

V-DEM: A New Way to Measure Democracy

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Abstract

In the last few decades, Western governments have spent huge sums of money to promote democracy abroad. We do not know which, if any, of these programs actually work. If we cannot measure democracy in sufficient detail and with the necessary nuance, we cannot mark its progress and setbacks or affect its future course. While distinguishing the most democratic countries from the least democratic ones is fairly easy, it has proven to be much harder to make finer distinctions. Here we present a new effort aimed at measuring democracy, the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem).