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**CAPITAL CITIES AND THEIR NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:
WASHINGTON, D.C. IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Along numerous dimensions Washington, D.C. differs substantially from the rest of the United States. It is a city that lacks the support and resources of a state. It performs many of the same functions as a state while lacking most of the rights, powers, and privileges guaranteed to states under the U.S. Constitution. The District of Columbia lacks full representation in the U.S. Congress, has limited autonomy over its own governance and fiscal policy, while carrying numerous burdens associated with hosting the national capital.

While unique in the American context, how unique is the District in the international context? All nations have capitals. In what ways do the circumstances of capitals in other nations resemble or differ from the District's? In what ways are capital cities treated differently from other cities in the respective nation?

In our report we compare the Washington, D.C. experience to that of the capital cities in ten democracies:

1. Berlin, Germany;
2. Brasilia, Brazil;
3. Brussels, Belgium;
4. Canberra, Australia;
5. London, United Kingdom;
6. Mexico City, Mexico;
7. Ottawa, Canada;
8. Stockholm, Sweden;
9. Vienna, Austria;
10. Wellington, New Zealand.

We examined eight dimensions or aspects of the national government – capital city relationship:

1. City governance;
2. Definition of the national interest;
3. Fiscal capacity of the capital city;
4. Local government autonomy;
5. Local fiscal autonomy;
6. Local citizen autonomy;
7. National enfranchisement;
8. Local service to the national government.

Key Findings

Tension

In all countries tension exists between the national government and the capital cities over issues related to the capital role. However, this tension is easily the most severe in the case of the United States and Washington, D.C.

Trends

The trend for capital cities is towards greater forms of autonomy and heightened enfranchisement over time. Generally this trend characterizes the District as well as it gained the presidential franchise, limited representation in Congress, and limited home rule in recent decades.

City Governance

In most cases the governance of the capital city differs little from that of other cities in the given country. While Stockholm and London are governed differently from other cities in Sweden and the U.K., respectively, these differences occur primarily because of the size and economic importance of the cities rather than their role as capital cities *per se*. However, of the ten cities we examined, three – Canberra, Brussels, and Mexico City – are governed differently than other cities in their respective nations in large part because of capital status. While individual details vary, each of the three resides in a special district roughly analogous to the District of Columbia. In each of these three cases the national government exercised substantial control over the governance of the city but has granted more local governance in recent years.

Definition of the National Interest

In regard to geography and the national interest, Washington, D.C. differs dramatically with its counterparts. Where the United States government exercises direct control over substantial portions of the District of Columbia, and substantial indirect control over other portions, such control is far more limited in the ten capital cities in our study.

Fiscal Capacity of the Capital City

There is enormous variation in the extent to which capital cities are treated differently than other cities in terms of fiscal transfers, payments for capital city functions, and compensation for property exempt from taxation. Even when capital cities are treated differently, the amount which they receive tends to be relatively small in terms of their total budget. Three capital cities (Canberra, Berlin, Brasilia) receive specific assistance related to their role as a capital city. Brussels also receives some assistance though much of that is because of the role Brussels plays as a capital city in the European Union. Treatment of property tax exemptions and compensation also vary greatly. Canada and Belgium both compensate their capital cities for local taxes lost through exempt property, while Australia, Austria, Brazil, Germany, and New Zealand do not. Mexico does not formally exempt federal property from local taxation but generally fails to pay taxes on its property to Mexico City. The national systems of property taxation used in the U.K. and Sweden do not penalize London and Sweden for exempt property within its locale.

Local Government Autonomy

All of the foreign capitals have local self-government, elected by their residents, although some, as detailed in the report, are subject to overrides or other types of interference by the national government (most notably in Canberra, Brussels, and Berlin). It appears these mechanisms are rarely, if ever, used, certainly much less rarely than the U.S. Congress overrides local laws passed by the District of Columbia.

Local Fiscal Autonomy

Excepting Mexico City, all of the capitals have local fiscal autonomy to the same extent as other local (or state in the case of city-states) governments do in the respective country. In Mexico City the city budget must be approved by the national legislature.

Local Citizen Autonomy

Residents of all of the capital cities in our sample now have full voting rights with respect to electing their own local government. However, like the District of Columbia, these rights came quite recently to those capitals that are in federal districts: Brussels, Canberra, and Mexico City.

National Enfranchisement

In dramatic contrast to Washington, D.C., residents in all the capital cities in our sample have full and legitimate representation in the national political system. However, for some cases this is a recent development. Canberra did not have full representation in the Australian House and Senate until 1975. Brasilia lacked representation in the two chambers of the National Congress until 1986.

Local Service to the National Government

In our report we focused on the issue of the local capital city providing security for the national government. In most of the countries in our sample local policing is either a state or a national function, so it does not register on local budgets. Canberra does not have its own police force and contracts with the Australian Federal Police to perform policing duties. In other capitals, such as Ottawa, the national police have a responsibility for protecting the national buildings. In Brussels, where policing is a local function, the federal government provides compensation to the local government for the additional costs incurred by the police force as a result of EU meetings.

MAIN REPORT

Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, is unique in terms of American cities. Its lack of representation at the national level, diminished degree of autonomy and high degree of federal oversight in dealing with local affairs, fiscal exigencies resulting from a tax base eroded as a result of tax exempt federal property, and additional service responsibilities that come with hosting the national capital are all well-known. But, while Washington, D.C. may be unique within the American context, it is not unique internationally. Every nation has a national capital. How do other national capital cities relate to their national government? Is Washington unique internationally in its relationship to its national government? What can we learn about how other capital cities relate to their national governments that might inform the debate about the relationship between Washington and the U.S. federal government?

In fact, there is a natural tension that exists everywhere between capital cities and national governments. Nations establish capital cities as symbolic representations of the nation. Capital cities house government functions and government buildings for which the national government is responsible. They host meetings of government officials, both international and domestic. They have security concerns in terms of protecting government facilities and officials. On the other hand, they are also places where people live, require local services, and engage in local political activity.

This tension is well-recognized (see Rowat, 1973; Eldredge, 1975; Harris, 1995; and Campbell, 2003). Rowat (1973: xi) introduces his edited book on the government of capitals in federal countries by observing:

Every federal country faces a difficult task in trying to decide how its national capital should be governed. The problem of governing any capital is difficult because there is always a conflict between the national government and the people who live in the capital city. The government wishes to control and develop the capital in the interests of the nation as a whole, while the people of the city naturally wish to govern themselves to the greatest extent possible.

Harris (1995: 239), also focusing on federal countries, gives a concrete example:

Democratic federations face the challenge of trying to balance the demands of democracy between the nation as a whole and the capital city. Although varied in their political cultures and governmental organizations, these countries confront basic problems that are surprisingly similar in the development of their capital cities. For example, control of the police forces and the keeping of public order can be a ticklish issue in the relations between the central government and the national capital.

Campbell (2003: 25) enunciates the same themes and ends with two universal concerns:

A capital is the seat of the national government and a representation of national power and culture. But it is also a city in its own right, with a local culture and municipal political structure. This local government typically operates in the shadow of the national government, with more restricted powers and resources than those enjoyed by other cities. Sometimes collaborating with the larger and more powerful national government when interests coincide, the municipality usually loses battles when local and national interests conflict. The local-national tension leads to two common disputes in capital cities. First, how much power and autonomy should the local government have in capital cities? Second, how should conflicts between local and national interests be resolved in capitals?

The purpose of our study is to address these and other associated critical questions that create tensions in the relationship between capital cities and their national governments. To do this we ask the following questions:

- **Governance** - In what ways does the governance of the capital city differ from the governance of other cities in the nation as a result of its status as a capital?
- **National Interest** - How is the national interest defined with respect to the capital city? Are there specific geographic areas that are set aside as nationally protected or certain functions that, while usually under control of the local government, are nationally controlled, and if so, which and how?
- **Fiscal Capacity** - To what extent, if at all, does the national government compensate the capital city for serving in its function as the capital city? How much fiscal support does the capital city receive? If there is a local property tax, is national government property tax-exempt and, if so, does the national government compensate the capital city in some way for this?
- **Local Government Autonomy** - Does the capital city have local self-government and how is that self-government limited, if at all, because of its function as a capital city? How is the “national interest of the capital city protected within the context of local self-government?
- **Local Fiscal Autonomy** - Does the capital city have local fiscal autonomy, i.e., can it make its own decisions about taxes and expenditures without approval of the national government or the possible threat of overrule by the national government?
- **Local Citizen Autonomy** - Do residents of the capital city have full voting rights in terms of determining their own local government?

- **National Enfranchisement** - Do residents of the capital city have full representation in the national political system, equal to that of residents elsewhere in the country?
- **Local Service to the National government** - Are there security/police forces in place in the capital city that are not in existence elsewhere in other cities? If so, who pays for them? Are the structure and organization of police/security forces in the capital city similar to those in other cities (e.g., who appoints police superintendent (or board), and to whom does the superintendent report)?

Using Washington, D.C. as a comparative “baseline” we address these questions to ten capital cities: Berlin, Brasilia, Brussels, Canberra, London, Mexico City, Ottawa, Stockholm, Vienna, and Wellington.

Washington, D.C. as a Baseline

Washington, D.C. is the baseline for comparison to other capital cities in our study. Our purpose is to understand whether D.C. is unique among capital cities; we know it is unique among U.S. cities.

There are two ways to view the District. Economically it is a city – the urban employment core that is surrounded by bedroom communities, transportation links and beltways, and suburban commercial and office development. As the urban core it also houses many of the less advantaged urban residents, who do not as readily link to the more costly residential neighborhoods in the suburbs.

As a jurisdiction, the District has, within the subnational government framework of the United States, the governmental functions of a city and school district (streets, police, fire, K-12 schools, public works, and the like); of a county (particularly health and income maintenance functions); and of a state (including highways, policy and oversight, higher education, and redistribution of public funds). The federal government provides a prison and courts system for D.C. that parallels state functions in these matters.

D.C. is governed under a federal, limited home-rule charter; other U.S. cities are not federally chartered. Residents vote for mayor, city council members, some school board members, and neighborhood commissioners. These officials perform city, county, school, and state functions and appoint or hire others to manage and execute their policies. D.C. residents also vote for president of the U.S. and for a delegate to the House of Representatives, the latter

has limited voting privileges relative to regular members of the House. D.C. residents do not have representation in the U.S. Senate.

Legislative actions taken by the District are subject to approval by Congress. The District's budget must be approved by the Congress and President. The District's finances are subject to specific federal constraints that, if violated, would institute a long period of federal fiscal control. The District's Chief Financial Officer and Inspector General have some local independence and are subject to certain federal approvals that can over-ride local decisions. These federal management steps are not binding on any other U.S. cities.

In the 1790s, the U.S. Congress and President decided not to locate the capital within a state due to conflicting views about relative state and federal powers. As is true today, the question of state vs. federal rights and responsibilities was central when the capital moved out of New York and, eventually, made its way to Washington, D.C. The "federal enclave" inside D.C. was built on inhospitable land and protected from commercial and residential encroachment in this and other ways (such as a building height limitation). Families and businesses located outside the enclave and a ring of forts protected the capital functions. The District was large enough to contain these forts, agricultural land (possibly for food self-sufficiency if needed), and even summer homes and retreats for the elite.

For many years, the Federal government made an unrestricted annual payment to the District of Columbia. In FY 1996, this payment was \$660 million. The District's chartering Federal legislation, the Home Rule Act of 1973, sec. 11601, describes at length the basis for such payment. The Revitalization Act of 1997 phased out the Federal payment as part of the assumption by the Federal government of the District's courts, prison and certain pension liabilities. The Federal payment was fully phased-out in FY 1999.

Under the Home Rule Act the District cannot assess a local income tax against incomes earned in the District by non-residents. Actions by U.S. Courts extend this prohibition to the earnings of proprietorships and partnerships when the income of the business primarily results from services of the owners (e.g., professional service partnerships). Similarly, D.C. could not impose a sales tax or a value added tax or wage tax on professional services. In previous discussions of charging tolls for entering D.C. or using its bridges, members of congress have stated the view that these also would not be constitutional.

By day, the District of Columbia holds about 1.2 million people. Far more than half of the 1.2 million live outside the District, primarily in surrounding Virginia and Maryland counties. Police, fire, emergency medical, transportation, health, poverty and other local services (to varying degrees) all serve this city of 1.2 million. While these are basic services, D.C. is distinguished from other cities in the large ratio of day-time population. No other large U.S. city comes close to a commuter population that matches its resident population. Commuters neither pay income tax directly to D.C. nor do they pay through a state redistribution program. In other urban core cities, the home state would provide some redistribution by taxing income (concentrated in the suburbs) and providing services (often concentrated in core and rural areas).

Overview of the Literature on Capital Cities

We begin by noting that despite the general recognition of the problem, the literature on capital cities and how the problem is dealt with is relatively sparse. There is a substantial literature on the planning of national capital cities and the architecture of these cities. A recent example is *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David Gordon (2006). In that book, Peter Hall, the distinguished geographer/planner begins his essay by observing that “Not all capital cities are alike.” He then identifies seven types of capital cities, three of which are relevant for our purposes:

- *Multi-Function Capitals*, which are capital cities with high national level economic and other functions: London, Paris, Madrid, Stockholm, Moscow, Tokyo, and Berlin.
- *Global Capitals*, a special case of Multi-Function capitals in that they perform super-national roles: London and Tokyo.
- *Political Capitals*, which are capitals created as seats of national government and frequently lacking in other functions: Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Canberra, Brasilia, The Hague.

Rowat (1973), Harris (1995), and Campbell (2003) all utilize a form of classification that distinguishes capital cities according to their political/administrative relationships to other levels of government, which is perhaps more useful for our purposes. Building upon their work, we can classify the capital cities in our study as:

- Capital cities that are federal districts or territories within a federal system (Washington, D.C., Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Canberra, Delhi, Mexico City).
- Capital cities that are city-states within a federal system (Berlin, Vienna)
- Capital cities that are located as a local government unit *within* a state, province or other subnational level of government (Ottawa, Bern)
- Capital cities that are a city within a unitary system (London, Paris, Copenhagen, Stockholm).

Harris (1995) and Rowat (1993) both speculate about the strengths and weaknesses these various forms have as locations for the national capital city. Harris observes (1995: 244) that, in democratic polities, “The essential challenge in governing the capital city is to strike a balance between national and local interests.”

He argues that capitals within states may not provide the national government sufficient control of its own capital.

Although the national government should have a definite role in developing the capital in the interest of the nation as a whole, the constitutional power to do this may not exist. The powers in the federal constitutions are usually divided in such a way that the central government cannot preempt state or local jurisdiction in certain policy areas, such as municipal government structure, transportation design and construction, registry issues, security, planning and zoning.

He observes, for example, that the Canadian government doesn’t have planning powers over Ottawa and cannot even control the construction of its own buildings. Harris also notes that, while capital cities located within states may have high autonomy they may suffer from financial insufficiency, i.e., the city is not adequately compensated for the cost of hosting the federal capital.

Capitals as city-states suffer from the same problem, according to Harris, only more so. Harris argues (1995: 242) that, “While a city-state arrangement assures that the residents of a capital city will enjoy democratic rights and privileges on a par with other citizens of the country, it may give the central government even less control than when the capital city is within a state or province.” In addition, city-states, because of their constitutionally fixed boundaries and their high densities, may quickly become underbounded, with population spilling over into adjacent states causing serious interjurisdictional coordination problems (the same problem may also exist in federal districts such as Washington, D.C.).

Federal districts as the locale for the capital city may overbalance the scales in favor of the federal government. As Harris (1995: 243) notes:

The main motivation behind establishing the seat of government in federal territory is the desire of the country to develop and have adequate control of its capital. And, although this goal may be achieved, experience with federal districts has shown that other basic problems of governing the capital are left unsolved. The central government may dominate the public affairs of the city at the expense of the democratic principles upon which the nation is founded... In some cases the local residents are denied the basic political rights that are enjoyed by the citizens of the nation as a whole.

Rowat concludes that (1993: 166), “federal districts are particularly appropriate in decentralized federations, where the sharp division of powers between the central and state governments would otherwise prevent the central government from having control of its own capital.” However, Harris (1995) concludes that none of the federal districts he examined provides the “full gamut” of self-government to its local citizenry available to other citizens and that (1997: 89) “even in the most advanced democratic systems studied in this report – Canberra and Brasilia – the national governments have ‘exclusive jurisdiction’ and ultimate power over their federal districts.”

For our study we selected a diverse set of capital cities, most, but not all, in federal systems of government. The capitals and their classification according to the above criteria are:

Berlin: City-State; Multi-Function Capital

Brasilia: Federal district; Political Capital

Brussels: Federal district; Multi-Function Capital

Canberra: Federal district; Political Capital

London: City within a unitary system; Global Capital

Mexico City: Federal district; Multi-Function Capital

Ottawa: Located within a state; Political Capital¹

Stockholm: City within a unitary system; Multi-Function capital

Vienna: City-State; Multi-Function Capital

Wellington: City within a unitary system; Political Capital

¹ The National Capital Region (NCR) is now located partly in two states (provinces), Ontario and Quebec.

Study Methods

In order to answer our research questions, we first conducted a literature review of comparative literature on capital cities, local government, and local government finance in order to frame our research efforts. We also conducted a literature review on each of the ten capital cities analyzed utilizing books, journal articles, government publications and internet sources. We sought the advice of colleagues and acquaintances of the Principal Investigator in the field of comparative urban politics² on whom to contact in each of the countries and cities about the relationship of the capital city to the national government in each of our countries. Using that information, we then communicated via e-mail or telephone with relevant experts within each of the ten capital cities—both those in academia and those who work for various government or government related offices –asking them to respond to our questions. We used a “snowball” technique to gather additional names of people to interview. Overall, we interviewed between four and eleven people in each country via e-mail, the telephone, and direct meetings when possible.

The main problem in comparing the relationship of capital cities to their national governments and in learning lessons that are relevant to the relationship of Washington, D.C. to the United States federal government is sorting out differences that are due to the capital city – national government relationship from those that are due to differences in the nature of the entire system of intergovernmental relations between any two countries. For example, in many countries cities, including the capital city, are provided aid by the national government to compensate for differences in fiscal capacity that might place cities at a disadvantage. Thus, many capital cities may appear fiscally better off than Washington, D.C., but this is not because of a determination to respond to the special needs of the capital; it is because of differences in the way in which all cities in these countries are treated relative to cities in the United States.

² Wolman has served as the President of the Urban Politics section of the American Political Science Association and as a member of the Executive Board of the Urban Affairs Association. He has participated in many international conferences on comparative local government and urban politics and has professional colleagues in most of the countries in our sample.

The Capital Cities in Comparison

In this report, we try to identify those differences that relate to capital city – national government relationships and to focus on them. We thus begin with the broadest and most basic question.

Governance

In what ways does the governance of the capital city differ from the governance of other cities in the national city system as a result of its status as a capital?

In respect to governance, Washington, D.C. is more unique in the United States than the other ten capital cities in our study are in their respective countries. In most cases there appears to be little difference in the governance of the national capital compared to other cities in the same country. This is true in one of the cities in a unitary nation (Wellington), for both of the city-state capitals in federal nations (Berlin and Vienna), for one of the two capitals within state governments in federal nations (Ottawa), and for one of the capitals in a federal administrative district (Brasilia³). It is true that Stockholm and, especially London, both in unitary nations, have substantially different governance from other cities in their respective nations. However, these differences are clearly related to the dominant size and importance of these cities in the national system rather than to their status as capitals (Marshall 2006; Olin 2006; Söderholm 2006).

There are some differences between the national capital and other city governments in Canberra, Brussels, and Mexico City. All of these cities are capitals within a capital district framework similar to Washington, D.C. And, interestingly, the relationship of each of these capital cities to their national governments has changed drastically over the course of the past twenty years. Canberra (the Australian Capital Territory or ACT) was governed by the Australian national government until 1989.⁴ Brussels was also essentially governed by the Belgium government (a unitary state until the constitutional revisions of 1988 which went into

³ The governance of Brasilia, as in Canberra and some of the other federal districts, is a mixture of state and municipal functions, and, in this respect, differs from the governance of other municipalities in the country.

⁴ There was however, a partly elected Advisory Council established in 1930, but its functions were limited to “advising.” In 1969 the elected members resigned in protest against alleged failures on the government’s part to consider their advice or to keep them informed Atkins, Ruth. 1973. “Canberra.” Pp. 39-62 in *The Government of Federal Capitals*, edited by Donald C. Rowat. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

affect as law in 1989).⁵ In Mexico the constitutional law allowing for popular election of a mayor for the federal district of Mexico City was passed in 1996. Until this time, the mayor of the city was appointed by the president of Mexico.

Canberra is located in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a federal territory rather than in a state as are most other Australian cities. Like the District of Columbia, the ACT government is responsible for functions performed by both state and local governments in the Australian system. The form and functions of the ACT (of which Canberra is part) is set by legislation enacted in 1989. Essentially the ACT has all powers available to other state and local governments, with the exception of planning and water supply. These two functions are the ultimate responsibility of the national government's National Capital Authority (roughly the equivalent of the National Capital Planning Authority for the District of Columbia). The NCA is responsible for formulating and managing the National Capital Plan, an overarching strategic plan for the development of Canberra. The plan must be approved by the Federal legislature. Planning by the city of Canberra itself must then be consistent with the approved NCA plan. Since there is no compliance mechanism built into the law, disagreement, when it occurs, must be resolved either through negotiation or the court system (Rohl 2006).

In addition, unlike other state and local governments, the national government has the power to limit the ACT's power to legislate and to override laws that it passes. As discussed below, however, it has very rarely used these powers.

Mexico City does not fully control its own budget, which, unlike the case for all other municipalities in Mexico, must be approved by the House of Representatives. Secondly, the police force is federal. In other municipalities the police are a local entity (Gault 2006; de Legarreta 2006).

Brussels is a capital city within a capital region, the Brussels Capital Region (BCR). What was formerly known as "Brussels City" is actually only one of the nineteen communes in the BCR. The other eighteen are, in a technical sense, the old suburbs of Brussels. In today's sense, however, the full area of the BCR is more governmentally unified than is the Washington

⁵ In 1970 a revision to the constitution created three regions by law, but there was no practical implementation until the Constitutional Law 12 January 1989 which set up the governmental structure for the BCR as similar to that of the other two Regions.

Metropolitan Area and functions under a common umbrella government. The BCR is one of the three Regions in federal Belgium.⁶

Prior to 1989, Brussels metropolitan area was the capital of a unitary Belgium state and had no elected self-government. The national government could override decisions of any of the Commune councils deemed contradictory to the interests of the national government. In 1970, the regional structure of Belgium was first created by constitutional change but not fully implemented until 1989. At that time, the 19 individual Communes that made up the Brussels metropolitan area were “merged” into an “Agglomeration” with a joint government. The general power structure of the Communes remained, but the new Agglomeration (city council) had authority in the areas of town and country planning, transport, safety, public health and cleanliness, economic expansion, etc. The powers of the former Agglomeration were turned over to the new executive and legislative bodies of the BCR in 1989 (Bruxelloise 2004).

Under the new federal government, the three Regions have guaranteed competencies in which the federal government cannot interfere. The BCR has the same powers as the other Regions. However, there are certain exceptions. Constitutionally the laws of the national government have precedence over the laws of the BCR (unlike other regions), and any potential conflicts are to be resolved through arbitration at the Council of State level. This happens rarely, but a case in point is the decision by the national government to make Brussels the EU capital, regardless of the wishes of the citizens of the BCR (Papadopoulos 1996: 164). Thus, the federal government has the theoretical ability to suspend or cancel any ordinance that would harm Brussels as a capital and international city.

The federal government may also suggest that issues of urban planning, transportation, and public works that are of concern to it be sent through a “Cooperation Committee” consisting of four Brussels ministers and four federal government ministers for discussion and resolution (Van Wynsberghe 2003). The Cooperation Committee is used often (it meets monthly—and deals with issues relating to the competencies of both the linguistic Communities and economic

⁶ The three Regions of federal Belgium are the Walloon Region, the Brussels Capital Region, and the Flemish Region—the divisions falling generally along economic boundaries. Overlapping the Regions are also three “Communities” with their own separate governments and spheres of competency (for example, education is a Community competency) divided along linguistic boundaries: the French, Dutch, and German communities. Geographically, the Communities overlap, but only in the BCR. Thus, the BCR is a multiple capital containing the governments of federal Belgium, of the Region of Brussels, and of both the French and Flemish Communities—each generally with their own individual competencies and administrative systems.

Regions). One of its key purposes is to negotiate conflict regarding the overlapping of the Community governments in Brussels. For example, the Brussels South Charleroi Airport is near the Wallonia side of the Brussels Capital Region and affects both these Regions—especially in relation to flight patterns and noise over residential areas. There have been many complaints about this by Walloon residents since much of the air traffic is directed over Walloon. The federal government has tried to mediate this issue on the Cooperation Committee, but in the end, has no ultimate authority to do anything--the Mayor of Brussels has had the last word over the issue and refuses to change the flight patterns (Deelen 2006).

The relationship between the German federal government and its capital, Berlin, are set out in a Cooperation Agreement agreed to in 1992 when the capital was moved from Bonn to Berlin after reunification. This agreement lays down basic rules for the cooperation between the federal government and Berlin. The agreement covers, in particular, controlled urban development of the areas needed for performing federal government duties, including the necessary infrastructure, appropriate accommodation for the federal constitutional bodies, support for foreign embassies, infrastructure related to Berlin's function as a capital city, etc. (Schumann 2006).

The agreement also calls for the creation of a joint committee for resolving any questions between the capital and the national government. This Committee affects only Berlin and is unique among the German states. It was also formalized with an insertion (also in 1992) into the Federal Building Code (Section 247). The Committee has not met in the past few years because all controversial issues were eventually resolved – although sometimes only after lengthy discussions – on a more informal basis (Schumann 2006). However, the Committee is a permanent section of the Federal Building Code. The members are “representatives of Berlin and the federal government of Germany” (with no stipulation as to how many representatives there should be or how they are to be appointed). Any questions regarding town planning and land use may be brought before the committee, including the location of new federal buildings (German Federal Code 1997). Thus far all issues have reached satisfactory agreements. Theoretically, the federal government could override Berlin wishes if no satisfactory agreement were reached (Schumann 2006).

In sum, the governance of most of our study's capital cities does not vary notably from the governance of others cities in each given nation. The three biggest exceptions, and thus the cases

that most resemble Washington, D.C., are Canberra, Brussels, and Mexico City. While individual details vary, each of these three cities resides in a special district framework that resembles that of Washington, D.C. Also similar to Washington, D.C., in each of the three cases the national-local relationship has changed substantially in recent decades.

National Interest

How is the national interest defined with respect to the capital city? Are there specific geographic areas that are set aside as nationally protected or certain functions that, while usually under control of the local government, are nationally controlled, and if so, which and how?

In most of the capitals, the national interest is expressed, if at all, in a geographical sense, although, as discussed above, in Canberra and Brussels it is expressed more broadly (albeit ambiguously). In general, national governments have control, in terms of security and maintenance, of national buildings and land that they own. In Canberra, for example, certain land and buildings are designated as national capital areas and are administered by the federal government through the National Capital Authority (Rohl 2006). In Brasilia, the *Esplanada dos Ministerios*, the large area where the headquarters of the ministries are located, and the official residences of the President and Vice-President, is the responsibility of the federal government, at least for security purposes as is the Three Powers Square, where the seats of Legislative, Executive and Judiciary Powers are located.

In Ottawa, the only geographic area that is set aside as in the *federal interest* is the area immediately around the Parliament Building. However, the federal government owns nearly 11% of the land in the NCR, including residential and commercial areas around the Parliament Building, parks, pathways, the Greenway, and several bridges. These areas are fully controlled by the national government (National Capital Commission 1998). In Berlin, the federal government has control only over its government buildings (Schumann 2006). In Wellington it is only the Parliament and its immediate environs that are under national government control. All other national government property is required to conform to local regulations and laws (Reid 2006).

Thus, in regard to geography and the national interest, Washington, D.C. differs dramatically with its counterparts. Where United States government exercises direct control over substantial

portions of the District of Columbia, and substantial indirect control over other portions, such control is far more limited in the ten capital cities in our study.

Fiscal Capacity

To what extent, if at all, does the national government compensate the capital city for serving in its function as the capital city? How much fiscal support does the capital city receive? If there is a local property tax, is national government property tax-exempt and, if so, does the national government compensate the capital city in some way for this?

There is enormous variation in the extent to which capital cities are treated differently than other cities in terms of fiscal transfers, payments for capital city functions, and compensation for property exempt from taxation. Even when capital cities are treated differently, the amount which they receive tends to be relatively small in terms of their total budget. However, it should be pointed out that there are two important differences between the circumstances of most of these foreign capitals and that of Washington, D.C. First, virtually all of the foreign capital cities in our sample are both wealthy economically and fiscally healthy; with the exception of London, Mexico City, and to some extent Berlin, they do not have a high proportion of their residential population who are poor. Second, unlike the United States, most of the national governments in our sample operate major programs involving grants to cities that are highly equalizing – they take into account the fiscal capacity and needs of cities in providing these funds. In some cases (e.g., Germany, Sweden), there is a system of horizontal transfers among states or local governments; in these cases the capital city/state sometimes benefits (e.g., Berlin) and sometimes serves as a net contributor (e.g., Stockholm).

Wellington, Stockholm, and London, all capital cities in unitary systems of government, are not treated any differently fiscally because of their status as capital cities (London is, in fact, treated differently in many respects, but, with one important proviso discussed below, the different treatment results from its size and importance rather than from its capital city status (Marshall 2006). Vienna, one of the two city-states in our sample is also not treated any differently.

In terms of operating subsidies, Canberra, Berlin, and Brasilia do receive some specific assistance. Canberra, whose annual budget in 2006-2007 the budget was \$2,886.7 million AUD,

provides perhaps the best example of special fiscal treatment because of its capital city status, and is worth describing at some length.

The Australian national government financial relationship with the ACT Government is the same as that of the other states and territories in the Commonwealth, except with regard “to the special circumstances arising from the existence of the national capital and the seat of [the Australian government] in the Territory” (Australian National Government 1988)

In practice, these “special circumstances” include three different forms of transfer payments from the Australian Commonwealth Government to the ACT:

- 1) “Direct compensation for specific financial disability of the expenditure of providing municipal functions relating to National Capital influences.” These include “ACT National Capital Influences,” which compensates the ACT “for the large number of national institutions and the extra costs resulting from the design and layout of Canberra.” Under the 2006-2007 budget this funding is \$23.5 million AUD; and “Assistance for Water and Sewerage,” which “compensates the ACT for the extra cost in providing water and sewerage services in an inland environment.” For 2006-07 this funding is \$9.5 million AUD (Grimes 2006).
- 2) “Direct compensation to the ACT for the specific financial disability of the expenditure of providing state functions relating to National Capital influences. Under this method of funding the ACT receives an additional \$23.7 million AUD (2006-07) for national capital factors resulting directly from influences that were unavoidable consequences of Canberra’s status as the national capital and the seat of the Australian Government; namely:
 - police (\$6.9 million AUD);
 - public safety (\$2.0 million AUD);
 - culture and recreation (\$5.1 million AUD);
 - national parks and wildlife service (\$0.1 million AUD);
 - roads (\$2.7 million AUD);
 - urban transit (\$1.6 million AUD);
 - general public services (\$5.2 million AUD).”

(Grimes 2006)

3) “Indirect compensation that recognizes a number of constraining factors of providing normal state government type services not directly accounted for. The ACT receives 14.7% above an equal per capita distribution (\$814.2 million AUD total, \$103.7 million AUD above equal per capita, in 2005-06) due to a number of fiscal disadvantages attributable to Canberra’s role as the national capital. These include:

- an inability to raise payroll tax from a large portion of the Territory’s labour market, due to the incapacity of the ACT government to tax the Australian Government;
- above average expenditure on infrastructure maintenance which is a legacy of Australian Government infrastructure planning pre-self government (1984); and
- the city state geographic composition of the ACT, which excludes the generation of mining revenues and has led to the ACT acting as a regional centre for government service provision to non-ACT residents.”

(Grimes 2006)

Berlin also receives compensation for its financial burden as the capital city. The federal government currently makes payments to the city in the following areas: Berlin’s security expenditures, infrastructure needed for purposes related to being the capital city, and for cultural activities. As Konrad Schumann informed us, “Berlin receives annual compensation payments of 38 million EUR from the federal government to cover part of its expenses for security (approx. 100 million EUR). Berlin spends an annual 20 million EUR on maintaining the infrastructure in the parliament and government district, of which 64 per cent are paid by the federation. Another 10 million EUR for the promotion of culture go to Berlin’s Capital Cultural Fund. Here it should be added that the federal government has been fully funding several cultural institutions over the last few years. This reduced Berlin’s financial burden in the tens of millions. On the basis of an agreement in 1994, the federal government has also sponsored three traffic projects and cultural institutions with 650 million EUR. This agreement has, however, expired.”

(Schumann 2006)

In Brazil, a “Constitutional Fund for the Federal District” was created in 2002 to provide Brasilia with fiscal assistance; the revenues received must be used for public safety, education, and health. The fund provides annually approximately 7% of Brasilia’s budget.

Brussels appears to have received some special treatment in terms of capital funding. Brussels receives compensation for infrastructure built specifically for European Union purposes (Brussels is one of the two capital cities for the EU), a provision which, although it applies throughout Belgium, has wide application only in the Brussels region (External Relations Department 2006).

While large capital cities like London, Stockholm, and Vienna may not be formally compensated for their status as a capital city, they may well be favored informally through funding arrangements that reflect the fact that they are capitals. As Adam Marshall noted in an interview (2006), London probably receives favorable fiscal treatment both because so many members of parliament and government officials live there and also because it is very well represented in parliament. Members of Parliament from London constitute 11.5% of all MPs in the British Parliament, far beyond the way in which the District of Columbia would be represented even if it did have representation.

The countries in our sample also varied substantially in how they treated national government property with respect to local property taxes and whether capital cities were compensated for exempt property in any way. At one extreme the Canadian federal government pays Ottawa a grant in lieu of taxes (GILT), which, according to several of our interviewees, now more or less fully compensates for local taxes lost through exempt federal property and amounts to about 8% of the city budget (Andrew 2006; Chaiton 2006; Gordon 2006a; Harris et al. 1997). The Belgium federal government similarly reimburses the BCR for about 72% of its foregone property tax revenue (External Relations Department 2006). Federal property is not tax exempt from property tax in Mexico, but apparently the federal government nonetheless seldom pays the tax to the Mexico City government (Gault 2006). Neither Australia nor Germany provides reimbursement for exempt federal property, but as we describe above, both do provide special payments to their capital cities in recognition of the special circumstances they face as national capitals. Neither New Zealand nor Austria nor Brazil provides compensation for exempt property. Since the property tax on non-residential buildings is a national tax in both the UK and in Sweden, neither London nor Stockholm suffers revenue loss from the existence of tax exempt local property in the city (Marshall 2006; Olin 2006).

Local Government Autonomy

Does the capital city have local self-government and how is that self-government limited, if at all, because of its function as a capital city? How is the “national interest of the capital city protected within the context of local self-government?”

All of the foreign capitals have local self-government, elected by their residents, although some, as noted above, are subject to provisions whereby the national government can override local laws or refer contentious issues to joint national government-local government committees to negotiate differences (see above discussions on Canberra, Brussels and Berlin). However, it appears these mechanisms are rarely, if ever, used, certainly much less rarely than the U.S. Congress overrides local laws passed by the District of Columbia (though, of course, the potential for override may deter these capital cities from passing legislation that they otherwise would). In Canberra, the Australian federal government recently overturned an ACT civil union law as “inconsistent with federal law” (Kiermaier 2006). In other Australian states, such a decision could only have been made through the court system, whereas in the ACT the federal government simply was able to invalidate it by issuing an edict, without regard to the courts⁷ (Rohl 2006). In Brussels the federal government has the right to intervene over BCR Authority only when the national interest is threatened.

Similar to the District of Columbia, all of the federal districts in our sample received home rule only within the past 20 years. Canberra was governed until 1989 by the Australian federal government. Proposals for self-government were initially opposed by Canberra residents for many years, primarily because of fear of higher taxes and poorer services. Indeed, two referendums for self-government were defeated by local residents before the 1989 Self-Government Act was accepted. As Grundy (1996: 3) notes, “At a time when people in other parts of the world were fighting for the right to govern themselves, the majority of the people of Canberra had, by their opposition to self-government, effectively perverted the cry of the American revolution into: “No representation if it involves taxation.” While democracy in Europe emerged because the governed imposed their wishes on the governors, in Canberra’s case

⁷ Note that there are two Territories in Australia: the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The national government has this right to override legislation in all Territories (and has also been known to do so in the Northern Territory where it overturned a euthanasia law). It does not have this right in regards to legislation of any of the states. Rohl, Todd. 2006. "Interview with staff member of the National Capital Authority.", Kiermaier, Max. 2006. "Interview with Deputy Clerk and Sarjeant-at-Arms for the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Secretariat."

the governors “imposed” democracy on a largely reluctant populace whose only apparent concern was to avoid paying any more for the administration of the city.”

There were several reasons that in the end, Canberrans accepted self-governance. First and probably foremost, according to Grundy (1996: 57), they accepted that it was an inevitability. Also, there was growing public resentment over redevelopment in which residents had little or no say; and the lack of zoning in Canberra’s planning process as well as the leasehold system meant that “...ordinary citizens were subject to the rigid policies of the [National Capital Authority] when they wanted to do something as insignificant as build a garden shed or erect a fence.”

When Belgium was restructured in 1989, three Regions (or states) were created. The new Brussels Capital Region (BCR) was created which included Brussels City and the 18 Communes (or cities) that formed the Brussels Metropolitan Area. The BCR was immediately afforded the same competencies of local self government as the other two Regions of Belgium: Walloon and Flanders. While it could be argued that Brussels City actually lost many of its powers of self government, now being only slightly more powerful than a city ward, the restructuring was seen as necessary (at least by those in national government) in order to centralize the fragmented government of the Region--especially with regard to land use and zoning issues--as a way to entice the European Union to keep its capital located in the area of the new BCR. According to Papadopoulos (1996: 161), this was one of the key problems the new EU was having in locating its capital—there were simply too many governmental authorities in the Brussels Metropolitan Area to deal with.

In Brazil, prior to 1990, the chief executive of the Federal District was appointed by the President, and a Senate committee (Senate Committee on the Federal District) would discuss and vote bills related to taxes, public services, personnel of the administration of the Federal District (Boyd and Fauntroy 15; Fauntroy 16; Marques 2006). Earlier in 1986, the first senators and federal deputies of the Federal District were elected. The Federal Constitution of 1988 gave the electors of the Federal District the right to elect their governor and the district deputies for the local legislature, the Legislative Chamber of the Federal District. It was not until 1990 that the Federal District elected its governor and the district deputies for the first time (Brasil 1996, 7; Brasil 1986; Toríbio 1986; Distrito Federal “Histórico”).

Thus, the Brazilian Federal District has self-government. There is not interference in its governance that can be attributed to the fact that the Federal District is the seat of the federal capital (Almeida 2006; Faria 2006; Sarlet 2006; Silva 2006). Nonetheless, the government of Federal District cannot be mistaken for the government of a state or a municipality. The constitutional distribution of prerogatives sometimes approximates the Federal District to a state, sometimes to a municipality. The judiciary of the Federal District is organized by the Union. In the states, the judiciary is organized by each state. The Federal District observes an organic law (as the municipalities) instead of a constitution (as the states). Nonetheless, the Federal District elects a governor (like the states) and not a mayor (like the municipalities) (Brasil 1988, article 32; Distrito Federal “Histórico”; Sarlet 2006; Silva 2006).

Local Fiscal Autonomy

Does the capital city have local fiscal autonomy, i.e., can it make its own decisions about taxes and expenditures without approval of the national government or the possible threat of overrule by the national government?

Excepting Mexico City, all of the capitals have local fiscal autonomy to the same extent as do other local (or state in the case of city-states) governments do. In Mexico City, as noted above, the city budget must be approved by the national legislature (although there are several capitals where laws adverse to the national interest can, at least in principle, be overturned by the national government.

Local Citizen Autonomy

Do residents of the capital city have full voting rights in terms of determining their own local government?

Residents of all of the capital cities in our sample now have full voting rights with respect to electing their own local government. However, like the District of Columbia, these rights came quite recently to those capitals that are in federal districts. Prior to 1996 Mexico City’s mayor was appointed by the President of Mexico, while before 1988 Brasilia’s mayor was appointed by the President of Brazil, with a committee of the Senate serving as the local legislature. Canberra and Brussels also were provided with full voting rights in electing their local governments in the

late 1980s. Prior to that time Canberra was governed completely by the federal government, and the Brussels Capital Region was provided full self government upon its formation in 1989.

London presents a complex situation that is arguably related at least to some extent to its status as a capital city. Prior to 1986 London had a two tier government consisting of thirty-two London boroughs and a single region-wide government, the Greater London Council (GLC). Both tiers were popularly elected and had designated powers and local autonomy. Late in 1985, but effective the next year, the Thatcher Government passed legislation in Parliament eliminating the region-wide government, not only in London, but in the other major metropolitan areas of England (such an act is constitutional in a unitary state with parliamentary sovereignty and where local government has no constitutional standing). As a consequence, London was left with no London area government, but simply individual governments in each of the thirty-two local authority boroughs, plus a variety of quasi-public committees to engage in coordinative activity. However, under the 1999 Greater London Authority Act, the new Labour Government re-instated a region-wide London government (the Greater London Authority), albeit with more limited powers, that included an elected assembly and, for the first time, an elected mayor. This reform left London with a two tiered form of governance, with the elected mayor and assembly, and the continuance of the thirty-two borough authorities (Marshall 2006).

National Enfranchisement

Do residents of the capital city have full representation in the national political system, equal to that of residents elsewhere in the country?

Quite unlike Washington, D.C. residents, residents in all of the capital cities in our sample have “full” representation in the national political system. However, Brasilia has had representation only since 1986. Canberra now has representation (although some argue that it is not proportionately represented). However, its history is the most relevant to that of Washington’s situation.

Residents of Canberra and the ACT had no representation in the Federal Parliament until 1949. At that time legislation was passed allowing one member in the Australian House of Representatives, but until 1966, the member could only vote on issues and legislation affecting the ACT. Full voting rights were granted and a second member added in 1974. However, the ACT had no representation in the Senate until 1975 when it received two seats with full voting

rights (Grundy et al. 1996: 57). (Other territories in the Australia also now receive two senators while each state receives twelve.)

The transition to full representation resulted from a combination of several factors. The first seat in the House was generally the result of community organization by a Representative League who were supported in their efforts by *The Canberra Times* who commented that “government by commission is all very well in a construction camp, but it is repugnant in a growing community.” The second seat in the House as well as the Senate seat, were probably added, according to Grundy (1996: 31), because of “...feelings of guilt about the effective disenfranchisement of the growing population of Canberra” and because senior bureaucrats in Canberra felt “that this move might pacify some of those who most objected to the treatment [of Canberra]...” since now they could “point to the equality of Canberrans in the national parliament, and thus perhaps defuse some of the pressure for self-government.” But, Grundy (1996: 84) adds that “it was probably that growth, more than any other factor, which modified the policy of paternalism...there were just too many people now resident in Canberra for the paternalistic style to continue...” “A Government which preached participation and democracy could not long...deny participation and democracy to its inhabitants.”

In sum, in terms of national representation Washington, D.C. now stands in marked contrast to ten capital cities in our study. Capital cities that once lacked representation – such as Canberra – now enjoy something close of full representation in the key chambers of their national legislatures.

Local Service to the National Government

Are there security/police forces in place in the capital city that are not in existence elsewhere in other cities? If so, who pays for them? Are the structure and organization of police/security forces in the capital city similar to those in other cities (e.g., who appoints police superintendent or board, to whom does he/they report?)?

In most of the countries in our sample local policing is either a state or a national function, so it does not register on local budgets, and the police chief is not appointed locally or subject to local authority. In Canberra, the ACT, which functions as a state in many respects, does not have a police force as do other states; instead it contracts with the Australian Federal Police to perform policing duties throughout the area (Kiermaier 2006). In other capitals the national

police have a responsibility for protecting the national buildings; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada's national police force has responsibility for protecting the parliamentary grounds even though Ottawa's local policing is a provincial government function. In Brussels, where policing is a function of the BCR, the federal government provides compensation to the local government for the additional costs incurred by the police force as a result of EU meetings (External Relations Department 2006).

Conclusion

Our review of the relationship of other foreign capital cities to their national governments indicates there is substantial variation. As discussed in the introduction, there is an inevitable tension between the demands imposed by the presence of a nation's capital and those of the city and its residents who live there. The way in which this tension is resolved can be seen as a continuum ranging from the capital being treated no differently from any other city in the nation to, at the opposite end, substantial oversight and differential treatment. The position on the continuum reflects, to a substantial extent, both the structural arrangements of the system and the importance and standing of the city for purposes other than that of a national capital. At one end are capital cities in unitary governments (London, Stockholm, Wellington), which are, with rare exceptions, treated no differently than other cities in the same country. The same is largely true of capitals that are city-states (i.e., they have the same constitutional status as state governments) in federal governments (Berlin, Vienna). Towards the other end of the continuum are capitals that are structurally part of districts that were set up specifically to serve as capital cities (Brasilia, Brussels, Canberra, and Mexico City). At the extreme end of this continuum is Washington, D.C.

In particular Washington, D.C. stands out for the lack of representation its citizens have in the national political system. Indeed, the citizens of all of the ten capitals we examined now have substantial representation at the national level. It is perhaps relevant, however, that the residents of the three of the four capitals in federal districts (Brasilia, Canberra, and Mexico City) have all been granted representation relatively recently (since the late 1980s), after long periods when they were deprived of a full voice in the national legislature.

Although the recent change to full representation might hold out hope for Washington, D.C., there is one obvious characteristic that differs. In none of these capital cities are the

residents of the capital a racial minority with strong proclivities to support a specific political party. The closest comparable situation among the capitals we studied was Brussels, where the ethnic/linguistic divisions divide the city between two linguistic Communities. However, the laws of Belgium *require* equal numbers of representatives from both linguistic Communities at the national level of government and the Brussels Capital Region government.

In many respects, the differences between the governance of Washington, D.C. and those of the other foreign capitals we examined derived less from the way the capitals are singled out for differential treatment by the national government than from overarching differences in the way the national government relates to all cities in the country. We have not included a discussion of these fundamental differences in our study (for example, in most countries, cities receive substantial fiscal assistance from their national governments specifically to compensate for disparities in local tax bases – a form of general revenue sharing but designed much more to achieve greater fiscal equalization than was the case with the U.S. general revenue sharing program when it was in existence), but they are critical in importance and well worthy of additional examination.

In this study our focus has been on the *differential* treatment of the capital city relative to other cities in the country by the national government. We find that such treatment (some unfavorable to the capital, other favorable) is not unusual and, in fact, nearly inevitable. However, on a continuum of such treatment, Washington, D.C. surely ranks at the extreme end both for differential treatment and for the extent to which much of the treatment is unfavorable.

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