

Cover blurb (316 words)

# Democratic Deficits:

Rising aspirations, negative news, or failing performance?

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Many fear that democracies are suffering from a crisis of legitimacy. Widespread concern has prompted reforms designed to restore the connection between citizens and the state. Yet initiatives will fail if symptoms have been misdiagnosed.

Part I develops the core argument, focusing upon '*democratic deficits*', reflecting how far the perceived democratic performance of any state diverges from public expectations.

Part II examines the symptoms by comparing system support in more than fifty societies worldwide. The autopsy challenges the pervasive claim that most established democracies have experienced a steadily rising tide of political disaffection during the third wave era. Instead confidence in government ebbs and flows during these decades – in the United States as well as in Western Europe. At the same time, in most societies, evaluations of how democracy performs lag behind aspirations.

Part III diagnoses the reasons behind the democratic deficit using a market model emphasizing the combination of *demand* (rising public aspirations for democracy); *information* (negative news about government); and *supply* (the performance and structure of democratic regimes).

Why does this phenomenon matter? The prognosis in Part IV examines the consequences for active citizenship, for governance, and ultimately for democratization. The conclusion summarizes the key lessons and reflects upon their broader implications.

This book provides fresh insights into major issues at the heart of the study of comparative politics, public opinion, political culture, political behavior, democratic governance, political psychology, political communications, public policymaking, comparative sociology, cross-national survey analysis, and the dynamics of the democratization process.

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