



RUSSIA IN TODAY'S WORLD: AN EXPERIMENT IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

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Abstract:

This article deals with the problem of assessment of Russia's current position in the world in general and among other nations in particular. Its major focus is not on expert opinions but on hard data from international and national statistics. Five new complex and correlated global indices and ratings are introduced: (1) State capacity; (2) External and internal threats; (3) Potential for international influence; (4) Quality of life; and (5) Institutional basis of democracy. These indices and corresponding ratings of the 192 countries of world provide an insight into the contradictory and ambiguous state of affairs in Russia and Russia's position in the world, combining its strong and weak points. Methods of multidimensional statistical analysis (discriminant, factor, cluster analysis, etc.) are also used to confirm general findings related to the problem under consideration.

Keywords: Russia; position; international relations.

Resumen:

Este artículo trata del problema de evaluar la posición actual de Rusia en el mundo, en general y entre otras naciones en particular. No está centrado en opiniones de expertos, sino en datos de estadísticas internacionales y nacionales. Se presentan cinco nuevos índices complejos y correlacionados: (1) capacidad estatal; (2) amenazas externas e internas; (3) potencial de influencia internacional; (4) calidad de vida; y (5) base institucional de la democracia. Estos índices y los correspondientes valores para los 192 países del mundo nos permiten comprender la contradictoria y ambigua situación de Rusia y su posición en el mundo, combinando sus puntos fuertes y débiles. Se usan también métodos de análisis estadístico multidimensional para confirmar las conclusiones generales sobre el problema estudiado.

Palabras clave: Rusia; posición; relaciones internacionales.

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Introduction

Russia is among 192 sovereign countries in the world — all members of the UN. All of them have unique features and characteristics, specific roles in the world, different levels and stages of development, particular national agendas, various political systems and regimes, etc. Different methods and criteria of comparative analysis of countries and polities have been used within different research as well as politically motivated projects². There are particular pros and cons in each of these and similar projects. In many cases these are long-term projects with high levels of citation, extensive data bases and time series. They are based on specific theoretical foundations and assume methodological improvements. However, in most of the cases these projects imply the use of one-dimensional scales of comparative analysis (democracy — autocracy, corruption — absence of corruption, freedom of press — censorship, etc.). Such approaches may be useful for particular purposes but for a comprehensive comparative analysis one may need a more multidimensional methodology. Besides, in a number of cases one needs to take into account politically biased expert opinions as criteria for evaluation of particular countries.

The “Political Atlas of the World” project³ presents an experiment in multidimensional statistical and comparative analysis and classification of countries of the world along a number of variables (i.e. “atlas”, not a “map”). An attempt was made to limit expert assessments and to rely predominantly on universal statistical databases (UN, UNESCO, World Bank, WTO, WHO, SIPRI, Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as national statistics, national constitutions and laws, etc.). A specific database of the project was developed (about 70 variables for each of 192 countries) and processed in SPSS with the subsequent use of various methods of multidimensional statistical analysis (correlation, regression, discriminant, factor, cluster analysis, etc.).

Our project was guided by a set of assumptions supported by theoretical and empirical arguments. One is recognition of the fact that the structural diversity of the modern world has set political development on different paths, or vectors. To see that this is so, one can look back at the political evolution of post-communist countries, some of which are consolidating into liberal democracies of Western type, others are emerging as autocracies of types unknown in past history, and still others are establishing themselves as hybrid regimes of every hue.

Another assumption is that no universal political models exist in the modern world to fit each and every country or nation, however whoever might wish they could. Not even what appear to be “ideal” patterns of political, social, and economic setup, if they are implanted to an irresponsive environment (Afghanistan and Iraq are the latest examples of how deceptive an attractive illusion, as it appears at first sight, can be). Political patterns, abundant as they are already, are multiplying, while internal and external factors shaping up national political models are proliferating.

² See: POLITY projects of Ted Robert Gurr *et al.*, Index of Democratization by Tatu Vanhanen, Freedom House projects, Transformation Index by Bertelsmann Stiftung, Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, Globalization Index by A.T.Kearney and Foreign Policy Magazine, Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders, Economic Freedom of the World Index by Cato Institute, etc.

³ The project was launched by MGIMO-University and the Institute for Social Design in 2005. The project team includes the author of this article (project director) and Yuri Polunin, Michail Mironyuk, Ivan Timofeev, Michail Ilyin, Elena Meleshkina together with more than 40 other experts and analysts. Preliminary results of the project are published in Melville, Andrei (ed.) (2007): *Political Atlas of the Modern World*, Moscow, MGIMO-University (in Russian).



We concede that the paths of national and global political evolution are molded by “structures” and “actors” alike, and, we want to make a special point, that political development is an “organic” process and attempts to implant even “ideal” political models from outside to a social context which is not ready (or rather not prepared) to accept them, are, most likely, doomed to fail. We are far from suggesting that no global trends (such as globalization per se, localization, transnationalization or democratization) are taking hold in the world. Our point is that the world does not, and will not accept ever, a single socio-political model to embrace.

The emerging new dimensions and realms of the body politic have injected a new significance into political interactions on the *supranational* (international and regional) level across traditional national borders, and on the *subnational* (regional and local) level, across countries rather than borders. This added a new quality to traditional domestic and foreign policies of all countries. A modern state, or, more exactly, a community of countries, has morphed from a club of sovereign member countries to a framework, a kind of “reference grid”, for all political processes to evolve in.

The expanding realm of the body politic in different, at times opposite, directions calls for a balanced and considerate analysis to be appraised. Indeed, a greater role in world politics is played by nongovernmental actors, and governments’ prerogatives and their countries’ borders are going through changes, so great indeed that they look eroded, in terms of dogmas professed by preceding generations. For all that, today, too (and, basically, in the short run as well) nothing compares with nation-states in their role as basic “cells” of the world structure.

No matter how real globalization and transnationalization might be, national polities exist, as they have ever been, each within its confined space and its specific timeframe. National polities each have their own “evolutionary age” and develop as their internal logic commands and their priorities call for.

Do we really have a suitable scale to compare them?

We started with an attempt to outline the key factors affecting individual polities’ standing in the world.

The first factor is the **quality of the state itself**, the degree of state capacity, that is, the level of real (not formal) sovereignty, independence, and self-sufficiency in policymaking, and an ability of the state to maintain an efficient operation and reproduction of political, economic, social, and any other institutions. The second factor is the **magnitude of threats and challenges** posed from outside and inside, and capable of reducing, or even draining, a statehood of efficiency and staying power. The third factor is the state’s combined **resources it can rally to impress its stamp on the international environment** in achieving its national objectives. The fourth factor is the **quality of the state’s delivery of its social functions**, above all, giving the livelihood to its own population. Finally, a country’s standing in the world is affected by whether or not it can draw on an **institutional basis to promote democratic development** (in the first place, traditions of political competition, representation, participation, constraints on the executive branch of government, respect for the constitution, etc.). This factor gives an indication of how much leverage the constituents have to influence decision-making on issues affecting their vested interests. These traditions can, in theory, strike root in the “subsoil” of undemocratic regimes, but their institutional legacy (socio-economic, cultural, political, or other values of modern democracy) carries the makings of truly democratic institutions and practices.



On the basis of these assumptions we have developed a system of 5 correlated indices which are composed of a complex of economic, social, political, demographic and other variables:

- **State capacity index;**
- **External and internal threats index;**
- **Potential for international influence index;**
- **Quality of life index;**
- **Index of the institutional basis of democracy.**

Thereupon the ratings of 192 countries of the world were constructed⁴.

Within the next stage of the project the factor analysis was used for the search of the so called non-correlated principal components which provide a specific method of analysis of structures composed by countries in the principal components' space. Cluster analysis was another methodological tool used in the project which largely confirmed findings of the previous stages of our research.

Combination of these multidimensional statistical approaches reveals a specific and largely contradictory position of contemporary Russia among other nations of the world.

1. Global Ratings: Some Findings

Each index of the project consists of a number of variables which, by definition, may have different importance, or "weight" within an index. The real "weights" of these variables are determined by discriminant analysis, a specific statistical method used for this purpose. The variables of the indices and their "weights" are presented in *Appendix 1*.

5 ratings of 192 countries of the world according to the abovementioned indices were the results of this stage of our research. Some examples of these ratings can be found in *Appendix 2*.

1.1. Rating of State Capacity

46 countries in the rating (USA, Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, S. Korea, China, Great Britain, Canada, Denmark, Russia, Island, Norway, etc.) belong to relatively strong and sustainable states, while 55 (Chad, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Georgia, Eritrea, etc.) are unsuccessful or failed states (others are "in between"). Leaders of the rating (with some exceptions) are countries with solid institutional basis of democracy, high quality of life and low external and internal threats. State capacity is inversely proportional to the level of national threats and directly proportional to the quality of life.

⁴ 5 ratings of 192 countries as well as all major findings of the project are available at www.worldpolities.org.



1.2. Rating of External and Internal Threats

Leaders of this rating, i.e. countries with high external and internal threats (Ethiopia, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Sri-Lanka, Ruanda, Tajikistan, etc.) have low state capacity and quality of life. Among countries with low external and internal threats (Canada, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, etc.) there are both democracies and autocracies. Level of external and internal threats is not necessarily correlated with the capacity for international influence

1.3. Rating of Potential for International Influence

Leaders of the rating (USA, China, Japan, Germany, France, Great Britain, Russia, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Canada, etc.) form the core of G8 plus China (and some regional leaders). Potential for international influence is directly proportional to state capacity and almost unrelated to the nature of political system and quality of life. Countries with strong potential for international influence present a small and very specific group of countries which are different from all others and which differ from each other

1.4. Rating of Quality of Life

This rating is very well correlated with the Human Development Index of UNDP. Among the leaders of the rating we can see Luxemburg, Ireland, Norway, San-Marino, USA, Switzerland, Island, etc.). Among the lowest in the rating — Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Zambia, Burundi, Chad, etc.). Quality of life is not guaranteed but at least partly depends on state capacity. External and internal threats represent the main obstacle to quality of life. Quality of life is higher in democracies (with some regional variations).

1.5. Rating of Institutional Basis of Democracy

Taking the proparliamentarian bias of the index, the leaders of the rating are Switzerland, Canada, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Finland, etc. In the bottom of the rating — Myanmar, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Turkmenistan, Eritrea, etc.). The results of the rating imply that democracy does not settle down in the situation of serious external and internal threats. Democracy is practically not correlated with the potential for international influence. Democratic development is conducive to improvements in the quality of life

Our analysis reveals pretty strong correlations between several indices used in our research project (see *Appendix 3*). These results seem to confirm the cohesiveness of the data base of the project and the propriety of our methodology.

2. Factor Analysis: Some Findings



Within the next stage of our research we have used factor analysis in order to search for the so called non-correlated principle components which could provide a more “compressed” image of the world structure and positions of particular countries within it. We attempted to calculate individual countries’ explanations by principal components and to analyze the structures composed by countries in principal components’ space.

2.1. Four Principal Components

Our analysis revealed four principal components (or, in a way, “world political projections”):

- 1) **“Threats” — vs. — “Quality of life”** (i.e. “national survival and its quality”);
- 2) **“State Capacity” — vs. — “Democracy”** (i.e. “state basis of democracy”);
- 3) **“State Capacity” — vs. — “Quality of life”** (i.e. “human price of stateness”);
- 4) **“Potential for international influence”** (i.e. “maximization of influence”)

Each principal component has its particular explanatory potential in terms of defining of the factors which unite or differentiate countries of the world. The most “weighty” is the first principal component (“Threats” — vs. — “Quality of life”), the second — “State capacity” — vs. — “Democracy”; the third — “State capacity” — vs. — “Quality of life”; and the fourth — “Potential for international influence”. See *Appendix 4*.

Each country can be explained by principal components in different accordance (see *Appendix 5*).

2.2. Countries in Principal Components’ Space

Within the space of the first (“Threats” — vs. — “Quality of life”) and the second (“State capacity” — vs. — “Democracy”) principal components we can see a very clear structure — an ellipse. The left pole presents a constellation of successful countries with high quality of life (Lichtenstein, Luxemburg, France, Italy, Switzerland, etc.). The right pole is actually an arch consisting of a variety of countries with very high external and internal threats (Iraq, Georgia, Haiti, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Sierra-Leone, etc.). Two arches uniting these two poles are composed either of the countries which are democracies with weak state capacity (upper arch — Moldova, Samoa, Dominica, Tuvalu, Mongolia, etc.) or countries with relatively strong state capacity but without any institutional basis of democracy (lower arch — Libya, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Belorussia, etc.). See *Appendix 6*.

Several conclusions come to mind. There are countries, so to say, under stress; for them national survival vis-à-vis enormous external and internal threats is the main priority. The trade off for them is low quality of life, weak state capacity, absence of democracy. There seem to be two basic strategic options in order to overcome the state of threats — either through democratization (at the expense of state capacity) or through the creation of a strong state (at the expense of democracy). However, these two tracks may not necessarily contradict each other in the long run — as the countries of the left pole demonstrate combination of state



capacity, security, quality of life and democracy is still possible. I.e. democracy may not necessarily contradict state capacity.

Within the space of the first (“Threats” — vs. — “Quality of life”) and the fourth (“Potential for international influence”) principal components we see another structure with important explanatory potential. Along the first principal component two similar poles are reproduced with practically the same countries representing dangerous national existence under external and internal threats, on the one hand, and quality of life and success, on the other.

However, countries, extremely important for the understanding of the structure of world politics, can not be explained by the first principal component. Only when the fourth principal component is introduced we can see the world leaders, the most influential countries of the world — the USA, Russia, China and also, at some distance, India, Japan, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Brazil. Leaders of international influence represent a very specific group of countries — different from all others and different from each other. See *Appendix 7*.

3. Cluster Analysis: Some Findings

The purpose of the cluster analysis is to create different-scale typologies, clusters of objects on the basis of objective similarities of their features. In our case this method was used to reveal different typologies of the groups of countries within the structure of today’s world.

2 clusters give us unimpressive results — they simply divide all 192 countries into two groups: tentatively, “winners” and “losers”. However, at the 10 cluster scale we have some information worth examination. No doubt, there are clusters difficult to interpret, but the logic of some clusters is pretty clear: for example, “*Leaders of influence*” (USA, UK, Germany, Italy, China, Russia, France, and Japan); “*Introvert democracies*” (Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Poland, etc.); “*Countries under threat*” (Bangladesh, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, etc.); “*Democratic clones*” (Bahamas, Sent Kits and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, etc.); “*Autocracies with problematic state capacity*” (Angola, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, etc.); “*Autocracies with relatively strong state capacity*” (Iran, North Korea, Turkmenistan, etc.); “*Post-communist consolidated democracies*” (Poland, Check Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, etc.), etc.

At the 30 cluster scale the USA, Russia and China get separated from the group of world leaders as independent and stable cluster. It seems to us that this cluster dimension of our research would need additional attention in the future.

4. Russia in Global Ratings

4.1. Russia in the State Capacity Rating

Russia is ranked *relatively high*, in 27th place, on the State Capacity Index, with 7.5 points out of total 10. This is the highest rank among all post-communist and post-USSR countries. Putting it in different terms, after more than a decade and a half of reforms, Russia has sustained its statehood and has moved on to leadership positions in this respect among post-



communist and post-USSR countries, **but is still behind other G8 countries, China, and several European countries.**

What explains Russia's high performance? Which factors contribute to its current ranking and which act against it?

First among the contributing factors is its relatively high self-sufficiency, evidence of which is the small share of foreign aid in its GNI and a moderate foreign debt. Russia is among only a few countries that are independent in several engineering industries, which is suggested by the ratio of patent applications filed by residents and nonresidents. As the successor to the USSR (and the Russian Empire), the country has a long statehood tradition. Besides, it does not have a foreign military presence in whatever form on its territory.

Russia has not made to the roster of absolute ranking leaders because of variables related to domestic conflicts. Although the situation is far better in this field than it was in the late 1990s, one of the country's regions, the Northern Caucasus, is still festering with conflict, which flares up occasionally in a loss of life. Besides, even though Russia draws high scores on several variables, they are still below the maximum. One, for example, is Russia's moderate foreign debt (in 2003 and 2004, further reduced significantly in 2006), while many countries owe no foreign debt at all. Russia's technological independence is high, but it is still higher in the United States, Japan, and Germany.

Shaken very recently by serious convulsions threatening its survival as a unitary state, Russia is ahead of most of the world's countries in the state capacity rating. It is also trailed by the former USSR's allies in the Warsaw Pact. Poland and Romania, for example, are only a few fractions of a point behind it in the 32nd and 38th places (or 7.32 and 7.12 points), respectively. Hungary falls further behind, in 45th place (with 6.88 points). The gap is still wider for Bulgaria, in 70th place (5.77 points), the Czech Republic, in 80th place (5.51 points), and Slovakia, 82nd place (with 5.41 points).

Russia is really an exception among the former republics of the USSR, which gained independence after 1991. They all hover at half-point down the rankings, or are closer to bottom. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan occupy the highest state capacity ranks among them in the 87th and 94th places, respectively. Their earnings from unprocessed commodity exports (for the larger part, oil and gas) and their undemocratic personalistic regimes allow them to be variously independent economically and to maintain internal stability in the short and medium term, even though the way they manage this draws condemnation from the international community. Both countries, however, have short-lived statehood traditions and depend on the outside world for technologies.

Further down the line are countries that have maintained their developed socio-economic infrastructure and kept a lid on open conflicts, which makes them stable with a favorable growth environment (not without foreign support at times). These are Belarus, in 102nd place (with 4.78 points), Lithuania in 108th (4.55), Latvia in 110th (4.48), Kazakhstan in 111th (4.45), Ukraine in 113th (4.35), and Estonia in 122nd (with 4.02 points). The absence of a longstanding and continuous sovereign statehood tradition, technological, financial, and economic dependence on foreign countries, latent conflicts, and permissive attitude to foreign military presence largely account for their relatively low rankings. Besides, low rankings are an inevitable result of **conventionality inherent in any rating** — it is significant (at times, critical) in this situation that **countries differing in state capacity type and in what state capacity comes from (for example, Belarus and Lithuania) find themselves side by side.**



The former USSR republics that are embroiled in open conflicts and mired in territorial disputes, or those that are economically weak and depend on international organizations or other countries for livelihood rank still nearer the bottom of the country list. The highest-ranking of them, Azerbaijan, is in 141st place (with 3.21 points), Moldova in 164th place (2.37), Tajikistan in 172nd place (2.01), Armenia in 177th place (1.85), Georgia in 183rd place (1.37), and Kyrgyzstan in 191st place (0.08 points).

Thus, Russia appears to have a fairly strong state capacity and a potential to beef it up by stimulating economic growth and institutionalizing internal conflicts by steering them toward a peaceful resolution.

4.2. Russia in the External and Internal Threats Rating

Russia's standing in the external and internal threats index rankings raises *deep concerns*. It sits in 81st place (with 4.34 points), a few ranks above the midpoint between Ethiopia in first place (with all of 10 points) and Canada exposed to the least number of threats (with 0 points).

Russia faces an *impressive catalogue of threats*, including terrorism, territorial disputes and claims, presence of separatist or antigovernment movements on its territory, attempts at unconstitutional change of government (in the country's most recent history), unbalanced export, natural disasters, dwindling population numbers, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and surplus migration.

And yet, Russia has been spared threats such as drinking water scarcities, malnutrition, and hunger, which are given a high weight in the index (because of their high incidence rate around the world). These circumstances are largely the reason why *Russia has evaded finding itself among the leaders of threatened countries*. Another contributing factor is the small weight (based on the discriminant analysis results) assigned to some of the threats confronting the country. The downside is, however, that Russia is under a few major threats (in terms of their contribution to the rating variable calculation) of political nature — presence of illegal separatist or antigovernment movements on the country's territory and attempts at unconstitutional change of government (in its most recent history).

Russia's closest neighbors among the majors in the threats rating are China in 78th place (with 4.48 points), Israel in 70th place (4.43), the Republic of Korea in 82nd place (4.28), Japan in 87th place (4.03), and Turkey in 88th place (with 4.00 points). These countries are faced with *very different sets of threats* that have a pattern and weight close to those confronting Russia. The US, too, is facing serious threats (which put it in 118th place with 3.06 points).

Central and East European countries are in a relatively favorable situation, with a minimum number of threats posed to them. They are ranked, from bottom up, as follows: Bulgaria is in 189th place (with 0.67 points), the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary in 174th, 173rd, and 172nd places (with 1.02 points each), and Slovenia, in 167th place (with 1.14 points).

Unlike Central and Eastern Europe, the former USSR republics are ranked within a much broader range of threats. While Russia places approximately in the middle of the rankings,



Lithuania (which is far down in 162nd place), Latvia (161st place), Belarus (160th place), Estonia (152nd place), Kazakhstan (141st place), and Ukraine (140th place) are on positive ground, harassed by a small number of threats only. The situation is not as cheerful for Moldova (134th), Armenia (120th), Uzbekistan (97th), and Turkmenistan (93rd), which still have better ratings than Russia's. The remaining countries, Georgia (38th), Azerbaijan (24th), Kyrgyzstan (19th), and Tajikistan (12th), are in a relatively grave situation from the perspective of external and internal threats.

In sum, *Russia is forced to respond to a broad, but not an ominous, array of challenges and threats*, compared to a majority of developing and several post-USSR countries struggling with continuing internal conflicts, which are confronted with much more serious threats, or in which the nature of the threats requires them to apply greater efforts.

4.3. Russia in the Potential of International Influence Rating

To recall, *Russia is among world leaders* in 7th place (with 2.60 points) in potential of international influence rankings. The rankings are topped by the United States (with 10 points), an enormous lead over the runner-up, China (3.93 points). Even if far behind the US in influence ratings, Russia is nearly as good as the other countries placing higher. The eight rating leaders include the G8 countries, in which Canada and Italy are replaced with China and India, respectively.

Significantly, Russia's leadership is not obviously overwhelming in terms of the weightiest variables. Compared to several other countries, its spending on defense and shares of world GDP and exports, and its contributions to the UN upkeep may appear relatively small. They are not as negligible as has been the recent fashion to underrate them in academic and political discourse in Russia itself. *While trailing the US, Russia places 6th in the world for defense spending, and a more distant 16th for share of world GDP and 16th for share of world exports.*

Russia's lag in ratings behind the other G8 countries is offset by a few minor variables, on which it has a "good" record. Indeed, Russia owes its leader role to its rising world standing, including its permanent member status in the UN Security Council, possession of nuclear weapons and modern air force, membership of the Paris Club, and military bases in other countries.

Russia has impressive rankings equal to, or just below, those of the other G8 countries on less significant variables. It contributes an appreciable share to UN funding. Its armed forces are the fourth largest military in the world. Finally, it is also among the world's most populous countries, even though its population numbers are on a downtrend.

Countries just above and below Russia in the rankings can be divided into two categories. Those above have bigger or lesser claims to *global and/or regional leadership* (in the military or economics). They are the US, China, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Russia, as we see it, appears to have similar claims, and so does India, which is breathing in its neck. Those below it are *big players in their regions* (it is immaterial to us whether a country plays a *negative* part, such as serving as a source of instability and threat, or has a *positive* role) — Italy, Saudi Arabia, Canada, North Korea, the Netherlands, Turkey, Belgium, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, and Pakistan.



The post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have a modest potential to exercise international influence. The biggest scorer among them is Poland, which is in 35th place (with 0.48 points). And so do the former republics of the USSR, except for Ukraine, which ranks 29th (with 0.59 points). In point of fact, Ukraine outperforms all Central and East European and post-USSR countries, save Russia, in this field.

This rating offers persuasive evidence that international influence potential is centered on a small club of great powers, including Russia. This country has a significant one-on-one influence potential, often a derivative inherited from the former USSR (a surplus of it in one area and a shortfall in another) and is confined to a number of factors, some of them natural (a small economy it has been for some time already and aging infrastructure) and others artificial (for example, inconsistent foreign and home policies).

A note long overdue is that *this rating only reflects potential, rather than actual, international influence*. In fact, this rating is only an indication that the potential to exert influence can be put to work with a varying effect, or that potential is not actual influence.

If applied to Russia, it means that “soft influence” components such as diplomacy and foreign policy strategy help channel existing potential influence into cultivating relations with foreign countries far and near and easing the squeeze on the resources available to it to project its influence. It is difficult, if not impossible at this stage of the Political Atlas project, however, to measure them.

4.4. Russia in the Quality of Life Rating

The quality of life ranking shows Russia in a *lowly* 73rd place, with 2.68 points on the 10-point scale. Considering the country’s aggregate potential, this is a discomfiting statistic. And yet, this does not fit into the media-trumpeted stereotype of Russia floundering near the bottom of quality of life rankings.

The country’s lackluster performance in these ratings is explained by its middling record on such significant variables as GDP per capita (63rd place in the world) and especially life expectancy (84th place). A similar record has been made in other variables as well, including spending on health care per capita (66th place), mortality from communicable diseases (62nd place), infant mortality (16 deaths per 1,000 infants against three in developed countries at the top of the rankings).

Education presents a considerably more cheery picture against this background. More than 90% of the country’s population have studied or are studying (at all secondary and higher education levels). But then, catastrophe is the right word for the sweep of death from injuries — murder, poisoning (including abuse of alcoholic drinks), deaths in road accidents, suicide, and the like, on so great a scale that Russia has been propelled to top place in the world in these standings.

A majority of post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe are a way below West European rating leaders and (except for Romania) above Russia — the Czech Republic is in 38th place (with 4.28 points), Hungary in 43rd (3.80 points), Poland in 48th (3.55 points), Slovakia in 49th (3.55 points), Croatia in 52nd (3.44 points), and Bulgaria in 70th place (with 2.21 points).



The former USSR republics have a relatively low quality of life. The three Baltic republics are an exception to this rule, Estonia placing 47th (with 3.57 points), Lithuania in 50th place (with 3.52 points), and Latvia in 55th place (with 3.29 points). The other countries in this group are all below Russia in quality of life rankings. Belarus is in 89th place (2.44 points), Ukraine in 101st place (2.20), Armenia in 104th place (2.13), Kazakhstan in 107th place (2.04), Georgia in 114th place (1.91), Kyrgyzstan in 121st place (1.72), Azerbaijan in 122nd place (1.71), Turkmenistan in 123rd place (1.70), Uzbekistan in 128th place (1.53), Moldova in 129th place (1.52), and Tajikistan in 139th place (with 1.30 points).

Although Russia is safely well above the bottom, *quality of life is a major matter of concern for the nation*. Its most urgent priority is reducing causes of death at all levels, improving the circumstances “for each and every one,” and giving a greater value to human life.

4.5. Russia in the Institutional Basis of Democracy Rating

Russia is in 93rd place, with 5.24 points on a ten-point scale, in the rating of the institutional basis of democracy. Switzerland is tops and Myanmar bottommost. Our reading of Russia’s upper-middle position is that it is *yet far to go* to catch up with advanced European and/or European-type democracies. It is not, though, an authoritarian country, in which there is no place for democratic institutions at all. Obviously, *a set of institutions we could describe as essential (even if inadequate) for a sustainable democratic governance* has been put in place in post-USSR Russia. And more, these institutions have been around for too short a time to wear down the effect of the country’s long tradition of undemocratic rule.

Our analysis shows that a majority of factors that have dragged Russia down the rankings are a legacy of its historical traditions and twists in the evolution of Russian political institutions after 1991. The minimum electoral tradition is still short (originating in 1993), with two attempts at unconstitutional change of government in between (in 1991 and 1993). As if it was not enough, the national agenda has lately been dominated by *other priorities thought to be vital for the nation’s advance* but, we regret to admit it, at times incompatible with the accepted ideals of democracy.

The pattern of competition at presidential election is a critical parameter slicing points off Russia’s rating. In fact, this parameter carries the greatest weight in the index.

These deficiencies aside, Russia is otherwise a good match for democratic countries. Elections draw a large proportion of the electorate, a clear sign that minorities are not discriminated against at the ballot box. No instances have been recorded of competition sapped by a referendum to give the head of state yet another term in office. The incumbent and his predecessor did not hold office for more than two terms.

Russia is rated on a par with Peru ranked 92nd (with 5.35 points), South Africa in 94th place (5.23 points), and Turkey in 99th (5.13 points). In no way models of democracy, these three countries set out on their way toward democratic governance riding the third wave of democratization and now have much to show for it.

Central European countries stand above or considerably higher than Russia, but below the “old” democracies, in the ratings. Croatia ranks in 27th place (with 6.95 points), Hungary



places 28th (6.94), Romania 31st (6.69), the Czech Republic 36th (6.56), Poland 40th (6.47), Slovenia 45th (6.43), and Bulgaria 46th (6.42).

By contrast, the former USSR republics are spread widely over the rankings. Some of them get higher ratings than Russia and compare well with post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Lithuania places 32nd (6.69 points), Ukraine 41st (6.46), Latvia 52nd (6.23), and Estonia 58th (6.03). Further down, Armenia (67th place with 5.86 points) and Moldova (81st place with 5.64 points) are way above Russia and below most Central and East European countries. The remaining post-USSR countries are far below Russia — Azerbaijan in 135th place (3.46 points), Belarus in 149th (2.23), Kazakhstan in 152nd (2.10), Kyrgyzstan in 154th (2.10), Uzbekistan in 159th (1.87), Georgia in 160th (1.79), Tajikistan in 172nd (1.05), and Turkmenistan in 187th (0.03).

Both in the general rankings and among the post-USSR countries, Russia *holds middle ground, without leaning toward autocracies or looking for a place to take up among democracies.*

5. Russia in the Principal Components Space

A look at Russia's place in the principal components space gives us its detailed profile. Unlike many other countries, Russia (or rather its distinction from other countries) is overwhelmingly explained by a single component, the fourth, which we call "power projection," that accounts for 75.6% of all explanations. This means that *potential of international influence is the most prominent typological characteristic that makes a country different from others.* This index carries the greatest weight in the component. In short, *maximizing its worldwide influence is what makes Russia so distinct in today's world.*

According to our observations, the fourth principal component but very rarely dominates country profile explanations. Whenever it does, it does so in the case of great powers, primarily the US (78.5%), Russia, and India (73.5%). It is also inordinately high for China (41.4%), Germany (41.1%), Japan (40.5%), Ukraine (33.6%), Turkey (32.8%), France (31.4%), and the United Kingdom (26.6%). These countries combine great power status and something of their typologies. For example, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany combine the fourth and first principal components, or a blend of considerable potential international influence and, what other influence-packing countries lack, a high quality of life and few threats.

Apart from the fourth principal component, Russia's profile is also explained by the second principal component, projection of the democratic state basis, which is left with a significantly smaller share of 22.2%. The implication is that the *country takes a double-track approach to building democracy and reinforcing statehood.* Democratization threatens to bring the problems of territorial integrity and statehood to a head, while a greater focus can be shifted to statehood at the expense of democracy. Russia is so far acting cautiously on both tracks, which can be gathered from the tenuous balance it maintains today between statehood and democratic institutional basis.

This verdict is validated by comparison with countries for which the second principal component plays a far greater role as regards their explanation. Comparison is centered on two distinct groups of countries — those where democracy is sustained at the expense of



statehood, and whose where it is the other way around. The first group includes, for example, Moldova and Macedonia. The second principal component provides 81% of Moldova's profile explanation — formal democratic institutions coexist, in a moderately developed format, with a statehood plunged deeply into a crisis. For Macedonia, the explanation offered by the second principal component is as high as 86.7% — its democratic institutions are at odds with its neglected statehood (evidenced by heavy injections of foreign aid, separatist moods in the Albanian community, and so on). The second group brings together Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia. Uzbekistan's explanation is 73.5% second principal component — statehood is shored up by whatever its undemocratic political regime can throw into the deal. The second principal component rises to 87.7% for Turkmenistan where statehood is enforced by a personalistic regime. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, which is 90.6% explained by the second principal component.

The other two principal components, first and third, are too weak to explain anything about Russia. The first principal component is a complete nonstarter — survival or its quality is not, in principle, something Russia needs badly. This not to say that Russia is immune to quality of life worries and threats (the two heavyweights of the first principal component). The fact is that they are overshadowed by other components that give Russia the distinct face it presents to the world.

The third principal component, projection of human costs of statehood, has a very low explanatory power for Russia — a negligible 2.2%: unlike Colombia or Peru, Russia is not at a crossroads between quality of life and statehood, and does not have to sacrifice one to save the other.

6. Russia in Cluster Analysis

Russia owes its standing in the clusters above all to its similarity to countries in the group of great powers. As the number of clusters increases, Russia tends to remain among the strongest players on the world stage. This is best illustrated by changes in Russia's position in the clusters increasing from 10 to 40 (a scale of under 10 clusters is too general, while that of over 40 is overburdened with unneeded details).

A 10-cluster scale brings out a group of countries that includes China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as Russia. These countries share a common distinction of possessing a high potential of international influence. They all are largely explained by the fourth component and lead the country ratings in the potential of international influence index. What might be a surprise, on first approximation, India did not make to the group. A country of high potential international influence, it is notorious for its low quality of life, a long list of external and internal threats, and serious internal problems (which all make maintaining its statehood a challenge). The other great powers have a high statehood level, high or medium quality of life, and low or moderate threats. In principal components terminology, India is closer to the “threats arc” than to the “affluence pole.”

As the number of clusters increases, the great powers group falls apart quickly. On the 13th cluster, it separates into further two groups — with France, Germany, Italy, and the UK in one group and China, Russia, and the US in the other. The countries in the first group have a fairly high potential of international influence matched up by a high quality of life and few threats. In the context of principal components, these countries are explained in terms of the



fourth and first components, that is, the great power status and high quality of life are their typological attributes. The second group consists of countries that are largely explained by the fourth component, almost without any contribution from the first component. In short, these are great powers for whom the quality of life and threats are no longer at the top of concerns. Moreover, a key role in their description is played by the second component, that is, each of them is faced, in one way or another, by the statehood vs. democracy choice. The second component is worth 56.6% for China, 22.2% for Russia, and 14.4% for the US.

Russia, China, and the US stay on together long into the clustering exercise. The group only splits on the 33rd cluster, when China falls off to form a cluster of its own, while Russia and the US jump into another cluster. China prefers to keep its own company because international influence is less of a preoccupation for China than it is for either Russia or the US. The fourth principal component describes 41.4% of China's profile, while the figure for Russia is 75.6%, and 78.5% for the US. Looking at it from the other end, these countries differ in the extent to which they are explained by the second component. It is the largest for China and smallest for the US.

The Russia-US group remains steady as long as the 40th cluster. This is clearly an indication that the two countries share many interests on the world scene and, at least, some challenges and problems.

Russia's place in the multidimensional classification of the world's nations could be called contradictory and ambiguous. It combines strong and weak points, from its high potential international influence to a low quality of life to midway institutional democracy. Our findings are more than our contribution to efforts to overcome simplification and stereotypes held about Russia. They also identify problems this country is facing and the opportunities it does not yet use in full.

Appendix 1

1.1. State capacity index

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Foreign aid, % of GNI	0,57
Impact of internal conflicts on regime's stability	0,45
Indebtedness	0,31
Duration of sovereign statehood	0,30
Casualties of internal conflicts	0,27
Applications for patents by residents — vs. — applications by non-residents	0,27
Regions involved in conflicts	0,22
Foreign military presence/deployment	0,16
Exchange rate arrangements and monetary frameworks	0,15
Share of the title nation in country's population	0,12

**1.2. External and internal threats index**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Water shortage	0,47
Illegal separatist and/or antigovernment movements	0,39
Military governments or attempts of coups d'etat during last 25 years	0,37
Undernourishment and famine (according to FAO)	0,30
Potential natural disasters	0,27
HIV/AIDS epidemics	0,20
Undiversified exports (one or two export commodities)	0,16
Territorial claims by foreign states	0,16
Chronic trade deficit	0,14
Legal secessionist movements	0,13
Threats of external aggression (in government's assessment)	0,13
Terrorist threats	0,11
Excessive migration (in government's assessment)	-0,06
Dependence on energy imports	0,06
Depopulation	0,03

1.3. Potential for international influence index

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Military expenditures	0,85
IMF member's voting power	0,83
Share of world goods and services exports	0,80
Share of world GDP	0,77
Factors of influence	0,66
<i>Permanent membership in the UN Security Council</i>	
<i>Membership in the Paris club</i>	
<i>Nuclear weapons</i>	
<i>Advanced military systems</i>	
<i>Nobel prize winners</i>	
<i>Military deployments abroad</i>	
Contribution to the UN regular budget	0,61
Armed forces personnel	0,55
Share of world population	0,48

1.4. Quality of life index

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Weight</i>
GDP per capita	0,79
Life expectancy at birth	0,57
Health care expenditure per capita	0,38
Infant mortality	-0,38
Involvement ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools	0,36
Death rate (communicable diseases)	-0,35
Death rate (injuries)	-0,15

**1.5. Index of the institutional basis of democracy**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Head of the executive elections competition	0,68
Performance of democratic institutions	0,66
<i>competitive elections without interruption since 1919-1921</i>	
<i>referendum to extend term for the head of state/executive, noncompetitive regimes</i>	
<i>military coups or unconstitutional regime changes during last 33 years</i>	
<i>more than two terms held by the head of state/executive</i>	
<i>influence of parliament on the appointment of members of government</i>	
Duration of an uninterrupted minimal competition tradition (1945-2005)	0,51
Parliamentary elections competition	0,50
Share of registered voters to the overall population	0,49
Share of women in parliament (lower chamber)	0,29

Appendix 2**2.1. State capacity rating (examples)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
USA	1	10,0
Japan	2	9,34
Germany	4	8,93
Korea (South)	8	8,53
China	12	8,24
Italy	18	8,06
Russia	27	7,50
South Africa	30	7,35
Saudi Arabia	41	6,99
Iran	43	6,97
Hungary	45	6,88
India	81	5,42
Korea (North)	98	5,01
Ukraine	113	4,35
Ethiopia	154	2,66
Central African Republic	188	0,81

2.2. External and internal threats rating (examples)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
Ethiopia	1	10,00
Central African Republic	10	7,57
India	44	5,99
Iran	57	5,34
Korea (North)	68	4,89
China	78	4,48
Russia	81	4,34
Korea (South)	82	4,28



Japan	87	4,03
Saudi Arabia	101	3,63
USA	118	3,06
South Africa	136	2,37
Ukraine	141	2,27
Italy	170	1,05
Hungary	172	1,02
Germany	181	0,77

2.3. Potential for international influence rating (examples)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
USA	1	10,00
China	2	3,93
Japan	3	3,25
Germany	4	3,24
Russia	7	2,60
India	8	2,28
Italy	9	1,95
Saudi Arabia	10	1,69
Korea (North)	12	1,25
Korea (South)	16	1,02
Iran	20	0,83
Ukraine	29	0,59
South Africa	34	0,49
Hungary	53	0,29
Ethiopia	62	0,22
Central African Republic	160	0,02

2.4. Quality of life rating (examples)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
USA	5	6,53
Japan	14	6,05
Italy	21	5,72
Germany	22	5,55
Korea (South)	33	4,66
Hungary	43	3,80
Saudi Arabia	56	3,21
Russia	73	2,68
Iran	85	2,49
China	95	2,35
Ukraine	101	2,20
South Africa	111	2,00
India	125	1,60
Korea (North)	131	1,46
Ethiopia	186	0,33
Central African Republic	192	0,00

**2.5. Institutional basis of democracy rating (examples)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
India	16	7,35
USA	18	7,30
Italy	24	7,02
Hungary	28	6,94
Korea (South)	34	6,62
Germany	35	6,06
Ukraine	42	6,46
Japan	43	6,46
Russia	93	5,24
South Africa	94	5,23
Ethiopia	124	4,03
Central African Republic	139	3,20
Iran	161	1,76
China	178	0,69
Korea (North)	179	0,68
Saudi Arabia	183	0,00

Appendix 3

	State capacity index	External and internal threats index	Index of the institutional basis of democracy	Quality of life index	Potential for international influence index
State capacity index	1,000	-0,627	0,465	0,761	0,581
External and internal threats index	-0,627	1,000	-0,534	-0,813	-0,166
Index of the institutional basis of democracy	0,465	-0,534	1,000	0,570	0,156
Quality of life index	0,761	-0,813	0,570	1,000	0,321
Potential for international influence index	0,581	-0,166	0,156	0,321	1,000

**Appendix 4****Principal components and their explanatory potential**

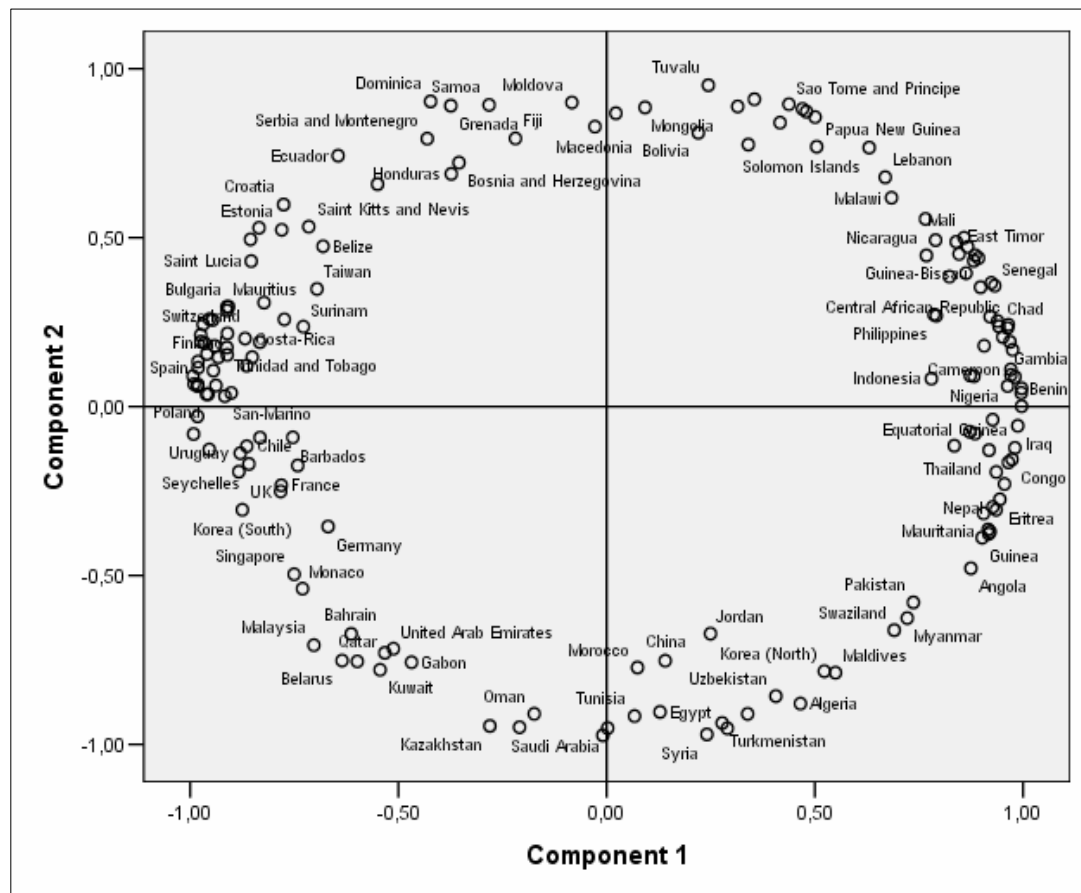
Component	Variance explained %	Cumulative %
1	55,4	55,4
2	26,4	81,8
3	11,2	93,0
4	7,0	100,0

Appendix 5**Percentage of countries' explanation by principal components: examples**

Country/ Component	1. Threats — vs. — Quality of life	2. State Capacity — vs. — Democracy	3. State Capacity — vs. — Quality of life	4. Potential of international influence
Australia	98,4	0,7	0,8	0,1
Ethiopia	95,0	2,8	0,5	1,7
Libya	0,0	94,7	1,0	4,3
Tuvalu	6,0	90,5	0,1	3,5
Colombia	1,6	3,0	81,8	13,6
Peru	1,0	0,1	81,3	17,6
USA	1,4	14,4	5,8	78,5
Russia	0,0	22,2	2,2	75,6
China	2,0	56,6	0,0	41,4
Japan	24,5	31,8	3,2	40,5
Germany	44,7	12,6	1,5	41,1



Appendix 6





Appendix 7

