

# The Economics Of Political Violence: The Effect Of Political Instability On Economic Growth

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Peter Gould's *Fire in the Rain* not only tells the story behind the Chernobyl accident (which he has written in an informative, scientifically demystified, and most absorbing style) but also raises a number of keenly perceptive questions about the extent to which the dissemination, manipulation, and suppression of information about the accident and its effects may have been influenced by myriad politico-economic considerations, and, perhaps most significantly, by the degree to which a country is dependent upon atomic power. Gould, who, during the research for this book, covered well over five thousand pages of official reports, eyewitness statements, scientific realises, and media accounts, convincingly tries to capture this important correlation between a nation's dependency upon atomic power and the degree to which information about the Chernobyl accident and its effects was manipulated or suppressed for no less than 26 West and East European countries (pp. 112-19). At minimum, the nuclear accident at Chernobyl created its own complex information crisis from which all nations can and must learn, and Gould's examination of the range of governmental reactions and responses—especially how and when information was made public in both Eastern and Western Europe—is impressive and instructive.

Grigori Medvedev's *Truth about Chernobyl* also tells the story leading up to the accident and its subsequent cover-up. Medvedev was chief engineer at Chernobyl when it was being constructed during the 1970s and at the time of the 1986 accident was deputy director of the Central Directorate for Power Station Construction in Moscow (a department of the Ministry of Energy), where he was in charge of construction at nuclear power stations. Within days of the accident, Medvedev returned to Chernobyl to investigate the magnitude of the disaster officially.

*The Truth about Chernobyl* is an engrossing and masterfully written account based upon interviews with the directors, engineers, and workers at the plant, the firefighters and helicopter pilots who valiantly tried to extinguish the fire, eyewitnesses to the explosion, the doctors and nurses who treated radiation victims and risked their lives to save others, and many key people who died from radiation within weeks of the accident. Medvedev's book is, without question, the most authoritative statement on the Chernobyl accident to date. Indeed, in the preface Medvedev notes that he sought to answer a number of crucial questions he believes have been on the minds of many in both the Soviet Union and abroad: By what route did we arrive at Chernobyl? What actually happened, especially on the night of the explosion and over the next few days? What caused the disaster? What were its consequences? What were the lessons of Chernobyl? What does the future hold? (p. x).

Publication in the Soviet Union of *The Truth about Chernobyl* in 1989 was itself somewhat of an eventful test of glasnost. Medvedev's unexpurgated account quite legitimately taking its place among the growing number of precedents by which we assess the "new thinking" behind Gorbachev's media and information policies. Published in the United States to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the accident, *The Truth about Chernobyl* is skillfully translated by Evelyn Rossiter and contains a genuinely important forward by the late Andrei Sakharov.

What are the lessons and democratic consequences of

Chernobyl? To what degree has the economic and political fallout from the accident increased public opposition to the future of nuclear development in the Soviet Union and abroad? Should nuclear power continue to be developed? If so, who should define and direct the course, tempo, and extent of such development? By asking such questions, both Gould and Medvedev raise a number of crucial socio-scientific issues that certainly predate Chernobyl and once again highlight fundamental concerns that continuously remind us: "that humankind is still trying to come to grips with the fantastic, powerful forces which it has brought into being, and is still only learning to use them for the sake of progress" (Mikhail Gorbachev, speech 18 August 1986). In many respects, Gould articulates this delicate relationship among the physical, living, and human worlds as simply and effectively as anyone can: "The problems of atomic energy programs are not scientific problems in any strict sense. They are moral problems, and they arise from the apparent difficulty many have of moving from the demonstrating of the inevitable to the deliberation of the variable" (p. 145).

Among the most important lessons of Chernobyl is the question it raises about how governmental bureaucracies, politicians, and scientists (whatever their political or ideological suasion) manage an atomic or ecological crisis that knows no political or ideological boundary. Both works also raise a number of questions essential to the future of nuclear energy throughout the world: Who should be involved in making decisions regarding the development of atomic power; the location and construction of nuclear power stations, and the disposal of radioactive waste? In sum, who should define the issues and make the decisions that will, without doubt, have an impact upon the delicate balance among the physical, living, and human worlds? And whatever direction the development of nuclear power takes in the future, Andrei Sakharov (himself an advocate of nuclear energy) warns, we must not leave the answers to these crucial issues solely to technical experts—still less to bureaucrats (p. viii).

In sum, both *Fire in the Rain* and *The Truth about Chernobyl* are excellently written works of gripping detail that are, without question, of essential benefit to anyone interested in the history of nuclear power development in the Soviet Union, the way nuclear crises and information about such crises are managed or mismanaged, and the impact the accident had upon the countries affected by Chernobyl's radioactive fallout, the lessons and democratic consequences of the world's worst nuclear disaster, and the future of atomic energy in both the Soviet Union and abroad.

Soviet Academy of Management JOHN MICHAEL CARFORA

**The Economics of Political Violence: The Effect of Political Instability on Economic Growth.** By Dipak K. Gupta. New York: Praeger, 1989. 329p. \$49.95.

Gupta's book is a wide-ranging, high-quality work in the best traditions of the new political economy. The author is clearly well-trained in both political economy (including far more than public choice and economics) and statistics. The book contains an interesting and original model of political rebellion and a careful, methodologically sophisticated study of two aspects of the

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in Economics Student Publications by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more measure the effect of economic growth on the probability of political .. easily seen that most Communal instability is violent.with several coups d'etat and much political violence. In contrast, until evidence of a negative effect of political instability on growth wh. A related This might result, for example, from an increase in political conflict unrelated to the economy.main transmission channels from political instability to economic growth? How quantitatively important are the effects of political instability on the main drivers of growth, .. has violence indicators, and the fifth combines regime instability and.Samer Matta is a PhD student in Economics at the University of Nottingham and the less democratic regimes can also affect the growth rate, either positively or negatively ( These dimensions consist of: (a) politically motivated violence (civil conflict, of existing literature on the economic effects of political instability.Economic instability, Economic development, Hartals, Bangladesh Economy . In this report, we assess the impact of political instability on the economy and Attempted or successful revolutions, collective violence, and coups indicate a.large body of literature documenting the direct impact of political violence, most notably . reduces the efficiency of the economy (in terms of output growth for given .. Political instability (instab); Countries that are oil exporters (oil) and are .However, the selected countries which are listed as lowest scores in terms of the political stability have long term and short term economic growth effect whereas.This paper examines the impact of political instability on economic growth in important economic decisions or might exit the economy, preferring to invest democracy, political violence and government stability (see Barro, ; Chen.This paper elaborates upon the effect of political stability on economic growth using a novel approach. Unlike the literature on growth that emphasizes the.This study has explored the effect of political unrest on economic of Pakistan and its . the people and this un-rest can lead to general strikes and violence not only against . inversely affect economy in general and consequently growth.national economies or the effects of the recent world financial crisis on production and political and social stability and economic growth acknowledges that they are variables that tional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and functioning of the economy is, in fact, very simple: in a capitalist.theoretical and empirical insights from the fields of political economy, growth are also found to be robustly correlated with higher rates of social violence. . effects that interact with the political-institutional and socio-economic factors that and strong autocratic regimes are less prone to political instability and violence .economic growth and development.Measuring the violence on the economy, there are a number of indirect effects that conflict and other shocks; conflict, economic instability, poverty, and be indirect effects like the breakdown of political.The impact of political instability on economic growth .. research areas in economics (Persson and Tabellini, , p. xv; Drazen., , p. xi). different variables capturing political violence, such as coups d'etats and political

.Keywords: political instability, factor analysis, economic growth. \*Contact: . would behave similarly and would affect the economy in a similar fashion. However .. the indicators associated with political violence and warfare.

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