

linkages may be direct "spirals," in which, for example, resources devoted to counter external threats trigger a response from neighbouring states that renders all less secure at higher levels of armaments and expenditure.<sup>11</sup> Others might, however, manifest an *interaction effect*, though which security expenditures that are primarily directed towards coping with one threat (maintaining regime stability or suppressing internal unrest, for example) could exacerbate regional conflicts, as neighbouring states feel threatened. Such forces appear to be at work in Central America, for example, where the civil wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador rendered less secure the neighbouring states such as Costa Rica and Honduras.

Of course, one cannot know precisely which combination of factors and forces is at work in any particular case without detailed case studies, sketches of which will be presented for illustrative purposes below. But the basic point is clear: attempts to uncover simple, linear, and universal causal paths (such as a straightforward link between military spending and wars, or between military spending and economic growth) are almost certainly doomed to miss important elements of the problem, in three ways. First, attempts to "test" in a formal or statistical fashion for linear causal relationships, are prone to uncovering "no relationship" in situations in which many variables may be interacting in complex ways. Hence the possibility of a genuine link between higher levels of military spending and lower rates of economic growth, for example, could be concealed by regional or internal conflict dynamics.<sup>12</sup> Second, by focusing attention on one or two possible negative consequences, the broader range of consequences and potential insecurities - political, economic and social - are obscured and ignored. This cannot lead either to good scholarship or good policy. Third, by neglecting to analyze at all the positive consequences of security expenditures, analysts tend to obscure the legitimate inter-state, internal and human security needs of states and citizens that must be met.

### Indicators and Regional Analyses

How can we proceed from this diagram of possible linkages to an quantitative and qualitative analysis that is sensitive to the complexity of the problem yet which can also lead to useful and policy-relevant knowledge, and possibly to constructive action? One approach is to adopt a regional focus that utilizes some basic quantitative indicators as a starting point for a more contextual analysis. The first step in such an approach is to delimit the specific regional context under examination. In some cases, this is a straightforward question; in others, the precise boundaries of a regional "security complex" ("a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot

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<sup>11</sup> A similar "spiral" could exist internally, with government repression of potential threats to the regime leading to greater resistance, and a descent into civil war.

<sup>12</sup> For one attempt to test multiple influences statistically, see Alfred Maizels and Machiko Nissanke, "The Determinants of Military Expenditures in Developing Countries," *World Development*, 14:9 (1986), 1125-1140.