THE "inequality explanation" of political instability, as formulated and tested by Bruce Russett, is well known and widely cited. In brief, it asserts that: "extreme inequality of land distribution leads to political instability only in those poor, predominantly agricultural societies where limitation to a small plot of land almost unavoidably condemns one to poverty." ¹ A multiple regression analysis of the relevant variables on a sample of 47 countries substantiated the central claim. Russett reported that in line with the hypothesis, the most important variables in the equation were the Gini index of inequality of land distribution and the percentage of the population in agriculture. Although the tentative formulation of this hypothesis as well as the loose fit with the empirical tests suggest that this result was achieved in the course of considerable exploration, it is nonetheless a significant result because it is the first comparative test of a hypothesis that has been in the literature for a long time. It therefore deserves and requires replication and analysis.

In the first part of this paper we submit the Russett explanation to both a theoretical and empirical examination. The empirical examination is made in the context of our study of political instability in the provinces of the Philippines over the period 1952–1968. Although we used a somewhat different dependent variable, we were able to reproduce Russett's two independent variables for the provinces, and have performed a comparable regression analysis for two points in time. The theoretical analysis of Russett's explanation emerges in the course of comparing his explanation to our own, which we label the "reactive subsystem hypothesis". Then, the appropriate measures for both explanations are put into competition in a single regression equation in an effort to bring about a head-on collision. The results of this test are instructive and they provide crucial evidence in favor of our alternative explanation, the exposition of which is the second goal of the paper.

¹ Bruce M. Russett, "Inequality and Instability: The Relation of Land Tenure to Politics", World Politics, 16 (April, 1964), p. 452.
A New Measure of Political Instability

Before proceeding with the two-fold test it is necessary to introduce a new measure of political instability. The conventional measures used on nations were not feasible. For example, Russett used an index of chief executive turnover (the number of years the country has been independent divided by the number of chief executives subtracted from the numerator); the number of deaths per million due to civil wars, revolutions, riots, etc. over a specified period; the total number of "internal wars" in a given period; and Lipset's classification of governmental stability. But civil unrest resulting in deaths is infrequent in subnational units and such information is difficult to obtain. We were, however, able to calculate a measure of executive turnover, and it will be reported below, but any such measure has an obvious defect for studies of political instability in that it must be based on a long period, while political instability tends to fluctuate rapidly.

There is a fundamental objection to most conventional instability measures that would hold even if they were feasible for subnational units. They tend to be biased toward violence. Putting aside the explicit "body count" measures, even the counts of demonstrations or riots that are derived from the close reading of newspapers\(^1\) show a bias. It is certainly true that such measures reflect instability, but it is also true that they de-emphasize the organizational aspects of political instability and ignore many groupings involved in petitions, lobbies, protests or disputes that represent nonviolent instability.

Our measure of coalitions of unrest is based on newspaper accounts of groups whose aims were at variance, at least initially, with those of the state or national government, and that resorted to specific acts or pronouncements that attracted the attention of the newspaper reporter. This preliminary operational definition was guided by a more theoretical concept, which is discussed below. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the focus on coalitions, while not excluding violent events, shifts the emphasis to the social organization of political instability. At the same time, it makes possible the construction of sensitive indicators of instability with the minimal data sources available at the provincial level.

Our measures for three points in time were constructed as follows: after a general review of the coverage of several Philippines newspapers, the coder settled on the *Manila Chronicle* as providing the most adequate coverage and began reading for reports of coalitions. The years 1952, 1960, and 1968 were selected because they spanned the period on which data were available and avoided the turbulent election years. The coder read all the issues of the *Manila Chronicle* for these years and noted with a brief description the occurrence of

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