
Debates

Political Instability and Economic Development: an Economic History Case Study of Greece, 1948-1966: A Reply

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Professor Lianos has made three comments on our paper published in *The Journal of European Economic History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Fall 1983. In this note, we wish to reply briefly to these comments which were published in the JEEH, Vol. 15, Winter 1986.

The first comment has to do with the quality of the statistical data. In our study we used the official data for selected "real" and "monetary" variables for the period 1948-1966. There is no doubt in our mind that the data are far from being flawless. It goes without saying that statistical data from less developed and developing countries suffer from inaccuracies, and Professor Lianos is correct in pointing out the relative unreliability of the Greek data. However, once data inaccuracies are acknowledged, research should proceed, even if an analysis of unreliable data can only yield tentative conclusions, instead of using the existence of poor data as an excuse not to do any research. Although we agree with Dr. Lianos who claims that "Greek data before 1952 and especially before 1950 can hardly be considered reliable" we do not interpret this to imply that Greek data for the period 1948-1966 are so poor to defy any analysis.

The second comment refers to the definition of political instability. A definition is a matter of naming a particular concept for reasons of analysis. We are fully aware that the process of choosing definitions is subjective. In our research on political instability we considered several alternative definitions and evaluated each such definition. We chose to define political instability as the existence of more than one government every three or four years. It is common to judge political instability by the frequency of change in govern-

ments. Also, the main advantage of our definition is that it is operational. Professor Lianos is justified in questioning the nature of such a definition but does not offer any alternative operational definition.

Finally, Professor Lianos raises some methodological questions concerning the approach of studying, in general, political instability and economic development. His main point is that "the relationship between economic development and political stability is a two-way relationship". We agree with this remark and we have tried to make it clear in our paper that "economists have recognized the existence of a strong interrelationship between a nation's economic and political variables" (p. 351). Notwithstanding this recognized interrelationship, our study has tried to focus on one of the several "neglected" non-economic variables of development. In recent years, many development economists are in agreement with Professor Moses Abramovitz that our large "measure of ignorance" about the process of development would be reduced if we incorporated in our analysis non-economic aspects of development.

In conclusion, Professor Lianos' comments are constructive but are not startling or new to us. His reservations have been raised in our numerous qualifying statements and any reader in the area of economic development and political stability would be cautious not to interpret our paper as the final work on the subject.