

**DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN WORLD.
RUSSIA IN THE WESTERN RANKINGS - PROBLEMS OF MEASUREMENT**

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At present, there is no consensus on how to conceptualize and measure democracy well enough to compare political regimes as accurately as possible and to identify various types of democracy. The need to measure democracy, the development of its institutions has long existed, and thus it will allow finding ways to improve the organization of public authority [1; p. 23-30], to solve numerous problems of assessing and forecasting political processes of a different kind and scale. The need to measure democracy in the modern state is also conditioned by the development of the society.

To characterize a state, taking as a criterion the development of democracy, political technologists proposed a system of indices and criteria. But since there are numerous of them now, we will focus on those that have received wide publicity and popularity:

- 1) The index of political rights and civil liberties, developed by Freedom House (FH);
- 2) The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index (EIU);
- 3) Democracy Status Index, calculated within the Bertelsmann transformation index (BTI), financed by the private foundation of Bertelsmann;
- 4) Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013;
- 5) "The political atlas of Modernity".

Undoubtedly, in order to talk about indexing the dimension of democracy, it is necessary to dwell on the definition of the concept we are analyzing - "democracy" and its essential features.

However, the modern meaning of this term is multifaceted, and there are lots of definitions that determine democracy. Analyzing different positions and opinions of scientists on the concept of democracy Avdeev D.A. [2; Pp. 16-20] concludes that "modern ideas about democracy come down to the fact that it is a politico-legal category that integrates the features of the state of law and characterizes the style of public management with the openness and the real possibility of people's influence on it". In our opinion, the consensus in defining the essential understanding of "democracy" it is necessary to reach an agreement on the measurement of democracy and to create a single universally accepted methodology for measuring democracy.

For example, the Polity4 index estimates the United States of America as a fully democratic state throughout the 20th century and most of the 19th century. This is a fair conclusion if you do not consider the composition of the electorate, from which women and black people were excluded altogether. It seems that similar problems could be found in other indices that do not take into account some important aspects of democracy.

On the contrary, broader concepts of democracy can be criticized for including elements that are far from the main meaning of the term. For example, the Freedom House index of political rights and civil liberties includes questions related to corruption, civilian police control, the absence of widespread violent crimes, the willingness to grant political asylum, the right to buy and sell land and the distribution of profits of large state-owned enterprises [3]. The developers of this index state that it measures freedom, not democracy; however, it is often used as an indicator of democracy.

In other cases, the judgments on which the index is based, in our opinion, are controversial. For example, the EIU index considers mandatory voting as a negative reflection on the quality of democracy in the country [4]. Although such voting infringes on individual rights and in this way, it can be considered undemocratic, it also raises voter turnout and possibly the quality of representation. Consequently, its role in increasing the power of the people is controversial, depending on the concept of democracy.

Many indicators of democracy are limited in coverage by time and by countries. For example, the index of political rights and civil liberties has been calculated since 1972, the EIU since 2006, and BTI has been ranking since 2003 and does not consider established states and consolidated regimes, examining only the countries which are in a transformation stage. Only a few indices of democracy cover a significant period of time, in particular, Polity4 (since 1800). In our opinion, the value of the Polity4 project lies precisely in its comprehensive historical coverage, although it excludes states with a population of fewer than 500,000 people and does not include the colonies until they gain independence even though they had significant self-government.

Sources used to provide an empirical basis for existing indices are often debated. For example, some indicators, such as EIU, are heavily dependent on survey data, which are available on a very irregular basis for about 100 states. For other countries (about half of the population covered by the EIU), these data are estimated by experts from countries or attributed to them. The procedures used for this assessment are not publicly available. Although citizen surveys are important for identifying their opinions, they are not available for every country in the world and they are conducted on an annual basis. Moreover, some of the questions included in the survey are of questionable importance for understanding the quality of democracy in the state. For example, there is the question of a great interest: do citizens belong to their country of citizenship as democratic, do they support democratic institutions and authority, and do they agree with democratic standards? It is necessary to consider that such questions do not allow evaluating these judgments in order to obtain a final conclusion - to determine the country as more or less democratic.

Behind such indices as Freedom House, EIU, and BTI lies the opinion of experts. Judgments of experts can be considered sufficiently reliable if there are clear and specific criteria on the basis of which they make their conclusions. Unfortunately, this is not always observed, and expert opinion is often subjective and uncertain. For example, the FH expert survey uses the following five composite subparagraphs in the question: «Is the country's governmental system democratic?»:

1. Does the Constitution or other national legislation enshrine the principles of democratic government?
2. Is the government open to meaningful citizen participation in political processes and decision-making in practice?
3. Is there an effective system of checks and balances between legislative, executive, and judicial authority?
4. Does a freedom of information act or similar legislation ensure access to government information by citizens and the media?
5. Is the economy free of government domination? [5].

Not to mention the controversial justice of attributing democracy to the necessary separation of powers and a market economy, it is not easy to answer these questions unambiguously, and their difficulty is related to the general, vague or ambiguous terms in which they are formulated. Is it possible to judge how "the principles of the democratic system" are fixed, without specifying what these principles represent? What does "openness to full participation of citizens" mean? What are the grounds for determining whether checks and balances are "effective"? What limits of state intervention and types of property determine the degree of "freedom" of the country's economy? Because of the vagueness of the provisions contained in these questions, respondents must rely on their own internal beliefs and assumptions. This creates the danger that the interpretation of judgments on specific criteria, for example, freedom of the press, will reflect a general understanding of the degree of democracy of the country, and not an independent assessment of the level of press freedom. In this respect, indices can in fact be significantly less objective than they appear. It is the ambiguity of the list of issues underlying these studies that contributes to such an ill-conceived unification of various criteria.

It is important to note that the western indices and criteria for the development of democracy have similar one-dimensional indicators of the state of democracy (these are the criteria for the EIU, FH and BTI indices). The index of the status of democracy within BTI is measured by the following variables: statehood (sovereignty), participation in political life, stability of democratic institutions, rule of law, political and social integration [6].

The EIU Democracy Index is calculated by 60 indicators, grouped into five variables: electoral process and pluralism, the quality of government functioning, civil liberties, political culture of the population and political participation. Freedom House experts use five key indicators of democracy in their studies: at national and local democratic governance, civil society, media independence, the quality of the electoral process, the independence of the judiciary and the level of corruption [7].

Polity4 emphasizes the institutional foundations of democracy and uses the following indicators of democracy: executive recruitment (regulation, competitiveness, and openness), the independence of executive authorities (executive constraints) and political competition and opposition (regulation and competitiveness of participation). Thus, these indices have a narrow, mostly political nature of indicators and do not consider socio-economic and cultural aspects, which in turn significantly influence the development of democracy in the countries of the modern world [8].

As you know, democracy is a regime that allows people to fully exercise their civil and political rights. However, in order for rights to be a useful tool in the hands of people, these people should be able and interested in implementing them. Therefore, certain socioeconomic and sociocultural conditions must be created by the state. Socioeconomic conditions, consisting of the amount of resources and their distribution, in a high level of economic development, form the ability of people to exercise rights. Sociocultural conditions manifested in political and legal values and customs, determine the motivation of citizens in the exercise of rights. Consequently, consideration of these conditions will allow the most accurate measurement of the effectiveness of democratic institutions.

In the above-mentioned Western ratings and indices, the Russian Federation is characterized as a state with an authoritarian political regime and is placed on the same level as countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Table 1

Indicators of Russian democracy indices in 2016

Indices	Ideal democracy	Russia	Category
Polity IV	10 (-10)	4	Open anocracy (transitional regime)
The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index	10	3,24	Authoritarian regime
Freedom House	1 (7)	6,5	Consolidated authoritarian regime
Democracy Status Index BTI	10	4,4	Moderate autocracy

In our opinion, such an assessment of the political situation in Russia is not entirely correct and is caused by the pronounced politicized nature of the assessment, which is caused by methodological problems and, to some extent, bias and ideological implications. For example, a professor at Columbia University, Mark Mazover, questions the independence of the organization Freedom House, considering it non-governmental only nominally, existing with the money of the US authorities [9, p. 202]. Moreover, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the reports of this organization are of a custom nature [10], and on July 8, 2015, by a resolution of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, it was included in the "patriotic stop list" due to anti-Russian bias and undesirability of activities in Russia [11].

In our opinion, the most objective and comprehensive methodology for determining the development degree of democratic institutions was delivered by the MGIMO University of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia jointly with the Institute of Public Engineering (with the support of the journal Expert). Their innovative project, entitled "Political Atlas of Modernity", implemented in 2007, offers a new approach to the analysis of political systems and political regimes of states. This is a comparative analysis of 192 UN member countries, conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods. Strict statistical databases (UN, WHO, SIPRI, World Bank, etc.) were used to determine the state's position in the modern world as a polity, which is a certain state of the political regime, characterized by a correlation of autocratic and democratic features, as well as many different variables (70), which indicates the objectivity of the empirical data.

The authors of the project "The Political Atlas of Modernity" note that the quality and development of democracy are influenced by various factors: statehood, namely the level of real (rather than formal) sovereignty; mass-

headquarters of threats and challenges of the external and internal environment; The total resources available to the state for influencing the international environment for the solution of their national problems, namely international influence; the quality of the state's realization of its social functions, primarily the life-support of its own population; finally, institutional capacity for democratic development (first of all, the traditions of political competition, representation, participation, limitation of executive power, observance of constitutional rules) [12, p. 127]. In addition, the authors of the project sought to minimize peer review in the studies.

The main drawbacks of the project "Political Atlas of Modernity" in comparison with the western ratings we can see in the impossibility to trace the development of countries in dynamics (the survey covers only one year) and in the absence of interactive maps that help to work with data and indicators easily and accessibly.

In conclusion, we must note that the measurement of the level of democracy is a problem, a clearly correct solution of which does not yet exist. Different methodologies for measuring the level of development of democracy determine the existence of different indices and criteria for democracy, each of which has an identical theoretical justification. Although modern Western ratings based on different criteria are not worked badly, they still have significant flaws and contradictions, and choosing a way of ranking countries that can be used both in scientific work and for making practical decisions is a problem. Therefore, the invention of objective ratings and their application is a relevant task, for the solution of which it is necessary to combine different approaches and apply more general, aggregate indicators of the development of democracy, considering both the multidimensionality of democracy and the features of its manifestation in various countries.

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