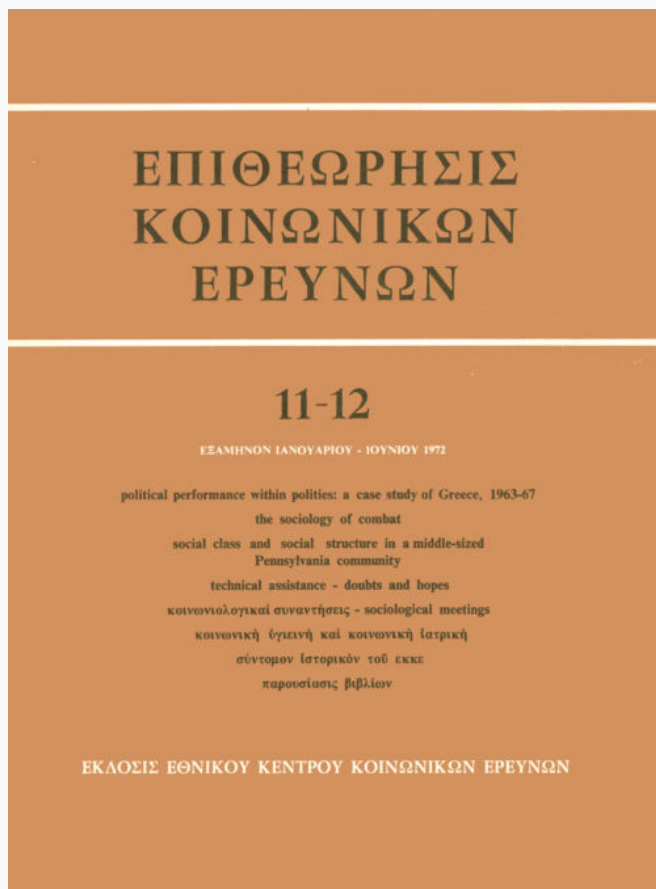


## The Greek Review of Social Research

Vol 11 (1972)

11-12



### Political performance within polities: A case study of Greece, 1963-1967

James Brown

doi: [10.12681/grsr.273](https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.273)

Copyright © 1972, James Brown



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

Brown, J. (1972). Political performance within polities: A case study of Greece, 1963-1967. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 11, 2-8. <https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.273>

**political performance  
within polities:  
a case study of Greece,  
1963-1967**

by

**James Brown**

*Assistant Professor of Political Science,  
Southern Methodist University,  
Dallas, Texas*

A recent trend in behavioral research is the systematic and empirical analysis of conflict behavior both within and among nations. External conflict behavior among nations can take many forms such as wars, embargoes, interruptions in diplomatic relations, and other behaviors that are indicative of aggression between national political systems. On the other hand, internal conflict within nations consists of such events as riots, demonstrations, *coups d'état*, guerrilla warfare, and others denoting the relative instability of the political system. The larger theoretical question that we want answered is: What causes these internal upheavals? According to Harry Eckstein, these internal upheavals run the spectrum of particular conditions within the economic, social, and political spheres of a political system.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the focus of this study and its purpose is to examine these variables in Greece during the 1963-1967 period and hopefully to answer the following empirical questions:

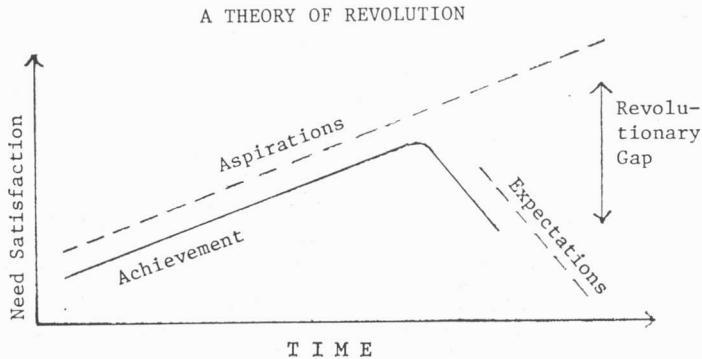
- 1) Was there a widespread lack of popular support for the multiplicity of governments during this period?
- 2) A companion question is: Was the ephemeral character of these governments effective in satisfying economic demands of the populace?
- 3) Did the pervulence of riots and strikes affect the legitimacy of parliamentary government?

Fundamental to this analysis is the recognition of a lack of harmony existing in the economic, political, and social spheres of a political system which Chalmers Johnson indicates prevail in a disequibrated system.<sup>2</sup> This latter term he derives from the structural-functional equilibrium model of the sociologist. But in examining these variables Johnson hastens to point out that the «final cause of a revolutionary resort to arms is some event, called an «accelerator», that holds forth the promise to the revolutionaries that they can break the elite's monopoly

1. For additional information and theories regarding conflict behavior within political systems see: James C. Davies, «Toward a Theory of Revolution», *American Sociological Review*, February, 1962; Harry Eckstein, «The Evaluation of Political Performance: Problems and Dimensions», *Comparative Politics Series*, Series Number: 01-018; Ivo Feierabend and Rosaline Feierabend, «Aggressive Behavior Within Politics, 1948-1962: A Cross-National Study», *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1966; Ted R. Gurr and M. McClelland, «Political Performance: A Twelve-Nation Study», *Comparative Politics Series*, Series Number: 01-018; Terry Nardin, «Violence and the State: A Critique of Empirical Political Theory», *Comparative Politics Series*, Series Number: 01-020; Martin C. Needler, «Political Development and Military Intervention in Latin America», *American Political Science Review*, September, 1966; Raymond Tanta and Manus Midlarsky, «A Theory of Revolution», *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September, 1967.

2. Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), p. 152.

FIG. 1. Relationship between Rate of Achievement, Aspirations, and Expectations



of power».<sup>1</sup> What Johnson is implying is that there are specific situations or events that are favorable or provide the opportunity for intervention by an elite (military or political) for the implementation of a revolution.<sup>2</sup> What, then, were the conditions in Greece during the 1963-1967 period that enhanced the military success of the Revolution of April 21st, 1967?<sup>3</sup>

#### economic conditions

In examining the economic variables, we will utilize some theories of revolution, in particular James Davies' economic model which introduces us to the concept of «need satisfaction».<sup>4</sup>

Davies' hypothesizes that revolutions or *coups d'état* are more likely to come about when a prolonged period of growth in economic and social development is followed by a short-term phase of economic stagnation or decline. The result of this «J-curve», as he calls it, is that the soaring expectations in the minds of the populace created by such economic growth usually go beyond the actual material satisfaction of the needs.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a successful *coup d'état* or revolution is the work of neither the destitute nor the well satisfied, but of those whose actual

situation in life is improving less rapidly than they expect.

On the other hand, we might advance the alternate hypothesis that when there is a prolonged period of economic decline in the need satisfactions of the populace, a frustrated elite may view this as an opportunity to instigate a revolution or a *coup d'état*. Thus arises the necessity of investigating the Greek economic indices that measure economic prosperity or depression for the 1963-April 1967 period; i.e., gross national product, consumer price index, wages and employment figures, and balance budgets and balance of payments.

The economic picture in Greece during the period under investigation was an uncertain one at best, although in the latter part of 1966 confidence in the economy began to rise again slightly and a marked improvement in public finances made possible a substantial increase in public investment expenditures. For the four years immediately preceding April, 1967, the rate of growth in the gross national product averaged 7.5 percent.<sup>6</sup> This was primarily a result of expanding industrial production which increased by more than fifteen percent in total value during 1965 and 1966, even though the agricultural sector was lagging behind.<sup>7</sup> Between 1960 and 1964 consumer prices remained relatively stable, but in 1965 inflationary pressures began to build up, causing rapid increases in the price of consumer goods. This rise during the course of 1965 and 1966 averaged about

1. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

2. See S. E. Finer, *Man on Horseback* for a further explanation on his concept of opportunity for intervention, pp. 72-83.

3. The author will make no attempt to define or distinguish between a revolution or a *coup d'état*. It is, however, suggested that a military elite could conceivably institute a *coup d'état* which in turn could develop into a revolution, i.e. Egypt, 1952.

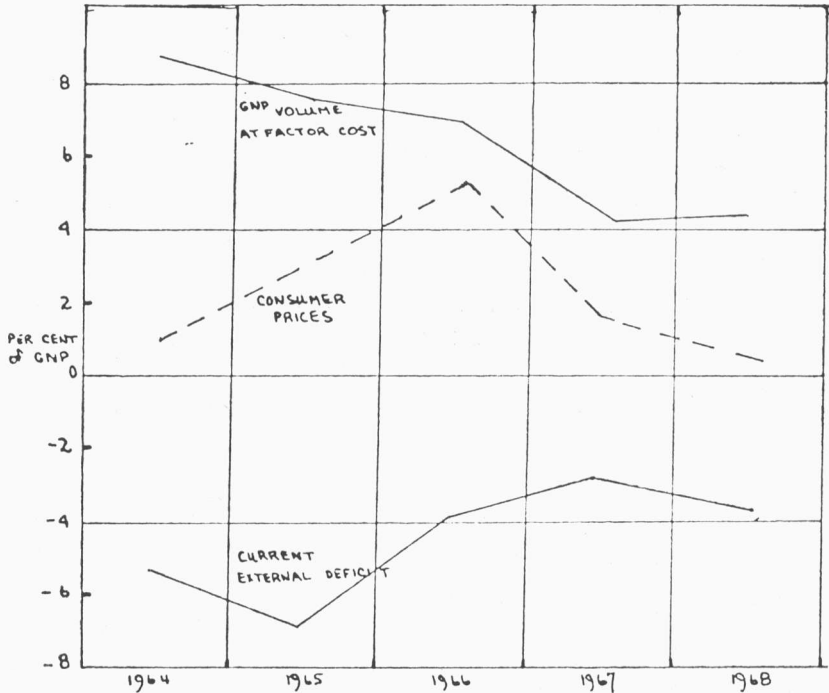
4. James Davies, «Toward a Theory of Revolution», *American Sociological Review*, February, 1962, pp. 5-19.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

6. *An Economic Report on Greece* (London : Lloyds Bank, Ltd., 1967), p. 4.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

TABLE 1. Main Economic Trends, 1964-1968. Economic Growth and Imbalances



Source: Greek Submission to OECD. *OECD Economic Surveys, Greece*, February, 1969.

six percent.<sup>1</sup> The rise in the consumer price index (see tables 1 and 2) seemed to be mainly the result of measures taken by the government in the direction of increased public expenditures and was especially manifest in the areas of uneconomic agricultural subsidies, rising incomes, and an unfavorable balance of payments. Wages during the years between 1964 and 1967 showed an average increase of approximately 8.4 percent. Although the wage scale did indicate an increase, unemployment remained relatively high, especially in the agricultural sector, on the average about five percent for the same period.<sup>2</sup> So in essence, from 1963 to 1967 the economic climate could not be said to be favorable, although in 1966 the eco-

nomy slowly began to right itself. Thus there had been three years of worsening economy, followed by an improvement, precisely opposite to the pattern set by Davies' «J-curve». So at first glance the Davies' hypothesis is not satisfied.

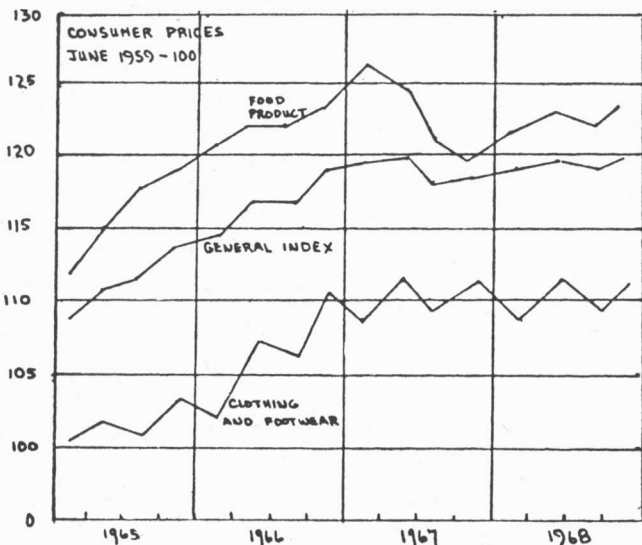
The second hypothesis that follows from the first, that is, regarding the prolonged period of economic deterioration that might be interpreted by an elite as sufficient opportunity to instigate a revolution or *coup d'état*, is a much closer fit even though the 1966 economic upturn in Greece is inconsistent. While there is this additional support for the hypothesis of economic decline, another conditioning variable needs to be introduced at this point.

It is not enough to merely examine these hard economic indicators. We must carry our analysis one step further and examine how these economic vari-

1. *OECD Economic Surveys Greece* (Zurich, Switzerland: 1967 and 1969).

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-20.

TABLE 2. Price Indices, 1965-1968. Quarterly Averages



Source: Greek Submission to OECD. *OECD Economic Surveys, Greece*, February, 1969.

ables are linked to the masses. In order to do so, we will examine public opinion data for the period of 1964 to 1967. An investigation of such data might provide us with some clues regarding the expectations of the populace and, in turn, how this might have been perceived by the Greek officer corps.

In Table 3 it is clear that those surveyed in the year 1966 were quite negative about their prospects for a higher standard of living. This correlates with the problem of inflation that Greece was suffering during that year. Prior to that time, and subsequently in 1967 and 1968, the outlook of those surveyed was surprisingly optimistic regarding the same standard of living issue. More particularistic data concerning the economic outlook and how it affected individuals is offered in Tables 4 and 5. Judging from this data, the respondents appear to fall into the pessimistic category for the period of 1966 to 1967: apparently anticipating a year of rising prices, industrial disputes, an increase in taxes and economic difficulties—all this, even though the employment picture was somewhat improved—all of which substantiates our earlier economic data.

Substantive information about the linkage between economic disequilibrium and a revolution or *coup d'état* is still somewhat remote, but we can arrive at some tentative conclusions regarding economic data

*vis-à-vis* the attitude of the populace about their economic future. As Martin Needler points out, «The overthrow of a government is more likely to occur when economic conditions are deteriorating».<sup>1</sup> This, however, was not true in the case of Greece. Tensions and frustrations were evident from our data and we might infer that apprehension was the prevailing mood of the Greek citizenry. Although our economic data indicates a direction of economic stability in 1966, this positive effect is not translated in our public opinion data. A gap exists between the economic indicators and their correlating effect upon the man in the street. In 1966 and 1967 a time-lag effect was apparent in that the populace was still economically depressed. One important conclusion of this case study for empirical theory is the gap between objective economic statistics and the subjective perceptions of the population. The greatest care should be utilized in studying economic data as a means of testing these empirical propositions. The economic causes for the implementation of a revolution or *coup d'état* are generally related to the satisfaction of the general public, not the actual health of the economy.

1. Martin C. Needler, «Political Development and Military Intervention in Latin America», *American Political Science Review*, September, 1966, p. 624.

TABLE 3. *Greek Populace Outlook Toward Standard of Living, 1964-1968\**

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Going up	36%	36%	15%	47%	56%
going down	30%	18%	67%	17%	12%
Same	33%	40%	13%	29%	25%
Don't know	1%	6%	5%	7%	7%
Sample size	400	800	400	400	800

Sources: Social Surveys Limited, London, England.

\*Text of Question: Speaking generally, would you say that your standard of living (things you can buy and do) is going up, going down, or remaining the same?

TABLE 4. *Future Outlook in the Social and Economic Spheres, 1965-1969\**

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
A year of rising prices	58%	74%	59%	23%	24%
A year of falling prices	6%	7%	5%	29%	22%
No opinion	36%	14%	36%	48%	54%
A year of full employment	38%	41%	31%	48%	67%
A year of rising unemployment	19%	32%	30%	11%	6%
No opinion	43%	27%	39%	41%	27%
A year of strikes and industrial disputes	19%	39%	37%	4%	3%
A year of industrial peace	31%	28%	21%	72%	85%
No opinion	50%	33%	42%	24%	12%
A year when taxes will rise	29%	84%	54%	14%	18%
A year when taxes will fall	21%	4%	8%	32%	23%
No opinion	50%	12%	38%	54%	59%
A year of economic prosperity	25%	11%	14%	50%	65%
A year of economic difficulty	33%	68%	46%	12%	9%
No opinion	42%	21%	40%	38%	26%

Sources: Social Surveys Limited, London, England.

\*Text of Question: Which of these do you think is likely to be true for (year)? These surveys were conducted in December of the previous year. With the exception of 1965, the sample size was 400; for 1965 it was 800.

TABLE 5. *Future Outlook Toward a Better or Worse Year\**

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Better	59%	25%	23%	62%	60%	67%
Worse	16%	37%	40%	6%	6%	3%
Same	8%	17%	7%	12%	13%	26%
Don't know	17%	21%	30%	20%	21%	4%
Sample size	400	800	400	400	400	400

Sources: Social Surveys Limited, London, England.

\*Text of Question: So far as you are concerned do you think that (year) will be better or worse than (year)?

They may or may not be related and, as this cast study indicates, there may be a significant time-lag in the accuracy of popular attitudes. Analysts should therefore remember that hard data are at best indirect indices of attitudes and should be cautiously used and interpreted.

There is a further causal step required for the link between deteriorating economic conditions, or, more accurately, popular perceptions of deteriorating economic conditions, and actual factors leading to intervention. If it is a factor creating a favorable opportunity, then the revolutionary leaders must perceive it as such. So surely, if the state of the Greek economy had been a factor seen as creating an opportunity for intervention, the military leaders would certainly have used it in their rationale and stated public positions. This, however, was not the case. In none of their immediate post-April 21st pronouncements or in the interviews that this writer conducted with varied officials of the government were the economic conditions in Greece during the period of 1963 to 1967 ever mentioned as reasons for their intervention, although the government did place major emphasis on the economy after it took over.

On the other hand, economic conditions can have a direct impact on revolutionaries, thereby creating a favorable condition for intervention. The Greek officer corps probably knew of the economic data discussed above, and would have seen the up-turn, but other figures must be taken into account if this be the case. In a revolutionary situation which is fundamentally concerned with a rather small group of politically active individuals, the issues of budget and balance of trade may greatly affect elite mood. Perhaps this is because government deficits and a decline in the balance of trade so gravely affect the opportunities for career advancement and overall prosperity of elites. Thus, although these two indicators may not directly affect the general public initially, they are closely related to the perceptions of would-be elites, who are the prime movers of revolutions or *coups d'état*. In other words, they may serve as a motive, as well as affecting perceptions of the «accelerator» for intervention. By utilizing the balance of trade and budget figures as economic indices in relation to the frame of mind of highly politicized individuals, we might expect to find that the trend in the balance of trade and balance of budget would drop sharply prior to April 1967 (see Table 6).

We should expect to find some correlation between the decline in the balances of trade and the balances of budget and, in this case, military intervention. Such was not the case. A partial explanation might be that the Greek armed forces were basically dependent on the United States to supply them with

TABLE 6. Imports, Exports, Balances of Trade and Balances of Budget (In Millions of Drachmai)

Year	Balance of Budget	Exports	Imports	Balance of Trade
1964	+1.2	9,256	26,556	-17,296
1965	-0.4	9,833	34,012	-24,179
1966	+2.1	12,179	36,685	-24,506
1967	+0.3	14,856	35,588	-20,732

Source: «Statistical Yearbook of Greece» (Athens, Greece: National Statistical Service, 1969).

the latest arms and equipment. The estimated value of the anticipated military arms for 1967 was \$ 44,000,000.<sup>1</sup> So it would seem that any imbalance in trade and budgets certainly did not threaten to immediately disturb the normal functioning and operation of the Greek armed forces.

As we have indicated earlier, inflation was a disturbing and vexing problem during the 1963-1967 period. It was not, however, severe to the point of creating economic failure. The balance of payments picture was surely negative in that imports at that time were two and a half times as high as exports, but the overall economic picture was sufficiently stable so as to rule out the state of the economy as a precipitant of the revolution.

In summary, we must conclude that the economic evidence presented does not allow us to conclude that the economic factors were involved either in creating opportunity or the «accelerator» for intervention. The Davies model is directly disconfirmed in our analysis of the April 21st Revolution, while the theory of general economic deterioration has positive support when its subjective form of popular support is considered. But before weighing the overall importance of economic factors, we must consider another important set of factors said to be significant determinants for providing the favorable conditions for a revolution or *coup d'état*.

#### political and social conditions

Another dimension that may provide the opportunity for a revolution or *coup d'état* is the prevalence of riots and strikes and how they affect the legitimacy of parliamentary government. Strikes were prevalent to the point of being rampant in Greece from 1965 to April of 1967 and, in fact, were anticipated by the populace (see Table 4). During this period about eighty percent of the trade unions went on strike at various times—an estimated 950 strikes took

1. *Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts*, Department of Defense; March, 1970.

place, or about twenty-four per month.<sup>2</sup> It is further estimated that of the above-numbered struck approximately sixty percent of them were either organized or inspired by Communist or Communist-front organizations. The principal organizations involved in these strikes were the General Confederation for Labor, the Lambrakis Movement, the United Democratic Left (EDA), and some members and followers of the Center Union Party (EK). All of these were more than willing to embark upon an extraparliamentary course of action. The Lambrakis in particular were extremely active in the demonstrations and other assorted anti-governmental activities. In fact, summarily, all of these organizations had expressed an intolerance, at once, of the traditional right-wing politicians, parliamentary institutions, and the armed forces.

Not only were strikes prevalent, but during this same period rioting seemed to be the order of the day, resulting in many injuries and some loss of life. From 1965 to April of 1967 approximately 1,200 individuals were injured in such riots and fifteen lost their lives. Of those injured, 300 were gendarmes.<sup>3</sup> Since the government of Greece is so intimately involved in its economy, strikes and disruptions of any kind can be disastrously interpreted. Threats of military call-ups were rife and on several occasions the Army was alerted to quell the rioting. But the bulk of responsibility for putting down these disorders was left to the local gendarmerie.

In connection with the above societal conditions, the relative stability or instability of the parliamentary government was another central issue of the times. Six separate governments came to power during this time, averaging a new government about every five months. The six governments were: George Athanasiades-Novas, July 15, 1965; Elias Tsirimokos, August 24, 1965; Stephanos Stephanopoulos, September 25, 1965 and July 15, 1966; Ioannis Paraskevopoulos, January 14, 1967; Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, March 15, 1967. This instability, in itself, might have undermined the legitimacy of these governments, but their ineffectiveness was further compounded by the behaviour of the members of Parliament, who seemed unwilling to work within the framework of the institutional rules and procedures. It was reported in the press on numerous occasions that members of Parliament actually threatened other fellow members with bodily harm and even scuffled and engaged in «fisticuffs» on occasion.<sup>4</sup> Such situations,

2. *Diati Eginai H. Epanastasi tis 21 Apriliou 1967* (Athens: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 95. Also see *The New York Times* for the period of 1966 to April, 1967.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

4. *Diati Eginai H. Epanastasi*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49. Also see Parliamentary Session Papers for 1965-1966.

although not directly linked to the question of governmental legitimacy, assuredly raised considerable doubt as to the institutional viability of Parliament as a body, and to the stability, both politically and mentally, of its members. I should hasten to point out that Parliament might well have reflected external tensions and still have remained viable if the conditions were different.

At no time during this chaotic period was martial law imposed, nor were the rights of assembly or petition denied or banned. As mentioned earlier, civilian authorities did not seem overly dependent on the armed forces for the maintenance of peace and order, but the above configuration does indicate that the various governments were unable to resolve the myriad conflicts through compromise and bargaining.

In contrast to economic factors, there were frequent public announcements made by the military leaders to justify their intervention, in which they continually mentioned the social and political turmoil that existed during this period, especially from 1965 to April of 1967. The instability *qua* instability of this period seems to have been the «accelerator» that Johnson mentions for intervention. That is to say, that the prevailing social and political conditions at that time provided the military leaders with the «favorable change to intervene». Ironically, however, according to a poll of the populace during 1965-1966, the majority of them (43 percent) felt that the most crucial problem facing Greece was economic in nature, while 27 percent of those polled felt that the political problems were more acute.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in actuality, the negative economic expectations of the population were an important, if not the most important, factor comprising the opportunity, but it would appear that it was not immediately perceived by the military leaders. The success of this intervention might

1. *Elpides Kai Fovie gia tin Ellada*, 1966 (Athens: Institute of Anthropos, 1967), pp. 354-355.

have been shaped by economic factors, but the perceived «accelerator» must ultimately be viewed through the eyes of the revolutionaries and, in this case, the Greek Military Officer Corps.

## conclusions

This examination of the Revolution of April 21st, 1967, in Greece has led us to two conclusions. First, although economic variables are factors to be considered in studying revolutions and *coups d'état*, in this particular case it would appear that they did not play a primary role, although the subjective perception of the populace regarding the economy does have positive support in our findings. Therefore, the writer would suggest that more analysis is necessary and the linkages between objective and subjective variables need to be more closely correlated in studying revolutionary behaviour. Second, this study is consistent with other investigations that indicate that political instability, as a result of fragmentation of opinions, can lead to hostile factions of such power that governments can be deprived of any coherent body of support strong enough to survive. This was especially true in Greece during the 1965-April 1967 period. Therefore, this case study affirms the fact that political instability is a telling variable in signalling to an elite that a favorable condition exists to provide the opportunity for the implementation of a revolution or *coup d'état*.

Although this was an exploratory endeavor, these findings are sufficiently striking and persuasive to argue from a broader empirical and theoretical perspective for studies utilizing a wider scope of variables: economic, political, sociological, and psychological—plus an inventory of others, complementary aggressive behaviors, and a longer time period. All of these should lead to more refined results in the study of internal conflicts of nations.

Therefore, the city-state is a perfectly natural form of association, as the earlier associations from which it sprang were natural. This association is the end-product of the perfecting process of any object, that we call its nature, that which man, house, household, or anything else aims at being. Moreover, the aim and end can only be that which is best, perfection; and self-sufficiency is both end and perfection. It follows that the state belongs to a class of objects which exist in nature, and that man is by nature a political animal; it is his nature to live in a state. He who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no city, no state, is either too bad or too good, either sub-human or super-human... But... man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any gregarious animal. Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and for the purpose of making man a political animal she has endowed him alone among the animals with the power of reasoned speech.

Aristotle, «Politics», Book I, Chapter 2 (Penguin Classics).