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.

Alexander Cooley is Professor of Political Science at Barnard College, Columbia University in New York and Columbia’s Harriman Institute. He has published commentaries and opinions in leading venues, including the New York Times, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Policy, and serves on a number of international committees, advisory boards, and working groups engaged in global governance in the post-Communist region.

Jack Snyder is the Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations in the Political Science Department and the Harriman Institute at Columbia University. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and in 2012 received the International Security Studies Distinguished Scholar Award of the International Studies Association.
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107098138

© Cambridge University Press 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Ranking the world : grading states as a tool of global governance / edited by Alexander Cooley and Jack Snyder.
pages cm
JZ1316.R36 2015
320.072–dc23

2014044750


Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.
Contents

List of figures vii
List of tables ix
List of contributors x
Preface and acknowledgments xi
List of abbreviations xiii

1 The emerging politics of international rankings and ratings: A framework for analysis 1
   ALEXANDER COOLEY

2 Just who put you in charge? We did: CRAs and the politics of ratings 39
   RAWI ABDELAL AND MARK BLYTH

3 Corruption rankings: Constructing and contesting the global anti-corruption agenda 60
   MLADA BUKOVANSKY

4 Measuring stateness, ranking political orders: Indices of state fragility and state failure 85
   NEHAL BHUTA

5 Lost in the gray zone: Competing measures of democracy in the former Soviet republics 112
   SEVA GUNITSKY

6 Winning the rankings game: The Republic of Georgia, USAID, and the Doing Business Project 151
   SAM SCHUETH

7 Conclusion – Rating the ratings craze: From consumer choice to public policy outcomes 178
   JACK SNYDER AND ALEXANDER COOLEY
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vi</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: List of prominent rankings and ratings, categorized according to issue area</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Comparing democracy measures within the former Soviet republics</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

1.1 RRO emergence, annual 1990–2014, N=83 ............................... page 10
1.2 Monthly media coverage of Transparency International’s CPI, 2012 (Proquest) .................................................. 23
5.1 Divergent political trajectories in the post-Soviet space ....... 113
5.2 The uneven distribution of Polity scores suggests the measure may be categorical rather than continuous ......... 124
5.3 Two methods of aggregating contestation and inclusiveness into a single measure .................................................... 126
5.4 Adjusting the EIU score for redundant sub-components ......... 129
5.5 Distribution of original (a) and modified (b) EIU scores ....... 130
5.6 Relationship between election quality and overall democratic quality .......................................................... 131
5.7 The relationship between election quality and percentage turnout ............................................................ 132
5.8 Measure sensitivity: average magnitude of annual changes in scores for each measure, compared to the proportion of country-years in which a change was recorded .... 135
5.10 Comparing assessments of democracy in Kazakhstan ......... 138
5.11 Disagreement among measures by regime type ................. 139
5.12 Disagreement among measures by country ..................... 140
5.13 Average regional measures of democracy in former Soviet republics for five different indices, 1991–2010 .................. 141
5.14 Average level of democracy in the former Soviet republics, as a proportion of the average level of democracy in Eastern Europe .................................................. 141
5.15 Evaluations of democratic quality in Armenia by Freedom House and Polity IV .................................................. 143
5.16 Evaluations of democratic quality in Russia by Freedom House and Polity IV .................................................. 145
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of figures</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.17 Assessment of democracy in Russia using six different measures</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Scattergram of 2009 DBI and GCI percentile ranks for 134 states</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Amount of development assistance and FDI received by Georgia annually</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables

1.1 Top five all-time biggest climbers in World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Competing definitions of “democracy” in common indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Correlations among measures of democracy and election quality in the former Soviet republics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Correlations among measures of democracy in the former Soviet republics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Summary statistics for the rescaled measures of democracy in the former Soviet republics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Average differences between measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1 DBI top-20 ranked states and corresponding GCI rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Georgia’s 2009 Ease of Doing Business rankings, all ten indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contributors

Rawi Abdelal is the Herbert F. Johnson Professor of International Management at Harvard Business School.

Nehal Bhuta is Professor of Public International Law at the European University Institute.

Mark Blyth is Professor of International Political Economy at Brown University.

Mlada Bukovansky is Professor in the Department of Government at Smith College.

Alexander Cooley is Professor of Political Science at Barnard College, Columbia University.

Seva Gunitsky is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

Samuel Schueth received his Ph.D. from the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota and currently works as a professional social scientist and consultant.

Jack Snyder is the Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations in the Political Science Department at Columbia University.
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.
The typescript and ideas presented have been vastly improved from advice and feedback provided by two Cambridge University Press reviewers and participants at workshops held at Yale University, Columbia University's International Politics Seminar, Koç University, and Cornell University's International Law/International Relations Colloquium. The editors are especially thankful to Sarah Levine for her invaluable research assistance and to Audrey Greene for assistance in preparing the manuscript. Chapter 6 is an edited version of the article “Assembling international competitiveness: The Republic of Georgia, USAID, and the Doing Business Project,” *Economic Geography* 87, no. 1 (2011): 51–77. We thank Wiley for granting permission for its inclusion.
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
USfP US Fund for Peace