

different nature of national health and educational systems makes comparisons equally difficult, even between advanced industrial states.

The Problem of Concepts

On the conceptual level, five problems also stand out. The first is a simple problem of *what is being measured*. The best statistics are worthless unless we have a clear idea what they are intended to represent. As noted above, much confusion surrounds the security-expenditure-development linkage. At the bottom, however, the assumption is that states and regimes make rational decisions about how to allocate their scarce resources based on assessments of the threats they face and the value gained by different "investments." Whether or not this is an accurate or even useful description of affairs is controversial. Even so, analysts must be careful not to use indices that have no plausible relationship to the phenomenon being measured.

Inter-state comparisons of levels of military spending, for example, may indicate greater or lower levels of commitment to the armed forces, but do not necessarily tell us anything about the regional threat environment. Spending does not convert directly into military capabilities, does not capture the aggressive or benign intentions of states, and does not take into account the radically different size and circumstances of states. Pakistan, for example, spends roughly 6.4 percent of GNP on defence, in contrast to India, which spends only 3.3 percent. Yet in absolute terms, India spends at least 2.5 times as much as Pakistan, and would appear to possess overwhelming capabilities. Given continued conflict over border areas, and their regional rivalry, to focus attention on Pakistan alone without examining the patterns of spending and development of its neighbours would be a mistake. A similar set of problems appear when attempting to capture levels of development and social welfare, of internal repression, or of regional conflict.

Likewise, the exclusive reliance on GNP or GNP/capita figures as a measure of "development" is also highly problematic. As the UN Development Programme points out:

wealth is important for human life. But to concentrate on it exclusively is wrong, for two reasons...First, accumulating wealth is not necessary for the fulfilment of some important human choices...Second, human choices extend far beyond economic well-being...Although there is a definite correlation between material wealth and human well-being, it breaks down in far too many societies.³⁴

GNP figures tell us little, however, about important dimensions of human security such as personal safety, political and civil liberties, or equality of opportunities. The solution is often to use such indicators as life expectancy or composites such as the Human Development Index (used in Figures 2 and 3 above) or the

³⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, 15.