hold. Nominally public spaces and services can be restricted by fiat in these regimes, providing the autocrat great flexibility when targeting groups. Social heterogeneity further facilitates such targeting, making it relatively easy to exclude vast segments of society on the basis of citizenship, ethnicity or other markers of identity. When the ruler can define who the public is, no good is beyond exclusion.

Given how problematic these definitions are in theory and in practice, it is more useful to distinguish among goods according to their distributive benefits. Specifically, we should focus on the differences between diffuse and concentrated goods. Traditional public goods, like broad health reforms or national infrastructure improvements can have broadly diffuse benefits and exploit economies of scale to reduce overall cost. Though relatively cheaper to provide– benefitting a larger share of the population than targeted or concentrated goods– these diffuse benefits may be less cost-effective when it actually comes to support-buying. This is especially true when the population is diverse and may hold varying, if not conflicting, preferences over goods. Diffuse goods should have diminishing returns for large, heterogeneous societies whose competing preferences make it difficult to please everyone.

Under such conditions, the autocrat may find it optimal to use targeted goods, which have more concentrated geographic benefits. In contrast to the broad reforms that come with diffuse benefits, targeted goods may focus investments on specific geographic areas or communities. While perhaps more costly overall, this targeting allows for better differentiation among groups, selectively providing goods to different communities depending on their support and preferences. This kind of distributive targeting can be extremely controversial, particularly in divided societies. As such, it often necessitates the autocrat conceal these benefits to avoid distributive conflict or popular outrage. Since Besley and Coate (1991), political economists have recognized how even “universal” goods may imply indirect transfers or hidden costs (Coate and Morris 1995). Recently, scholars have focused increasingly on the benefits of geographically concentrated goods (e.g. parks, roads). Those areas most proximate to these goods enjoy disproportionate benefit, making “brick and mortar” clientelism an especially attractive targeting strategy (Cammett and Issar 2010; Ichino and Nathan 2013).

In short, authoritarian survival reduces to a basic transaction between the autocrat and society: an exchange of support for goods. Through this transaction, the autocrat may solicit support from
a range of groups, whether they be traditionally defined as marginalized or elite. In exchange for
their support, these groups receive distributive goods. The autocrat’s control over the state affords
him the power to direct goods and services to groups as payment for their support. Whether these
goods generate diffuse or concentrated benefits will depend on the groups that are targeted and
their preferences. Rather than an alternative to existing theory, this support-buying framework can
be seen as a complement, building on the traditional coalition model by relaxing a few problematic
assumptions. While fecund and eminently generalizable, these models fail to explain the role of
the marginalized within authoritarian regimes and how these groups may influence distributive
outcomes.

At least in principle, the support-buying argument allows for the possibility of exchange between
the autocrat and the marginalized. The marginalized, like any other group in society, may provide
the autocrat with vital support, irrespective of their nominal standing within the regime. Yet
even within this framework, the marginalized are likely to receive few targeted goods. After all,
by assumption, the marginalized are those groups in society whose support is not vital to the
autocrat’s survival. These are groups who have been effectively disenfranchised, both socially and
politically. In the case of Qatar, for example, we would never consider migrant workers from Nepal
as vital regime supporters in the traditional sense.

In effect, we are left with the original puzzle. At best, the support-buying framework can sustain
some (trivial) provision of distributive goods to these groups. It cannot, however, explain such a
large investment like that found in Qatar today. Lacking any support value, there is little reason to
expect autocrats to extend benefits to these groups. That is, unless we allow for the marginalized
to actively participate in this exchange. Even without valuable support to offer, the marginalized
have other means to influence the autocrat’s distributive policy. This influence comes from the
threat of sabotage.

2.2 The Threat of Sabotage

At its core, this a political economic theory of authoritarianism. Until now, I have focused on
support-buying, which largely represents the political side of the story. Absent from this discussion
has been the question of sabotage and the economics that underly this political exchange. Previ-
ously, I took for granted the autocrat’s ability to finance support-buying. In reality, distributive
policy is much more complicated precisely because of the economic implications of these policy
choices. Clearly, distributive policies have important long-term externalities and effects on invest-
ment and growth. But even in the short-term, these choices matter as they determine the extent
to which economic actors have an interest in promoting production or committing sabotage.

Formally, let us define sabotage as any act that destroys capital or obstructs its creation. This
definition refers to acts, both destructive and obstructive, that decrease capital stock or total
societal wealth. Perhaps the most striking feature of this definition is just how general it is. Such
generality, of course, brings both advantages and disadvantages. From a modeling or theoretical
point of view, generality allows for greater abstraction and flexibility. We can treat various forms
or modes of sabotage as analytically equivalent, so long as their regime-wide effects and group-specific costs are equal. In other words, if two acts of sabotage produce similar costs for all players involved, we can lump these actions together to speak more generally about authoritarian distributive dynamics. Conflating distinct actions may be dangerously reductionist but it can also lead to novel insights, helping reveal underlying processes or mechanisms that would otherwise be obscured. This is especially true if we want to generalize across regimes, whose distributive politics may initially appear quite dissimilar but ultimately derive from a common, underlying logic.

This broad definition allows for sabotage to be either destructive or obstructive. Ostensibly, the distinction between these modes of sabotage seems quite significant. Destructive acts generally—but not always—carry greater costs to both the autocrat and the saboteur. In addition to whatever material costs the attack entails, it can also influence public perception. Destructive acts are often publicly observable, causing the autocrat to suffer reputation costs or lose credibility among society. As for the saboteur, destruction usually entails a greater risk of personal security or property. These acts may place the saboteur in open defiance of the regime, which in turn exposes her to greater risk of reprisal. Obstructive acts, by contrast, can be more easily concealed from the public and the dreaded security apparatus. Such sabotage may even take a more passive form, like simply withholding something (e.g. labor, assets) vital to the creation of capital.

Despite their distinct costs, destruction and obstruction both fall under the definition of sabotage. Referring to both of these modes as sabotage does not, however, imply that they are equivalent. Nonetheless, they may still be comparable in important ways. This comparability is evident when we situate sabotage within the broader strategic context of authoritarian support-buying. In this project, the theory I offer is one of rational calculus. As such, strategic choice does not depend on the specific form some benefit or cost takes, only the net gain or loss to the actor. Thus, depending on their net benefit, destructive and obstructive acts of sabotage may look quite similar to the autocrat. Consider, two worker protests. In the first case, intense grievance among factory workers leads to a week of isolated, violent riots. These riots entail both direct costs (e.g. loss of property) and indirect costs (e.g. lower factory productivity). Ultimately, the protest remains localized, costing the state some loss of infrastructure and the factory owner a loss of profits. Compare this protest to a widespread, month-long work stoppage. While the direct cost is negligible, the indirect costs may be astronomical. If enough workers strike, spanning different economic sectors or areas in the country, and the stoppage is protracted, then firms will begin to divest, growth will slow and, eventually, the regime itself may fall. Whether a bridge is burnt or simply left unbuilt, there are costs to the autocrat. And depending on the severity of these costs, obstruction may look a lot more like destruction from the autocrat’s point of view. Therefore, in distinguishing among acts of sabotage, we should focus on the costs some action entails, rather than the action itself.

The simple definition of sabotage is equally agnostic about the actors involved. Just as the definition allows for destruction or obstruction, it does not restrict who can commit sabotage. In principle, sabotage is open to any group capable of disrupting production and growth. As such,
both traditional elites and marginalized groups have the potential to commit sabotage. In practice, however, elites may prefer other options to sabotage. By virtue of their standing within society, and the political power they hold, elites have a more direct means of influencing the autocrat: withdrawing support or even staging a coup. Elites represent the political core that sustains a regime, giving them greater power over and access to the autocrat, even without resorting to economic sabotage. Moreover, if elites disproportionately enjoy the gains from production (i.e. have greater wealth at stake), they have even less of an incentive to destroy capital, further making exit or other political options more attractive. While sabotage is feasibly open to any group that contributes to production, it may not be optimal for all groups.

Similarly, this definition does not assume *ex ante* any particular unit of analysis. Saboteurs can be individuals or collectives. Although coordinated action is generally more costly, it need not be. If some abuse is sufficiently widespread, many individual acts of sabotage may scale up and actually resemble a collective choice. Suppose, for example, we were to compare an individual act of sabotage– a personal nanny refusing to work– to a collective one– a janitor’s strike. In the latter case, given their shared workspace and community, the janitors are able to coordinate their action to amplify its effects. They can speak as one voice and bargain for greater concessions from their firm and the regime. Initially, this appears quite dissimilar from the former case, where a personal nanny demands improved working conditions. If, however, nanny abuse is systematic, such that poor treatment and a lack of protection in the workplace is rampant, then many individual nannies may choose to break their contracts. These individual choices, moreover, can take on greater power when supported by rights groups or even home countries protecting their citizens abroad.\(^9\) Under such conditions, nannies may closely resemble striking janitors. This aggregation process, while not identical to collective action, nonetheless imposes a cost on the regime similar to that of a collective actor. Whether it derives from collective action or individual aggregation, the regime cares only about the ultimate cost.

Clearly, sabotage is an expansive concept. As defined, it captures actions that are destructive or obstructive, carried out by individuals or collectives. On the one hand, such conceptual expansiveness makes generalizability and comparative analysis easier. We can use this single concept to characterize a host of actions across groups, countries and over time. Unfortunately, this expansiveness also comes at a significant cost. Thus, to fully operationalize this concept, we must look to the specific political economic context. Take for example, the difference between sabotage in the Gulf today versus that of industrial Europe. While they share some features in common (e.g. labor strikes), there are critical differences that inform the available options to marginalized groups. In the Gulf, migrant workers have no real hope of greater political rights but can leverage their economic power to influence distributive policy. This economic power is awesome and extends

\(^9\)This question of domestic worker abuse is an especially sensitive one in the Gulf. Even as these countries make efforts to improve worker conditions, little has been done to protect this most vulnerable group (Human Rights Watch 2010). As such, protection has often fallen on home countries (e.g. Indonesia, the Philippines), who must make appeals on the behalf of their citizens, at times threatening to suspend all immigration to Gulf countries that fail to ensure protections.
far beyond the factory or job site; foreign workers hold positions both high and low, in every major sector of the economy and ubiquitous in citizens’ homes. Without these workers, production would come to a halt, not only compromising the autocrat’s ability to purchase support but also undermining the very way of life that most citizens have come to expect from their rulers.

Ultimately, even though marginalized groups provide relatively little value in terms of political support, they can nonetheless influence the terms of exchange by threatening costly sabotage. Whereas other (i.e. elite) groups may directly damage the autocrat’s probability of survival by withdrawing their valuable support, the marginalized lack such political value. Instead, they must resort to sabotage to improve the terms of exchange in their favor. When credible, the threat of sabotage forces the autocrat to deliver greater distributive benefits to marginalized groups than would otherwise be necessary. The economic costs from sabotage not only decrease the autocrat’s personal rents, but can also indirectly influence the probability of survival. By decreasing production, sabotage reduces the total goods available to the autocrat for buying support. Thus, the autocrat may find it profitable to co-opt marginalized groups to avoid sabotage altogether.

3 Spatial Segregation and Distributive Targeting in Qatar

Having developed my general theory of support-buying under the threat of sabotage, I now consider the theory’s main predictions situated within the Qatari context. I begin by discussing the case of Qatar, relating it back to the motivating puzzle and the problem with coalition theories. Having contextualized the theory and its implications for Qatar, I then turn to the data and empirical tests. Drawing on unique GIS data from Qatar, I test the theory’s predictions and explore evidence of distributive targeting.

The previous section introduced core concepts and sketched the theoretical intuition. Empirically testing this argument first requires a more narrow discussion of the political economy of Qatar and how these terms operate in practice. The current ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani took power on June 25, 2013 after the emir’s father abdicated the throne. Sheikh Tamim enjoys great support among the royal family and across society in general. The emir holds vast power within the state, facing few, if any, elite challengers or meaningful domestic opposition. Absent even an implicit threat, the idea of a coalitional threshold appears strange. Nor is it clear who comprises the support coalition. Depending on how we define such concepts, we could imagine the coalition as narrow as some subset of the ruling family, and as broad as the entire citizenry. After all, from a distributive point of view, the regime’s provision of goods would suggest a deliberate attempt to buy the support of all citizens through housing grants, subsidized energy and water and the ready supply of public sector sinecures. These benefits not only buy support, but also grow the state’s presence and role in the everyday lives of its citizens. Concomitant with the emergence of the petrostate, Qatar’s vast welfare system ultimately serves the regime’s purposes, projecting its power and growing its control over the population.

This power even extends into the Qatari state’s control over space, which confers a special
advantage when managing distributive demands. The targeted provision of goods is difficult, if not infeasible, when social groups are mixed or widely distributed. And while all countries have some degree of segregation, whether by top-down design or some decentralized sorting mechanism, the communal divisions in Qatar are especially pronounced. Centralized state planning came relatively late for Qatar, coinciding with the discovery of oil and gas. The overnight transformation allowed for more deliberate spatial planning and social engineering. Through the state provision of housing plots and construction grants, the government could essentially decide where citizens live (Nagy 2006). At the same time, the government controls the location of worker camps and other foreign population housing (e.g. expat compounds). This spatial planning helped to erect, quite literally, concrete divisions among communities. Walled behind state-located and firm-controlled compounds, Qatari society has been effectively segregated. Social, economic and national divisions have been assiduously concretized, as communal borders are policed by the state.

The effects of this spatial policy can be readily seen throughout Qatar, as evident in Figure 1 in the Appendix. The figure spatially maps residences across the country, showing the stark segregation among communities depending on housing type. The four housing types generally associate with distinct groups: villas and houses are given to citizens, flats to high-skill expats, and camps for low-skill migrant workers. As seen in the figure, citizens are the most widely spread group, while worker camps are highly concentrated in only a few areas, which tend to associate with the energy sector and related industries.

This communal segregation, moreover, has profound implications for the regime’s distributive strategy. Having divided communities along spatial lines, the regime can more easily and effectively target concrete distributive goods. Such targeting is especially useful given the diversity of the population and the varying preferences over goods and services. Qatari society effectively comprises three distinct groups: native citizens, high-skill expats from the West, and migrant workers from Asia and Africa. These communities differ not only in their countries of origin and socio-economic class, but also in their views on state goods and services.

Figure 2 in the Appendix plots results from a 2010 survey, asking respondents to rate their confidence in the Qatari roads and water systems. These results have been broken down across the three subgroups. The plots suggest some real difference in satisfaction across communities. Relative to expats and citizens, migrant workers appear to have more confidence in roads, but less confidence in the water system. However clear this may be, it is much harder to say what exactly these differences reveal about preferences over goods. Take for example the relatively high ratings for roads among migrants. This result may simply reveal how little this issue matters for migrants. Most migrants do not have a personal vehicle, making this question less relevant than it is for citizens or Western expats. Alternatively, water quality is a basic and important issue for most migrants, especially for those living in over-crowded camps. In the end, these plots suggest varying degrees of satisfaction with just a couple of basic goods in Qatar.

Given the spatial segregation of society, this preference divergence means that the regime can better differentiate among communities through the selective provision of distributive goods. De-
pending on a group’s relative value, and the prevailing price of support, the regime can target goods in both quantity and kind. This targeting serves to purchase support while deterring economic sabotage. The specific predictions implied by this argument are described below.

3.1 Hypotheses

Reduced to its simplest form, my theory intends to answer the question: who gets what? Or, more concretely, which groups are targeted with what kinds of goods? Beginning with the question of who is targeted, we can clearly delineate between supporters and non-supporters. Supposing that some groups hold greater support value than others (i.e. citizens versus non-citizens, prominent tribes versus historically disenfranchised tribes), then we can generally treat the groups with higher support value as the (most likely) pool of potential supporters. In many cases, this pool may resemble a selectorate, comprising a stratum of social and political elites.

Among the marginalized, we can think of groups as varying in their relative sabotage potential. This sabotage potential—combining the credibility of threat and overall cost—should vary according to a group’s: i) ability to overcome collective action; and ii) relative economic position. Together, these two group characteristics should determine the relative sabotage potential, which in turn affects the autocrat’s optimal distributive policy. Overall, the theory predicts the following on who should receive goods.

**Targets of Distribution**

**Hypothesis 1:** Supporters should receive more goods than marginalized groups.

**Hypothesis 2:** Among the marginalized, goods should be increasing in the threat of sabotage.

In the case of Qatar, these hypotheses have relatively straightforward empirical implications. Within this context, and most of the Gulf for that matter, the supporters would be the small native population. Although a numerical minority within their own country, native Qataris enjoy citizenship rights that confer upon them special privileges and powers unavailable to the foreign population. At the same time, this is the population on which the regime depends for its continued survival and legitimacy. As for the non-supporters, or marginalized groups, we can think of the foreign population as filling this role.

10 We should expect that as these groups’ sabotage potential varies, so too should the goods they receive. And while it is impossible to fully measure sabotage potential, we can nonetheless consider why and how these groups may vary on this dimension. Most significantly, sabotage potential should depend on a group’s spatial density and economic importance. Although high-skilled expats generally hold more valuable positions individually, as a group they hold little collective power. Living separately in apartments throughout the downtown area of Doha, these largely Western expats do not share the concentrated, communal living that

10Admittedly, most Western expats in Qatar live an extremely comfortable life, hardly comparable to migrant workers or other groups that we would traditionally think of as marginalized. That said, even this population suffers systematic discrimination, albeit not at the level of the largely Asian migrant worker community.
characterizes the poor migrant experience. For these low-skill workers, while they are individually less valuable, they also have the ability to coordinate and, collectively, their choice to commit sabotage could be crippling for the economy. In this sense then, we can expect migrant workers to pose a greater threat of sabotage than high-skill expats. This threat, moreover, should be increasing in the spatial concentration and density of the community.

Beyond the question of who should be targeted, we can also explore what form this targeting will take. In other words, which goods will be targeted and how this will vary across groups. Recall from above that the autocrat can choose to provide diffuse or targeted goods. In practice, we can think of this distinction as really a continuum, rather than binary. Depending on the relative cost/benefit of each type, the autocrat may provide a bundle that includes some diffuse and some targeted goods. Additionally, the autocrat may invest more/less heavily in different quality goods. Depending on group preferences and the availability of private options or other substitutes, rulers may choose to forego providing basic goods (e.g. schools, clinics) and instead focus on more discretionary projects (e.g. parks, stadiums). These intuitions are formalized in the following hypotheses.

**Goods of Distribution**

**Hypothesis 3:** The mix of goods (i.e. targeted vs. diffuse) will depend on the diversity of the population; more heterogeneous societies will receive a greater share of targeted goods.

**Hypothesis 4:** Targeted goods will vary in their quality/kind; supporters will receive higher quality and more discretionary goods than marginalized groups.

Again, taking these hypotheses to Qatar, we should expect that given the diversity of the resident population (i.e. including both citizens and non-citizens), that the regime will focus on providing more targeted goods. Given the overall spatial segregation of communities within Qatar, these goods are likely to have a geographic component, making proximity to goods a critical test of targeting. Additionally, the kinds of goods should vary across citizens, migrant workers and expats. As critical supporters, we should expect citizens to receive the most goods and a disproportionate share of high quality, discretionary goods. As for non-citizens, migrants are not only a greater sabotage threat than expats, but they also depend more on government goods and services. Migrant workers are the poorest group in Qatar and have little access to private options, making them dependent on state-provided goods and services. High-skill expatriates, by contrast, are wealthier and can afford private substitutes should they prefer a higher quality service than the state provides. Therefore, in concert with their greater sabotage threat, the higher demand among migrants suggests we should expect a higher concentration of basic services in these areas.
3.2 Data

In testing these hypotheses, I explore the provision and distribution of goods and services across Qatar, and their spatial relationship with different communities. The state of Qatar is divided into seven regions, called municipalities. Most of these municipalities are sparsely populated with only a few cities or large villages. By contrast, the municipality of Doha spans less than two percent of the country’s total area but comprises over forty-five percent of the country’s population (Qatar Statistical Authority 2010). These municipalities are further disaggregated into a total of 87 zones. Given the density of the capital city, most of these zones are found in or around Doha proper. Zones not only serve as simple administrative units, but also help the regime to clearly and effectively segregate the population. By design, these areas have been planned to house specific groups or communities depending on nationality and socio-economic position (Nagy 2006; Gardner 2011).

This local sorting can be seen in Figure 3 in the Appendix. The figure includes two spatial maps of Doha. The first map demonstrates the density of groups within the city. We can clearly see sorting, with migrant workers (marked here by the red-colored camps) concentrated mostly in the South-West corner of Doha. This worker-dense area is Zone 57, also known as Industrial City. Most migrants who work in or around Doha reside in this zone.\footnote{This of course does not take into consideration domestic workers, who reside within the homes that they serve.} We find a similar sorting for expats (indicated here by the green-colored flats), who largely reside in downtown Doha. These flats are found within up-scale residential compounds or high-rise towers. As for Qatari citizens (represented here by the purple-colored villas), we see much more spread across Doha and throughout the country. As single-family homes, these villas take up much more space than the worker camp or apartment-style housing that serves the foreign population. Finally, the blue-colored houses represent an ambiguous category. In the past, these units housed Qatari families but over time have been replaced by the newer villas. As Qataris moved out of these neighborhoods, houses opened up for rent. In some cases, these houses operate as if they are small migrant camps, with dozens of workers sharing one single-family home. Because of the ambiguity surrounding these units, I drop these houses in subsequent empirical analysis. Much of the qualitative results remain unchanged with their inclusion.

I exploit this spatial sorting to evaluate my theory and the hypotheses on distributive targeting. Specifically, I investigate the extent to which the Qatari regime disproportionately locates distributive goods (and if so, which ones) near particular communities or groups. In other words, how the regime leverages this spatial segregation to more effectively target specific groups within society. For a rough eye-ball test of this proposition, the second map of Figure 3 represents the distribution of goods in Doha. While not as pronounced as the sorting among housing types, there appears to be some clustering of distributive goods according to type. This association, moreover, seems to track with different housing types when we compare the figures side-by-side. For a more rigorous test, I draw on a series of GIS files mapping the location of communities and goods throughout Qatar. These data were collected by the Qatari state as part of their urban planning and development strategy. Using these files, I constructed counts of goods and services by zone. These goods are
broken into a series of categories, some of which have already been coded by the Qatari government (e.g. “Schools”), while others are more theoretically-informed. I coded these other categories from a mix of goods to better test my theory’s predictions. Each of these categories can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Coding of Goods and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>An aggregate measure of the Services, Schools and Medical categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Transportation and shipping services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Hospitals, clinics and pharmacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Public and private schools (all levels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalized</td>
<td>Public toilettes, drainage and money exchange locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Government security offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>Malls, cinemas, swimming pools and parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosques</td>
<td>Any building designated for Islamic practice and prayer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these goods measures, I also created count variables for the three major housing types in Qatar: camps, villas and flats. These categories correspond to blue-collar migrant workers, native Qatari citizens and white-collar expats, respectively. The type and location of housing is ultimately a choice of the state: citizens receive housing or villa allotments from a government council; housing for non-citizens (i.e. migrant workers and expats) generally depends on the individual’s sponsor (i.e. employer), whose available housing locations are also decided by the state. Given this comprehensive housing policy, I use house type to proxy for each of these three groups in Qatar. While it would be useful to further disaggregate groups according to more granular measures (e.g. sector of employment, nationality), these covariates simply do not exist in this dataset.

3.3 Regressions and Results

Given the codings from above, I construct zone-level counts for each type of housing unit and good. Figure 4 in the Appendix includes density plots for each outcome variable. These per zone measures are count variables, making OLS an inappropriate estimation strategy. Instead, I estimate a series of Negative Binomial models,\(^{12}\) regressing the various goods and services measures on the three housing types. In addition to these housing types, I also include a control for the zone population, which is proxied here by (total) Residences per zone. This measure helps control for the overall population density, which may be driving the regime’s distributive choice. The Negative Binomial results can be found in Tables 2 and 3 below. Overall, the results are broadly consistent with my theory and its predictions. Let us consider each outcome variable in turn, beginning with the basic goods and services.

\(^{12}\) As a robustness test, I have also replicated these results with an OLS model with a logged dependent variable, along with a Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial. The results are qualitatively the same.
Table 2: Spatial Targeting of Basic Goods and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camps per zone</td>
<td>0.0023*</td>
<td>0.0035***</td>
<td>0.0019</td>
<td>0.0009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0009)</td>
<td>(0.0009)</td>
<td>(0.0015)</td>
<td>(0.0018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villas per zone</td>
<td>0.0007*</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>0.0015**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flats per zone</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0004</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residences per zone</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispersion Parameter</td>
<td>2.2819***</td>
<td>2.7612**</td>
<td>0.8774***</td>
<td>0.9713***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.4712)</td>
<td>(1.0232)</td>
<td>(0.2007)</td>
<td>(0.3022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Intercept                    | 1.5680***| 0.3162*  | 0.1599  | -0.4842*
|                              | (0.1139)| (0.1429) | (0.1957)| (0.2189)|

N 82 82 82 82
log $L$ -239.8696 -140.3894 -158.9260 -108.3240

Negative Binomial Regression; Standard errors in parentheses
significant at * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2 reports the results for basic goods and services. I consider four separate measures: Services, Medical, Schools and the aggregate measure, Basic. For the aggregate measure, the camps and villas variables are significant and positive. This indicates that even after controlling for total residences, increasing the number of worker camps and citizen villas per zone results in a higher overall amount of basic goods. When we disaggregate this measure into its constituent parts, we find that basic goods are not uniformly distributed. The camps result appears to be driven by the strong association between worker areas and transportation/shipping services, as seen in the second column’s significant results for camps. These workers are dependent on such services to stay connected with their families abroad, making this a vital service for them. Similarly, in the fourth column, we see that schools are the basic goods most associated with citizen areas. This is not surprising given the Qatari state’s recent focus on education and developing the human capital of its citizen population. As for expats, who are proxied here by the flats variable, we see no evidence of geographic targeting of any goods or services.
Table 3: Spatial Targeting of Group-specific Goods and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marginalized</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Luxury</th>
<th>Mosques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camps per zone</td>
<td>0.0024*</td>
<td>0.0032**</td>
<td>-0.0002</td>
<td>-0.0007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0011)</td>
<td>(0.0012)</td>
<td>(0.0017)</td>
<td>(0.0011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villas per zone</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0014**</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
<td>(0.0008)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flats per zone</td>
<td>0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
<td>-0.0010***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0007)</td>
<td>(0.0004)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residences per zone</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
<td>0.0010***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispersion Parameter</td>
<td>1.7119***</td>
<td>15.8980</td>
<td>1.1477***</td>
<td>2.1002***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.5255)</td>
<td>(247.4256)</td>
<td>(0.2686)</td>
<td>(0.4937)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.1989</td>
<td>-1.7068***</td>
<td>0.3778*</td>
<td>1.4183***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1593)</td>
<td>(0.3333)</td>
<td>(0.1687)</td>
<td>(0.1202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log $L$</td>
<td>-146.0387</td>
<td>-28.0487</td>
<td>-175.5601</td>
<td>-222.2498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative Binomial Regression; Standard errors in parentheses
significant at *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 3 delves further into this idea that the regime will target specific kinds of goods to particular groups, depending on their preferences and demands. We immediately see that both marginalized goods and security locations positively associate with camps. The marginalized goods measure includes important services (e.g. drainage, public toilet, money exchange), that we may expect would be disproportionately beneficial for migrant workers. While some of these services can be thought of as basic, others are more specific to migrant worker demands and everyday concerns. Ready access to good drainage and waste services is relatively important for workers in communal camps where this basic service matters quite a lot for overall welfare and quality of life. Additionally, we see that security locations is highly associated with camps. This result may reveal the state’s fear of such workers, deliberately placing them in close proximity to government and state structures to better monitor, police and manage them. By contrast, luxury goods (e.g. pools, cinemas) appear to target citizens, as seen in the significant effects on villas. Finally, the regression on mosques reveals a general tendency to locate these buildings in population dense areas, as evident in the significant and positive effect of the total residences measure. At the same time, however, mosques are negatively associated with flats, perhaps representing the regime’s fear of the corruptive influence of Westerners and other expats. All told, these results broadly confirm the predictions from the hypotheses above. The Qatari regime appears to target citizens with a mix of basic and luxury goods. Migrants receive a better share of basic and marginalized goods than expats, but this also comes at the expense of a greater proximity to state security locations, reflecting the implicit fear of the regime towards these potential saboteurs.
4 Conclusion

I began this paper by introducing the motivating puzzle of Barwa al-Baraha. This project, I argue, represents a profound departure from traditional narratives about the treatment of minorities under authoritarian regimes in general, and within Qatar in particular. Over the course of the paper, however, I have tried to show how this distributive targeting is not unique but actually represents a broader trend in Qatar. Until recently, such sensational projects were not the norm in Qatar, nor were they even necessary to appease the migrant population. The Barwa project does not so much represent a new strategy for the regime, but a continuation of an old one. While the project may be more extravagant, it fits into a broader strategy of targeting groups with specific goods. As the threat of sabotage grows, however, the regime has been forced to offer greater concessions, targeting the marginalized with more and better goods. Though perhaps the most ostentatious case, the Barwa al-Baraha project reflects a larger and more deliberate strategy of distributive co-optation in authoritarian regimes.

To understand this strategy and the conditions that animate it, I have offered a distributive theory that begins with the very basis of authoritarianism: the autocrat’s pursuit of survival. Autocrats are rent-maximizing but their first and principal concern is that of survival. In pursuit of survival, autocrats will use distributive goods to buy vital support from important social and political groups (i.e. elites) within society. To purchase this support, the autocrat must continuously raise state revenues. In this sense, support-buying does not exist within an elite vacuum; it is financed by economic growth and thus depends on the actors critical to production. Such a dependence makes these regimes potentially vulnerable to sabotage. By withholding their services (i.e. obstruction) or actively attacking key infrastructure (i.e. destruction), marginalized groups can undermine the political economy of the state, exacting a high cost on the regime and its supporters. This threat, when credible and costly, provides these groups with a bargaining power to extract greater concessions than traditional models would otherwise suggest. Ultimately, I argue that the provision of targeted goods to marginalized groups is not the choice of some benevolent dictator. Rather, it represents shrewd, pragmatic policymaking. However marginalized these groups may be, they pose a potentially crippling economic threat. And while appeasement may be unpopular, it is necessary.

In testing my theory, I draw on a unique dataset of GIS data from Qatar. My empirical strategy exploits the spatial segregation of groups to evaluate the relationship between distributive targeting and the location of marginalized communities. I offer suggestive evidence that the regime targets distributive goods to different communities, favoring citizens over non-citizens and potential saboteurs (i.e. migrant camps) over groups with a lower sabotage potential (i.e. spatially isolated expats). This difference in targeting can be seen in the overall magnitude of distribution, as well as the types of goods that are provided. To the extent we find evidence for targeting, the regime appears to concentrate higher quality and discretionary goods in citizen-dense areas, along with the more basic services that are also found near migrant camps.

In future work, I hope to explore the temporal dynamics of this distributive targeting and
consider the role that political economic shocks play in regime policy. Additionally, I hope to supplement this work with a similar discussion on Bahrain, where the regime faces an entirely different set of political, economic and social constraints. These varying conditions should play a critical role in the regime’s distributive calculus, including which groups are co-opted and at what price.
Appendix

Figure 1: The Spatial Distribution of Housing Across Qatar
Figure 2: Confidence in Goods and Services by Household Type
Figure 3: The Spatial Distribution Within Doha

(c) Housing

(d) Goods
Figure 4: Density Counts for Outcome Variables
Works Cited


