

Системные конструкторы международной безопасности: индикаторы социальных изменений как путь к разрешению конфликтов

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Аннотация

В статье предлагается концепция системных конструкторов международной безопасности (СКМБ) для определения степени международной напряженности в мире на основе нескольких видов данных: показателей социального развития государств, степени концентрации ресурсов в руках немногих, военной и информационной мощи. Методология исследования основана на системном подходе, выявляющем взаимосвязь экономических, политических, социальных и военных факторов, приводящих к стабилизации или дестабилизации международной обстановки. При оценке усложняющейся реальности международной безопасности использовался диалектический метод. СКМБ можно определить как минимальный набор взаимосвязанных параметров государства (экономических, политических, военных, культурных, научных, экологических), удержание которых в соотношении, отвечающем требованиям социального развития, сводит к минимуму риск дестабилизации социальных систем. Кроме того, предварительно оценены СКМБ по шести странам, пять из которых (Великобритания, Китай, Россия, США и Франция) официально объявляли об успешных испытаниях ядерного оружия, а шестая — Индия — имеет ядерную программу, а также значительный экономический потенциал и второй в мире показатель численности населения. На основе проведенного анализа сделаны рекомендации по определению индекса военной опасности государств. Задача демократических институтов, прогрессивной части любого общества, состоит в том, чтобы разработать и усовершенствовать подход к анализу текущей политической ситуации, сочетающий мониторинг кризисных тенденций с практической готовностью к их преодолению на глобальном уровне. Вопрос о том, что общественно-политические акторы могут предоставить для разработки и регулирования СКМБ, открыт для широкой научной и общественной дискуссии.

Ключевые слова

Международная безопасность, общественное развитие, неравенство, военная опасность, разрешение конфликтов, элитология, военные исследования.

Systemic Constructs of International Security: Societal Change Agents as Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

This article proposes systemic constructs of international security (SCIS) to determine the degree of international tensions in the world, based on several types of data: indicators on the social development of states; the degree of resource concentration amongst elites; military and information power. The research methodology includes a systemic approach that makes explicit the interrelation of economic, political, social, and military factors, thereby producing a stabilization or destabilization of

the international situation. In assessing the increasingly complex reality of international security, a dialectical method was used. SCIS can be defined as the minimum set of interrelated parameters of the state (economic, political, military, cultural, scientific, environmental), keeping them in a ratio that meets the demands of social development while minimizing the risks of destabilizing social systems. Finally, the authors made a preliminary SCIS assessment for six countries: five (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have officially announced successful nuclear weapons tests. The sixth, India, has a nuclear program as well as significant economic potential and the second largest population in the world. Based on the analysis, the authors offer proposals for determining a state's military danger index. The task of democratic institutions is to develop and improve an analytical model so as to combine the monitoring of dangerous trends with practical readiness to overcome them globally. The question of what socio-political actors can provide for the SCIS is open for discussion.

Keywords

International security, social development, inequality, military risk, conflict resolution, elitology, military studies.

Introduction

The crisis in Ukraine has shown with renewed vigor the threat of confrontation between nuclear powers, bringing about the possibility of a world war which can have no winners. At the same time, the role of norms in international law and the efforts of the international community to prevent such conflicts is woefully small and lacking necessary influence. The reason for the weak effectiveness of conflict resolution tools, starting with those that appeared on the eve of the First and Second World Wars (namely, the 1899 Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes¹), is the insufficient correlation of international legal mechanisms for preventing war with economic, social, and technological factors that could eliminate or minimize the grounds for its occurrence. Fundamental threats to international security (IS) cannot be eliminated only through interstate negotiations. Without understanding the factors of destabilization within states, including extreme unevenness across socio-economic development, it is nearly impossible to understand the true root causes of war, especially world war. Within the framework of various academic schools, many possible explanations are given and described in detail. But at the international level, they are not addressed in any systemic way. To this end, we draw attention in this article to the possibility and necessity of forming new systemic constructs of international security (SCIS).

The goal of the study is to propose the concept of SCIS to determine degrees of likely international tension (up to the occurrence of military threat) based on three types of data: state social development indicators; elite resource concentration; military/information power. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to identify parameters for assessing the risk of international security failures and evaluate these values across six nuclear powers, selected for their traditionally diverse positions on various regional conflicts. Eight sovereign states overall have formally announced successful detonation of nuclear weapons and are considered to be nuclear-weapon states (NWS) under the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The original states are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States². They are included in the study. Since the NPT entered into force in 1970, three more states not party to the Treaty have conducted overt nuclear tests — India, Pakistan, and North Korea. From this last group India is selected not only as a nuclear power, but also for its significant economic potential and being the second most populous country in the world.

The research methodology uses a systemic approach to establish the interrelation of economic, political, social, and military factors that produce stabilization or destabilization in an international conflict situation. In assessing the increasingly complex reality of IS, a dialectical method was used, focusing on the principles of development, the natural change of material and ideal objects against their original properties, and then progressing through the repetition of previous stages to ultimately emerge at a higher stage of development. The concept of SCIS was first formulated within the framework of the grant

¹ 1899 Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes // PCA [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://docs.pca-cpa.org/2016/01/1899-Convention-for-the-Pacific-Settlement-of-International-Disputes.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

² Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons // US Department of State [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/141503.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

project “Malicious use of artificial intelligence and challenges to psychological security in Northeast Asia” by Evgeny N. Pashentsev [Pashentsev 2022a]³ and was further developed herein via the cooperation between specialists from the Russian Federation and United States.

In the process of developing the present article, a wide range of primary and secondary sources were used. The primary sources include official publications of state bodies and international organizations and their formal media materials. Among secondary sources, we highlight summaries of statistical data, academic monographs, and scholarly articles. The authors’ estimates on the regularity of conflict aggravation have been generally confirmed⁴ [Пашенцев 2014; Pashentsev 2022b; Crosston, Pashentsev 2022; Базаркина 2021, 140–141]. Studies on the topic of international tension, for the most part, proceeded from the literature that looked at a gradual increase in threats to IS. Additionally, many researchers have paid attention to the changing balance of forces in the international arena, like the emergence of a new global center of power in China [Bergsten 2022; China’s Global Engagement 2017], the revival of Russia as an important factor in international development [Giles, Ellis 2017], the decline of Europe [Bongiovanni 2012; Theorising the crises of the European Union 2021], and the weakening of the US as a true hegemonic power [Erler 2022; Petras 2019; Bulmer-Thomas 2018]. At the same time, the impact of military-political, economic, social-scientific, and technological factors within conflict were considered. These works were reviewed and utilized when the analysis for ensuring international security at both the global and regional level was performed.

In the West, in light of the current Ukraine conflict, highly politicized forecasts are being made about the imminent collapse of Russia as a result of sanctions⁵. Much less widely publicized are factors that could produce a real threat of coup d’état and/or social civil war in the United States, recognized today by only a few politicians, representatives of big business⁶, and researchers [Walter 2022; Marche 2022]⁷. Discussion of the possibility of a coup d’état⁸ and/or social civil war⁹ has become a common topic within US media, especially since the 2016 election of Donald Trump as President and subsequent social upheavals related to race, ethnicity, and gender¹⁰. Taking into account the social media/misinformation crisis that is seemingly innate to the modern world, no country is immune from such dangerous processes.

³ The study by Evgeny N. Pashentsev was funded by RFBR and VASS, project number № 21-514-92001.

⁴ Pashentsev E. Forcing the Correct Choice: Deterring Right-Wing Radicals and Preventing Threats to Nuclear Facilities in Ukraine // Modern Diplomacy [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/03/07/forcing-the-correct-choice-deterring-right-wing-radicals-and-preventing-threats-to-nuclear-facilities-in-ukraine/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁵ Foreign corporations exit Russia to provoke economic collapse // World Socialist Web Site [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/03/09/rusa-m09.html> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Russia Facing ‘Outright Defeat’ And ‘Sudden’ Collapse in Ukraine, Author Says // HuffPost UK [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/francis-fukuyama-russia-ukraine_n_622eb131e4b0317d0a329c20 (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁶ Billionaire investor Ray Dalio says the US appears to be on the path to ‘some form of civil war’ // Yahoo!News [Electronic resource]. URL: https://news.yahoo.com/billionaire-investor-ray-dalio-says-150649894.html?fr=sycsrp_catchall (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁷ America’s next civil war: Toronto writer Stephen Marche sets out scenarios for the future — and none of them are pretty // Toronto Star [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/reviews/2022/01/04/americas-next-civil-war-toronto-writer-stephen-marche-sets-out-scenarios-for-the-future-and-none-of-them-are-pretty.html> (accessed: 05.05.2022); America’s Next Civil War // The Walrus [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://thewalrus.ca/americas-next-civil-war/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁸ 3 retired generals: The military must prepare now for a 2024 insurrection // The Washington Post [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/12/17/eaton-taguba-anderson-generals-military/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁹ Why the U.S. Military Isn’t Ready for Civil War // Foreign Policy [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/04/american-civil-war-january-6-capitol/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Are red states and blue states on the verge of a civil war? // News@Northeastern [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://news.northeastern.edu/2022/01/05/us-civil-war-political-divide/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Imagine another American Civil War, but this time in every state // NPR [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/11/1071082955/imagine-another-american-civil-war-but-this-time-in-every-state> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Kinzinger predicts ‘civil war’ coming, says our ‘basic survival at stake’ after being censured by own party // BPR Business and Politics [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.bizpacreview.com/2022/02/09/kinzinger-predicts-civil-war-coming-says-our-basic-survival-at-stake-after-being-censured-by-own-party-1198769/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Is the US really heading for a second civil war? // The Guardian [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jan/09/is-the-us-really-heading-for-a-second-civil-war> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Is a Civil War Ahead? // The New Yorker [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/is-a-civil-war-ahead> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Is Civil War Coming to America? // The New York Times [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/18/books/review/how-civil-wars-start-barbara-f-walter-the-next-civil-war-stephen-marche.html> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁰ If a new civil war breaks out in America, here are the 3 places it’s most likely to start // Business Insider [Electronic resource]. URL: www.businessinsider.com/3-states-where-second-american-civil-war-could-start-2022-3 (accessed: 05.05.2022).

This is why there is a need to define more clearly internal societal conditions and criteria for identifying social phenomena that could manifest themselves as conflict externally and threaten the world in the ultimate worst scenario (nuclear tension/conflict).

Developing SCIS and Elaborating Concepts

The general imbalance of the IS system, full of power and principle contradictions, is the main cause of many global crises. And while we believe it to be possible (and necessary) to resolve local or regional crises as a top priority, including the Ukrainian one, this alone would not completely correct the imbalance. If better control over world conflict parameters is not developed (there is no such control now, despite the current framework being tied to the interests of Western elites as a whole and trumpeted as the ideal system), then global crises evolving from regional issues will continue to erupt regularly. At a local level, many of those regional dilemmas emerge from the global inequity problem, where the ultra-rich continue to get richer while ordinary citizens get poorer and less secure. The open publicizing of such data (with no proffered solution) in the modern social media world means an inevitable increase of social tensions, including ultra-right tendencies. In such situations, war (internal and/or external) becomes almost unavoidable. Ideally, modern consolidated democracies across the globe would assess not only the degree of tension in international relations but go below that level of analysis to identify the underlying signs of destabilization within countries that subsequently increase military danger and intensify threats. New measures of internal destabilization are needed (especially within the most powerful nuclear states) so that local tension does not continually escalate into regional and global conflicts. Arguably, the SCIS concept will help establish minimum mandatory indicators for this very purpose.

SCIS can be defined as the minimum set of interrelated parameters of state capacity (financial, economic, political, military, cultural, scientific, environmental) that keeps social cohesion and development at the necessary advanced level, thereby minimizing the risk of societal destabilization. At the same time, SCIS is based on quantitatively measurable indicators and their influence on the consent of people to act, based on the imperative of preserving human dignity and peaceful societal functioning (see more about the constructs of international security [Pashentsev 2022a]).

The SCIS aims to identify systematically how the violation of chief societal development factors naturally leads to socio-political crises that can cause the potential collapse of the state and/or the strengthening of reactionary tendencies in domestic and foreign policy. Often, such trends produce predatory economic and military behavior so that nervous elites stay in power. Most importantly, this is about creating a quantitative warning system aimed at the prevention of extreme social polarization within the permanent members of the UN Security Council and other unofficial members of the “nuclear club” (though the SCIS should be applicable to “lesser” power states as well). Proper utilization of the SCIS is important: if the indicators of the SCIS are systematically violated, this should be considered by the world community as a direct threat to peace and IS overall. If relevant social and/or political actors are found responsible for such manipulation, then a reasonable effort must be made to bring about the cessation of their activities. This concept of SCIS is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN and, if successfully implemented, will provide favorable conditions for the early identification of local negative social factors that can evolve to global crisis levels.

When developing the concept of SCIS, one should consider low social development starting points for the vast majority of UN member countries as former colonies or semi-colonies, whose resources have been used by advanced countries for centuries to ensure their own more dynamic development. The situation began to partially change only because of decolonization, but the so-called backwardness of the “Global South” and its economic domination by the “Global North” has by no means been overcome.

Of great importance to the authors is the degradation of socio-economic development in most post-Soviet states. The absence or presence of obvious negative external factors, like international sanctions, should also be evaluated. If a country successfully endures sanctions and improves its socio-economic development, this obviously indicates even greater potential for development without sanctions.

An important part of the SCIS is to both refine existing assessment systems and develop new integrative indicators of social progress. At the same time, SCIS is not just about absolute values. The economic and social indicators of a developed country can be many times higher than those of a developing one. Basic criteria for a systemic change in the dynamics of these indicators is needed, which is the most important part of the present analysis and will allow other scholars in the future to develop further indices of social progress and its impact on the military danger of a state. For example, if there is a drop in the main indicators of social development in a country against a background of continuing elite resource concentration, it indicates an obvious drop in efficiency, systemic corruption, and the anti-national character of said elites. Such states, especially if they are nuclear ones, represent the highest threat to IS. The Gini coefficient and Forbes rating can serve for determining this degree of wealth concentration. Taken with various social development indices, they give an indication of the degree to which ruling groups comply with public interests and the potential threat level to IS from said groups. Of course, as we will show later, the exceptional income of a small circle combined with negative social development processes should not be considered in isolation from the political, military, scientific, and informational support structures of the state.

Considering these concepts, it would also be expedient to develop a new Index of Social Orientation of the State (ISOS), to which a Military Danger Index (MDI) could be correlated. To determine the latter, one can use the Global Firepower Countries Index¹¹. Each country by this index is evaluated on a multitude of factors related to a prolonged offensive or defensive military campaign. Taken by itself, it can only give an idea of the capability of a state to deter or carry out military aggression. Within this framework it is possible to correlate ISOS with the Global Firepower Countries Index (PowerIndex), thereby establishing possible motives for military action. In the same way, based on indicators of information technology development, the concentration of media resources, etc., we can distinguish the Information Power Index (IPI) of state. Correlating IPI with MDI can become the basis for determining the Information Danger Index (IDI).

It can be presumed that a socially oriented state, even having a high PowerIndex, will not necessarily be pacifist. However, its military actions (usually defensive or preventative in extreme cases) will be founded on maintaining its territory, as well as raising the ISOS of the adversary state thereby aiming to eliminate the social foundations of aggression. Adversary states with a low-level ISOS will often be aggressive to increase the wealth of their corrupt elite and consequently lowering the ISOS of satellite countries, conquered countries, and colonies (at the same time at the propaganda level, often claiming to achieve a higher standard of living and freedom in other countries, as was the case with the “export of democracy” during the 1990s and 2000s and still somewhat continues today) while trying to not lower it excessively at home to avoid social shocks. If the adversary state does not have enough inflow of funds to grow and maintain a relatively high but false ISOS, the latter is systematically reduced. The ensuing crisis is usually an attempt by the state to overcome popular protest and dissatisfaction through open dictatorship and the mobilization of resources for greater aggression. At the least, this results in the ruling class being renewed at the expense of the rest of society. Also important in this as a new indicator is the global information influence of the state, i.e., its ability to shape the international agenda through mass/social media. So as to deprive

¹¹ Global Firepower Countries Index // GFP [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries.php> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

citizens of the opportunity to objectively assess the social orientation, development, and aggressiveness of the state, reactionary elite strive to control or severely influence information resources. Without this, it will be difficult to properly frame the narrative in favor of the elite and incline public opinion to their side.

It is worth noting: if a developed state or a group of developed ones is faced with a slowdown in development, then serious talk about the exhaustion of resources of the socio-economic system itself emerges. Unfortunately, when faced with these problems, elite ruling circles tend to appeal to the traditional elements of force (economic sanctions, military power, and the psychological impact on internal and external target groups). The more active this process is, the worse the negative dynamics of social development with an increased concentration of wealth in the hands of the ultra-rich is. Truly, it is difficult to reduce the threat level to national and international security when facing an inefficient, desperate, and corrupt elite. For long-term sustainability, only state citizens have a chance to turn such states onto a progressive internal path. If the corrupt elite of a nuclear power (especially if a superpower) establishes a quasi-dictatorship and consolidates the ruling class, it will lead the country on a path of world instigation, coincident with the suppression of dissidents to forcibly stagnate any grassroots activism. In other words, a far-right, irrationally nationalist dictatorship may arise, where elites enrich themselves while proclaiming the supremacy of the state. Given such crimes, the elite could more realistically consider strategies of aggression that most other states would never allow. This type of far-right desperation is analogous to the insanity exhibited by Nazi Germany during WWII. The SCIS aims to help illuminate the dangerous potential for such degradation in the modern age and the consequential harm this could do to international peace and security. In short, SCIS helps prevent history repeating.

Analyzing with ISOS: American Indices as a Warning Case Study

In this study, we tried to make a preliminary calculation of the ISOS and make proposals for determining the MDI of a state based on four types of data: state social development indicators, elite resource concentration, military and information power. The specified data was collected from open sources. Based on collected indicators, preliminary calculations of social development and resource concentration ratings for all six countries were carried out. We evaluated the degree of positive change (the amount by which, for example, the life expectancy of the population increased or the Gini index decreased) and, in accordance with it, assigned rating points to countries from one to six. One point corresponds to minimum positive change or the maximum negative trend (i.e., all countries have the change). Six points are assigned to the maximum positive or minimum negative change (if the trend is observed for all countries). The rating scores for each indicator are summed for each country and the results are presented in the bottom row of Table 1.

Table 1. Social development indicators by country¹²

	USA	China	India	Russia	UK	France
Life expectancy, years¹³	2013 — 78.74	2013 — 75.32	2013 — 67.93	2013 — 70.58	2013 — 81.00	2013 — 82.22
	2019 — 78.79	2019 — 76.91	2019 — 69.66	2019 — 73.08	2019 — 81.20	2019 — 82.58
	2020 — 79.11	2020 — 77.47	2020 — 70.42	2020 — 72.99	2020 — 81.77	2020 — 83.13

¹² Compiled by the authors based on materials from international organizations and think tanks.

¹³ Life expectancy — Country rankings // The Global Economy [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/Life_expectancy/ (accessed: 05.05.2022); Life Expectancy of the World Population // Worldometer [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

GDP per capita, Purchasing Power Parity, US\$¹⁴	2013 — 56214.43	2013 — 11101.94	2013 — 4818.52	2013 — 26332.40	2013 — 43271.83	2013 — 42816.27
	2020 — 60286.63	2020 — 16315.82	2020 — 6165.75	2020 — 26456.39	2020 — 42675.78	2020 — 42313.19
Social Progress Index¹⁵	2015 — 82.85	2015 — 59.07	2015 — 53.06	2015 — 63.64	2015 — 84.68	2015 — 80.82
	2021 — 86.29	2021 — 65.44	2021 — 58.81	2021 — 73.45	2021 — 88.25	2021 — 88.23
Human Development Index Rank (place)¹⁶	2010 — 4	2010 — 89	2010 — 119	2010 — 65	2010 — 26	2010 — 14
	2015 — 10	2015 — 90	2015 — 131	2015 — 49	2015 — 16	2015 — 21
	2019 — 17	2019 — 85	2019 — 131	2019 — 52	2019 — 13	2019 — 26
Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, indicator in the Social Progress Index system¹⁷	2015 — 98.52	2015 — 93.08	2015 — 81.78	2015 — 97.76	2015 — 99.09	2015 — 99.20
	2021 — 97.51	2021 — 95.87	2021 — 76.04	2021 — 95.49	2021 — 98.36	2021 — 98.58
Corruption Perception Index (the higher the number is, the lower the level of corruption is)¹⁸	2015 — 76	2015 — 37	2015 — 38	2015 — 29	2015 — 81	2015 — 70
	2021 — 67	2021 — 45	2021 — 40	2021 — 29	2021 — 78	2021 — 71
Gini Index¹⁹	2010 — 40	2010 — 43,7	2010 — 82.1	2010 — 39.5	2010 — 34.4	2010 — 33.7
	2016 — 41.1	2016 — 38.5	2015 — 83.3	2015 — 37.7	2016 — 34.8	2017 — 31.6
	2018 — 41.4	2020 — 46.8	2020 — 82.3	2018 — 37.5	2017 — 35.7	2018 — 32.4
The amount of public debt in % of GDP²⁰	2010 — 90	2010 — 33.9	2010 — 66.0	2010 — 10.1	2010 — 74.3	2010 — 85.3
	2015 — 100	2015 — 41.5	2015 — 68.8	2015 — 15.3	2015 — 86.7	2015 — 95.6
	2021 — 124	2020 — 66.8	2020 — 89.6	2020 — 19.3	2020 — 103.7	2020 — 113.5

¹⁴ GDP per capita, PPP — Country rankings // The Global Economy [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/GDP_per_capita_PPP/ (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁵ Global Index: Results // Social Progress Imperative [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.socialprogress.org/index/global/results> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Social Progress Index 2015 // Social Progress [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.socialprogress.org/static/b11e8918ae3b7edf007e9343965b650b/2015-social-progress-index.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁶ Human Development Report 2010. The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development // United Nations Development Programme [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2010> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Human Development Report 2016. Human Development for Everyone // United Nations Development Programme [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2016> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier. Human development and the Anthropocene // United Nations Development Programme [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2020> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁷ Global Index: Results // Social Progress [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.socialprogress.org/index/global/results> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Social Progress Index 2015 // Social Progress [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.socialprogress.org/static/b11e8918ae3b7edf007e9343965b650b/2015-social-progress-index.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁸ 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index // Transparency International [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

¹⁹ Gini Coefficient by Country 2022 // World Population Review [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gini-coefficient-by-country> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Индекс Джини в странах мира // Svspb.net [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://svspb.net/danmark/gini.php> (accessed: 05.05.2022); China Gini inequality index // The Global Economy [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/China/gini_inequality_index/ (accessed: 05.05.2022); Gini index: inequality of income distribution in China from 2004 to 2020 // Statista [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250400/inequality-of-income-distribution-in-china-based-on-the-gini-index/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Wealth Gini coefficient of India from 2000 to 2020 // Statista [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1248515/india-wealth-gini-coefficient/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²⁰ U.S. National Debt by Year // The Balance [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thebalance.com/national-debt-by-year-compared-to-gdp-and-major-events-3306287> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Государственный долг стран в 2021 году // Svspb.net [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://svspb.net/danmark/gosudarstvennyi-dolg-stran.php> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

Suicide rates²¹.	2010 — 11.7	2010 — 9.6	2010 — 15.6	2010 — 33.0	2010 — 7.0	2010 — 13.9
	2015 — 12.9	2015 — 7.1	2015 — 12.9	2015 — 27.9	2015 — 7.8	2015 — 11.5
	2022 — 16.1	2022 — 8.1	2022 — 12.7	2022 — 25.1	2022 — 7.9	2022 — 13.8
ISOS points	17	37	32	41	25	32

The above indicators require certain comments. In Table 1 for 2020, life expectancy rates are indicated without taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, death rates from COVID-19 by country are clearly in favor of China, where 4.638 people died — a tragedy — but in other countries it was far worse: USA — 1.003.198, India — 520.885, Russia — 367.013, UK — 164.454, France — 141.564²². This seems to indicate the effectiveness of quarantine measures taken in China, further confirmed by indicators for growth in the quality of nutrition and basic medical care. In Russia, the simultaneous decline in life expectancy in 2020 compared to 2019 (against an overall increase in life expectancy since 2013), a persistently negative corruption perception index, and a decline in the quality of nutrition and basic medical care is particularly worrisome. Positive trends according to the selected indicators are most often observed in China, while negative ones are interestingly seen in the USA, United Kingdom, and France. In the latter three countries, according to available data, the Gini index is growing while the share of public debt to GDP exceeds 100%. At the same time, public debt is growing in all the selected countries without exception and this factor (which is fraught with a likely increase in crisis phenomena in the future) should be studied more closely from the point of view of international security. In China, the growth of the Gini index also inspires concern.

Of course, this brief quantitative study of social development indicators (base for ISOS) has some limitations. It was not possible to trace the change trends for the same periods of time for all indicators. It is also possible to select a larger number of indicators of social development that have positive dynamics, or a greater number of indicators of destabilization (i.e., selection bias awareness). For example, against the Social Progress Index system (published by the nonprofit Social Progress Imperative and based on the writings of Amartya Sen, Douglass North, and Joseph Stiglitz), which indicated a decrease in the quality of nutrition and basic medical care in Russia in 2021, there is counter-evidence that in 2020 Russia was among the top ten countries globally for improvements to human capital development in the last decade (according to the World Bank's Human Capital Index)²³. At the same time, questions are raised by the assessment of the Social Progress Index, which is growing in all countries, despite the parallel growth of social and political tensions in the world. In the US, for example, where many indicators of socio-economic development have deteriorated in recent years, the SPI has actually grown for the last six years.

Thus, we are not claiming to be the ultimate truth, but we consider it expedient to select the most representative indicators of social development by the academic community. It is also extremely useful to jointly verify and evaluate data from various sources (for example, from various international institutions that have access to information coming from national and public structures in countries with different government mechanisms). In any case, the assessment of social indicators and the concentration

²¹ List of countries by suicide rate // Wikipedia [Electronic resource]. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_suicide_rate (accessed: 05.05.2022); Suicide Rate by Country 2022 // World Population Review [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/suicide-rate-by-country> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²² COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic // Worldometer [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²³ Russia among Global Top Ten Improvers for Progress Made in Health and Education, says World Bank Report // The World Bank [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/09/16/russia-among-global-top-ten-improvers-for-progress-made-in-health-and-education> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

of resources by country deserves further elucidation of the relationship between these two indicators and what role this relationship may have in determining likely global tension and conflict. Hopefully, this article can be a spur to further investigation and research by others.

Elite Resource Concentration

The elite resource concentration rating (ERCR) seems dependent on the inverse increase in absolute indicators, assigning one point to countries with the most pronounced trends in resource concentration and six points to countries where these trends are minimal. As in the social development rankings, countries were assigned scores from one to six for each indicator and the bottom row of Table 2 shows the sums. For two indicators that could not be tracked explicitly (Top 500 billionaires per million nationals and income share held by richest 1%), rating points were assigned in accordance with the available absolute numbers.

Table 2. Indicators of elite resource concentration²⁴

	USA	China	India	Russia	UK	France
Number of top ten ultra-rich (according to Forbes)²⁵	2010 — 3	2010 — 0	2010 — 2	2010 — 0	2010 — 0	2010 — 1
	2015 — 7	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 1
	2021 — 8	2021 — 0	2021 — 1	2021 — 0	2021 — 0	2021 — 1
Cumulative fortune of top ten ultra-rich (according to Forbes), US\$ billions²⁶	2010 — 128	2010 — 0	2010 — 57.7	2010 — 0	2010 — 0	2010 — 27.5
	2015 — 374.3	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 0	2015 — 40.1
	2021 — 918.5	2021 — 0	2021 — 84.5	2021 — 0	2021 — 0	2021 — 150
Number of billionaires in absolute terms²⁷	2013 — 442	2013 — 122	2013 — 55	2013 — 110	2013 — 37	2013 — 24
	2018 — 585	2018 — 373	2018 — 119	2018 — 101	2018 — 54	2018 — 40
	2021 — 724	2021 — 626	2021 — 140	2021 — 117	2021 — 56	2021 — 42
Top 500 billionaires per million nationals²⁸	2019 — 0.54	2019 — 0.03	2019 — 0.01	2019 — 0.18	2019 — 0.21	2019 — 0.17
Number of billionaires per million people²⁹	2016 — 1.67	2016 — 0.18	2016 — 0.06	2016 — 0.54	2016 — 0.76	2016 — 0.60
	2018 — 1.76	2018 — 0.26	2018 — 0.09	2018 — 0.72	2018 — 0.83	2018 — 0.61
	2021 — 1.853	2021 — 0.276	2021 — 0.101	2021 — 0.677	2021 — 0.674	2021 — 0.579
Income share held by richest 1% (%)³⁰	2019 — 22.5	2019 — 13.9	2019 — 21.3	2019 — 23.2	2019 — 12.6	2019 — 11.2
ERCR points	12	25	25	24	29	29

²⁴ Compiled by the authors based on materials from international organizations and think tanks.

²⁵ World's Billionaires List. The Richest in 2021 // Forbes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Where do the World's Wealthiest People Live? // Latona's [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://latonas.com/where-the-worlds-wealthiest-live/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); World's Billionaires List. The Richest in 2021 // Forbes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²⁸ World Top 500 Billionaires by Nation, 2019 // Areppim [Electronic resource]. URL: https://stats.areppim.com/stats/stats_rich_19_nation.htm (accessed: 05.05.2022).

²⁹ World's Billionaires List. The Richest in 2021 // Forbes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); World Top 500 Billionaires by Nation, 2019 // Areppim [Electronic resource]. URL: https://stats.areppim.com/stats/stats_rich_19_nation.htm (accessed: 05.05.2022).

³⁰ List of countries by income share held by richest one percent // Wikipedia [Electronic resource]. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_share_of_income_of_the_richest_one_percent#cite_note-1 (accessed: 05.05.2022).

The US and France are the countries with the most billionaires in the Forbes top ten. The number of such ultra-rich in the USA is constantly growing, as is the total amount of their fortune. A similar growth trend in the ultra-rich is seen in France, while India shows a decline in the number of Forbes top ten billionaires. The representatives of Russia and the UK were not included in the Forbes top ten, neither in 2010 nor in 2021. This contrarily speaks to the low representation of these countries in a perceived world oligarchy. Having said that, however, it does not negate the need for additional research on the processes of capital concentration in these countries (especially against the background of the fact that in Russia, as in the US or India, the share of income belonging to the richest 1% is quite high). For France and the UK, there is a drop in the number of billionaires per million people, but for France this is a more positive trend, as it can be traced against the background of a decrease in the Gini index.

The overall case of the US stands out for a significant deterioration in social development indicators against the backdrop of an unprecedented concentration of resources in the hands of the ultra-rich. The largest number of billionaires from the top 500 in 2019 is in the US, which (in the aggregate data on the Forbes top ten) indicates the concentration of much higher resources in the hands of the American ultra-rich than in other countries. More than two-thirds of Americans experienced financial setbacks in 2020 due to job loss, declining household income, the pandemic, or a drawdown of emergency savings, according to a new Fidelity study³¹. However, US billionaire wealth surged by 70% during this same period of pandemic. Their combined worth jumped \$5 trillion in October 2020³², increasing from 8 to 13 trillion dollars in the crisis year of 2020. This means approximately 38% of the world's billionaires' fortunes were from Americans.

Military Power and Decreasing Education

Such phenomena in arguably the world's only superpower causes concern as it forms the backdrop against which the US is in first place in the 2022 Military Strength Ranking (Table 3). It seems to us that a rapid decline in social development indicators, an increase in the elite concentration of resources, and strengthened military and information power can become the basis for calculating MDI and IDI with any country. If that is so, then America is by far the country with the worst overall combination of factor values. It should be of great concern to all that the world's global leader has put itself into this position. Such assessments should be shared with the leaders of the worst countries for a timely turn towards reducing this negative conflagration of indicators. Arguably, the sum of these scores forms a rough basis for developing a war danger index.

³¹ 'Survival mode': Over 68% of Americans had financial setbacks in 2020 amid the pandemic // USA Today [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/12/08/economy-2021-these-biggest-concerns-americans-next-year/6488131002/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

³² Updates: Billionaire Wealth, U.S. Job Losses and Pandemic Profiteers // Inequality.org [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://inequality.org/great-divide/updates-billionaire-pandemic/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

Table 3. Indicators of military power³³

	USA	China	India	Russia	UK	France
PowerIndex (PwrIndx), a score of 0.0000 is considered 'perfect' ³⁴ ; the smaller the PwrIndx value is, the more powerful a nation's theoretical fighting capability is (nuclear capability is not taken into account).	2022 — 0.0453	2022 — 0.0511	2022 — 0.0979	2022 — 0.0501	2022 — 0.1382	2022 — 0.1283
Place at 2022 Military Strength Ranking ³⁵	1	3	4	2	8	7

The US today seemingly faces a number of systemic problems that increase social tension. For instance, the IMD World Competitiveness Center reports that the US is ranked 10th in its 2020 Competitiveness Report (after ranking first in 2018)³⁶. The Program for International Student Assessment tests 15-year-old students around the world and is administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In 2018, when the test was last administered, the U.S. placed 11th out of 79 countries in science. In 2021, it did worse in math, ranking 30th. "These low scores mean that U.S. students may not be as prepared to take high-paying computer and engineering jobs, which often go to foreign workers"³⁷. Although the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) continues to be rated the world's best technical university, several other prominent U.S. institutions saw their rankings fall in the 2022 edition of the QS Quacquarelli World University Rankings. By contrast, several universities in Asia and Australia showed gains³⁸.

From Freedom to Mistrust to Depression

A decade ago, the United States received a score of 94 out of 100 in "Freedom in the World", Freedom House's annual report on political rights and civil liberties. Today, whereas France and Germany remain at 90 or above, the United States has fallen to 83. The global influence of the United States "means that its woes have a uniquely damaging effect on democracy in the rest of the world"³⁹. The overall state of democracy in the U.S. declined in 2021, according to the annual ranking published by The Economist's Intelligence Unit⁴⁰. Among social problems, it is especially worth highlighting the increase in American suicide rates: 48.344 Americans died by suicide in 2020⁴¹. Suicide mortality rate (the number of suicide deaths in a year per 100,000 population) in 2019 was 16.10 in comparison with 15.10 in 2016⁴². Emergency room visits for suspected suicide attempts among girls between the ages of 12 and 17 increased by 26% during summer 2020 and by 50% during winter 2021, compared with the same periods in 2019⁴³.

³³ Compiled by the authors based on materials from Globalfirepower.com.

³⁴ 2022 Military Strength Ranking // GFP [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ U.S. Education Rankings Are Falling Behind the Rest of the World // The Balance [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thebalance.com/the-u-s-is-losing-its-competitive-advantage-3306225> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ U.S. Universities Slip in an Influential World Ranking // Forbes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2021/06/08/us-universities-slip-in-an-influential-world-ranking/?sh=2f1867a85589> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

³⁹ From Crisis to Reform: A Call to Strengthen America's Battered Democracy // Freedom House [Electronic resource]. URL: https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote2_mf63alg (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁰ US score falls in Economist's annual Democracy Index // The Hill [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/537204-us-score-falls-in-economists-2020-democracy-index> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴¹ Suicide Facts & Figures: United States 2020 // Chapterland [Electronic resource]. URL: https://chapterland.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2017/11/US_FactsFigures_Flyer.pdf (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴² U.S. Suicide Rate 2000–2022 // Macrotrends [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/united-states/suicide-rate> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴³ Big Rise in Suicide Attempts by U.S. Teen Girls During Pandemic // U.S. News [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-06-11/big-rise-in-suicide-attempts-by-us-teen-girls-during-pandemic> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

A \$350 billion US trade deficit with China for 2021 was formed a long time ago and has been growing almost constantly⁴⁴. Consumer products imports are the primary driver of the US trade deficit⁴⁵. It is destroying jobs, depressing wages, hurting competitiveness, and contributing to the stagnation of real incomes that has plagued the US economy for the past two decades⁴⁶. In addition, much of the US infrastructure is aging and at the end of its useful life⁴⁷. So far, measures taken to finance the rebuilding of US infrastructure are clearly insufficient to radically improve the situation.

Continuing these negative social indicator trends, respect for the US Congress, with approval ratings hovering around 20%, cannot fall any lower⁴⁸. After a year in office, voter confidence in Biden plummeted, with opinion polls pointing to a “correction” Republican victory in the 2022 midterm congressional elections. According to many polls, at least a third of Americans do not believe in the integrity of the 2020 presidential election, with some showing even higher rates of mistrust⁴⁹. Interestingly, in the context of the Ukraine crisis, Biden’s determination to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia quickly boosted his voter rating to 47%, from 39% in just a week in February 2022⁵⁰. According to a Pew Research Center Report published in 2019, three quarters of Americans say that their fellow citizens’ trust in the federal government has been shrinking and nearly two thirds do not believe in trusting their fellow citizens either⁵¹. Thus, analyzing all of these factors through SCIS and correlating it to aggressive foreign affairs behavior allows greater subtlety to be discovered and reveals hidden dangers in many states that heretofore are usually considered stable and peace-inducing.

The negative American trends are further enhanced by the fact that the country’s television, radio, and internet platforms are quite literally hoarded into the coffers of just a handful of enormous multimedia corporations. Increasing US media domination by the relatively few has a damaging impact on reputational perception overall in the society. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer, an annual survey conducted by the global public relations firm for more than two decades, shows this clearly. In 2012, 77% of survey respondents expressed trust in tech/media companies to “do what is right”. In 2021, that percentage dropped to 68%⁵². So even when it comes to the consumption and distribution of information, America is splitting itself into a world of haves and have-nots, decreasing believers while increasing skeptics.

This data is not presented to divert attention from problems in other states or to lay all blame on America. Rather, the United States should serve as a vital warning. If such negative trends can happen in the US, the leading military and economic power, and supposedly representing ideal principles of freedom and civil liberties, it should put the leadership and citizenry of other countries on high alert. Ultimately, the SCIS identifies under-publicized processes of oligarchization, pushed by common drops in social

⁴⁴ More than 30 years of US trade with China, in one chart // World Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/05/more-than-30-years-of-us-trade-with-china-in-one-chart/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁵ What Is the Current U.S. Trade Deficit? // The Balance [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thebalance.com/u-s-trade-deficit-causes-effects-trade-partners-3306276> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁶ U.S. Trade Deficits: Causes, Consequences, and Policy Implications // Economic Policy Institute [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.epi.org/publication/trade-deficits-consequences-policy-implications/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁷ The State of U.S. Infrastructure // Council on Foreign Relations [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/background/state-us-infrastructure> (accessed: 05.05.2022); A surefire strategy to improve water infrastructure in Flint and beyond // Brookings [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/03/18/a-surefire-strategy-to-improve-water-infrastructure-in-flint-and-beyond/> (accessed: 05.05.2022); Beyond the Trump transition, investing in resilient infrastructure is a priority we can all agree on // Brookings [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/11/21/beyond-the-trump-transition-investing-in-resilient-infrastructure-is-a-priority-we-can-all-agree-on/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁸ The next US civil war is already here – we just refuse to see it // Yahoo!News [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/next-us-civil-war-already-100012433.html> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁴⁹ No, most Americans don't believe the 2020 election was fraudulent // Politifact [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/02/viral-image/no-most-americans-dont-believe-2020-election-was-f/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁵⁰ Biden approval rating ticks up; majority of adults OK with his handling of Ukraine situation: Poll // The Washington Times [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/8/biden-approval-rating-ticks-majority-adults-ok-his/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁵¹ Key findings about Americans’ declining trust in government and each other // PEW Research [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/22/key-findings-about-americans-declining-trust-in-government-and-each-other/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

⁵² Four Steps to Winning over an Increasingly Skeptical Public // Technology Times [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://technologytimes.pk/2021/02/02/four-steps-to-winning-over-an-increasingly-skeptical-public/> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

indicators combined with a build-up of military power. If such trends go unchecked and unnoticed, then the world can be plunged into protracted global conflicts, often tinged with the fear of nuclear or biological weapons deployment and the guarantee that no one will emerge the winner.

Conclusion

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Laureate and Professor at Columbia University, commented that while the financial crisis of 2008 bore a “Made in the United States” label, its consequences were in fact worldwide and required a global response⁵³. Unfortunately, proper measures have not been taken against such crises within the existing framework of conflict resolution. Meanwhile, trends have only become more negative: a global system meant to be democratic and equitable is much more akin to a global empire controlled by elites whose behavior rarely defends the supposed principles the system espouses. These contradictions are causing “spontaneous” social unrest and upheavals the world over, but in particular in the world’s leading beacon — the United States. Continued failure to address these problems does not just mean potential catastrophe in the United States or social crisis for just Americans. As the hegemon goes, so goes the system. Keeping the latter safe and secure means the former must address its own house’s order.

Resisting what is, in essence, a de facto transnational oligarchy involves uniting forces with very different interests, ideologies, and political beliefs. Today, more than ever, it is necessary to assess the actions of any state in terms of IS risks but lensed through internal social demographic and politico-economic trends that are too often not connected to global consequences. The task of democratic institutions, the progressive part of any society, is to develop and improve an analytical model like SCIS to combine the monitoring of dangerous trends with practical readiness to overcome them at the global level. Activation of the non-elite is first achieved through the activation of their awareness to the problem, in explicit quantitative terms. The question of what social and political actors can provide for the SCIS is open to a wide scientific and public discussion. But it is our hope that discussion of SCIS analyses is the first such step to global awareness and subsequent activism. Quite possibly the preservation of positive humanity depends on it.

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⁵³ United Nations Must Intervene Following Failure of United States Government, Bretton Woods Institutions to Address Financial Crisis, Says Nobel Laureate // United Nations [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10773.doc.htm#:~:text=Mr.%20Stiglitz%2C%20a%20Nobel%20Laureate%20and%20Professor%20at,principles%20of%20democratic%20due%20process%2C%20including%20full%20transparency> (accessed: 05.05.2022).

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