

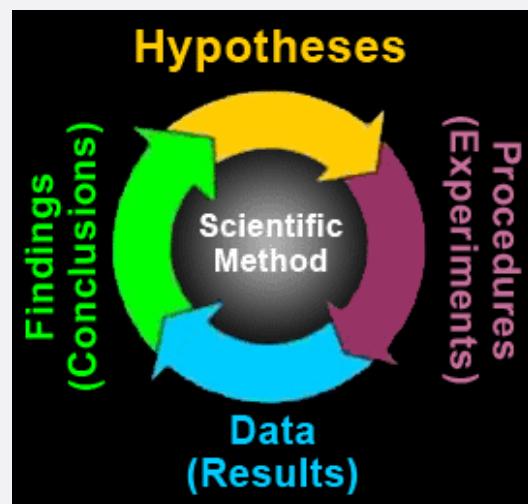
PSC 202

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

# **INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS CONCEPTS AND MEASUREMENTS**

# RECAP

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



# SUMMARY

- **Good theory**
  - clarifies causal relationship between what does the explaining and what is to be explained
  - concretely specifies the concepts it invokes
  - is falsifiable
  - builds on existing theory
  - leads to testable hypotheses

# GOOD THEORIES

- ***Good theory concretely specifies the concepts it invokes***
  - Precisely explain what we mean by e.g. “performance of the economy”
  - Or “democracy”, “corruption”, etc.
  - Discuss in detail later today

# GOOD THEORIES

- ***Good theory is falsifiable***
  - Falsifiable = can be proven wrong
    - Falsifiable ≠ false: We don't aim to create theories that are false, but theories that *can potentially show to be false*
  - “What evidence do I have to observe so I would conclude that a theory is wrong?”
    - If no answer to that, the theory is not falsifiable

# GOOD THEORIES

- **Non-falsifiable theory:** “The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq prevented terrorist attacks in the United States”
- **Falsifiable theory:** “Worldwide terrorist incidents will diminish after an external military intervention to counter terrorism”

# GOOD THEORIES

- *Good theory builds on existing theory*
  - Grounded in prior literature
  - Your theory needs to be consistent with what prior literature has already shown to be true
    - e.g. your theory should not imply or be based on claim that polarization in U.S. Congress has been decreasing in recent years

# BUT HOW?

The screenshot shows the Google Scholar homepage. At the top is the Google logo followed by "Scholar". Below is a search bar with a blue "Search" button containing a white magnifying glass icon. Underneath the search bar are two radio buttons: one selected (filled with a black dot) labeled "Articles" and one unselected (empty) labeled "Case law". A horizontal line separates this from the "Recommended articles" section. This section features a blue link to an article titled "Corruption and satisfaction with democracy: the conditional role of electoral disproportionality and ballot control" by A. Pellegata and V. Memoli, published in the European Political Science Review in 2018. Below this link is a blue "See all recommendations" button. At the bottom of the page is a green quote: "Stand on the shoulders of giants".

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# BUT HOW?

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**Ethnicity and civil war**      [PDF] sagepub.com

EK Denny, BF Walter - Journal of Peace Research, 2014 - journals.sagepub.com

If a **civil war** begins, it is more likely to be initiated by an ethnic group than any other type of group. We argue that ethnic groups, on average, are likely to have more grievances against the state, are likely to have an easier time organizing support and mobilizing a movement ...

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JD Fearon, DD Laitin - American political science review, 2003 - cambridge.org

An influential conventional wisdom holds that **civil wars** proliferated rapidly with the end of the Cold **War** and that the root cause of many or most of these has been ethnic and religious antagonisms. We show that the current prevalence of internal **war** is mainly the result of a ...

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**Ethnicity, the state, and the duration of civil war**      [PDF] heinonline.org

J Wucherpfennig, NW Metternich, LE Cederman... - World Politics, 2012 - cambridge.org

Previous research has focused primarily on how **ethnicity** may trigger **civil war**, and its effect on conflict duration remains disputed. Rather than treating conflict as a direct consequence of ethnic cleavages, the authors argue that **ethnicity** per se does not affect **civil war** duration ...

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M Bosker, J De Ree - Journal of Development Economics, 2014 - Elsevier

**Civil wars** tend to cluster in particular areas of the world. We provide empirical evidence that cross-border conflict spillovers are an important factor in explaining this pattern. Moreover, we show that **ethnicity** plays a key role in conditioning the spread of **civil wars**. Only ethnic ...

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# SEARCH TIPS

American Political Science Review

Vol. 97, No. 1 February 2003

## Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War

JAMES D. FEARON and DAVID D. LAITIN *Stanford University*

**A**n influential conventional wisdom holds that civil wars proliferated rapidly with the end of the Cold War and that the root cause of many or most of these has been ethnic and religious antagonisms. We show that the current prevalence of internal war is mainly the result of a steady accumulation of protracted conflicts since the 1950s and 1960s rather than a sudden change associated with a new, post-Cold War international system. We also find that after controlling for per capita income, more ethnically or religiously diverse countries have been no more likely to experience significant civil violence in this period. We argue for understanding civil war in this period in terms of insurgency or rural guerrilla warfare, a particular form of military practice that can be harnessed to diverse political agendas. The factors that explain which countries have been at risk for civil war are not their ethnic or religious characteristics but rather the conditions that favor insurgency. These include poverty—which marks financially and bureaucratically weak states and also favors rebel recruitment—political instability, rough terrain, and large populations.

jgs.org/core/terms; https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534

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Alesina, A., Devlaeminck, W., Easterly, W. - Journal of Economic ..., 2003 - Springer  
We provide new measures of ethnic, linguistic, and religious fractionalization for about 190 countries. These measures are more comprehensive than those previously used in the economics literature and we compare our new variables with those previously used. We ...  
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All influential conventional wisdom holds that **civil wars** proliferated rapidly with the end of the Cold **War** and that the root cause of many or most of these has been ethnic and religious antagonism. ... We show that the current prevalence of internal **war** is mainly the result of a ...

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Cornell University Press

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American political science review 90 (4), 715-735

[Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity](#)

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International organization 54 (4), 845-877

[A theory of endogenous institutional change](#)

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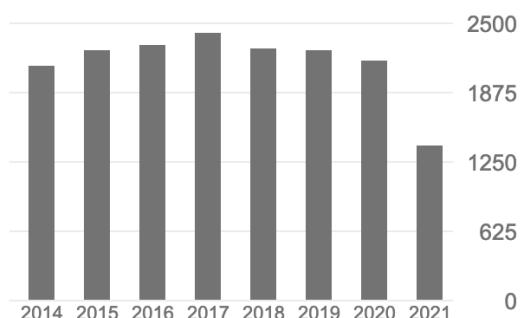
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# GOOD THEORIES

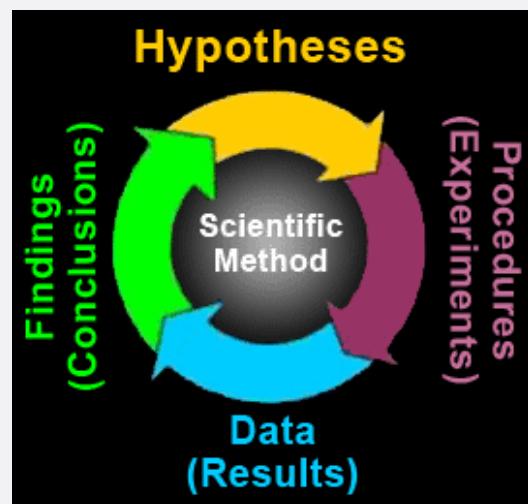
- ***Good theory leads to testable hypotheses***
  - Specifies what we would expect to observe *in our data* if the theory is an accurate generalization about how the world works
  - Will discuss this in detail in a couple of weeks

# SUMMARY

- **Good theory**
  - clarifies causal relationship between what does the explaining and what is to be explained
  - concretely specifies the concepts it invokes
  - is falsifiable
  - builds on existing theory
  - leads to testable hypotheses

# TODAY

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



# TODAY

***How Stable Are Democracies? ‘Warning Signs Are Flashing Red’***

Across the Globe, a Growing Disillusionment With Democracy

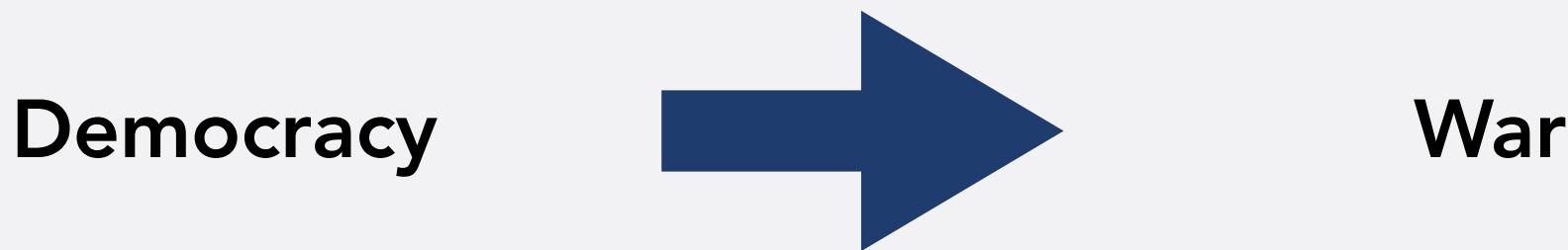
Yes, people really are turning away from democracy

No, people really aren't turning away from democracy

# TODAY

- When is a country a democracy?
- How can we measure this?

# EXAMPLE THEORY



- “Democratic peace theory”: Democracies are less likely to fight wars against each other than non-democracies

# TODAY

- Countries are more or less democratic
- Want to study this empirically
  - “I know it when I see it” definition is not enough
- Democracy is a concept, we need to measure it
  - What does it mean to be more or less democratic?
  - How can we measure it?
  - What can go wrong in measuring it?

# TODAY

- Concepts
- Measurement Process
- Measurement Issues

# CONCEPTS

- Mental constructs to represent real-world phenomena
  - Names for ideas, things, and feelings
- Identifying the relationship between concepts is at the core of social science
  - Need to have a clear definition of the concept
  - Then: How can we measure the concept in the real world?

# OTHER CONCEPTS

How Liberal Colleges Breed  
Conservative Firebrands

Liberals and Soda Taxes

Conservatives and Health Care

**Liberals and conservatives even  
have their own dating apps**

**Study: Liberals and conservatives sniff  
out like-minded mates by body odor**

# OTHER CONCEPTS

***Brazilian Corruption Case Ensnares Ex-Presidents da Silva and Rousseff***

**Brazil's Federal Police Accuse President Temer of Corruption**

**Corruption Battle Roils Ukraine**

# OTHER CONCEPTS

**Florida Law Aims To Protect Religious Expression In Public Schools**

America's Changing Religious Identity

**More than half in UK are non-religious, suggests survey**

**Religion is on the decline – yet our society is underpinned by faith**

One in three scientists are religious

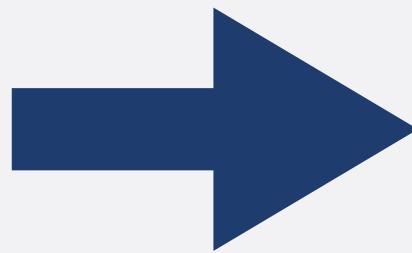
**More Americans now say they're spiritual but not religious**

# THEORY



# THEORY

**Democracy**  
(concept)

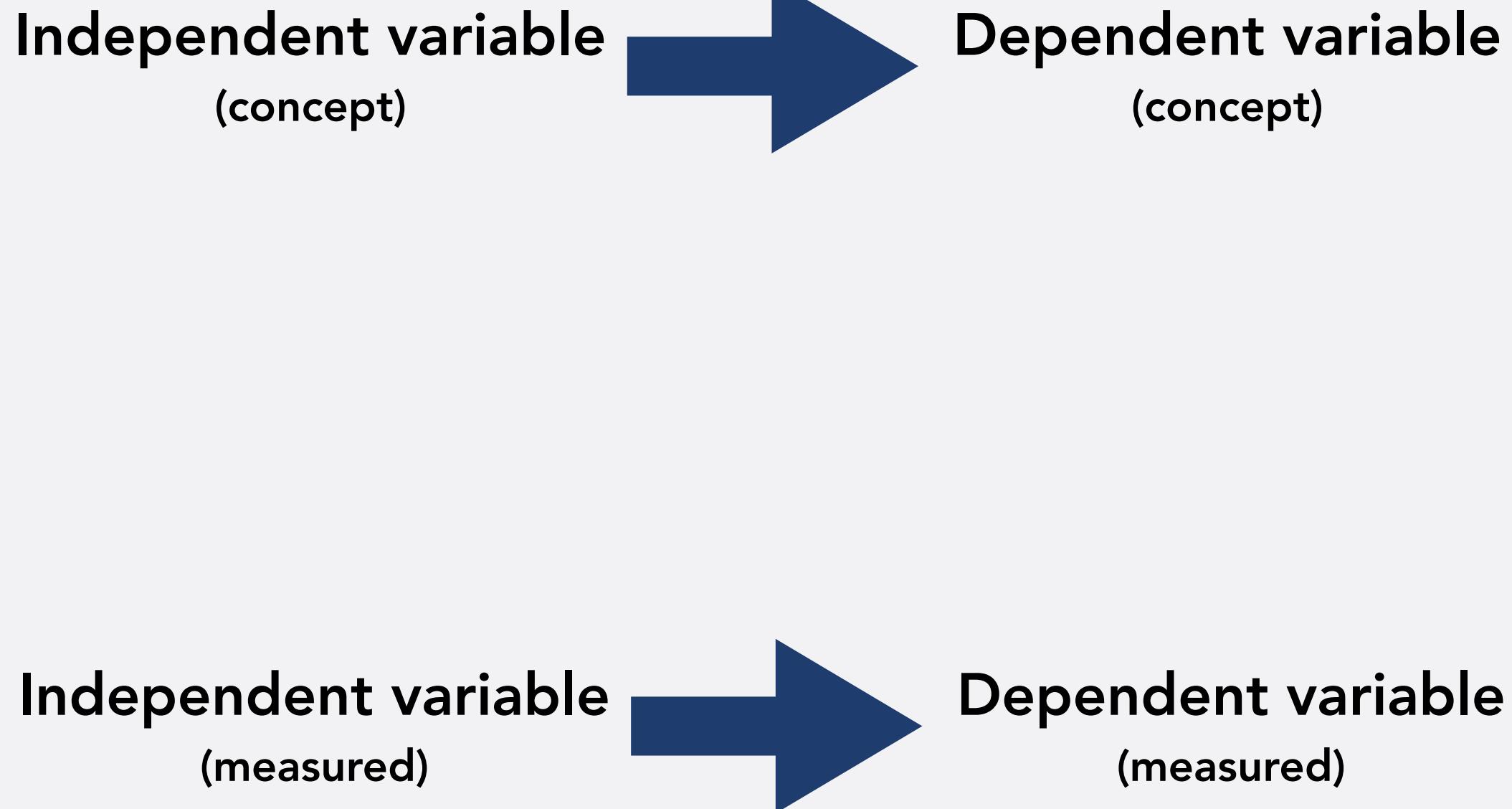


**War**  
(concept)

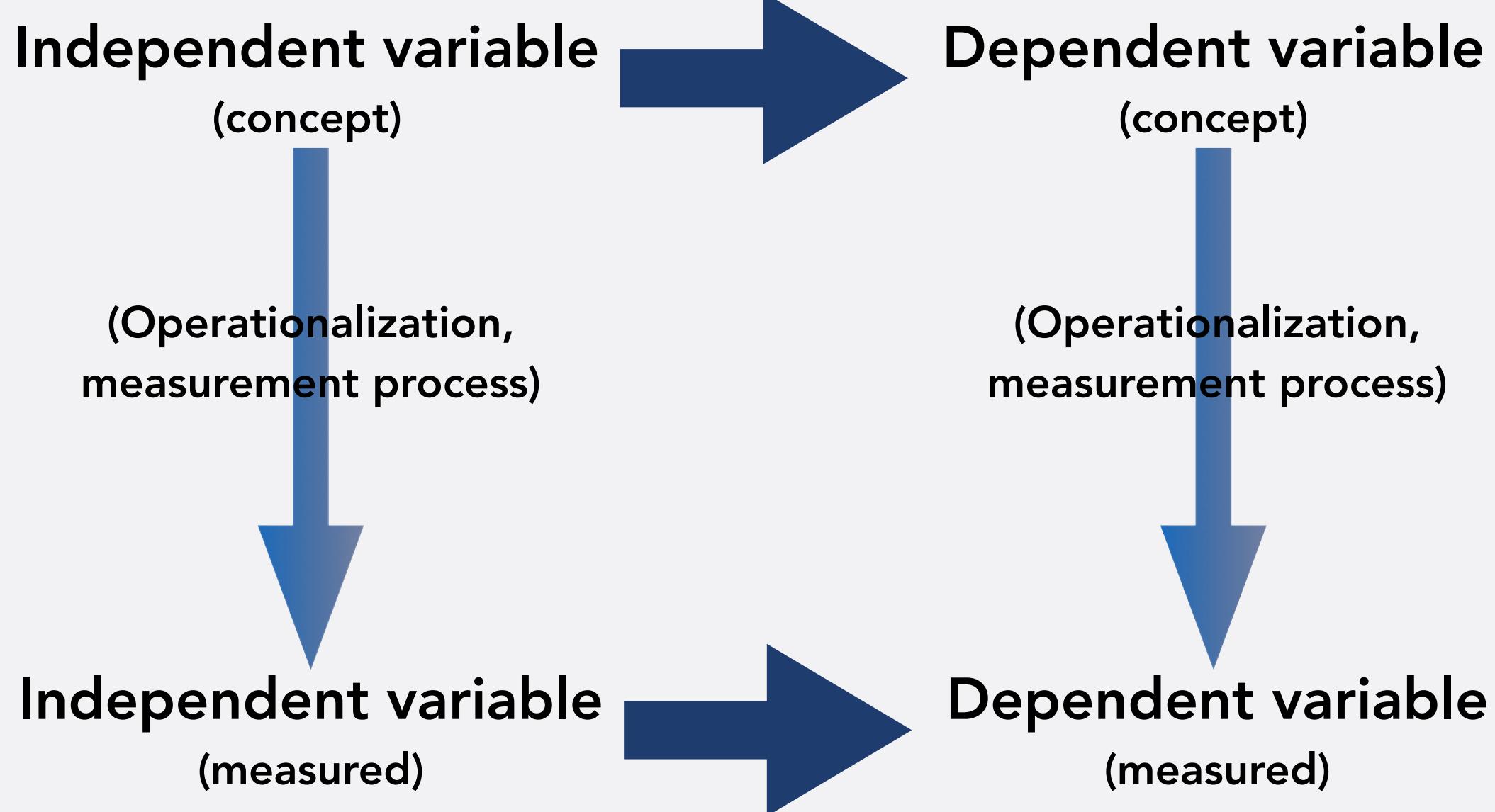
# THEORY



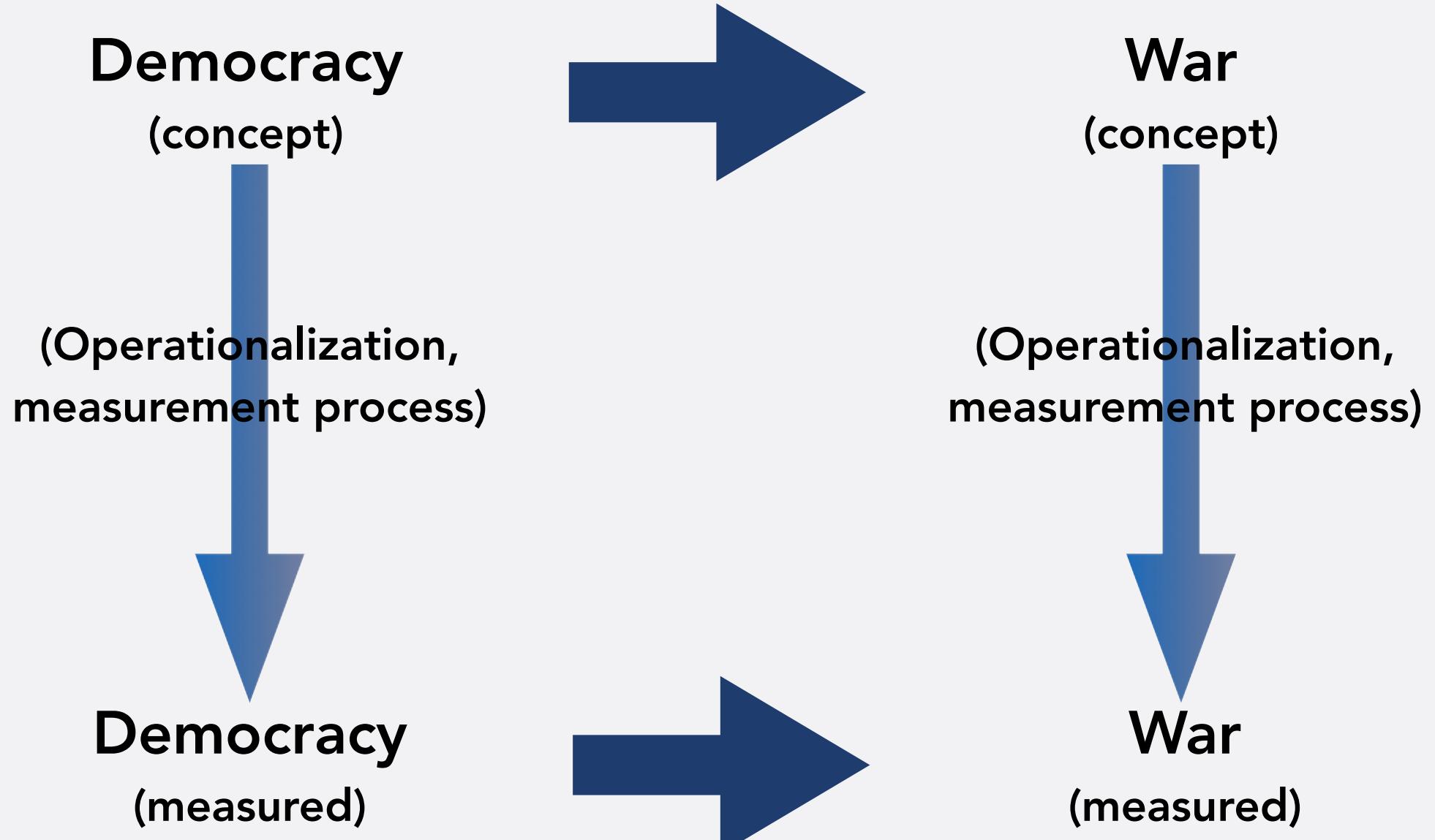
# MEASUREMENT



# MEASUREMENT



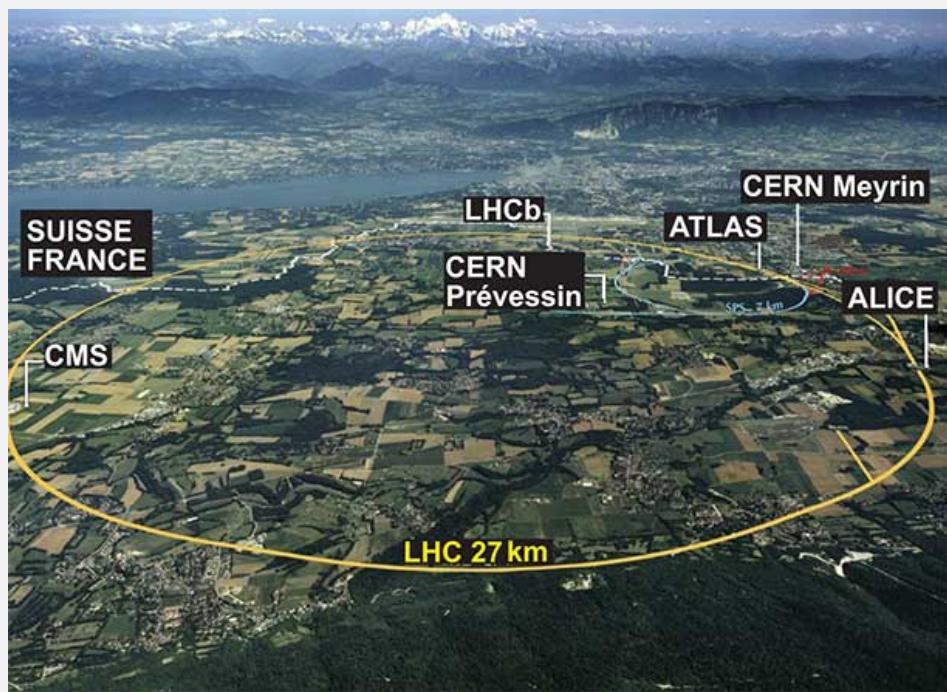
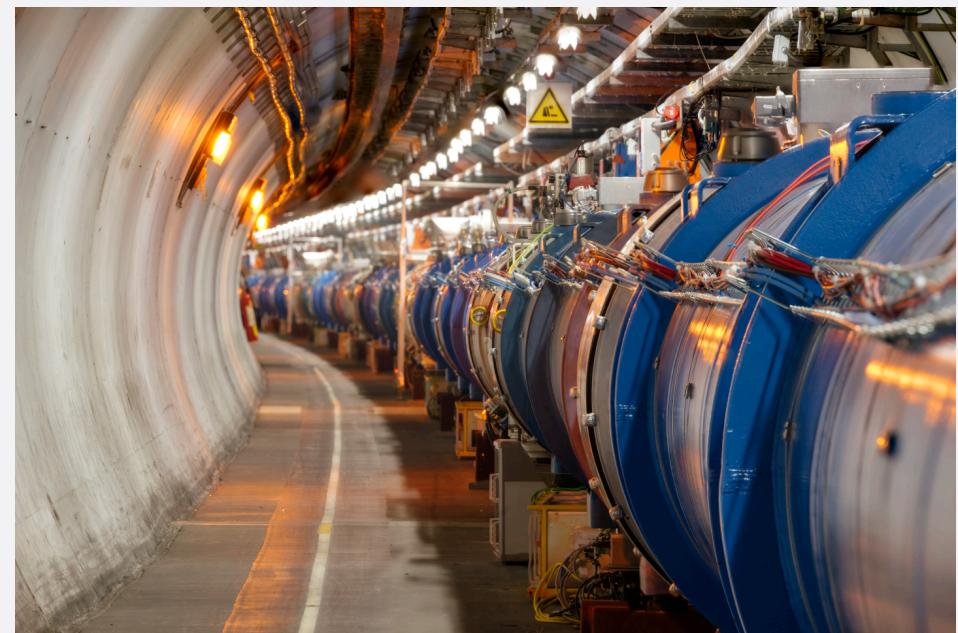
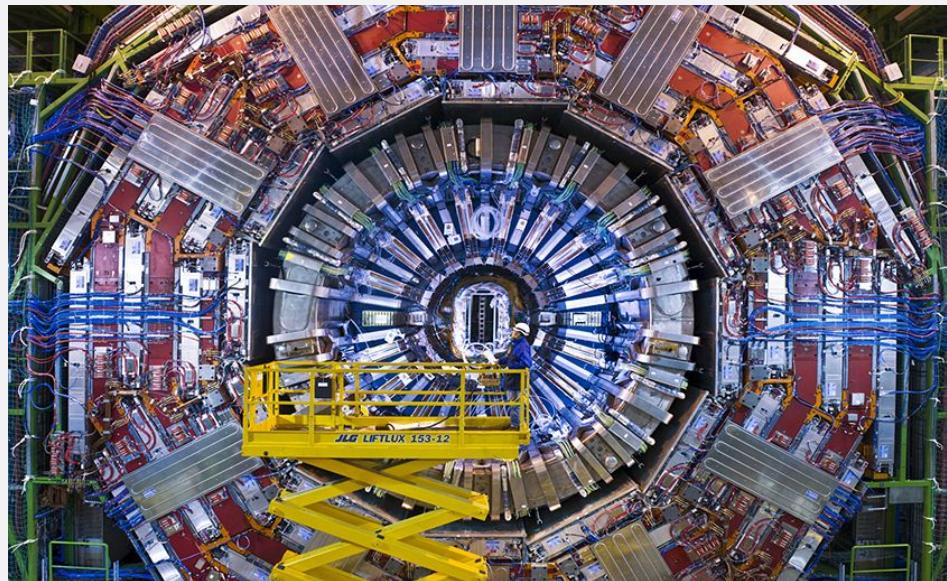
# MEASUREMENT



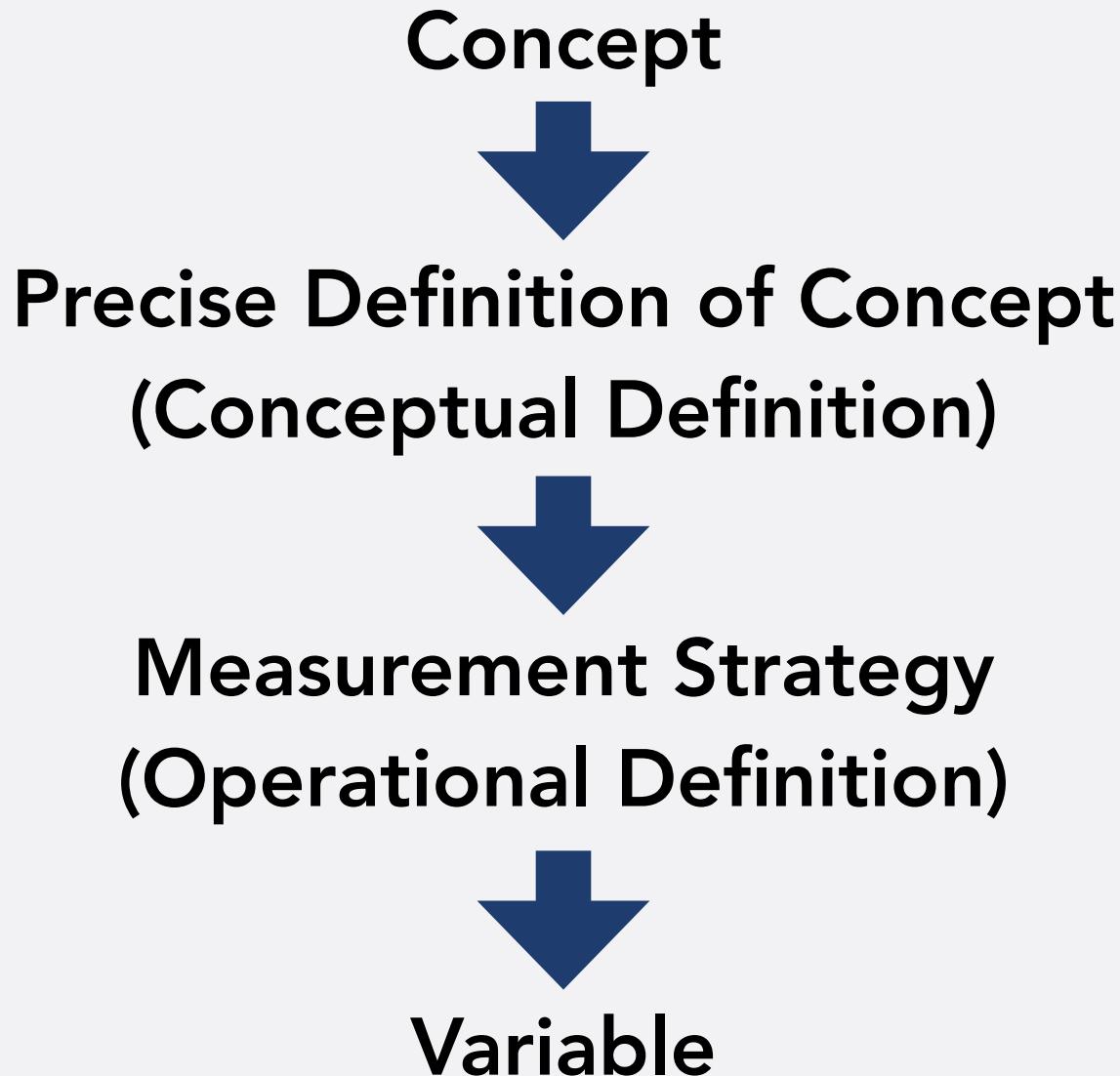
# TODAY

- Concepts
- Measurement Process
- Measurement Issues

# MEASUREMENT

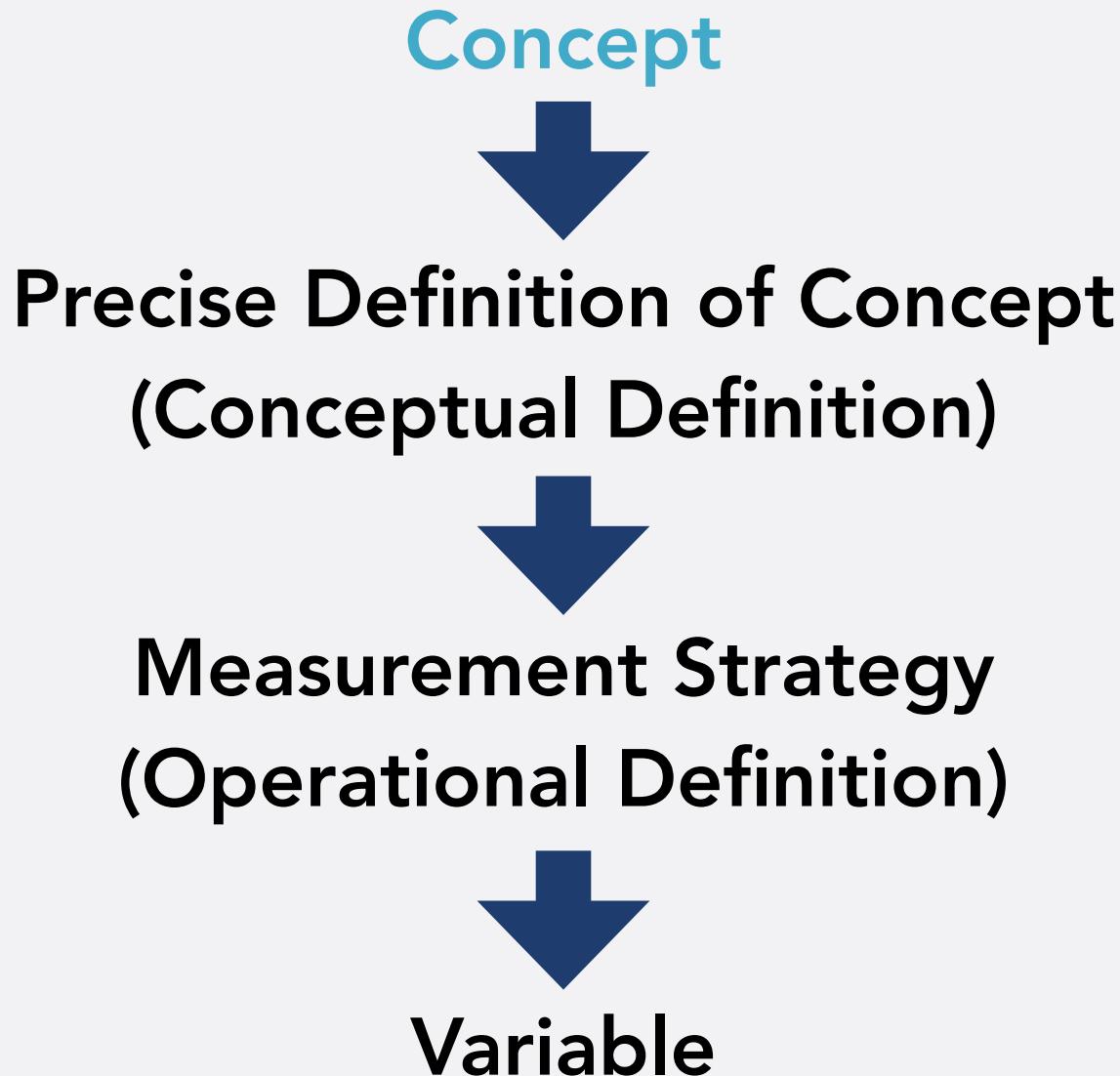


# MEASUREMENT PROCESS



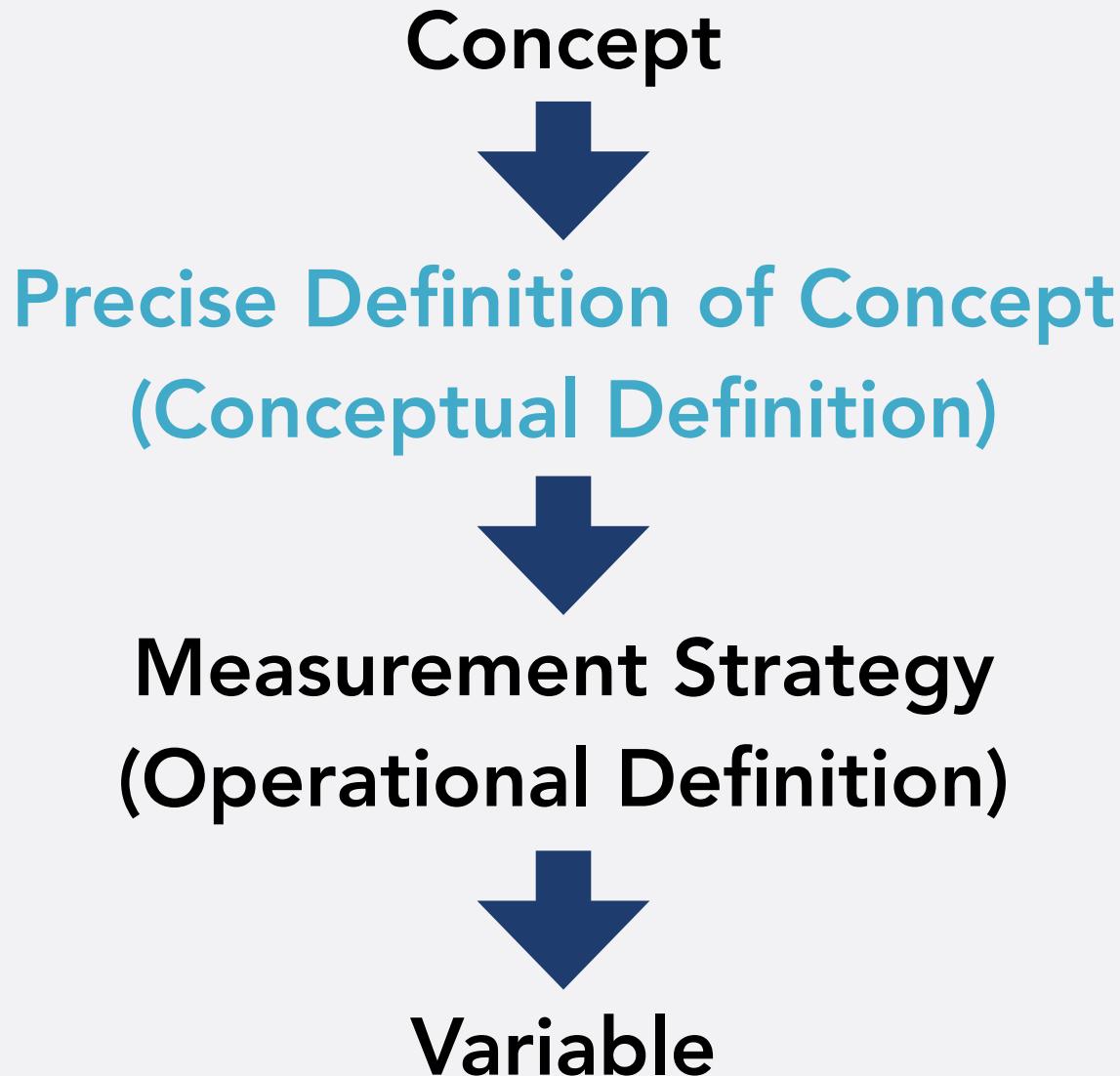
- Also called “operationalization”

# MEASUREMENT PROCESS



- Example: Democracy

# MEASUREMENT PROCESS



# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of \_\_\_\_\_ is defined as the extent to which \_\_\_\_\_ exhibit the characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_

# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of democracy is defined as the extent to which \_\_\_\_\_ exhibit the characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_

# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of democracy is defined as the extent to which countries exhibit the characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_

# UNIT OF ANALYSIS

- Entity we want to describe: “unit of analysis”
- Individual-level
  - people
  - Religiosity, Conservatism, Liberalism, etc.
- Aggregate-level
  - groups of people (e.g. countries, regions)
  - Democracy, Press Freedom, etc.
  - also: religiosity...

# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of democracy is defined as the extent to which countries exhibit the characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_

# CLARIFYING A CONCEPT

Democratic Country

Non-Democratic/Authoritarian  
Country

# CLARIFYING A CONCEPT

Democratic Country	Non-Democratic/Authoritarian Country
<b>How ruler is selected is regulated</b>	<b>Ruler becomes ruler through force/seizing power</b>
<b>Rulers are selected through competitive elections</b>	<b>Rulers are selected through heredity succession or designation</b>
<b>Most people have (in principle) the opportunity to try to become ruler</b>	<b>Only some people have opportunity to become ruler (e.g. son of current ruler)</b>
<b>There are constraints on what the ruler can do</b>	<b>Ruler has unlimited authority ("above the law")</b>

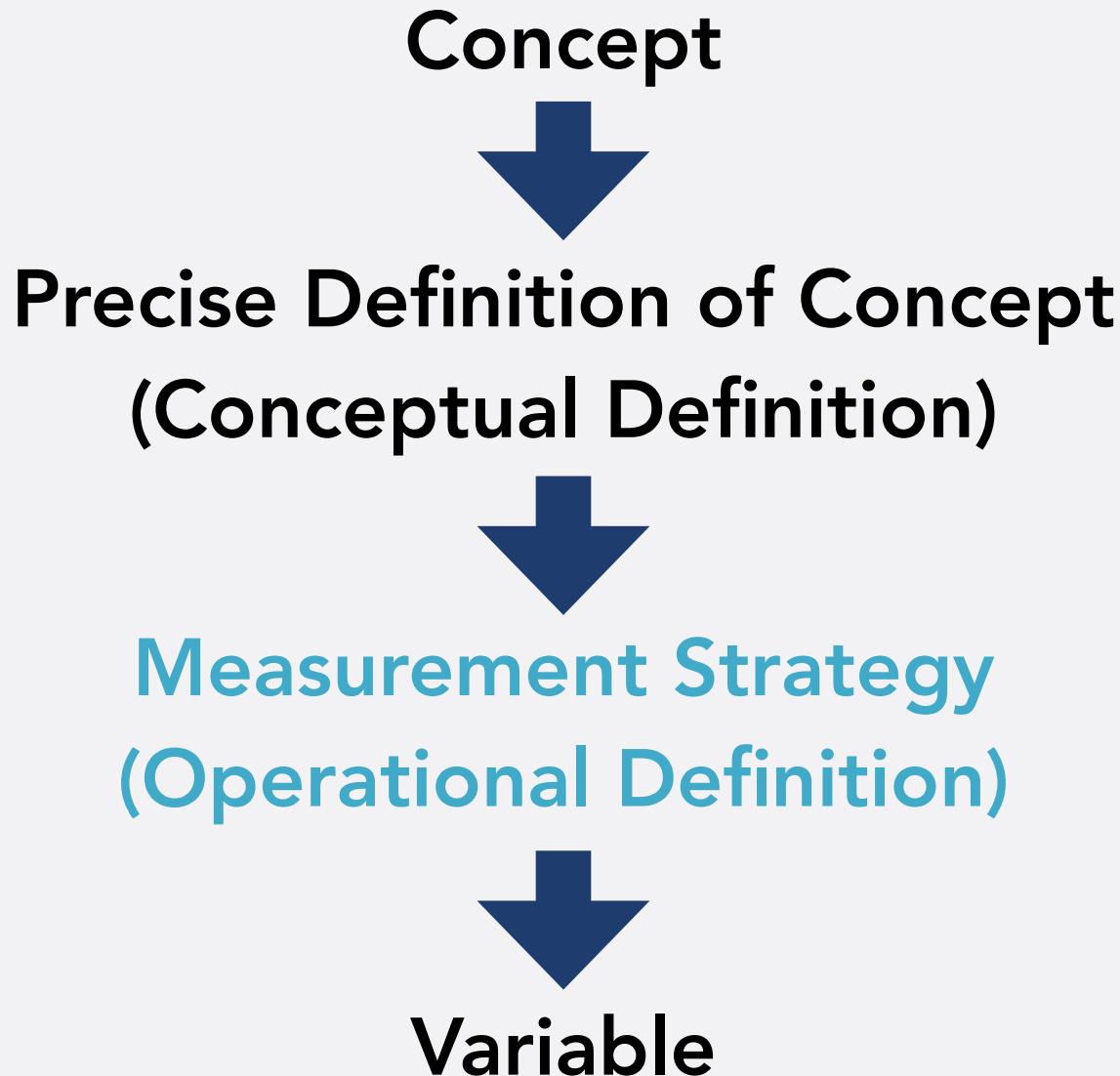
# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of democracy is defined as the extent to which countries exhibit the characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_

# CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

- The concept of democracy is defined as the extent to which countries exhibit the characteristic of having open and competitive contests to decide leadership

# MEASUREMENT PROCESS



# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- How can we measure whether countries have open and competitive contests to decide leadership?

# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- A good operational definition
  - “Recipe”
  - Provides answers to:
    - What procedure is used to collect the data?
    - How will the concept be measured?
    - What “metric” will be employed?

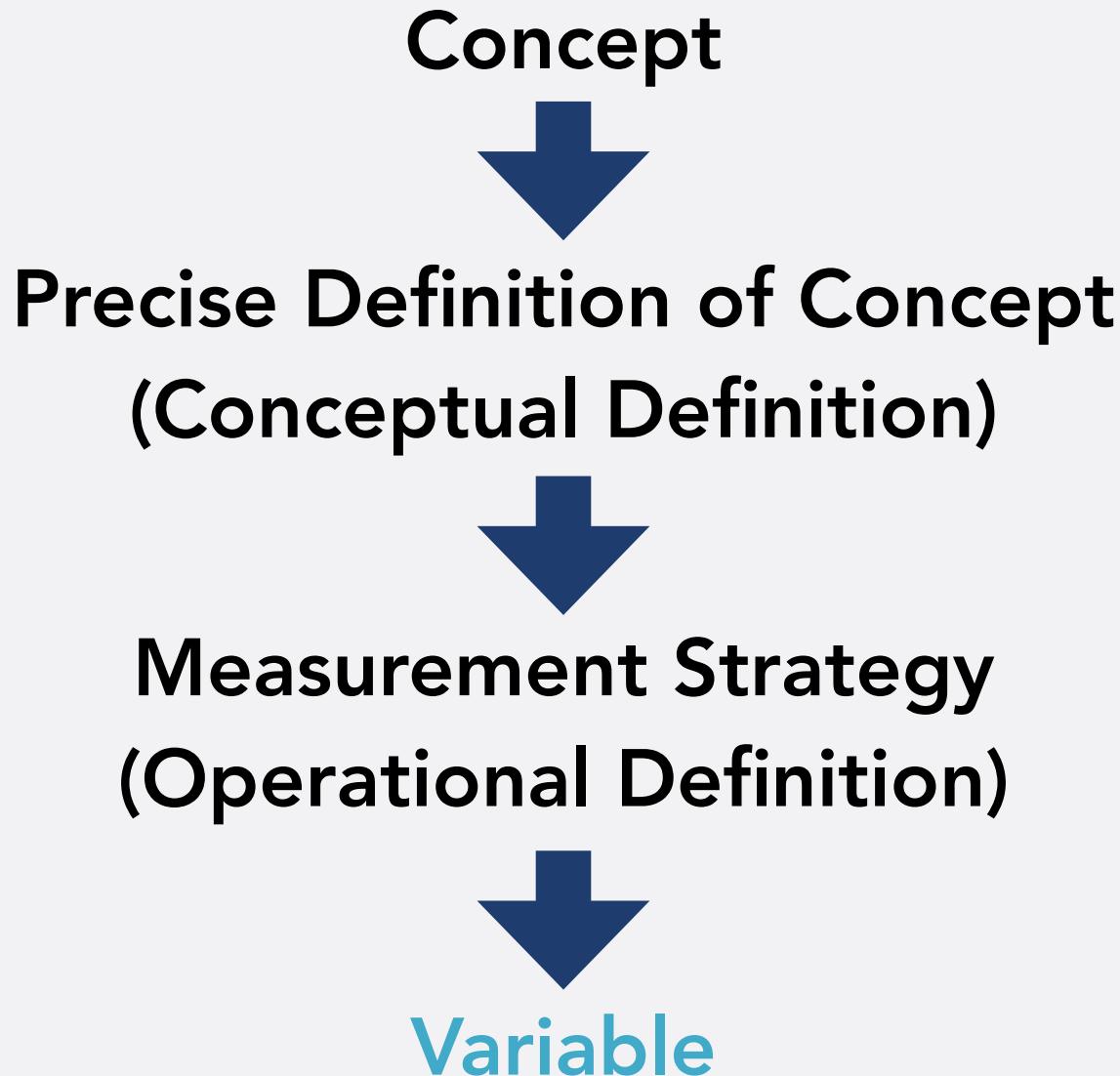
# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- How can we measure whether countries have open and competitive contests to decide leadership?

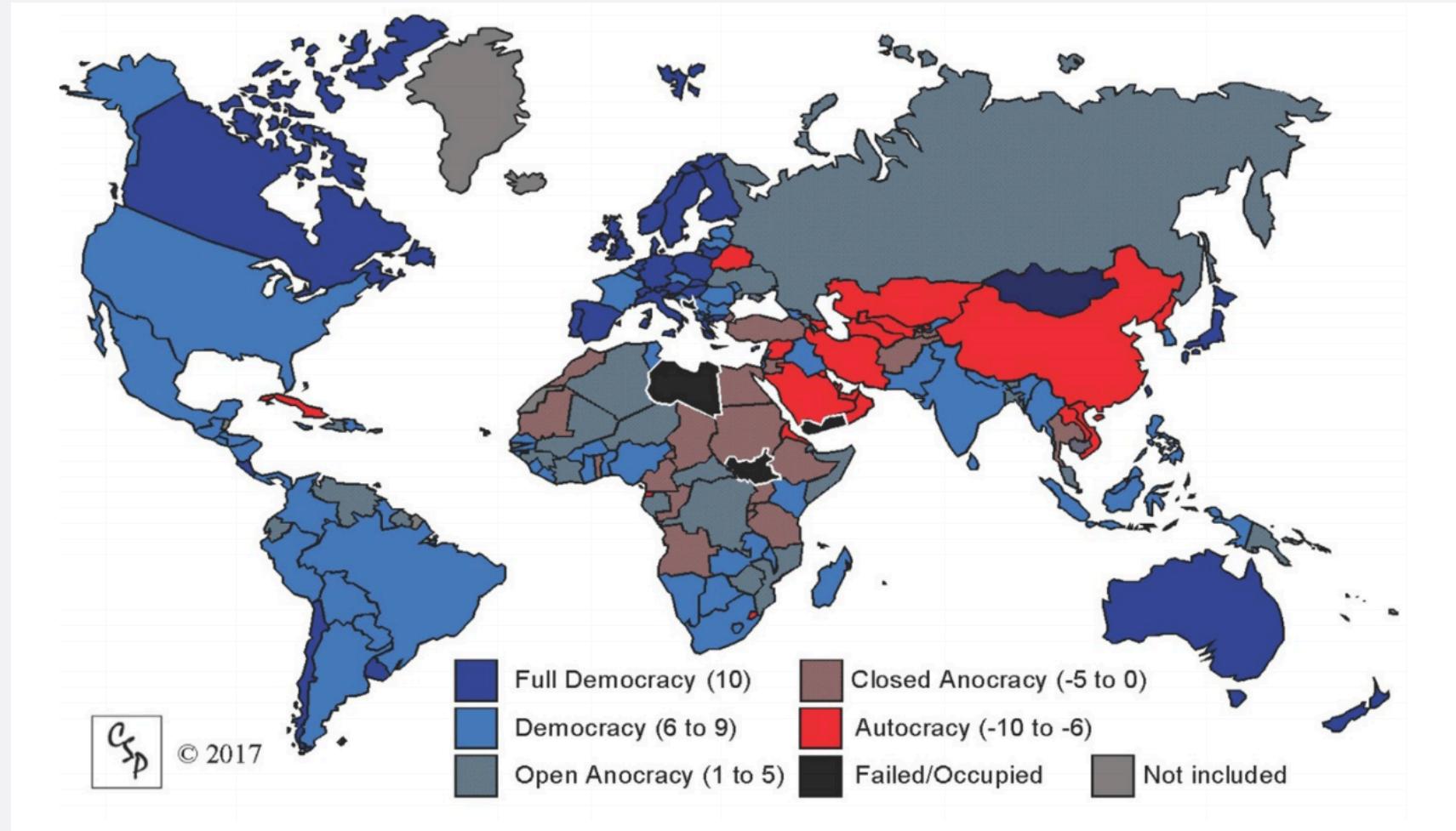
# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- Example Democracy:
  - What procedure is used to collect the data?
    - Country experts rate countries
  - How will the concept be measured?
    - regulation of executive recruitment, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, constraints on chief executive
  - What “metric” will be employed?
    - For each of the 4 components, experts rate country, then ratings are added up, resulting in score from -10 (strongly autocratic) to 10 (strongly democratic)

# MEASUREMENT PROCESS



# VARIABLE



- Polity IV

# ANOTHER, SIMPLER, EXAMPLE

- Concept: religiosity
- Conceptual definition: The concept of religiosity is defined as the extent to which individuals exhibit the characteristic of attending religious services

# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- **Example Religiosity:**
  - What procedure is used to collect the data?
    - Face-to-face survey of a random sample of adult Americans
  - How will the concept be measured?
    - "How often do you attend religious services?"
  - What "metric" will be employed?
    - Never; Less than once/year; Once/year; Several times/year; Once/month; 2-3x/month; Nearly every week; Every week; More than once/week