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ASIA AND THE NEW CENTURY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT. Asia is the world's largest and most culturally diverse region. Consisting of some 53 independent nations with a combined population of more than 3808 million persons – 59% of the world's total population in 2005 – patterns of social and economic development in the region have been comparatively slow, especially with respect to rates of economic expansion, protection of human rights, environmental protection, and the extension of social protections to the region's historically vulnerable population groups – including women, children, the aged, persons with disabilities and others. Continuing high rates of population growth, in combination with long-standing internal and intra-regional conflicts, compounds the difficulties experienced by Asian leaders in achieving more ambitious development objectives. This paper reports on the Asian region's social development successes and challenges for the 35-year period beginning in 1970. Data are reported at three levels of analysis: (1) for the region-as-a-whole; (2) for each of Asia's four major subregions; and (3) for 45 of the region's most populous countries. The picture that emerges from this analysis is that, for the region-as-a-whole, Asia's development remains both asynchronous and heterogeneous, i.e., inconsistent and uneven development across a broad range of inter-dependent socio-economic sectors. Some nations within the region, however, realized extraordinary social progress during the period studied and the lessons they offer may provide important insights into the development strategies adopted by other nations both within and outside Asia.

KEY WORDS: Asia, comparative, development, economic development, international, social development, social indicators, social progress, sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

The Asian region is characterized by extraordinary contradictions and paradoxes. Certainly one of the most beautiful and resource rich regions on the planet, in recent decades Asia's social landscape continues to be marred

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by recurrent intra-regional wars and civil conflicts (IFRCRCS, 2005; SIPRI, 2005), chronic human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2006), corrupt governments (Transparency International, 2006) and, still, high levels of financial poverty and social exclusion (Editors, 2003b; UNDP, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Population growth in Asia continues to be one of the most rapid in the world as is the region's rate of rural to urban migration (ADB, 2002). Asia's physical landscape has been seriously compromised as well; today, the region's governments struggle against the effects of rapidly spreading deforestation, exhausted soil and animal resources, recurrent floods and other major natural disasters, environmental pollution and the social consequences of depleted mineral and other natural resources (Editors, 2004, 2005; World Resources Institute, 2005). And, the governments of Asia's poorest countries also must seek to compete in a global economic order that is governed by rules not of their own making and which, on balance, clearly better serve the interests of already economically advanced countries (Editors, 1998, 2000, 2003a; UNDP, 2005). These and other issues have combined to confront Asia's leaders with unparalleled social, political, and economic challenges (ESCAP, 1998; ADB, 2006).

The response of Asian governments to the region's development crises has been direct, forward looking, impassioned, and oriented toward a more optimistic view of the region's future. Their priorities emphasize the need for: (1) new paradigms for development that better reflect the region's own rich history and cultural traditions (ESCAP, 1998; Estes, 1993; Sen, 2004); (2) more fully integrated and cross-sectoral approaches to development (ESCAP, 1997a, b); (3) increased economic and political self-sufficiency (ADB, 2006); (4) the eradication of absolute poverty and other forms of "mal-development" in the region by the year 2015, or as soon thereafter as possible (UNDP, 2003); (5) the enhancement of popular participation (United Nations, 2002), including through the region's rapidly emerging network of nongovernmental organizations (Estes, 2001; Galli, 2006); and (6) a more equitable sharing of the region's abundant resources (ESCAP, 1998; UNDP, 2005)¹.

This paper assesses the extent to which the region's governments are succeeding in advancing Asia's new social development agenda. In particular, the paper reports the results of a comprehensive survey of the region's successes and failures over a period of 35 years in responding to the basic social and material needs of its rapidly increasing population. To that end, the paper:

1. reports the results obtained through application of a statistically weighted version of the author's previously developed *Weighted Index of Social*

- Progress* (WISP) to an analysis of social development trends in Asia for the period 1970–2000;
2. using the WISP, identifies Asia’s major 30-year social development accomplishments and failures;
 3. using the WISP, identifies Asia’s *social development leaders* (SLs) and *socially least developing countries* (SLDCs);
 4. using the WISP and other social indicator data, compares the major social development trends occurring in Asia with those observed for other major world regions;
 5. identifies and briefly discusses the major social, political, and economic forces that are likely to influence Asia’s further development toward the year 2025 and beyond;
 6. using the WISP as a backdrop, provides more recent social indicator data for the five-year period 2000–2005; and,
 7. provides baseline data against which future developments in Asia may be assessed.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study is the fifth in a series of analyses of worldwide social development trends (Estes, 1984, 1988, 1998, 2004, 2006), including one previously published 10 years earlier in this journal (Estes, 1996a). The purpose of all five studies has been: (1) to identify significant changes in “adequacy of social provision”² occurring throughout the world; and (2) to assess national and international progress in providing more adequately for the basic social and material needs of the world’s growing population. This paper reports a time-series analysis of Asia’s development performance over a 35-year period – including more recent social indicator data summarized in the paper’s supplemental charts. Data are reported at three levels of analysis: (1) development trends occurring in Asia vis-à-vis those of other world regions; (2) Asian sub-regional variations; and, (3) development trends occurring in each of the 45 countries included in this analysis.

2.1. *Index of Social Progress (ISP)*

The primary instrument used in this study is the author’s extensively pre-tested “Index of Social Progress” (ISP). In its present form the ISP consists of 40 social indicators that have been subdivided into 10 subindexes (Table I): *Education* ($N = 3$); *Health Status* ($N = 7$); *Women Status* ($N = 5$); *Defense Effort* ($N = 1$); *Economic* ($N = 5$); *Demographic* ($N = 3$); *Environmental* ($N = 3$); *Social Chaos* ($N = 5$); *Cultural Diversity* ($N = 3$);

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TABLE I

Indicators on the weighted index of social progress (WISP), by subindex ($N = 10$ subindexes, 40 indicators)

Subindex indicators

Education subindex ($N = 3$)
 Primary school completion rate, 1992–2000 (+)
 Average years of schooling, 2000 (+)
 Adult literacy rate, 2000 (+)

Health status subindex ($N = 7$)
 Physicians per 100,000 population, 1990–99 (+)
 Percent of children immunized against DPT at age 1, 1999 (+)
 Percent of population using improved water sources, 2000 (+)
 Percent of population undernourished, 1996–98 (–)
 Infant mortality rate, 2000 (–)
 Under-five child mortality rate, 2000 (–)
 Life expectation at birth, 2000 (+)

Women status subindex ($N = 5$)
 Female secondary school enrollment as percent of males, 1995–97 (+)
 Seats in parliament held by women as percent of total, 1991–2000 (+)
 Contraceptive prevalence among married women, 1990–2000 (+)
 Maternal mortality ratio, 1990–98 (–)
 Female adult literacy as percent of males, 2000 (+)

Defense effort subindex ($N = 1$)
 Military expenditures as percent of gross domestic product, 2000 (–)

Economic subindex ($N = 5$)
 Per capita gross national income (PPP), 2000 (+)
 Percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), 1999–2000 (+)
 Total external debt service as percent of exports of goods and services, 2000 (–)
 Unemployment rate, 1998–2000 (–)
 GINI index score, most recent year (–)

Demography subindex ($N = 3$)
 Average annual population growth rate, 1990–00 (–)
 Percent of population aged < 15 years, 2000 (–)
 Percent of population aged > 64 years, 2000 (+)

Environmental subindex ($N = 3$)
 Nationally protected areas (%), 1996 (+)
 Per capita metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, 1998 (–)
 Average annual disaster-related deaths per million population, 1990–2000 (–)

Social chaos subindex ($N = 5$)
 Strength of political rights, 2000 (+)
 Strength of civil liberties, 2000 (+)
 Perceived corruption index, 2000 (–)
 Total deaths in major armed conflicts since inception, 2000 (–)
 Number of externally displaced persons per 100,000 population, 1999 (–)

Cultural diversity subindex ($N = 3$)
 Largest percentage of population sharing the same or similar racial/ethnic origins, 2000 (+)
 Largest percentage of population sharing the same or similar religious beliefs, 2000 (+)

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TABLE I
Continued

| |
|--|
| Subindex indicators |
| Largest share of population sharing the same mother tongue, 2000 (+) |
| <i>Welfare effort subindex</i> ($N = 5$) |
| Age first national law-old age, invalidity & death, 1999 (+) |
| Age first national law-sickness & maternity, 1999 (+) |
| Age first national law-work injury, 1999 (+) |
| Age first national law-unemployment, 1999 (+) |
| Age first national law-family allowance, 1999 (+) |

and *Welfare Effort* ($N = 5$).³ All 40 of the ISP's indicators are known to be valid indicators of social development; indeed, the majority of the ISP's indicators now are employed regularly by other scholars of socioeconomic development (Hagerty et al., 2002; Noll, 2002; Vogel, 2002; UNDP, 2005).

2.2. *Weighted Index of Social Progress (WISP)*

Owing to the volume of data gathered for this analysis only statistically-weighted index and subindex scores will be reported. The study's statistical weights were derived through a two-stage Varimax factor analysis in which each indicator and subindex was analyzed for its relative contribution toward explaining the variance associated with changes in social progress over time. Standardized subindex scores then were multiplied by the factor loadings to create weighted subindex scores. Composite Weighted Index of Social Progress (WISP) scores were obtained through a summation of the weighted subindex scores (see Table II for further details).⁴

TABLE II
Statistical weights used in constructing the weighted index of social progress^a

| |
|---|
| $WISP2000 = \{[(Factor1)*0.697] + [(Factor2)*0.163] + [(Factor3)*0.140]\}$ |
| where: |
| $Factor1 = \{[(Health*0.92) + (Education*0.91) + (Welfare*0.72) + (Woman*0.91) + (SocialChaos*0.84) + (Economic*0.71) + (Diversity*0.64) + (Demographic*0.93)]$ |
| $Factor2 = \{[(Defense\ Effort*0.93)]$ |
| $Factor3 = \{[(Environmental*0.98)]$ |

^aDerived from factor analysis using Varimax rotation. For purposes of comparability across the time series, the same statistical weights were used in all four time periods: 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000.

2.3. *The WISP Versus Other Measures of Social Progress*

The Index of Social Progress differs from other measures of social development in the number, range, and relevance of the indicators used in its construction. In all cases, the ISP is judged to be a more comprehensive instrument for assessing changes in social development than other indices of national and international progress (e.g., Gross National Product [GNP], per capita income level, Gini coefficients, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) widely cited "Human Development Index", among others).⁵

2.4. *Data Sources*

The majority of the data used in the analysis were obtained from annual reports supplied by individual countries to various specialized agencies of the United Nations, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and other major international data collection organizations. Data for the *Social Chaos* and *Environmental* subindexes were obtained from independent scholars and from private, non-governmental, organizations including Amnesty International (AI), Freedom House, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRC), the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute (SIPRI) and Transparency International (TI). Data for the *Cultural Diversity* subindex were obtained from both the *CIA World Factbook* (2006) and from independent scholars working in the fields of comparative language, religion and ethnology.

2.5. *Country Selection*

Forty-five ($N = 45$) Asian countries were selected for inclusion in the analysis using two criteria: (1) a 1970 population size approximating one million persons; and (2) the availability of timely, reliable, and comprehensive social indicator data. Countries with missing, inadequate, incomplete, or seriously distorted data were excluded from the analysis (Table III).

2.6. *Time Frames*

Index and subindex findings are reported separately for each of the study's four time periods, i.e., 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000; thus, the study provides a cross-sectional analysis of the "state" of Asian social development over a 30-year period. In addition to the WISP data reported for the periods 1970–2000, more current social indicator data for selected

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TABLE III

Asian countries grouped by subregion, WISP Scores and Ranks, 2000 ($N = 45$)

| | WISP00 | Rank00 | | WISP00 | Rank00 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| East Asia ($N = 7$) | | | South east Asia ($N = 9$) | | |
| China | 56 | 69 | Cambodia ^a | 28 | 116 |
| Hong Kong | 84 | 30 | Indonesia | 45 | 92 |
| Japan | 91 | 18 | Lao PDR ^a | 21 | 127 |
| Korea, PDR (North) | 35 | 109 | Malaysia | 49 | 84 |
| Korea, Rep. (South) | 71 | 41 | Myanmar ^a | 35 | 109 |
| Mongolia | 57 | 67 | Philippines | 49 | 84 |
| Taiwan | 77 | 34 | Singapore | 64 | 52 |
| | | | Thailand | 54 | 71 |
| | | | Vietnam | 49 | 84 |
| Average | 67.3 | 52.6 | Average | 43.8 | 91.0 |
| South central Asia ($N = 13$) | | | West Asia ($N = 16$) | | |
| Afghanistan ^a | -19 | 163 | Armenia | 65 | 49 |
| Bangladesh ^a | 32 | 114 | Azerbaijan | 60 | 58 |
| Bhutan ^a | 13 | 137 | Bahrain | 44 | 93 |
| India | 34 | 111 | Cyprus | 70 | 43 |
| Iran | 46 | 90 | Georgia | 63 | 53 |
| Kazakhstan | 59 | 61 | Iraq | 28 | 116 |
| Kyrgyz Rep. | 61 | 56 | Israel | 72 | 40 |
| Nepal ^a | 22 | 123 | Jordan | 40 | 99 |
| Pakistan | 23 | 121 | Kuwait | 50 | 82 |
| Sri Lanka | 53 | 73 | Lebanon | 52 | 78 |
| Tajikistan | 50 | 82 | Oman | 29 | 115 |
| Turkmenistan | 54 | 71 | Qatar | 36 | 106 |
| Uzbekistan | 52 | 78 | Saudi Arabia | 38 | 103 |
| | | | Syrian Arab | 39 | 102 |
| | | | Turkey | 48 | 88 |
| | | | Yemen ^a | 8 | 146 |
| Average | 36.9 | 98.5 | Average | 46.4 | 85.7 |

^aIndicates countries previously classified by the United Nations as "Least Developing" (LDC).

variables are summarized in Tables IV, V, VI and VII for the 5-year period 2000–2005.

3. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLDWIDE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the study's major findings on the WISP for all 161 countries included in the author's larger analysis of worldwide social development trends (Estes, 2004, 2005a, 2006). These time-series data cover

TABLE IV
Selected population-related indicators for Asia ranked by development grouping, 2003–2015 ($N = 42$)

| Countries | WISP 2000 (Base = 163) | WISP2000 RANK (Base = 163) | HDI 2003 (Base = 177) | Population (Millions) 2004 | Population growth rate 2003–15 | Age dependent population | | Life expectation at birth 2005 | Infant mortality 2004 |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| | | | | | | < 15 Years 2015 | > 65 Years 2015 | | |
| Asian social leaders (WISP range = 107 > 84) | | | | | | | | | |
| Japan | 91 | 18 | 0.94 | 127.8 | 0.2 | 13.3 | 26.0 | 82.0 | 3 |
| Hong Kong | 84 | 30 | 0.92 | 6.8 | 0.7 | 12.7 | 14.4 | 81.6 | na |
| SL total ($N = 2$) | | | | 134.6 | | | | | |
| SL avg ($N = 2$) | 87.5 | 24.0 | 0.93 | 67.3 | 0.5 | 13.0 | 20.2 | 81.8 | 3.0 |
| Asian middle performing countries (WISP range = 81 > 23) | | | | | | | | | |
| Taiwan | 77 | 34 | 0.91 | 23.1 | 0.6 | 19.4 | 9.8 | 77.4 | 6 |
| Israel | 72 | 40 | 0.92 | 6.8 | 1.9 | 25.8 | 11.5 | 78.3 | 5 |
| Korea, Rep. (South) | 71 | 41 | 0.90 | 48.1 | 0.6 | 13.9 | 13.2 | 77.9 | 5 |
| Cyprus | 70 | 43 | 0.89 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 17.2 | 14.2 | | 4 |
| Armenia | 65 | 49 | 0.76 | 3.0 | -0.5 | | 11.0 | 71.5 | 30 |
| Singapore | 64 | 52 | 0.91 | 4.3 | 1.9 | 13.2 | 13.3 | 78.7 | 3 |
| Georgia | 63 | 53 | 0.73 | 4.5 | -1.1 | 15.8 | 14.4 | 70.5 | 41 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | 61 | 56 | 0.70 | 5.1 | 0.9 | 27.5 | 5.5 | 66.8 | 59 |
| Azerbaijan | 60 | 58 | 0.73 | 8.3 | 0.7 | 21.2 | 6.7 | 66.9 | 75 |
| Kazakhstan | 59 | 61 | 0.76 | 15.0 | -0.2 | 21.3 | 8.0 | 63.2 | 63 |
| Mongolia | 57 | 67 | 0.68 | 2.5 | 1.2 | 26.3 | 4.1 | 64.0 | 56 |
| China | 56 | 69 | 0.76 | 1296.5 | 0.7 | 18.5 | 9.6 | 71.6 | 30 |
| Turkmenistan | 54 | 71 | 0.74 | 4.9 | 1.5 | 27.0 | 4.4 | 62.4 | 79 |
| Thailand | 54 | 71 | 0.78 | 62.4 | 0.7 | 21.2 | 9.3 | 70.0 | 23 |
| Sri Lanka | 53 | 73 | 0.75 | 19.4 | 1.3 | 21.4 | 9.3 | 74.0 | 13 |

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|--|------|------|------|--------|-----|------|-----|------|------|
| Lebanon | 52 | 78 | 0.76 | 3.5 | 1.0 | 24.4 | 7.7 | 72.0 | 27 |
| Uzbekistan | 52 | 78 | 0.69 | 25.9 | 1.3 | 28.3 | 4.4 | 66.5 | 57 |
| Tajikistan | 50 | 82 | 0.65 | 6.4 | 1.1 | 33.0 | 3.5 | 63.6 | 92 |
| Kuwait | 50 | 82 | 0.84 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 23.2 | 3.1 | 76.9 | 8 |
| Viet nam | 49 | 84 | 0.70 | 82.0 | 1.1 | 25.0 | 5.6 | 70.5 | 19 |
| Philippines | 49 | 84 | 0.76 | 83.0 | 2.0 | 30.0 | 4.9 | 70.4 | 27 |
| Malaysia | 49 | 84 | 0.80 | 71.7 | 1.5 | 27.2 | 6.1 | 73.2 | 7 |
| Turkey | 48 | 88 | 0.75 | 71.3 | 1.3 | 25.8 | 6.1 | 68.7 | 33 |
| Iran | 46 | 90 | 0.74 | 66.9 | 1.2 | 25.6 | 4.9 | 70.4 | 33 |
| Indonesia | 45 | 92 | 0.70 | 217.6 | 1.3 | 25.2 | 6.4 | 66.8 | 31 |
| Bahrain | 44 | 93 | 0.85 | 0.7 | 1.9 | 21.7 | 4.0 | 74.3 | 12 |
| Jordan | 40 | 99 | 0.75 | 5.4 | 2.7 | 31.7 | 4.0 | 71.3 | 23 |
| Syrian Arab | 39 | 102 | 0.72 | 17.8 | 2.3 | 33.2 | 3.6 | 73.3 | 16 |
| Saudi Arabia | 38 | 103 | 0.77 | 23.3 | 2.8 | 32.3 | 3.5 | 71.8 | 11 |
| Qatar | 36 | 106 | 0.85 | 0.6 | 2.1 | 21.8 | 2.0 | 72.8 | 11 |
| Myanmar ^a | 35 | 109 | 0.58 | 49.9 | 1.2 | 23.6 | 6.2 | 60.2 | 76 |
| India | 34 | 111 | 0.60 | 1079.7 | 1.5 | 28.0 | 6.2 | 63.3 | 63 |
| Bangladesh ^a | 32 | 114 | 0.52 | 140.5 | 1.7 | 31.4 | 4.2 | 62.8 | 46 |
| Oman | 29 | 115 | 0.78 | 3.2 | 1.9 | 30.6 | 3.4 | 74.1 | 10 |
| Cambodia ^a | 28 | 116 | 0.57 | 13.6 | 1.9 | 34.1 | 4.4 | 56.2 | 97 |
| Pakistan | 23 | 121 | 0.53 | 152.1 | 2.4 | 34.1 | 4.2 | 63.0 | 81 |
| MPC total (N = 36) | | | | 3621.8 | | | | | |
| MPC avg (N = 36) | 50.1 | 79.7 | 0.75 | 103.5 | 1.3 | 25.1 | 6.7 | 69.6 | 35.3 |
| Asian socially least development countries (WISP range = 22 > -19 >) | | | | | | | | | |
| Nepal ^a | 22 | 123 | 0.52 | 25.2 | 2.2 | 33.9 | 4.2 | 61.6 | 61 |
| Lao PDR ^a | 21 | 127 | 0.55 | 5.8 | 2.3 | 37.1 | 3.7 | 54.7 | 82 |
| Bhutan ^a | 13 | 137 | 0.54 | 0.9 | 2.7 | 34.7 | 5.1 | 62.9 | 70 |
| Yemen ^a | 8 | 146 | 0.49 | 19.8 | 3.0 | 43.4 | 2.4 | 60.6 | 82 |

TABLE IV
Continued

| Countries | WISP 2000 (Base = 163) | WISP2000 RANK (Base = 163) | HDI 2003 (Base = 177) | Population (Millions) 2004 | Population growth rate 2003-15 | Age dependent population | | Life expectation at birth 2005 | Infant mortality 2004 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| | | | | | | < 15 Years 2015 | > 65 Years 2015 | | |
| SLDC total (<i>N</i> = 4) | | | | 51.7 | | | | | |
| SLDC avg (<i>N</i> = 4) | 16.0 | 133.3 | 0.53 | 12.9 | 2.6 | 37.3 | 3.9 | 60.0 | 73.8 |
| Total (<i>N</i> = 42) | | | | 3808.1 | | | | | |
| Regional avg (<i>N</i> = 42) | 48.6 | 82.1 | 0.73 | 92.9 | 1.4 | 25.7 | 7.1 | 69.2 | 38.3 |
| United States | 85 | 27 | 0.94 | 293.5 | 1.0 | 19.7 | 14.1 | 77.4 | 7.0 |

Sources: CIA World Factbook, 2006; UNDP, 2005; UNFPA, 2005; World Bank, 2006. ^aIndicates countries previously classified by the United Nations as "Least Developing" (LDC). "na" indicates either "not available" or "not applicable".

TABLE V
Selected economic indicators for Asia ranked by development grouping, 1990–2005 (N = 42)

| Countries | PC GDP 2004 | GDP growth rate 2000–2004 | Inflation rate 1990–2003 | Annual unemployment rate | % Share of income/consumption 20% (varied) | | GINI score 2005 |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | Top 20% | Bottom 20% (varied) | |
| Asian social leaders (WISP range = 107 > 84) | | | | | | | |
| Japan | \$30,040 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 5.3 | 35.7 | 10.6 | 24.9 |
| Hong Kong | \$31,510 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 7.5 | 50.7 | 5.3 | 43.4 |
| SL avg (N = 2) | \$30,775 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 6.4 | 43.2 | 8.0 | 34.2 |
| Asian middle performing countries (WISP range = 81 > 23) | | | | | | | |
| Taiwan | \$26,700 | 0.9 | 2.3 | 5.2 | na | na | 35.0 |
| Israel | \$23,510 | 1.6 | 7.7 | 10.4 | 44.3 | 6.9 | 35.5 |
| Korea, Rep. (South) | \$20,400 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 3.4 | 37.5 | 7.9 | 31.6 |
| Cyprus | \$18,776 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.3 | na | na | na |
| Armenia | \$4270 | 12.0 | 36.9 | 20.0 | 45.1 | 6.7 | 37.9 |
| Singapore | \$26,590 | 2.8 | 1.3 | 4.6 | 49.0 | 5.0 | 42.5 |
| Georgia | \$2930 | 7.6 | 17.7 | 17.0 | 45.2 | 6.0 | 36.9 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | \$1840 | 4.5 | 16.5 | 7.2 | 38.3 | 9.1 | 34.8 |
| Azerbaijan | \$3830 | 10.7 | 109.1 | 16.0 | 44.5 | 7.4 | 36.5 |
| Kazakhstan | \$6980 | 10.3 | 38.8 | 8.8 | 39.6 | 8.2 | 31.2 |
| Mongolia | \$2020 | 5.2 | 29.5 | 20.0 | 51.2 | 5.6 | 30.3 |
| China | \$5530 | 8.7 | 6.0 | 3.1 | 46.6 | 5.9 | 44.7 |
| Turkmenistan | \$6910 | 18.5 | na | na | 47.5 | 6.1 | 40.8 |
| Thailand | \$8020 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 2.9 | 50.0 | 6.1 | 43.2 |
| Sri Lanka | \$4000 | 3.8 | 9.7 | 8.0 | 42.8 | 8.0 | 33.2 |
| Uzbekistan | \$1860 | 4.8 | na | 10.0 | 36.3 | 9.2 | 26.8 |
| Lebanon | \$5074 | 2.9 | na | 18.0 | na | na | na |
| Tajikistan | \$1150 | 9.9 | na | 40.0 | 40.0 | 8.0 | 32.6 |

TABLE V
Continued

| Countries | PC GDP 2004 | GDP growth rate 2000–2004 | Inflation rate 1990–2003 | Annual unemployment rate | % Share of income/consumption | | GINI score 2005 |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | Top 20% (varied) | Bottom 20% (varied) | |
| Kuwait | \$19,510 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 7.0 | na | na | na |
| Vietnam | \$2700 | 7.2 | 2.8 | 25.0 | 44.5 | 8.0 | 37.0 |
| Philippines | \$4890 | 4.2 | 7.3 | 10.2 | 52.3 | 5.4 | 46.1 |
| Malaysia | \$9630 | 4.3 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 54.3 | 4.4 | 49.2 |
| Turkey | \$7680 | 4.2 | 72.4 | 10.3 | 46.7 | 6.1 | 40.0 |
| Iran | \$7550 | 6.2 | 22.8 | 16.3 | 49.9 | 5.1 | 43.0 |
| Indonesia | \$3460 | 4.6 | 13.9 | 10.6 | 43.3 | 8.4 | 34.3 |
| Bahrain | \$17,479 | 1.5 | 0.7 | na | na | na | na |
| Jordan | \$4640 | 5.1 | 3.0 | 16.0 | 44.4 | 7.6 | 36.4 |
| Syrian Arab | \$3550 | 3.1 | 4.9 | 20.0 | na | na | na |
| Saudi Arabia | \$14,010 | 3.4 | 0.5 | 25.0 | na | na | na |
| Qatar | \$19,844 | na | na | 2.7 | na | na | na |
| Myanmar ^a | \$1600 | 5.7 | 25.9 | na | na | na | na |
| India | \$3100 | 4.0 | 7.9 | 8.8 | 46.1 | 8.1 | 32.5 |
| Bangladesh ^a | \$1980 | 6.2 | 5.0 | 40.0 | 41.3 | 9.0 | 31.8 |
| Oman | \$13,250 | 3.5 | 0.2 | na | na | na | na |
| Cambodia ^a | \$2180 | 5.6 | 4.3 | 2.8 | 47.6 | 6.9 | 40.4 |
| Pakistan | \$2160 | 4.1 | 8.1 | 7.8 | 42.3 | 8.8 | 33.0 |
| MPC avg (N = 36) | \$8600 | 5.5 | 15.2 | 12.6 | 45.0 | 7.1 | 36.9 |
| Asian socially least development countries (WISP range = 22 > -19 >) | | | | | | | |
| Nepal ^a | \$1470 | 2.6 | 7.1 | 47.0 | 44.8 | 7.6 | 36.7 |
| Lao PDR ^a | \$1850 | 5.7 | 29.7 | 5.7 | 45.0 | 7.6 | 37.0 |
| Bhutan ^a | \$1969 | 3.6 | 7.7 | na | na | na | na |

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|-------------------------------|----------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Yemen ^a | \$820 | 3.6 | 20.8 | 30.0 | 41.2 | 7.4 | 33.4 |
| SLDC avg (<i>N</i> = 4) | \$1527 | 3.9 | 16.3 | 27.6 | 43.7 | 7.5 | 35.7 |
| Regional avg (<i>N</i> = 42) | \$8982 | 5.2 | 14.6 | 13.5 | 44.8 | 7.2 | 36.6 |
| United States | \$39,710 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 6.0 | 45.8 | 5.4 | 40.8 |

Sources: CIA World Fact Book 2006; UNDP 2005; World Bank 2006. ^aIndicate countries previously classified by the United Nations as "Least Developing" (LDC). "na" indicates either "not available" or "not applicable".

TABLE VI
Selected social, environmental and technologies indicators for Asia ranked by development grouping, 2003–2005 (N = 42)

| Countries | Maternal mortality Rate/100K births 2000 | % parliament held by women 2005 | Official development assistance | | Perceived corruption index (PCI) 2005 | Freedom measures | PC tons CO2 emissions 2002 | % Manufactured exports hi-tech 2003 | Patents per million pop 2003 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | ODA received as % GNI 2003 | ODA per capita 2003 | | | | | |
| Asian social leaders (WISP range = 107 > 84) | | | | | | | | | |
| Japan | 10 | 9.3 | na | na | 7.3 | 1 | 9.4 | 24.0 | 852.0 |
| Hong Kong | na | na | 0.7 | 0.7 | 8.3 | na | 5.2 | 13.0 | 3.0 |
| SL avg (N = 2) | 10 | 9.3 | na | 0.7 | 7.8 | 1.0 | 7.3 | 18.5 | 427.5 |
| Asian middle performing countries (WISP range = 81 > 23) | | | | | | | | | |
| Taiwan | na | na | na | na | 5.9 | 2 | na | na | na |
| Israel | 17 | 15.0 | 0.4 | 65.8 | 6.3 | 1 | 11.0 | 18.0 | 35.0 |
| Korea, Rep. (South) | 20 | 13.0 | -0.1 | -9.6 | 5.0 | 1 | 9.4 | 32.0 | 633.0 |
| Cyprus | na | 16.1 | 0.2 | 24.2 | 5.7 | 1 | 8.3 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Armenia | 55 | 5.3 | 8.8 | 81.0 | 2.9 | 5 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 42.0 |
| Singapore | 30 | 16.0 | na | 1.7 | 9.4 | 5 | 13.8 | 59.0 | 58.0 |
| Georgia | 32 | 9.4 | 5.5 | 42.9 | 2.3 | 3 | 0.7 | 24.0 | 27.0 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | 110 | () | 10.4 | 39.1 | 2.3 | 6 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 10.0 |
| Azerbaijan | 94 | 10.5 | 4.2 | 36.0 | 2.2 | 6 | 3.4 | 5.0 | 0.0 |
| Kazakhstan | 1,000 | 9.5 | 0.9 | 18.0 | 2.6 | 6 | 9.9 | 9.0 | 0.0 |
| Mongolia | 110 | 6.7 | 19.4 | 99.7 | 3.0 | 2 | 3.3 | 0.0 | 31.0 |
| China | 56 | 20.2 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 3.2 | 7 | 2.7 | 27.0 | 5.0 |
| Thailand | 44 | 8.1 | -0.7 | -15.6 | 3.8 | 2 | 3.7 | 30.0 | na |

ASIA AND THE NEW CENTURY

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| Turkmenistan | 880 | 16.4 | 0.4 | 5.6 | 1.8 | 7 | 7 | 9.1 | na | 0.0 |
| Sri Lanka | 92 | 4.9 | 3.7 | 35.0 | 3.2 | 3 | 3 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Lebanon | 150 | 2.3 | 1.2 | 50.8 | 3.1 | 6 | 5 | 4.7 | na | na |
| Uzbekistan | 24 | 16.4 | 2.0 | 7.6 | 2.2 | 7 | 6 | 4.8 | na | 17.0 |
| Kuwait | 5 | 0.0 | na | 1.9 | 4.7 | 4 | 5 | 24.6 | 1.0 | na |
| Tajikistan | 100 | (.) | 9.3 | 22.9 | 2.1 | 6 | 5 | 0.7 | na | 3.0 |
| Malaysia | 450 | 13.1 | 0.1 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 4 | 4 | 6.3 | 58.0 | 0.0 |
| Philippines | 200 | 15.4 | 0.9 | 9.1 | 2.5 | 2 | 3 | 0.9 | 74.0 | 0.0 |
| Vietnam | na | 27.3 | 4.5 | 112.6 | 2.6 | 7 | 6 | 0.8 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| Turkey | 70 | 4.4 | 0.1 | 2.4 | 3.5 | 3 | 3 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| Iran | 76 | 4.1 | 0.1 | 2.0 | 2.9 | 6 | 6 | 5.3 | 2.0 | na |
| Indonesia | 230 | 11.3 | 0.8 | 8.1 | 2.2 | 3 | 4 | 1.4 | 14.0 | na |
| Bahrain | 1,200 | 7.5 | 0.2 | 52.7 | 5.8 | 5 | 5 | 30.6 | na | na |
| Jordan | 41 | 7.9 | 12.5 | 232.5 | 5.7 | 5 | 4 | 3.2 | 2.0 | na |
| Syrian Arab | 160 | 12.0 | 0.7 | 9.2 | 3.4 | 7 | 7 | 3.8 | 1.0 | na |
| Saudi Arabia | 23 | 0.0 | na | 3.2 | 3.4 | 7 | 7 | 15.0 | 0.0 | na |
| Qatar | na | na | na | 17.1 | 5.9 | 6 | 5 | 53.1 | na | na |
| Myanmar ^a | na | (.) | na | 2.9 | 1.8 | 7 | 7 | 0.2 | na | na |
| India | 540 | 9.3 | 0.2 | 0.9 | 2.9 | 2 | 3 | 1.2 | 5.0 | 0.0 |
| Bangladesh ^a | 380 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 10.1 | 1.7 | 4 | 4 | 0.3 | 0.0 | na |
| Oman | 87 | 7.8 | na | 17.1 | 6.3 | 6 | 5 | 12.1 | 2.0 | na |
| Cambodia ^a | 450 | 10.9 | 12.0 | 37.9 | 2.3 | 6 | 5 | na | na | na |
| Pakistan | 500 | 20.7 | 1.3 | 7.2 | 2.1 | 6 | 5 | 0.7 | 1.0 | na |
| MPC avg (N = 36) | 233 | 10.4 | 3.5 | 29.6 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 7.4 | 13.8 | 43.2 |
| Asian socially least development countries (WISP range = 22 > -19 >) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nepal ^a | 740 | 6.4 | 8.0 | 18.9 | 2.5 | 5 | 5 | 0.2 | na | na |
| Lao PDR ^a | 650 | 22.9 | 14.1 | 52.8 | 3.3 | 7 | 6 | 0.2 | na | na |
| Bhutan ^a | na | 8.7 | 11.1 | 88.1 | na | 6 | 5 | 0.2 | na | na |

TABLE VI
Continued

| Countries | Maternal mortality Rate/100K births 2000 | % parliament held by women 2005 | Seats of Official development assistance | ODA received as % GNI 2003 | | Perceived corruption index (PCI) 2005 | Freedom measures | Political rights | Civil liberties | PC tons CO2 emmissions 2002 | % hi-tech exports 2003 | Manufactured exports per million pop 2003 | Patents |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---|---------|
| | | | | ODA received as % | ODA per capita 2003 | | | | | | | | |
| Yemen ^a | 570 | 0.3 | 2.2 | 12.7 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 5 | 5 | 0.7 | na | na | na | |
| SILDC avg (N = 4) | 653 | 9.6 | 8.9 | 43.1 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| Global avg (N = 42) | 263 | 10.3 | 4.2 | 30.3 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 6.7 | 14.1 | 78.1 | 78.1 | |
| United States | 17 | 14.8 | 0.10 | (.) | 7.6 | 7.6 | 1 | 1 | 20.1 | 31.0 | 302 | 302 | |

Sources: Freedom House, 2005; Transparency International, 2006; UNDP 2005; World Bank, 2006. ^aIndicates countries previously classified by the United Nations as "Least Developing" (LDC). "na" indicates either "not available" or "not applicable". PCI refers to the "Perceived Corruption Index" developed by Transparency International (2006); scores are inversely related to perceived corruption (0 = low; 10 = high). Freedom House (2005) uses a seven point scale to measure Political Rights and Civil Liberties, with one representing the highest degree of Freedom and seven the lowest. Owing to substantial civil or political unrest more recent social indicator data could not be collected for the following countries: Afghanistan, Iraq and North Korea.

TABLE VII
Central government expenditures (CGE) and public spending priorities for Asia ranked by development grouping, 2000–2003 ($N = 42$)

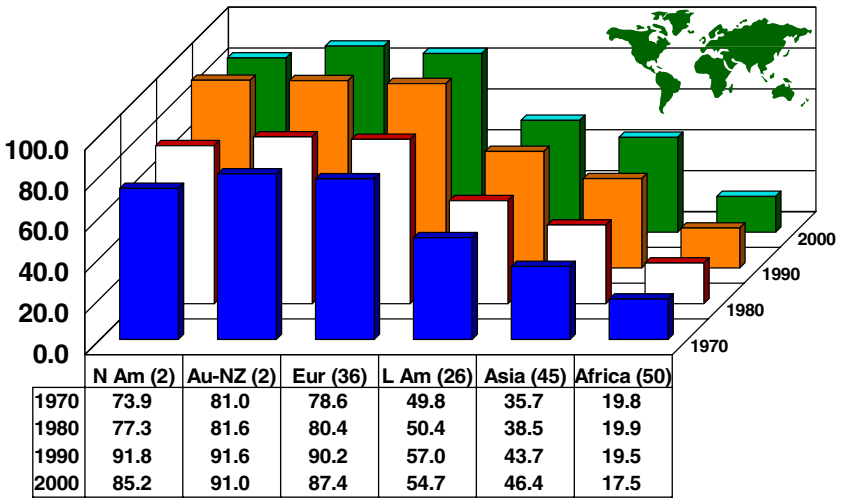
| Countries | CGE expenditures as % GDP2000 (a) | Public expenditures as % GDP (b) | | | Military expenditures | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | | Education 2000–2002 | Health 2002 | Debt Service 2003 | As % GDP 2003 (c) | As % CGE 2003 (d) |
| Asian social leaders (WISP range = 107 > 84) | | | | | | |
| Japan | 23.2 | 3.6 | 6.5 | na | 1.0 | 6.1 |
| Hong Kong | na | 4.4 | na | na | na | Na |
| SL avg ($N = 2$) | 23.2 | 4.0 | 6.5 | na | 1.0 | 6.1 |
| Asian middle performing countries (WISP Range = 81 > 23) | | | | | | |
| Taiwan | na | na | na | na | na | Na |
| Israel | 46.3 | 7.5 | 6.0 | na | 9.1 | 18.5 |
| Korea, Rep. (South) | 17.4 | 4.2 | 2.6 | 6.2 | 2.5 | 11.0 |
| Cyprus | 36.9 | 6.3 | 2.9 | na | 1.5 | 9.3 |
| Armenia | na | 3.2 | 1.3 | 3.4 | 2.7 | 20.2 |
| Singapore | 19.1 | 3.7 | 1.3 | na | 5.2 | 20.5 |
| Georgia | 12.3 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 1.1 | 7.0 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | 18.0 | 3.1 | 2.2 | 7.1 | 2.9 | 14.0 |
| Azerbaijan | 22.6 | 3.2 | 0.8 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 24.4 |
| Kazakhstan | 14.3 | 3.0 | 1.9 | 17.8 | 1.1 | 5.3 |
| Mongolia | 29.3 | 9.0 | 4.6 | 22.6 | 2.3 | 5.9 |
| China | 10.9 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 22.2 |
| Thailand | 18.0 | 5.2 | 3.1 | 10.5 | 1.3 | 6.1 |
| Turkmenistan | na | 2.1 | 3.0 | 7.6 | 1.2 | 16.0 |
| Sri Lanka | 25.7 | 3.1 | 1.8 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 18.4 |
| Lebanon | 35.7 | 2.7 | 3.5 | 1.7 | 4.3 | 11.0 |
| Uzbekistan | na | na | 2.5 | 8.2 | 0.5 | 5.3 |
| Kuwait | 44.2 | na | 2.9 | na | 9.0 | 20.8 |

TABLE VII
Continued

| Countries | CGE expenditures as % GDP2000 (a) | Public expenditures as % GDP (b) | | | Military expenditures | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Education 2000-2002 | Health 2002 | Debt Service 2003 | As % GDP 2003 (c) | As % CGE 2 003 (d) | |
| | | | | | | |
| Tajikistan | 11.3 | 0.9 | 5.7 | 2.2 | 9.4 | |
| Malaysia | 19.7 | 2.0 | 9.1 | 2.8 | 9.3 | |
| Philippines | 19.5 | 1.1 | 12.8 | 0.9 | 7.3 | |
| Viet nam | 23.4 | 1.5 | 2.1 | na | 11.6 | |
| Turkey | 39.4 | 4.3 | 11.7 | 4.9 | 13.9 | |
| Iran | 21.9 | 2.9 | 1.2 | 3.8 | 11.2 | |
| Indonesia | 20.5 | 1.2 | 8.9 | 1.5 | 5.3 | |
| Bahrain | 25.9 | 3.2 | na | 5.1 | 18.9 | |
| Jordan | 31.1 | 4.3 | 11.7 | 8.9 | 27.5 | |
| Syrian Arab | 23.2 | 2.3 | 1.6 | 7.1 | 25.1 | |
| Saudi Arabia | na | 4.2 | na | 8.7 | 43.2 | |
| Qatar | na | 2.5 | na | na | 22.9 | |
| Myanmar ^a | 8.7 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 93.6 | |
| India | 16.6 | 1.5 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 14.6 | |
| Bangladesh ^a | 12.7 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 10.1 | |
| Oman | 28.5 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 12.2 | 36.3 | |
| Cambodia ^a | na | 1.8 | 0.6 | 2.5 | 26.0 | |
| Pakistan | 23.1 | 1.1 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 27.9 | |
| MPC avg (N = 36) | 23.3 | 2.4 | 6.2 | 3.7 | 18.6 | |
| Asian socially least development countries (WISP range = 22 > -19 >) | | | | | | |
| Nepal ^a | 16.0 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 5.7 | |
| Lao PDR ^a | na | 1.5 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 11.0 | |
| Bhutan ^a | 38.3 | 4.1 | 1.0 | na | na | |

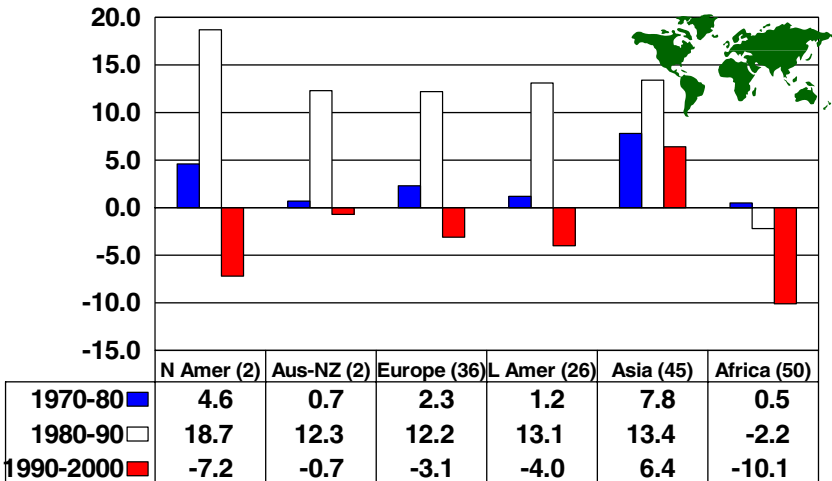
| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Yemen ^a | 26.5 | 9.5 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 7.1 | 18.0 |
| SLDC avg (<i>N</i> = 4) | 26.9 | 5.2 | 2.0 | 1.7 | 3.6 | 11.6 |
| Regional avg (<i>N</i> = 42) | 23.6 | 3.9 | 2.4 | 5.6 | 3.7 | 17.7 |
| United States | 19.3 | 5.7 | 6.6 | na | 3.8 | 15.7 |

Sources: (a), World Bank, 2005; (b), (c), UNDP, 2005;(d), World Bank, 2006. ^aIndicates countries previously classified by the United Nations as "Least Developing" (LDC). "na" indicates either "not available" or "not applicable".



[cont_00]

Fig. 1. Average WISP scores by continent ($N = 161$) 1970–2000.



[%cont_00]

Fig. 2. Percent change in average WISP scores by continent ($N = 161$), 1970–2000.

the period 1970–2000 and reflect comparative WISP performance for the larger study’s six continental groupings, i.e., North America ($N = 2$), Australia–New Zealand ($N = 2$), Europe ($N = 36$), Latin America ($N = 26$), Asia ($N = 45$), and Africa ($N = 50$). The average WISP scores for all 161 countries contained in this analysis are 44.5, 44.1, 48.8 and 48.7 for 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000, respectively (Estes, 2005a, 2006a).

1. The world’s most socially developed regions are North America, Australia–New Zealand, and Europe. These regions had already attained the most favorable WISP ratings by 1970; further improvements on the index continued to occur between 1970–1980, 1980–1990 and, for many but not all countries, for the period 1990–2000 as well (Figure 1). Today, comparatively few differences characterize the development profiles of the economically advanced countries of North America (2000 Average = 85.2), Australia–New Zealand (1990 Average = 91.0), and Europe (1990 Average = 87.4).
2. The world’s least developed regions are Africa (2000 Average = 17.5) and Asia (2000 Average = 46.4). WISP scores for the African region were the lowest worldwide for the entire 30-year period studied.
 - a. Social development losses were reported for the African region for both 1980–90 and 1990–2000, -2.2% and -10.1% , respectively. Social losses for the 10-year period 1990–2000 were most pronounced in Africa’s Middle (-33%) and Eastern (-20%) sub-regions and were less dramatic in the continent’s oil-rich Northern (-5%) region (Estes, 2004).
 - b. Fortunately, recent net 10-year social gains on the WISP were observed for Africa’s conflict-ridden Western subregion ($+3\%$).
3. Africa’s continuing unfavorable economic situation, recurrent wars, high levels of diversity-related social conflict, and public corruption account for most of the region’s decades-long social losses. The region’s current social development situation is all the more tragic given that Africa’s “least development countries” (LDCs) have been the preferential recipients of international development assistance since at least 1980 (including debt rescheduling and forgiveness, reduced tariffs on exports, and rising levels of foreign private sector investments). HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, however, have combined with the region’s geographic isolation, failed political systems and inadequate social infrastructures to exacerbate the already impossible situation that exists for Sub-Saharan Africa’s most deeply impoverished nations (UN/AIDS, 2005; World Health Organization, 2006).

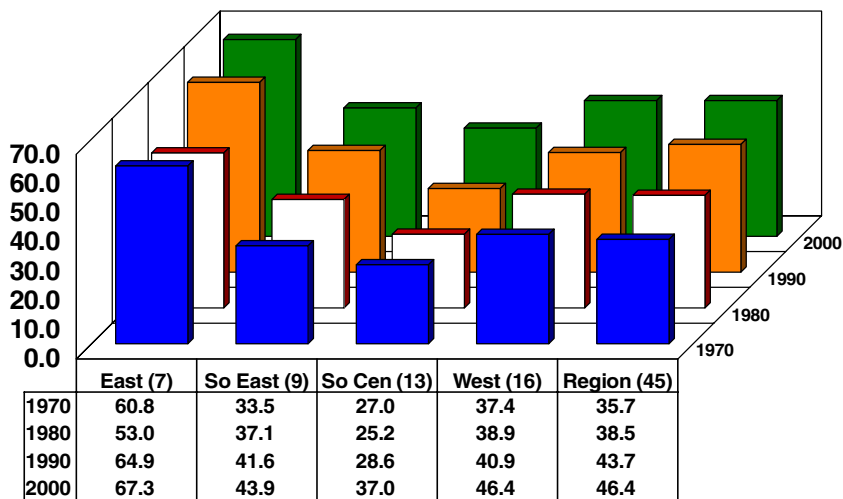
4. The social development situation in Latin America is equally perplexing and troubling, especially given the region's rich natural and human capital resources. Recurrent wars, civil unrest and, too often, corrupt governments have combined to deprive the region's countries of its bountiful resources for use in advancing social and economic development (ECLAC, 2005; Transparency International, 2006). Thus, today, and despite some modest gains for a few countries, development trends in Latin America as a whole have advanced comparatively little over the full 30-year period studied (Estes, 1990, 1996a, b).
5. As clearly reflected in the continental WISP scores reported in Figures 1 and 2, considerable variation also exists with respect to Asia's 30-year social development trends.

In general, then, between 1970 and 1990 the world's most economically advanced regions continued to add to their already high levels of social development while the world's poorest region, Africa, experienced additional net social losses. The social gains reported for Latin America during the period were especially hopeful but, unfortunately, the region lost some additional social ground between 1990 and 2000 (-4.0%). Most alarmingly, though, development scores for the African region barely moved at all during the full 30-year period of the study and, today, are 10% lower than those of the preceding decade! This ominous picture for Africa, though, applies primarily to the African Sub-Saharan region (i.e., Central, Western and Eastern Africa) in stark contrast to the net social gains reported elsewhere for Africa's Northern and Southern sub-regions (Estes, 1995; World Bank, 2006).

4. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

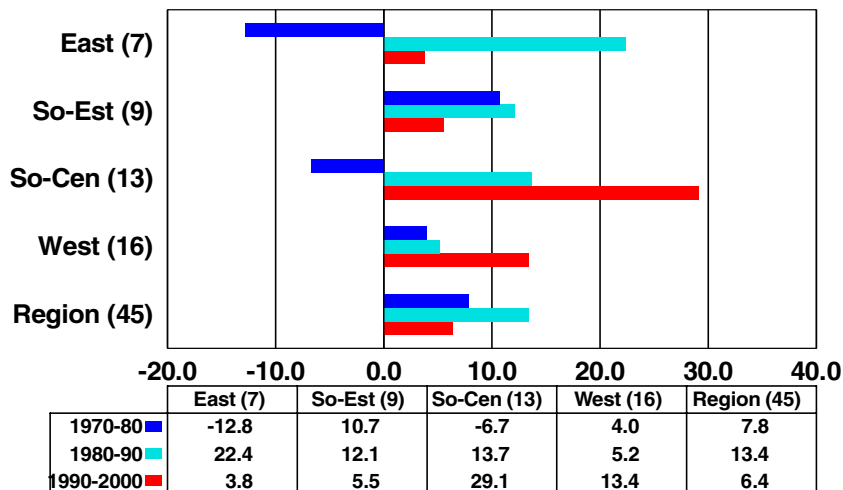
Thirty-year social development trends for the Asian region are summarized in Figures 3 and 4. WISP scores are reported in these figures both for the region-as-whole ($N = 45$) and for each of Asia's four sub-regions: East Asia ($N = 7$), Southeast Asia ($N = 9$), South Central Asia ($N = 13$), and Western Asia ($N = 16$). Region-wide performances on the WISP's *ten subindexes* are reported separately in Figures 5 and 6. Country-specific WISP scores for the year 2000, including country rank position relative to all 161 countries included in the larger study, are reported in Figures 7 and 8 and in Table IV. Current social indicator data for each country grouped by their overall performance on the WISP are summarized in Tables IV, V, VI and VII.

ASIA AND THE NEW CENTURY



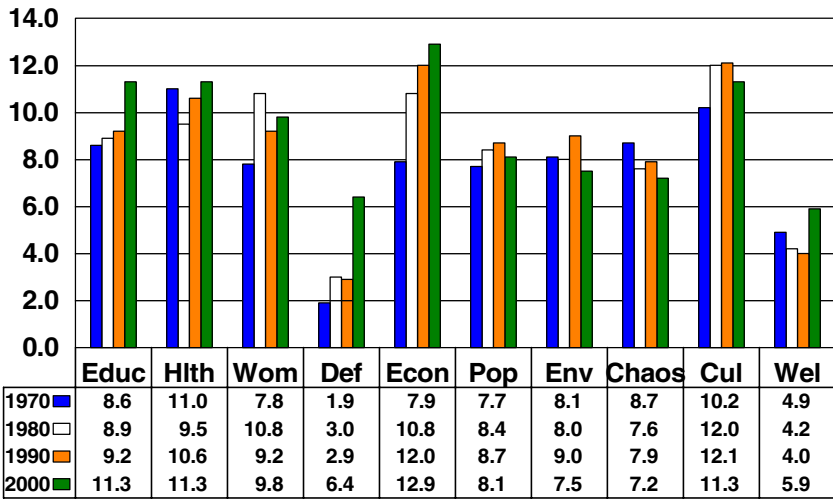
[asia_00]

Fig. 3. Average WISP scores for Asia by subregion ($N = 45$), 1970–2000.



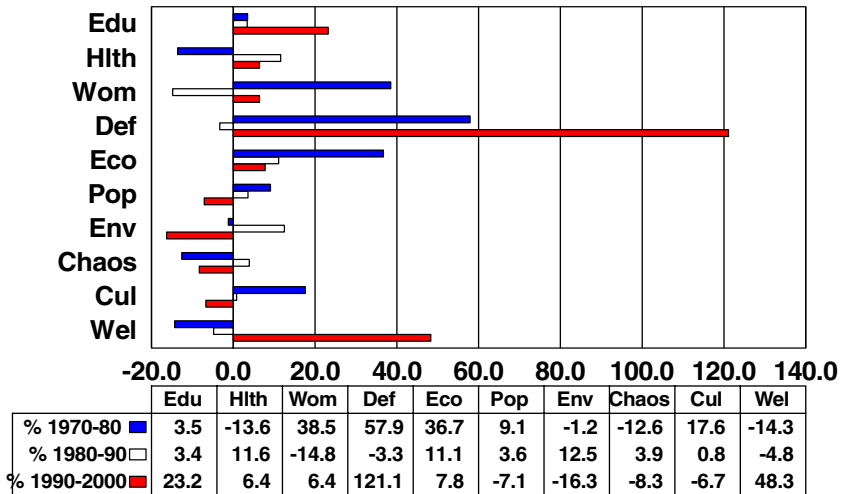
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Fig. 4. Percent change in average WISP scores for Asia ($N = 45$), 1970–2000.



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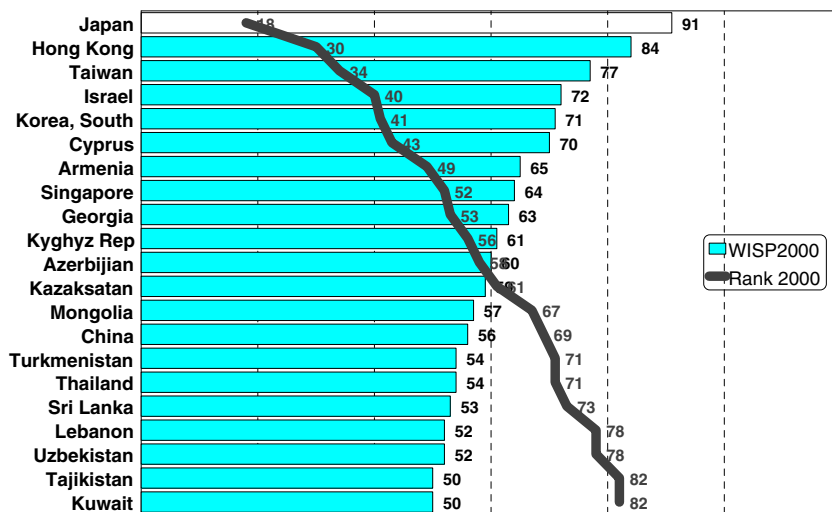
Fig. 5. Average WISP subindex scores for Asia ($N = 45$), 1970–2000.



[%sb_asia_00]

Fig. 6. Percent change in average WISP subindex scores for Asia ($N = 45$), 1970–2000.

ASIA AND THE NEW CENTURY



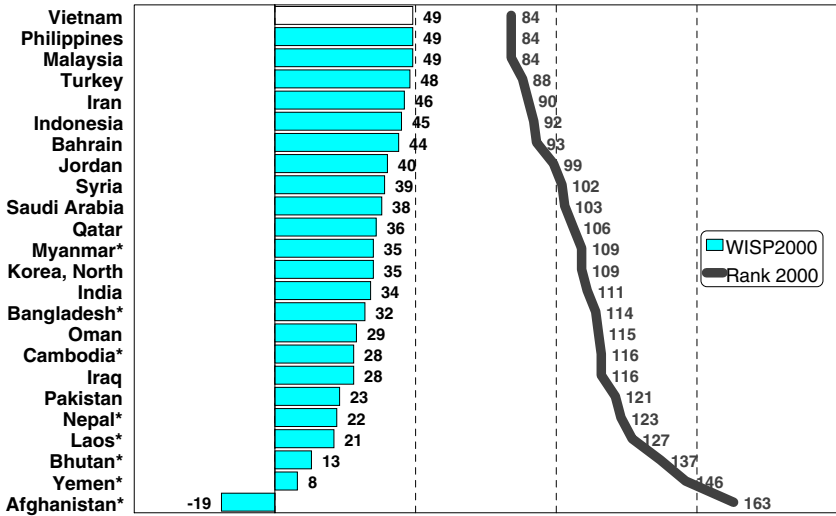
[Asia_Part 1]

Fig. 7. Rank ordered WISP scores and net changes in WISP ranks for Asia, 2000 ($N = 21/163$).

4.1. Regional Performance on the WISP

Asia's regional scores on the WISP for the year 2000 averaged 35.7, 38.5, 43.7, and 46.4 for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000, respectively (Figure 1). The 45 Asian countries included in this analysis, as a group, ranked fifth worldwide in overall level of social development, i.e., one rank above the world's least developed region, Africa. The region maintained its worldwide social development ranking relative to other world regions for all four time intervals.

As reflected in the data summarized in Figure 2, however, Asia has consistently been the world's most rapidly developing region. The region's WISP performances increased by +7.8%, between 1970 and 1980, by +13.4% between 1980 and 1990 and, again, by +6.4% between 1990 and 2000. These net social gains are especially impressive given the significant social losses experienced by the North American (-7.2%), Australia-New Zealand (-0.7%), European (-3.1%), Latin America (-4.0%) and African (-10.1%) regions between 1990 and 2000. Thus, Asia's net social gains on the WISP increased by more than 30% between 1970 and 2000 – a



[Asia_Part 2]

Fig. 8. Rank ordered WISP scores and net changes in WISP ranks for Asia, 2000 ($N = 24/163$).

remarkable achievement given the region’s extraordinary cultural and ethnic diversity and the size of its population – 3808 million persons, or 61% of the world total population in 2000.

Asia’s net social gains for the 30 year period beginning in 1970 exceeded even that experienced by the North American (+15.3%) and European (+11.2%) regions during the same time period. Hence, the Asian region is beginning to succeed in reversing the downward spiral that characterized many of the region’s nations prior to 1980 (ESCAP, 1992a, b; Jun, 1994; Simone, 2001). The social indicator data reported in Tables IV through VII offer further confirmation that other fundamental changes are occurring throughout the region, especially in the health, social, economic, technological and status of women and children sectors. The breadth and depth of these social improvements also suggest that the region’s recent social development accomplishments are of an integrative, and hopefully, sustainable nature (ADB, 2006).

A variety of factors help to explain Asia’s recent development accomplishments: (1) the rapid economic development of selected countries in East

and West Asia (ADB, 2006; World Bank, 2005); (2) the end of several military conflicts that previously undermined peace and stability throughout the region (IFRCRCS, 2005); (3) substantial reductions in military and defense expenditures (SIPRI, 2005); (4) modest gains in slowing the rate of population increase (UNDP, 2005); (5) new investments in social and political infrastructure (World Bank, 2006); (6) a new commitment to advancing the economic and legal status of the region's women and children (UNICEF, 2006; Save the Children, 2005); and, (7) region-wide cooperation on a variety of integrated plans for social and economic development (ADB, 2006; ESCAP, 2006).

4.2. *Sub-regional Performances on the WISP*

Despite impressive gains at the regional level on the WISP, considerable variation exists in the 30-year social development trends observed for Asia's four sub-regions (Figure 3). East Asia, for example, is the region's most developed sub-region (2000 Average WISP = 67.3); South Central Asia is the least socially developed (2000 Average WISP = 37.0). By comparison, 2000 WISP scores for Western (46.4) and Southeastern Asia (43.9) are nearly identical...though both are substantially lower than those attained by the nations of East Asia for all four time periods reported.

Considerable variation also exists with respect to the *pace* at which social development is occurring in the four sub-regions (Figure 5). The most significant 30-year WISP improvements occurred in South Central (+37.0%) and South Eastern (+31.0%) Asia, whereas average WISP scores for West Asia (+24.1%) and East Asia (+10.7%) were substantially lower. Part of the explanation for these lower rates of improvement, of course, is that both West Asia and East Asia already had attained considerably higher levels of development by 1980 than had either the nations of South Central or South Eastern Asia (Estes, 1996a). By all measures, then, Asian sub-regional development is asynchronous and continues to be characterized by considerable heterogeneity at both the national and subregional levels.

The tremendous variation that characterizes recent Asian social development trends results from a variety of related factors: (1) each sub-region's level of social development *at the outset of the study* (Estes, 1984); (2) the nature and extent of the economic resources available to each sub-region (i.e., ranging from land-locked, resource poor, countries to countries that are major exporters of oil and other products); (3) the size and cultural mix of each sub-region's population (ranging from small, culturally homogenous societies to those with very large, highly diverse, populations); (4) the

sub-region's recent histories of intra-national and intra-regional wars or recurrent...much of it stemming from religious and cultural diversity issues; and, (5) the legacy of colonialism for many of the region's nations which denied them access to both natural and human resources and imposed artificial geographic boundaries that separated related peoples and groupings from one another (Brogan, 1990; Estes, 1990).

Issues of cultural diversity – racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious – also figure prominently in the explanation of variations in sub-regional social development trends. In general, the pace of social development is slower in the Asian sub-regions and countries characterized by higher levels of cultural diversity (e.g., India, Indonesia) than those characterized by higher levels of cultural homogeneity (e.g., China, Japan, Korea).

4.3. *Regional Performance on the WISP Subindexes*

The region's performance on the 10 subindexes of the WISP is reported in Figures 5 and 6 ($N = 45$). As reported in these figures, the region's strongest performances in 2000 were on the Economic (2000 Average = 12.9), Health (2000 Average = 11.3), Education (2000 Average = 11.3) and Cultural Diversity (2000 Average = 11.3) subindexes; indeed, the region out-performed worldwide average scores on these subindexes.⁶ Further, the region's subindex performance approximated world average scores on the Women Status (2000 Average = 9.8). However, the region's 2000 scores on the Population (2000 Average = 8.1), Environment (2000 Average = 7.5), Social Chaos (2000 Average = 7.2), Defense Effort (2000 Average = 6.4) and Welfare Effort (2000 Average = 5.9) subindexes lagged substantially behind those recorded for the world-as-a-whole, especially in comparison with the high levels of attainment achieved on these subindexes by Western nations (Estes, 2004). The region's highly unfavorable scores on the Defense Effort and Welfare Effort subindexes are especially perplexing given the known relationship between successes on these subindexes and more accelerated patterns of economic development (Nafziger and Auvinen, 2004; World Bank, 2006).

The region's pattern of subindex findings suggest the asynchronous nature of Asia's social development, i.e., inconsistent and uneven development across a range of interdependent sectors. As reported in Figure 6, the region's economic successes since 1970 (Net Change = +63%) contributed to the willingness of many governments to undertake initiatives directed at: (1) reducing defense expenditures (Net Change = +236%); (2) promoting increased cooperation across culturally diverse population groups (Net

Change = +11%); and, (3) advancing the education and health status of women and children (Net Change = +26%). These are important changes for the region and reflect more than a transitory commitment to redressing some of the most fundamental problems that have thwarted the region's past development efforts.

The region's governments also achieved important 30-year successes on the Education (Net Change = +31%) and Demographic subindexes (Net Change = +5.6%). These are very significant improvements, indeed, and set the stage for even more dramatic improvements in other sectors over the near term, i.e., a viable, expanding, economy requires a healthy and well-educated workforce. And, at the same time, the rate of population growth needs to be brought under manageable control if resources are to be available to improve developments in the education, health, and welfare sectors.

Unfortunately, though, Asia's net 30-year progress in the Welfare Effort (Net Change = +20.4%), Social Chaos (Net Change = -17.2%) and Health (Net Change = +2.7%) sectors did not match the region's impressive gains in the Education and Demographic sectors (Figures 5 and 6). No region of the world, indeed no country, has succeeded in advancing the overall social and economic status of its people without significant progress in these sectors (Estes, 2002a, 2004, 2005a; UNDP, 2005). Significant improvement in all of these sectors will prove essential to the region's future development successes, including its future economic success (ADB, 2006; World Bank, 2001, 2006).

5. REGIONAL SOCIAL LEADERS (SLS) AND SOCIALLY LEAST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (SLDCS)

Figures 7 and 8 report Asia's country-specific WISP scores for 2000. The figures both rank the region's countries on the basis of their 2000 WISP performance and reports 30-year net changes in country rankings on the WISP. Table IV also reports country-specific WISP scores and changes to WISP rankings for 2000 and shows their relationship to the widely used Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2005). Tables IV through VII also report a broad range of social indicator data that help place both the WISP and HDI scores into a more developmental context. Both Figures 7 and 8 and Table IV identify the region's "Social Leaders" ("SLs", WISP range ≥ 84), "Middle-Range Performing" countries (WISP range = 81-23), and the region's "Socially Least Developing Countries" ("SLDCs," WISP range ≤ 22) *relative to all 161 countries included in the author's larger studies of worldwide social development trends* (Estes, 2006).

5.1. *Asia's Social Development "Leaders" (SLs)*

The region's two "social development leaders" (SLs) are Japan (WISP00 = 91) and Hong Kong (WISP00 = 84). Both of these nations are located in the East Asian region and both consistently have demonstrated extraordinary levels of social progress relative to other countries in the region (Estes, 1996a, 2002b). WISP scores for the SLs averaged 87.5 in 2000, a net increase of +26% over their average combined scores attained in 1970. The rate of social development among Asia's SLs is unusually rapid; indeed, the region's SLs are developing more rapidly than most other sub-regions worldwide, including that observed for most economically advanced Western nations (Estes, 1995c, d).

The significant social development gains occurring in the SLs are reflected in their lower population growth rates, longer average life expectation, reduced rates of infant and child mortality, substantial improvements in child and adult literacy levels, and higher than average income levels and rates of economic expansion (Tables IV and V). Indeed, and despite some setbacks following the "East Asian financial crisis" that began in Thailand in 1997 (Blustein, 2001; Caprio et al., 2005), the rates of economic expansion, on average, are proceeding at their earlier patterns of growth. The region's SLs advantaged position on the WISP also are reflected in their significantly reduced levels of public expenditures for defense and military spending (Table VII). And, in a comparative sense, the social situations of the region's two SLs is generally more favorable than that observed for most other countries of Asia – including those patterns observed for East Asia's other two "mini-dragons" (Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan).

Of importance in this report, too, is that the status of women in the SLs also has improved appreciably since 1970 and is reflected in nearly universal primary and secondary school participation levels for girls, higher levels of adult female literacy, significantly reduced maternal mortality rates, and improved access to contraception for married women (UNDP, 2005). The overall economic and political status of the region's SL women, however, continues to lag far behind that of men, especially with respect to opportunities for post-secondary education, more deeply enshrined legal protections, and higher per capita income levels. The social situation of the region's women living in its SLs is especially acute for those who never married and for those widows whose children do not contribute substantially toward their financial support (Estes, 2005a, b, c).

Overall, then, Asian SLs are among the most rapidly developing countries worldwide. Comparatively small initial population size *in combination with*

slow population growth rates and high levels of cultural homogeneity are three of the factors that appear to be most responsible for the favorable social development trends currently taking place in the region's SLs, But only 135 million of the region's 3808 million people (3.5%) reside in its socially leading nations!

5.2. *Asia's Socially Least Developing Countries (SLDCs)*

The region's four "socially least developing countries" (SLDCs) also are identified in Table IV and in Figure 8: Nepal (WISP00 = 22), Laos (WISP00 = 21), Bhutan (WISP00 = 13), and Yemen (WISP00 = 8). WISP scores for the region's SLDCs averaged just 16.0 in 2000... slightly higher than that reported for these countries in 1970, 1980 and 1990 (Estes, 1988, 1996a).

Figures 7 and 8 identify those countries within the Asian region that experienced the most significant social losses between 1970 and 2000, i.e., beginning with Kazakhstan and continuing through to Afghanistan ($N = 34$). The population of these 34 countries exceeds 3568 million persons or 59% of the world total population in 2000 – including Asia's and the world's three population "super giants": China, India and Indonesia. The overall WISP scores for each of these countries have improved measurably but, still, hundreds of millions of the citizens of these countries continue to live in poverty...many under conditions that Westerners can little imagine (UNDP, 2005).

Thus, the vast majority of nations in Asia continue to be classified as "middle performing countries" (MPCs)...this in a world that is characterized by great abundance, even affluence, and to which many economically advanced countries turn to for comparatively cheap labor, cheap raw materials and, increasingly, for less expensive human capital resources (e.g., the flood of "outsourcing" arrangements between Western nations and human capital rich China, India, the Philippines, and other Asian countries). For many of these MPCs progress appears to be occurring but the benefits of more rapid social and economic progress continue to elude most of the populations that live in these countries. The simple reality is that virtually none of the region's MPCs are in a position to significantly influence the rules by which the global economy is structured and, fewer still, benefit from the enormous wealth which their collective efforts generate to the benefit of more economically advanced nations. The World Trade Organization (WTO), the South-South Partnership, and the International Monetary Fund aside, the reality is that the vast majority of Asians and

Asian economies play little more than a secondary role in shaping either the rules or benefits associated with their labor. The global economic system, as it currently exists, is controlled by “first” and “second” world countries; without a new international financial order most developing Asian economies will remain trapped as little more than suppliers of resources to rich countries.

The data presented in Figures 7 and 8 dramatically demonstrate the downward slide that is occurring among many nations in the Asian region. Only those societies that have been “adopted”, at least in a figurative, sense by First World countries – largely members of NATO or the OECD and, more recently by the European Union – can expect to experience significant progress in achieving their economic and social goals. Grand statements of desirable development outcomes alone – such as those promulgated in the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2003) – will do little to improve the day-to-day living conditions of the majority of people living in Asia’s most deeply impoverished nations.

Today, some 2% of the Asia’s population live in its most desperate SLDCs, i.e., more than 52 million people (Table IV); but another 2500 million Asians continue to live under difficult economic or political circumstances (Tables V and VI).

6. DISCUSSION

Asia once again has arrived at another crossroads with respect to social and economic development. Following decades of social deterioration, the region social status is steadily improving and, indeed, the basic needs of an increasing number of people in the region are beginning to be met (ADB, 2006). And, indeed, the Asia region’s recent social development accomplishments have been particularly impressive in the economic and defense effort sectors. Significant gains also have been made in advancing the legal and economic status of the region’s women and children, especially through increased access to higher levels of female participation in formal programs of primary and secondary education and the inclusion of greater numbers of women as members of national parliaments. Modest, but important, improvements also are occurring in Asia’s education and demographic sectors – but considerably more progress must be made in these sectors if the region’s recent economic successes are to be sustained over the long-term (ESCAP, 1998).

In general, the region’s governments are succeeding less well in assuring universal access to basic health services – especially in the areas of secondary

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and tertiary health care. Similarly, Asia's formal welfare effort continues to be among the weakest worldwide. The absence of an even modest social safety net is especially troublesome given that at least 65% of all the world's total poor reside in the region's countries.⁷ Popular participation in political decision-making also remains problematic in the region but the situation today is far better than that which existed in the 1980s (Freedom House, 2005).

At the outset of a new century, the need is apparent for more dramatic initiatives that will transform Asia into a more fully developed region. At a minimum, these initiatives must be informed by a renewed commitment to the three goals on which Asian leaders already agree: (1) the elimination of absolute poverty everywhere in the region; (2) enhanced popular participation in political decision-making; and, (3) a more equitable sharing of the region's abundant resources.

As emphasized by the region's heads of state who participated in the United Nations most recent World Summit on Social Development (United Nations, 2002), the new initiatives also must foster more active participation in development planning (and implementation) on the part of a broader base of non-governmental and other private actors (ESCAP, 1998; Sen, 2004). The need also exists for increased cross-sectoral initiatives, especially in finding solutions to age-old problems that have defied resolution in the past (e.g., diversity-related social conflict, income poverty, rigid systems of social stratification). To be successful, a considerably invigorated approach to social development for the region will place people and the satisfaction of their basic needs at the center of the development process.

NOTES

¹ The most compelling statements of the region's near-term development objectives are to be found in United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) documents prepared for the 5th Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development held in Manila 5–11 November, 1997 (ESCAP, 1997a, b, 1998).

² "Adequacy of social provision" refers to the changing capacity of governments to provide for the basic social, material, and other needs of the people living within their borders, e.g., for food, clothing, shelter, and access to at least basic health, education, and social services, etc. (Estes, 1984).

³ For methodological reasons, the ISP's 40 indicators are divided between positive and negative indicators of social progress. On the Education Subindex, for example, higher *adult illiteracy* rates are negatively associated with social progress whereas gains in *primary school enrollment* levels are positively associated with overall improvements in development. Thus, not only is the ISP representative of all major sectors of development, the instrument also achieves balance with respect the range of positive and negative factors that are used to assess changes in social progress over time.

⁴ For a fuller explanation of the procedures used to construct the WISP see Estes, 1988:199–209.

⁵ A more comprehensive listing of such indices is summarized in Estes, 2005c.

⁶ The world average for each subindex was set statistically at 10.0 (Estes, 1988: Appendix C).

⁷ Operationalized as people living on \$2 or less per day (UNDP, 2005; World Bank, 2006).

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