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978-1-107-09813-8 - Ranking the World: Grading States as a Tool of Global Governance

Edited by Alexander Cooley and Jack Snyder

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Ranking the World

Over the last decade, international rankings have emerged as a critical tool used by international actors engaged in global governance. State practices and performance are now judged by a number of high-profile indices, including assessments of their levels of corruption, quality of democracy, creditworthiness, media freedom, and business environment. However, these rankings always carry value judgments, methodological choices, and implicit political agendas. This volume expertly addresses the important analytical, normative, and policy issues associated with the contemporary practice of “grading states.” The chapters explore how rankings affect our perceptions of state performance, how states react to being ranked, why some rankings exert more global influence than others, and how states have come to strategize and respond to these public judgments. The book also critically examines how treating state rankings like popular consumer choice indices may actually lead policymakers to internalize questionable normative assumptions and lead to poorer, not improved, public policy outcomes.

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Preface and acknowledgments

This project was made possible by a generous grant from Columbia University's Harriman Institute to the editors for the 2010–2011 core project on “Human Rights in the Post-Communist World: Strategies and Outcomes.” For the project, the editors explored the theoretical, normative, and policy-related issues surrounding international attempts to introduce human rights standards and political reform in the post-Communist states. Rankings and ratings emerged as powerful tools of these international efforts, yet we soon discovered that while international legal scholars were now engaging with the topic of indicators and global power, international relations scholars had not assessed these practices, even as they have been embraced by policymakers, international governance actors, and the media.

The core project supported a number of key initiatives for us to assess and learn about the emerging power of international rankings. The Harriman Institute held a series of public panels and lectures featuring academics, policymakers, and NGO representatives that explored various rankings-related topics, including democracy promotion, international media freedom, international corruption, and illicit indicators and the contested politics of numbers. The project also supported an initial authors' workshop at Columbia in February 2012, featuring the contributors to this volume, along with Andrei Tsygankov, Lee Becker, and Tudor Vlad. We are thankful to Kevin Davis, Benedict Kingsbury and Sally Merry of NYU, whose work on indicators has been invaluable to our own understandings. The project also supported research visits to the headquarters of various rankings organizations, including Transparency International, the World Bank, Fund for Peace, Open Budget Partnership, Revenue Watch, Heritage Foundation, and Publish What You Fund. We thank these and other organizations for their cooperation and sharing of materials concerning the political issues we were interested in.

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Abbreviations

BPI	Bribe Payers Index
CAM	Coppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2008
CAST	Conflict Assessment Software Tool
CDO	collateralized debt obligation
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CRA	credit rating agency
DBI	World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FDI	foreign direct investment
FSI	Failed States Index
GBCR	Georgia Business Climate Reform
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GNIA	Georgian National Investment Agency
IFI	international financial institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	international organization
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACL	Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi
RRO	ratings and rankings organization
S&P	Standard & Poor's
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SMRC	State Ministry for Reform Coordination (Georgia)
TI	Transparency International
UDS	Universal Democracy Score
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFfP	US Fund for Peace