

Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy A New Approach

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Abstract

In the wake of the Cold War, democracy has gained the status of a mantra. Yet there is no consensus about how to conceptualize and measure regimes such that meaningful comparisons can be made through time and across countries. In this prescriptive article, we argue for a new approach to conceptualization and measurement. We first review some of the weaknesses among traditional approaches. We then lay out our approach, which may be characterized as historical, multidimensional, disaggregated, and transparent. We end by reviewing some of the payoffs such an approach might bring to the study of democracy.