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# Third World Leadership Death and Political Stability

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A Research Paper

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# **Third World Leadership Death and Political Stability**

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**A Research Paper**

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Applying the findings of the survey of past cases, this study also examines 38 countries headed by authoritarian leaders in 1984 and identifies 12 cases for which the risk of significant postdeath instability is high (see figure 6 foldout at back). US interests are substantial in about two-thirds of these high-risk cases—Chile, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Tunisia. Conversely, the study assesses the odds for postdeath instability as low in 11 countries, of which only three—Oman, North Korea, and Vietnam—are of major importance strategically or economically.

This study does not assess whether a leader will die in office but only the likelihood that unrest will occur if he dies. A high level of predeath instability—that is, unrest occurring now—could be a precursor to a military coup that removes the leader from power and precludes his dying in office. Thus, for example, the initial contract study concluded that Sudan had a high potential for postdeath unrest, but it could not foresee that President Nimeiri would be ousted in April 1985.



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### Third World Leadership Death and Political Stability

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#### Overview

*Information available  
as of 31 December 1984  
was used in this report.*

This contract study examines the link between political instability and the death of long-tenure authoritarian leaders in the Third World. The first part surveys 22 historical cases of authoritarian leadership death and concludes that three factors are closely associated with postdeath unrest:

- *Previous instability.* The greater the unrest before a leader's death, the more extensive it was after his death. Moreover, postdeath political violence usually did not occur when there was no evidence of discontent—such as strikes or demonstrations—before an authoritarian leader died.
- *Duration in power.* The longer the leader's tenure, the greater was the probability of unrest after his death.
- *Level of social organization.* The more extensive the social organization in a society—such as labor unions, political parties, and churches—the more likely was violence to break out after the authoritarian leader died. In countries with low levels of social organization, organizing antiregime protests was more difficult.

Economic development, as measured by indexes such as calorie consumption and urbanization, had only a modest relationship to the level of postdeath instability. Other factors that one might expect to play a key role—the existence of a succession mechanism, the leader's age, whether his death was anticipated, and the type of regime—did not correlate with postdeath instability.

Some of these findings challenge commonly held assumptions about the causes of political instability. For example, the first observation—that predeath instability correlates strongly with postdeath instability—refutes the belief that unrest will abate after an unpopular leader leaves the scene. It also calls into question the notion that significant antiregime sentiment could well up within a society and not be manifested openly until the authoritarian leader dies. Similarly, the strong positive correlation between the level of social organization and political instability tends to dispel the perception that less developed countries with rudimentary political systems are more likely to experience political violence than are more advanced societies.

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## Third World Leadership Death and Political Stability

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### Introduction

Thirty-eight authoritarian Third World regimes are currently led by individuals who have been in power for 10 years or more.<sup>1</sup> Whether friendly or antagonistic to US interests, many of these regimes, including Cuba, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, North Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Zaire, are important to the United States. US interests could be significantly affected by the degree, nature, timing, and consequences of political instability following the death of leaders in these countries. This study—focusing on authoritarian leaders in power for 10 years or more—attempts to shed light on the extent to which the death of long-tenure leaders generates political instability.

In this study, we examine the instability following the death of 22 long-duration authoritarian leaders and identify the principal precipitating factors. The analysis of past cases includes all long-duration leaders of authoritarian states who died in office from natural or accidental causes since World War II (table 1). We exclude instances in which political instability led to the death of leaders, as in organized coups d'etat. In addition, we look at the 38 current cases of long-duration authoritarian leaders for the presence or absence of those factors most likely to lead to instability. This paper concludes with detailed discussions of three current cases of particular interest and importance—Syria, Tunisia, and the Philippines.

### The Record of Instability

The death of a long-duration authoritarian leader has not always been followed by significant political turmoil. Among the 22 cases we examined, there were

<sup>1</sup> The study surveys leaders in power through December 1984. It has not been revised to reflect either the deaths of Enver Hoxha of Albania and Forbes Burnham of Guyana or the ouster of Sudan's Gaafar Nimeiri in 1985, although the study did assess the prospects for instability following the departure of these leaders.

wide variations in when and how much political instability occurred. During the first year following the leader's death, for example, no instability occurred in eight of the cases, and extensive instability occurred in only five. Within four years of the leader's death, however, the change was substantially more marked:

- Fifteen countries experienced coups or coup attempts, mass turbulence, guerrilla terrorism, or combinations of all three.<sup>2</sup>
- Civil conflict, usually of a limited character involving armed forces versus local groups, occurred in four countries—China, Dominican Republic, South Korea, and Yugoslavia.
- Revolution, involving major social upheaval, occurred only in Portugal.

### Reasons for Variations in Instability

Our analysis shows that—of the many variables influencing the form, extent, and timing of developments after the death of an authoritarian leader—three key factors are closely related to the degree of instability that arises:

- The types and degree of instability before the death of the leader.
- The tenure of the leader in power.
- The level of social organization in the society, which, in turn, often reflects the society's overall level of socioeconomic development.

These three factors interact with and reinforce each other and—to a significant degree—determine the level of postdeath instability. When societies that have

<sup>2</sup> Coups or coup attempts occurred in Bhutan, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt (Nasser), Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Panama, Portugal, and South Korea; mass turbulence occurred in Dominican Republic, Egypt (Nasser), Egypt (Sadat), Kenya, Kuwait, Nepal, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and Yugoslavia; and guerrilla terrorism occurred in China, Dominican Republic, Egypt (Sadat), Haiti, Panama, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Yugoslavia.

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**Table 1**  
**Authoritarian Leaders Ruling for 10 Years or Longer**  
**Who Died in Office, 1945-84**

Country	Leader	Born	Assumed Power	Died	Years in Power	Age at Death
Algeria	Houari Boumediene	1927	1965	1978	13	51
Bhutan	Jigme Dorji Wangchuk	1927	1952	1972	20	45
China	Mao Zedong	1893	1949	1976	27	83
Dominican Republic	Rafael Leonidas Trujillo	1891	1930	1961	31	70
Egypt	Gamal Abdul Nasser	1918	1954	1970	16	52
Egypt	Anwar Sadat	1918	1970	1981	11	63
Guinea	Ahmed Sekou Toure	1922	1958	1984	26	62
Haiti	Francois Duvalier	1907	1957	1971	14	64
Kenya	Jomo Kenyatta	1891	1963	1978	15	87
Korea	Park Chung Hee	1917	1961	1979	18	62
Kuwait	Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah	1913	1965	1977	12	65
Liberia	William V. S. Tubman	1895	1944	1971	27	76
Nepal	Mahendra Bir Bikram	1921	1955	1972	17	51
Nicaragua	Anastasio Somoza Garcia	1896	1936	1956	20	60
Panama	Omar Torrijos	1929	1968	1981	13	52
Portugal	Antonio Salazar	1889	1932	1970	38	81
Saudi Arabia	Faisal ibn Abdul Azis	1905	1964	1975	11	70
Spain	Francisco Franco	1892	1939	1975	36	82
Swaziland	Subhuza II	1899	1968	1982	14	83
Taiwan	Chiang Kai-shek	1887	1949	1975	26	88
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh	1890	1954	1969	15	79
Yugoslavia	Josef Broz Tito	1892	1945	1980	35	88

been ruled by a single authoritarian leader over a long period achieve greater economic development and social mobilization and organization, the political system becomes too confining for the increasingly complex and participatory society. As a result, various forms of unrest manifest themselves while the leader is still in power, in some cases leading to the overthrow of the leader. If the leader dies in office, instability generally continues after his death. If the society has a high level of social-political organization, turmoil is likely to be more extreme and widespread.

#### Predeath Instability

The level of instability in the year after the death of an authoritarian leader correlates more closely with the level of predeath instability than with any other

variable we examined (figure 1). In seven of nine cases of no predeath unrest, there was no postdeath instability; in the other two, only limited instability occurred. Correspondingly, in five of seven cases of serious predeath unrest, postdeath instability was extensive, and in the other two it was moderate. The forms of postdeath instability also correlate fairly high with the forms of predeath instability.

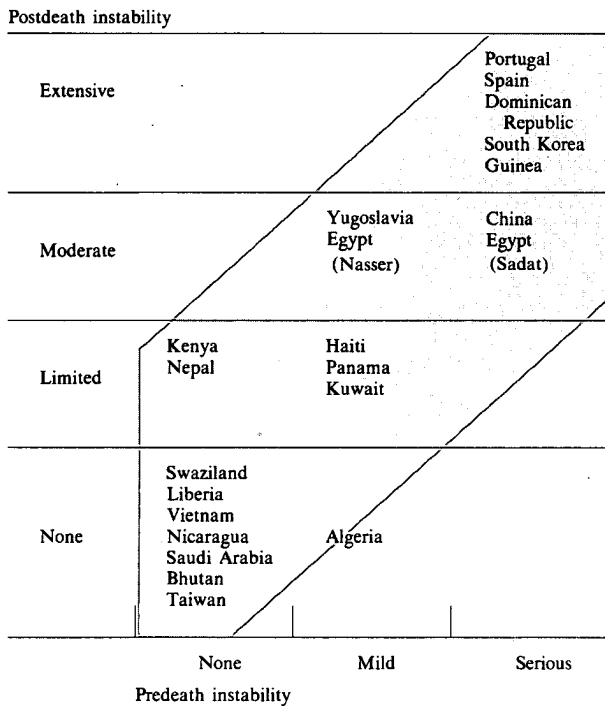
#### Duration in Power

The level of instability in the year after a leader's death is strongly associated with the number of years he has been in power (figure 2). The deaths of the four

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**Figure 1**  
**Predeath Instability and Instability**  
**First Year After Death**



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leaders in power for more than 30 years were followed by extensive instability in three cases (Portugal, Spain, Dominican Republic) and moderate instability in the fourth (Yugoslavia). At the other extreme, the deaths of seven leaders in power for 10 to 14 years were followed in three cases by no instability (Swaziland, Algeria, Saudi Arabia), in three cases by only limited instability (Haiti, Panama, Kuwait), and in a single case (Egypt—Sadat) by moderate instability. In general, the earlier authoritarian leaders die in office the less instability follows their death.

**Social Organization**

An extraordinarily strong correlation exists between the overall level of social organization in a society and the level of instability following the death of an authoritarian leader (figure 3).<sup>3</sup> The level of social

<sup>3</sup> Social organizations include such groupings as labor unions, political parties, interest groups, churches, cooperatives, and universities.

organization in a society can be measured as to: (1) how numerous and complex the social organizations are, and (2) how autonomous those organizations are from control by the state. It is difficult to devise any single quantitative measure of the extent and autonomy of social organization. We have, however, classified our 22 countries into three general categories of high, medium, or low levels of social organization in terms of extent and autonomy. In doing this, we have paid special attention to the strength and role of labor unions and political parties.

Eleven countries were classified as having low levels of social organization, five as having medium levels, and six as having high levels. Ten of the 11 countries with low levels of social organization experienced no or limited postdeath instability. Five of the six with high levels of social organization experienced extensive or moderate postdeath instability. Greater instability occurred in countries where social organizations were able to mobilize their constituents—South Korea, Spain, Portugal, Egypt, and the Dominican Republic—than in countries—for example, Nepal, Swaziland, Liberia, Saudi Arabia—that lacked such groupings.

**A Partial Factor: Economic Development**

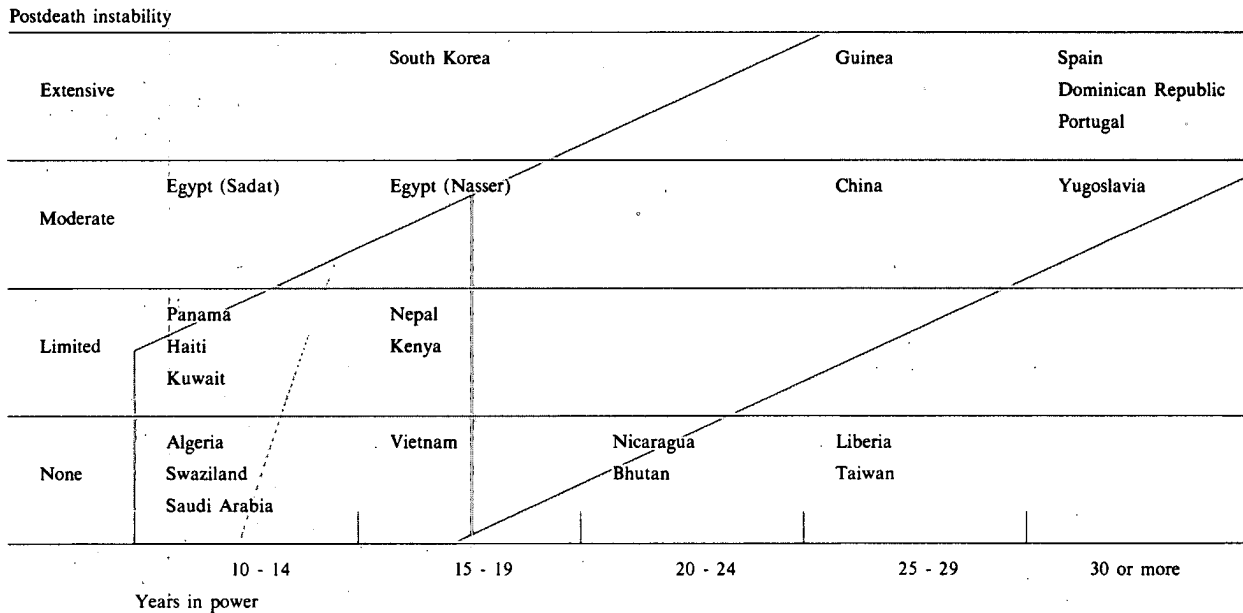
The overall level of economic development in a society had only a modest positive relation to the level of postdeath instability in the 22 historical cases. In general, countries at higher levels of economic development had widely varying levels of postdeath instability, while countries at low levels of development had low levels of instability. The higher the level of development, the greater the likelihood that unrest would occur.

The modest positive relation is reflected in comparisons of postdeath instability with indexes of economic development. Uneven income distribution distorts the value of using per capita GDP to measure development, but other indexes show a stronger correlation with postdeath unrest (see figure 4 foldout at back):

- Most of the countries where per capita *calorie consumption* was high experienced either extensive or moderate postdeath instability.

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**Figure 2**  
**Years in Power and Instability**  
**First Year After Death**



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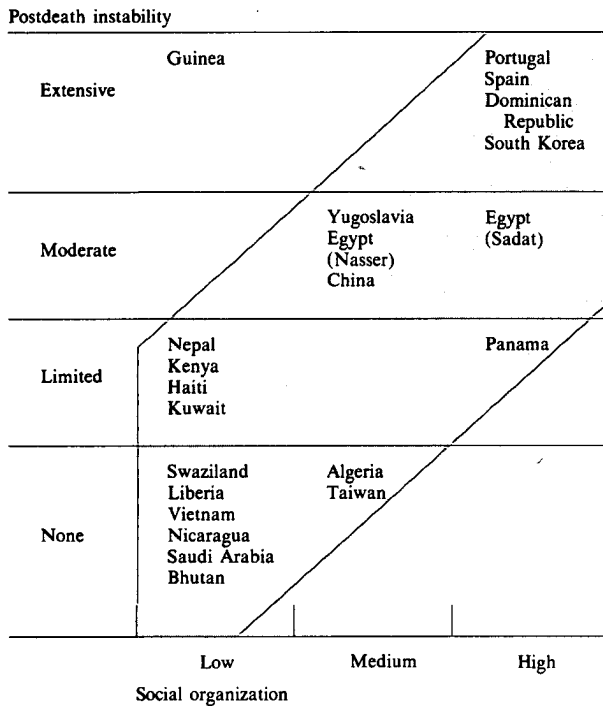
- Largely *urban* societies varied greatly in their levels of postdeath unrest, while most of the societies that are overwhelmingly rural had no or limited instability.
- Countries with predominantly *literate* populations had varying levels of postdeath unrest, while most of the societies with low rates of literacy had limited or no postdeath instability.
- In five of the six countries with high annual per capita *economic growth rates*, instability was either moderate or extensive.

**Noninfluential Factors: Age, Succession, and the Regime**

Our study shows no relationship between postdeath instability and various aspects of the authoritarian leader and his regime—factors one might expect to affect instability (see figure 5 foldout at back). The

age of a leader at the time of his death has no effect on the extent of postdeath instability. Nor, more generally, is the degree to which a leader's death was anticipated or unexpected related to postdeath instability. In addition, no association was found between the broad institutional character of the regime and the extent of postdeath instability. More extreme and less extreme degrees of instability after the deaths of leaders have occurred in about equal measure in Communist regimes, tightly controlled authoritarian regimes, and authoritarian regimes that allow some freedoms. Finally, there appears to be no significant relationship between the existence of succession arrangements and postdeath instability.

**Figure 3**  
**Social Organization and Instability**  
**First Year After Death**



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**Likelihood of Instability in Countries With Current Long-Term Authoritarian Leaders**

The number of authoritarian leaders in power for 10 years or more has been increasing in recent years. At present there are 38 such leaders, and in 1985 the current leaders of Taiwan and Madagascar also will have been in power for 10 years (table 2). Exactly half of the 38 current leaders are at least 60 years old, including 10 who are 70 or older. Although a number of the leaders may leave office voluntarily or be overthrown, more long-term authoritarian leaders are likely to die in office during the next two decades than during the past two decades.

Using our findings from the 22 historical cases as a basis for estimation, we ranked the 38 current cases on each of the three major factors most closely related

to postdeath instability. We then added the assigned numerical values for a composite estimate of the probability that significant instability will follow a leader's death. The three indexes—predeath instability, level of social organization, and duration in power—were weighted equally for purposes of aggregate estimation. The measurement of predeath instability and social organization in each case is necessarily general and subjective. Table 3 summarizes the calculations that were made and the results; because of their simplified nature, the calculations should be viewed as a starting point for more detailed country analysis.

The case studies that follow explore how, in addition to our three principal variables, other factors bear on developments that follow a leader's death. These include variables that, when very roughly aggregated or characterized for purposes of broad comparison, did not appear closely related to results in the 22 past cases but that might have an effect in a particular case (for example, the nature of the regime and succession arrangements). Consideration of economic, social, and demographic trends may also yield a more complete basis for estimation. The case studies also include an assessment of factors that are unique in character and cannot be reliably aggregated, such as external influences on predeath and postdeath developments.

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**Three Case Studies**

Tunisia, the Philippines, and Syria are among the countries we have identified as having a high potential for significant postdeath instability. There is a strong possibility that all three leaders could die in the near future because of age or illness. The risk of postdeath instability, however, is calculated somewhat differently in each case on the basis of the three key factors:

- Duration in power of the current leader is a more important factor in the case of Tunisia.
- Predeath instability is more significant for the Philippines and Syria.
- The level of social organization, important in all three cases, is probably most so in the Philippines.

**Table 2**  
**Long-Duration Authoritarian Leaders in Office, 1984**

Country	Leader	Born	Assumed Power	Years in Power	Age
Albania	Enver Hoxha	1908	1944	40	76
Bahrain	Isa bin Sulman Al Khalifa	1933	1961	23	51
Benin	Mathieu Kerekou	1933	1972	12	51
Bhutan	Jigme Singye Wangchuck	1955	1972	12	29
Burma	U Ne Win	1911	1962	22	73
Chile	Augusto Pinochet Ugarte	1915	1973	11	69
Cuba	Fidel Castro Ruz	1927	1959	25	57
Gabon	El Hadj Omar Bongo	1935	1967	17	49
Gambia, The	Dawda Kairaba Jawara	1924	1965	19	60
Guyana	Forbes Burnham	1923	1966	18	61
Haiti	Jean-Claude Duvalier	1951	1971	13	33
Indonesia	Soeharto	1921	1966	18	63
Ivory Coast	Felix Houphouet-Boigny	1905	1960	24	79
Jordan	Hussein I	1935	1953	31	49
Korea, North	Kim Il-song	1912	1948	36	72
Lesotho	Leabua Jonathan	1914	1965	19	70
Libya	Mu'ammar Qadhafi	1942	1969	15	42
Malawi	Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda	1906	1963	21	78
Mali	Moussa Traore	1936	1968	16	48
Morocco	Hassan II	1929	1961	23	55
Nepal	Birendra Bir Bikram	1945	1972	12	39
Niger	Seyni Kountche	1931	1974	10	53
Oman	Qaboos bin Said	1940	1970	14	44
Paraguay	Alfredo Stroessner	1912	1954	30	72
Philippines	Ferdinand E. Marcos	1917	1966	18	67
Qatar	Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani	1932	1972	12	52
Rwanda	Juvenal Habyarimana	1937	1973	11	47
Sierra Leone	Siaka P. Stevens	1905	1968	16	79
Singapore	Lee Kuan Yew	1923	1965	19	61
Somalia	Mohamed Siad Barre	1921	1969	15	63
Sudan	Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri	1930	1969	15	54
Syria	Hafiz al-Assad	1928	1970	14	56
Tanzania	Julius K. Nyerere	1922	1961	23	62
Togo	Gnassingbe Eyadema	1937	1967	17	47
Tunisia	Habib Bourguiba	1903	1956	28	81
Vietnam	Le Duan	1907	1969	15	77
Zaire	Mobutu Sese Seko	1930	1965	19	54
Zambia	Kenneth David Kaunda	1924	1964	20	60

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**Table 3**  
**Rankings of Countries With Current Long-Term Authoritarian Leaders <sup>a</sup>**

Country	Predeath Instability		Duration in Power		Social Organization		Instability Estimate
	Level	Score	Years	Score	Level	Score	
Albania	Limited	1	40	3	NEGL	0	4
Bahrain	Limited	1	23	2	Low	1	4
Benin	Limited	1	12	0	Low	1	2
Bhutan	Limited	1	12	0	Low	1	2
Burma	Extensive	3	22	2	Extensive	3	8
Chile	Extensive	3	11	0	Extensive	3	6
Cuba	Limited	1	25	3	NEGL	0	4
Gabon	Limited	1	17	1	Moderate	2	4
Gambia, The	Extensive	3	19	1	Moderate	2	6
Guyana	Moderate	2	18	1	Moderate	2	5
Haiti	Moderate	2	13	0	Low	1	3
Indonesia	Extensive	3	18	1	Moderate	2	6
Ivory Coast	Limited	1	24	2	Low	1	4
Jordan	None	0	31	3	Moderate	2	5
Korea, North	None	0	36	3	NEGL	0	3
Lesotho	Moderate	2	19	1	Low	1	4
Libya	Moderate	2	15	1	Low	1	4
Malawi	Limited	1	21	2	Low	1	4
Mali	Moderate	2	16	1	Moderate	2	5
Morocco	Extensive	3	23	2	Extensive	3	8
Nepal	Limited	1	12	0	Low	1	2
Niger	Moderate	2	10	0	Low	1	3
Oman	Limited	1	14	0	Low	1	2
Paraguay	Limited	1	30	3	Low	1	5
Philippines	Extensive	3	18	1	Extensive	3	7
Qatar	Limited	1	12	0	NEGL	0	1
Rwanda	Limited	1	11	0	Low	1	2
Sierra Leone	Moderate	2	16	1	Extensive	3	6
Singapore	Limited	1	19	1	Moderate	2	4
Somalia	Extensive	3	15	1	Extensive	3	7
Sudan	Extensive	3	15	1	Extensive	3	7
Syria	Extensive	3	14	0	Extensive	3	6
Tanzania	Limited	1	23	2	Low	1	4
Togo	None	0	17	1	Low	1	2
Tunisia	Extensive	3	28	3	Extensive	3	9
Vietnam	Limited	1	15	1	Low	1	3
Zaire	Moderate	2	19	1	Low	1	4
Zambia	Moderate	2	20	2	Extensive	3	7

<sup>a</sup> Each of the 38 countries with current long-term authoritarian leaders was ranked on each of the three key factors most closely related to postdeath instability in the past. Numerical values were assigned as follows: for the factors of previous instability and level of social organization, three points were given for "extensive," two for "moderate," one for "limited" or "low," and zero for "none" or "negligible." For duration in power, three points were assigned for 25 or more years, two for 20 to 24, one for 15 to 19, and zero for 10 to 14. The points for each country were then added to provide the estimated potential for postdeath instability.

**Confidential****Tunisia**

Habib Bourguiba, founder of the modern Tunisian state, is the only leader the country has known since independence. This compounds the effect of his long tenure—almost three decades—on the prospects for stability. Not only do few Tunisians have any memory of another regime or ruler but there is no historical record of legitimate transfer of power, apart from the withdrawal of the French colonial government. In this sense the Bourguiba government resembles revolutionary regimes dominated by longstanding charismatic leaders, like Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, Mao Zedong of China, or Tito of Yugoslavia. If the current Tunisian Government rested on a highly developed and disciplined party structure as did those regimes, prospects for stable succession might be greater. But the ruling party has been decaying at the same time that Bourguiba's personal charisma, legitimacy, and political skill have been faltering.

Bourguiba's rule has been autocratic but comparatively benevolent, promoting a personality cult but co-opting and reappointing opponents willing to accept his authority. For example, several years ago he pardoned Habib Achour, former Secretary General of the labor federation (UGTT), who was then elected chairman of the federation. The regime is based on Bourguiba's Destourian Socialist Party (PSD), which has an operating structure at lower levels. At the top, however, the party is, according to Clement H. Moore, "a patrimonial system." Conflict within the elite has been controlled, but, when Bourguiba leaves the scene, the PSD will not be equipped to mobilize the public or channel mass action to support the government. Party vitality has declined as social mobilization and unrest have grown. Bourguiba's duration in power bulks large in the question of what instability may follow his death because the country has undergone marked social and economic transformation during that time, and instability scarcely known for most of the period has increased notably since the late 1970s.

Over half of Tunisia's population now is urban, and over 60 percent is literate. The latter figure contrasts with 15 percent at independence and reflects Bourguiba's extraordinary investment in education. Given

rapid population growth, the post-Bourguiba generation will be unusually large and educated. This is significant in the context of recent economic straits—20-percent unemployment, severe underemployment, and constriction of opportunities for migration to Western Europe that had earlier provided a major economic safety valve. (Currently, only Libya imports large numbers of Tunisian workers, who are then exposed to anti-Bourguiba propaganda.) Many educated young Tunisians are now unemployed and lack enthusiasm for the regime, and survey data indicate that less educated youth are very politically alienated.

In recent years several opposition parties have been legalized, but in the 1981 elections Bourguiba's National Front took all 136 Assembly seats, [redacted] (Opposition parties collectively received only 5 percent of the vote.) The most significant semi-independent organization, the UGTT labor federation, is linked to the regime but has often been a source of opposition. The ruling party and the UGTT agreed to support a common list of candidates in the 1981 election, but government efforts to undermine the UGTT could drive it into opposition again.

With Tunisia ethnically homogeneous, the main potential bases of opposition appear to be class and religion. After independence Bourguiba's modernization program reduced clerical influence, but Islamic fundamentalism has increased recently, especially among the young and outside the capital. The government has retreated from confrontation with such religious resurgence. Actual or potential influence of the fundamentalists within the military and among students is especially significant. Of 30 members of the small Islamic Liberation Party sentenced to prison in 1984, 19 were soldiers.

Beginning in 1978, student and labor unrest grew. A general strike and riots—crushed by security forces—left up to 100 dead. Violent countrywide protests against food price increases occurred in January 1984, with 70 deaths and 800 arrests. The economic problems coincided with infighting and jockeying for

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position in the PSD. [redacted]  
[redacted] The riots forced Bourguiba to repeal the price increases and offer up his Interior Minister as a scapegoat to protect his chosen successor, Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali. Without Bourguiba's status as "Father of the Country," there is little reason to assume that Mzali will in fact be able to take and consolidate power, or that he would succeed in containing opposition should he come to office.

Apart from those emanating from Libya, external influences are not likely to be a major determinant of political events after Bourguiba. Libya, which borders the country, almost certainly will try to meddle. Qadhafi has already sponsored an attack on the Tunisian town of Gafsa in 1980 and has been charged with training Tunisian dissidents and dispatching assassins to kill Tunisian officials in 1976. Libyan-trained Tunisian dissidents may have been involved in a January 1984 explosion on the Algerian-Tunisian pipeline near the Libyan border.

Tunisia does not necessarily have the greatest potential for serious instability, as our ranking of the 38 countries might suggest. The length of Bourguiba's tenure accounts for Tunisia's position at the top of the list. The length is indeed important—it reflects the absolute lack of experience in Tunisia with transfer of authority and the reasons for doubt that any individual would have the prestige to manage, as Bourguiba has, challenges to the regime. Yet there is a dominant party, sclerotic though it has become, and the government and important organizations such as the UGTT labor federation have learned the art of compromise in negotiations with each other. Social organization and predeath instability have been extensive, but not clearly more so than in several other countries on the list, such as Chile, Morocco, Syria, or the Philippines. Radical as demographic changes have been, they too are matched in significance in some other countries. Nevertheless, whether or not Tunisia is the most unstable country on the list, it is virtually certain to experience severe turmoil. Mass turbulence is likely to occur before and after Bourguiba's death, but a radical coup or armed civil strife—the forms of instability more likely to lead to a change of regime or foreign policy—are less probable. One possibility, especially in the context of increased US aid to the

armed forces, is that a pro-American colonel might try to seize power in order to preempt a move by the radical Muslims.

#### The Philippines

For 25 years after independence, virtually all, save one, of the conditions favoring revolution and major upheaval existed in the Philippines. There was rapid modernization and urbanization, a highly literate and educated population by Third World standards, extreme inequalities in income and wealth, a major land tenure problem (most notably in central Luzon), extensive corruption, the domination of politics by a small group of families closely tied to sugar interests, a tradition of rural insurrection, a pervasive culture of violence, and, most important, a massive foreign military and economic presence. Social and economic conditions in the Philippines in the 1950s were more favorable to outbreak of a major revolution than they were at that time in Cuba. There was, however, one significant political difference: the Philippines had a wide-open democracy, which produced a steady flow of political leaders (including the regular defeat of presidents running for reelection), at least minimum responsiveness of government to local needs, and the widespread distribution of the spoils of corruption. During the 1950s and 1960s, the democratic safety valve eased the pressures that would have produced far greater instability than actually occurred. After martial law was instituted in 1972, the safety valve was closed.

At present, Philippine politics is largely focused on how and when Marcos will cease to be President and what will be the consequences of his departure from the scene. During the past year, major debates have occurred over the Executive Committee that he created to manage the succession and the desirability of recreating the office of vice president to have a successor in place. There are three ways Marcos could leave office:

- He could retire voluntarily. From time to time he has suggested he might do this, most recently with reference to the 1987 presidential elections. On the

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basis of his performance to date, however, the probability that he would actually retire seems extremely low.

- He could be forced out of office. To date, however, Marcos has demonstrated great skill and flexibility in outmaneuvering and co-opting his opponents. During the six months after Aquino's murder, for instance, he showed himself to be the master of the neatly timed concession or compromise necessary to divide and weaken the opposition. At present there is no political figure with sufficient appeal and resources to effectively challenge him. If he were going to be forced out of office as a result of massive popular disaffection, it would have happened in the tumultuous months following Aquino's death. Conceivably, he could be overthrown by a military coup, but he has carefully ensured that the key commanders in the Army are loyal to him. The military "We Belong" reform movement, however, represents a potential coup threat if its demands are not met. The one other circumstance in which he might be forced out of office is if he were incapacitated. In that case, the military, perhaps in combination with some civilian politicians, could move in to take control.
- He could die in office. This seems the most probable way the Marcos regime will end. The turmoil and instability that have existed in recent years plus the high level of social organization in the Philippines (a product of its previous democratic phase) virtually ensure a fair amount of instability after Marcos's death. The later that death occurs, the more substantial that instability is likely to be. If Marcos had died in office two or three years ago, a transition back to a democratic system would have been more probable and less traumatic than it would be now or in the future. Ironically, Marcos's ill health is one of the few factors favoring less instability in the Philippines.

Marcos appears to occupy a position comparable to that which Franco of Spain had in his last years or that Assad of Syria has at the present time. All three were or are the linchpins of their systems. In the two current cases, a major succession struggle is almost certain to occur involving personal associates, political factions, military leaders, technocratic executives, and

opposition groups of varying stripes. In the Philippines the principal actors are likely to be Imelda Marcos and close associates of the Marcos family; senior political figures and cabinet ministers, such as Juan Ponce Enrile; the military chiefs, particularly Generals Ver and Ramos; major leaders of business and commerce; Jaime Cardinal Sin; and opposition political leaders, such as Salvador Laurel, Jose Diokno, and Agapito Aquino.

In its post-Marcos era the Philippines will face two major political challenges: the restoration of a democratic system and the establishment of stability. The two are closely linked, and it will be almost impossible to achieve the second without achieving the first. Democracy, however, could be restored at least temporarily without achieving stability. The immediate issue after Marcos dies will be whether the principal political actors can agree both on an immediate successor and on a process for establishing a lasting democratic regime. Factors favoring agreement include the awareness among elite groups of the need for external help and the widely prevalent feeling that a democratic system is the proper form of government for the Philippines. Factors working against such an outcome include the absence, since Aquino's death, of a broadly acceptable opposition leader, the organizational disunity and conflicting goals of the opposition groups, and the natural reluctance of Marcos's associates to yield or to share power for fear of the retribution they might suffer from his successors.

If Marcos's widow or his close associates attempt to continue to monopolize power, the democratic opposition groups are likely to engage in massive demonstrations, strikes, and riots to force them at least to share power if not to relinquish it completely. In these circumstances, the military leaders will be in a critical position. If the Army remains neutral or actively or passively supports the opposition, the Marcos loyalists will be forced out. If the Army supports the successor leaders, the situation will polarize, with the democratic opposition increasingly resorting to violent methods and the Marxist New People's Army rapidly gaining adherents. The road will then be open for prolonged terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and eventual revolution.

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If, on the other hand, Marcos's associates and opposition leaders can agree on an interim leader and the basic elements of a new democratic system, prospects are brighter although the new authorities will still face serious problems. Central among these, of course, is the economy, with the huge external debt, a declining GNP, unemployment variously estimated at 20 percent or more, and a 50-percent inflation rate. The problems facing a leader in the post-Marcos regime are comparable to but in many respects much worse than those that Alfonsín has confronted in Argentina. Thus, even if there is agreement on a constitutional process, there is also great likelihood of strikes, protests, and riots over economic issues. A democratic successor regime's ability to deal with these effectively would depend primarily on the skill of its leader in obtaining political acquiescence from his people and economic support from the IMF and the United States. Shortly before his death, Benigno Aquino remarked on the impossibility of a democratic post-Marcos regime meeting the high expectations that people would have for it. No successor to Marcos, including himself, Aquino said, was likely to last in power more than six months. If the successor regime is unable to keep a lid on instability, the way could again be open to, and indeed great demands could exist for, intervention by the military.

### Syria

Syria experienced chronic political instability in the quarter century after independence—47 different cabinets and 11 violent changes in leadership. Hafiz al-Assad, who came to power in 1970, was the key to breaking the pattern, and there are ample reasons why Syria's politics could revert to chronic instability upon his death—which could be imminent because of serious illness. Assad's government rests on a narrow base in a country with marked social cleavages, serious opposition and instability have occurred in recent years, and violent jockeying for succession is already under way among the regime's elite.

Assad's tenure in office (14 years) is not the major factor in potential instability, except insofar as he—through his personal skill—has managed tenuously to keep a lid on internal turmoil. The primary source of instability is the interaction between the two other key variables—social organization and a history of instability—aggravated by strife among the elite, which is

particularly intense in Syria. Syrian society is extensively organized and divided along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. The severity of elite conflict means that not only autonomous organizations but governmental ones as well (such as rival security units) contribute to instability. Government repression has suppressed social conflict in the near term, but in so doing may have channeled organizational efforts in directions that could be more dangerous for the longer term. For example, after the brutal suppression of the revolt at Hamah, public support for the subversive Muslim Brotherhood declined. One of the two main factions of the Brotherhood, however, reacted by shifting strategy toward penetration of the armed forces.

The Syrian military and government apparatuses are dominated by individuals from rural areas—although half of Syria's population is urban, and the urban population is growing at a rate 50 percent faster than the rural. Moreover, the regime is overwhelmingly dominated by members of Assad's Alawite sect, which represents only about one-eighth of the population and is outnumbered by Sunni Muslims six to one. The tightening Alawite grip on Syrian politics prompted Sunni countermobilization, most notably by the Muslim Brotherhood, which is centered in the cities. Non-Alawites are represented in the regime, but as isolated individuals, not power blocs. (Two key figures, however, are Sunnis—Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas and Chief of Staff Hikmat Shehabi.) Three-quarters of Alawites live in just one region (Latakia).

To compound the problem, challenges to Assad have come from within the Alawite community, which is divided into different tribal associations and sects. This has led Assad to put more reliance on family members. Intra-Alawite cleavages were reflected in battles that reportedly took place in Latakia in 1984. Thus ethnic-religious, sectional, urban/rural, and intraelite cleavages combine to shrink the foundation of the regime. "The problem became a vicious circle," Nikolaos Van Dam wrote in 1979, ". . . power was essential if the necessary drastic social changes entailing the suppression of sectarian, regional, and tribal

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loyalties, were to be effected; on the other hand, maintenance of that power entailed dependence on those same loyalties, thus hindering their suppression."

Between 1976 and 1981, there were over 300 assassinations of people linked to the regime—and an attempt on Assad, after which security forces reportedly killed several hundred political prisoners—as well as attacks on Ba'th Party installations. Alawite officer candidates were massacred in Aleppo. In 1980 general strikes paralyzed northern Syria's cities, and in 1982 an uprising in Hamah led to a two-week battle, destruction of parts of the city, and casualties that may have numbered in the thousands. This led to formation of the opposition National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria (including elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Front, pro-Iraqi Ba'thists, and others—of which the two religious groups are most significant).

The Ba'th Party ostensibly is in a position to be a prime mechanism for social mobilization and control or co-optation of other organized social forces. Party discipline improved under Assad but did so because of the greater sectarian homogeneity, which in fact is the more general underlying weakness of the regime. The party also expanded into more of a mass organization, but overall political mobilization of the population has not been notably successful even though the political consciousness of the population is generally quite high. This suggests potential for mobilization of the populace by antiregime forces in an uncertain period after Assad's death.

The effective power of the regime resides in security units, especially the Presidential Guard (dramatically increased in size in 1984), the Defense Companies (heavily Alawite in composition), and the Special Forces under Ali Haidar. The latter two groups, however, are bitter rivals within the elite. When the President was believed to be dying in the spring of 1984, the two organizations deployed into contesting positions in and around the capital, and the recovered President's personal intervention was required to restore order.

Since these events the struggle within the elite has continued. Publicly available sources provide only

ambiguous accounts of how it is evolving. Whatever the actual situation is, the tense controversies over succession suggest that different inferences might be drawn about the effect of the third key variable in our analysis—the leader's duration in power. The general lesson drawn from past cases implies that the longer Assad survives in power, the greater will be the instability when he dies. The specific events in the Syrian case, however, suggest that any chance of muting instability now depends on Assad's keeping the reins for some time—in order to resolve or modify the conflict among would-be successors. (One of Assad's maneuvers, for example, was to appoint three vice presidents in the wake of the struggles in the capital.) In any event, the odds of a peaceful and orderly transition upon Assad's death are low.

All the factors that point to instability are aggravated by a number of other variables. High inflation, heavy dependence on foreign aid, and the possibility of an economic downturn can only work to promote political instability. External factors are also less promising in this regard. The 1976 Syrian intervention in Lebanon was unpopular at home, and without Egyptian collaboration the option of another voluntary military engagement with Israel (which might rally the population) appears out of the question.

Syria has the hallmarks of major instability waiting to explode. The length of Assad's tenure is the least of the three major causes. He has managed the sources of conflict within Syria but not overpowered them. Several facts indicate that Assad's demise could trigger the outbreak:

- His personal leadership, however tenuous, has kept the marked political fissures in Syria from cracking wide open.
- There is little evidence that other elements of the narrow elite will honor his preference for succession (which has not even been made explicit).
- The divided governing elite is socially unrepresentative of the population.
- Opposition forces have been mobilized, organized, and embittered by violent repression.

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Judging by the various forms of predeath instability and the lack of elite cohesion, postdeath instability could easily occur under numerous circumstances. One or more coup attempts are certainly likely, and if the intralite conflict is severe or inconclusive, broader opposition groups could seize the opportunity to foment civil strife on a large scale.



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**Figure 5  
Noninfluential Factors and Instability  
First Year After Death**

Age at Death				
Postdeath instability				
Extensive	Spain Portugal	Dominican Republic	South Korea Guinea	
Moderate	Yugoslavia China		Egypt (Sadat)	Egypt (Nasser)
Limited	Kenya		Kuwait Haiti	Panama Nepal
None	Taiwan Swaziland	Vietnam Liberia Saudi Arabia	Nicaragua	Algeria Bhutan
	80 or over	70 - 79	60 - 69	59 or under
	Age			

Regime Type <sup>a</sup>				
Postdeath instability				
Extensive		Guinea Dominican Republic Portugal Spain		South Korea
Moderate	China Yugoslavia	Egypt (Nasser)		Egypt (Sadat)
Limited		Haiti Nepal		Kenya Kuwait Panama
None	Vietnam	Algeria Liberia Taiwan Nicaragua	Saudi Arabia	Swaziland
	Communist	Not free		Partially free
	Regime			

<sup>a</sup> Data unavailable for Bhutan.

Expectation of Death				
Postdeath instability				
Extensive	Dominican Republic Portugal Spain			Guinea South Korea
Moderate	China Yugoslavia			Egypt (Nasser) Egypt (Sadat)
Limited	Haiti Kenya Kuwait			Nepal Panama
None	Algeria Bhutan Taiwan Liberia	Saudi Arabia Swaziland Vietnam		Nicaragua
	Death anticipated		Death unexpected	
	Expectation			

Succession Arrangements <sup>b</sup>				
Postdeath instability				
Extensive	Portugal Spain			Dominican Republic Guinea
Moderate	China Yugoslavia			Egypt (Nasser) Egypt (Sadat)
Limited	Haiti Kuwait			Kenya Nepal Panama
None	Taiwan Vietnam		Algeria Bhutan Liberia Nicaragua	Saudi Arabia
	Accepted designation or mechanism		Uncertain designation or mechanism	
	Succession			

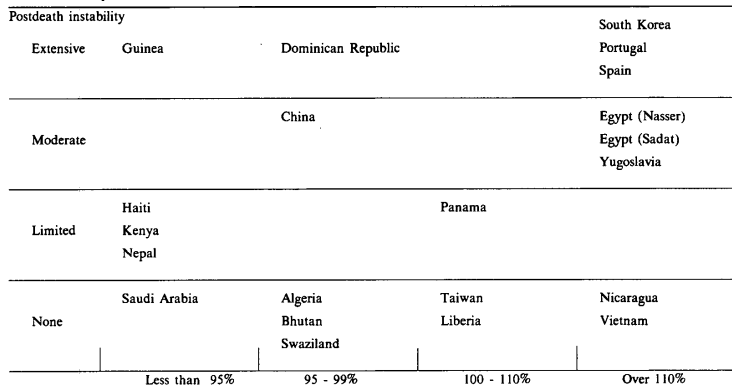
<sup>b</sup> Data unavailable for South Korea and Swaziland.

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**Figure 4  
Economic Development and Instability  
First Year After Death**

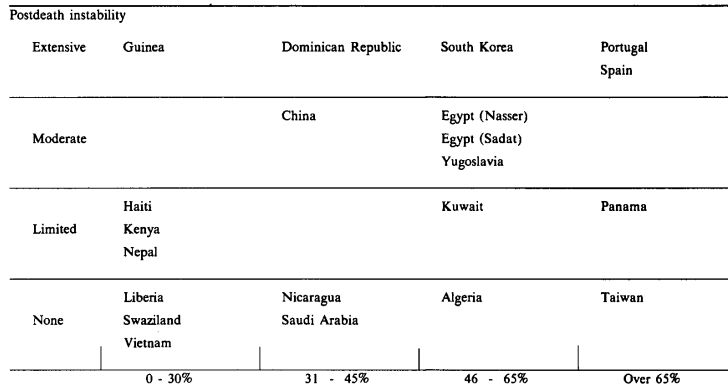
**Calorie Consumption <sup>a</sup>**



Calorie Consumption as percent of daily requirement

<sup>a</sup> Data unavailable for Kuwait.

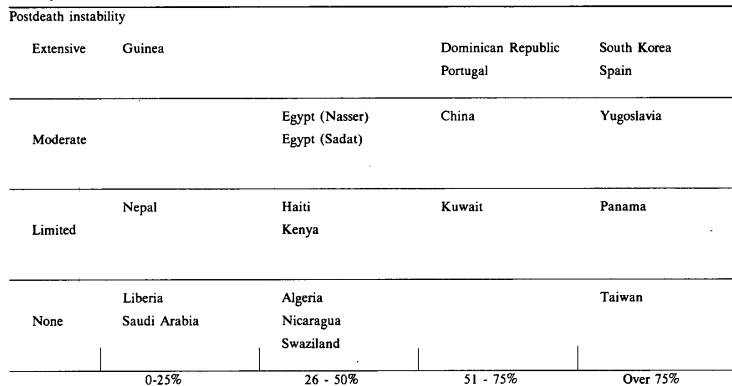
**Urban Population <sup>b</sup>**



Percent of population in urban areas

<sup>b</sup> Data unavailable for Bhutan.

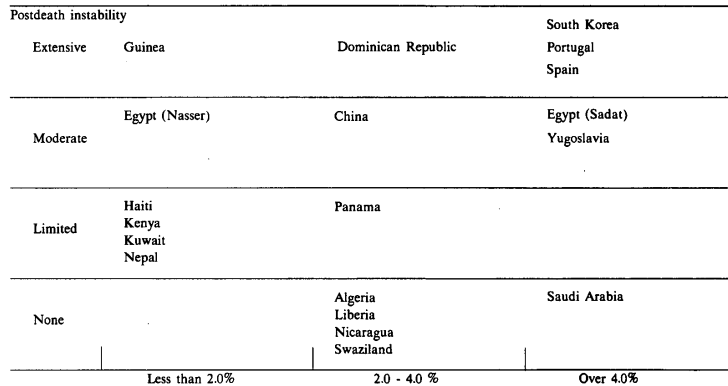
**Literacy <sup>c</sup>**



Literacy

<sup>c</sup> Data unavailable for Bhutan and Vietnam.

**Annual Growth <sup>d</sup>**



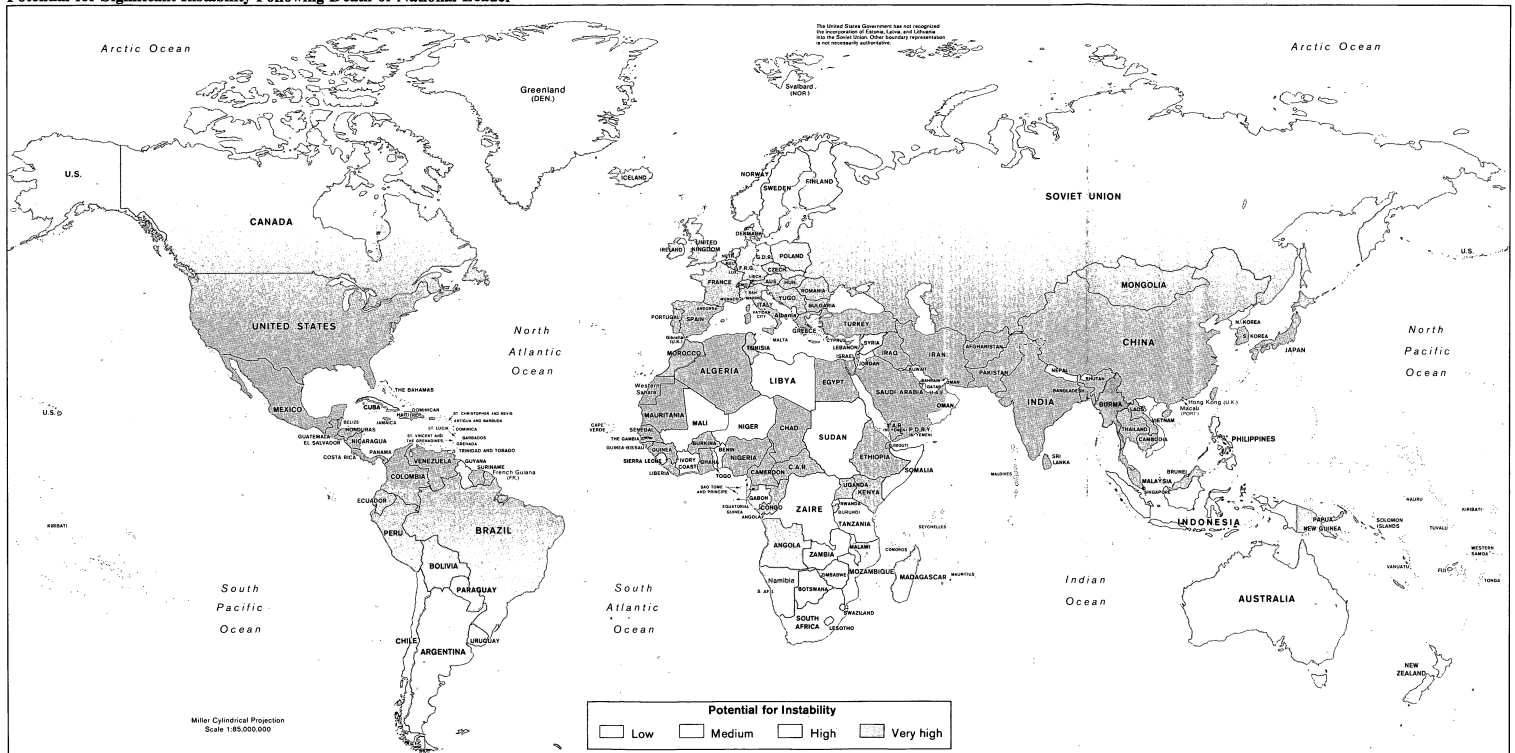
Annual GDP growth per capita

<sup>d</sup> Data unavailable for Bhutan, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

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Figure 6  
Potential for Significant Instability Following Death of National Leader

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