# Sesgos de la DD: Status Quo

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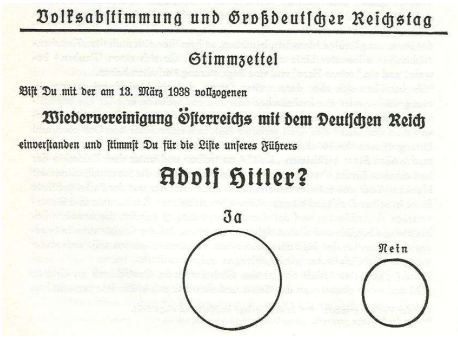
Arend Lijphart once claimed that "when governments control the referendum, they will tend to use it only when they expect to win" (1984: 203).

However, the results of such popular votes are much more eclectic than these authors usually grant, and the margins of victory are much narrower than one might assume.

# DD – Burdos Sesgos


Volksabstimmung und Großdeutscher Reichstag

Stimmzettel

Bist Du mit der am 13. März 1938 vollzogenen

**Wiedervereinigung Österreichs mit dem Deutschen Reich**

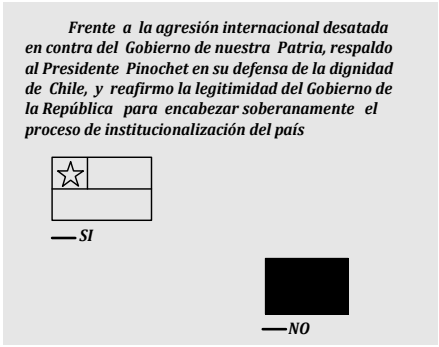
einverstanden und stimmst Du für die Liste unseres Führers

**Adolf Hitler?**

Ja

Nein

**Nazi Germany (1938)**
"Plebiscito y Gran Parlamento Alemán / ¿Está usted de acuerdo con la reunificación del Estado austriaco y alemán como se llevó a cabo el 13 de marzo de 1938 y le da voto a nuestro líder Adolf Hitler?


*Frente a la agresión internacional desatada en contra del Gobierno de nuestra Patria, respaldo al Presidente Pinochet en su defensa de la dignidad de Chile, y reafirmo la legitimidad del Gobierno de la República para encabezar soberanamente el proceso de institucionalización del país*

*SI*

*NO*

**Chile (1978)**

# Status Quo Bias?

Types of MDDs based on their agenda-setters and policy preferences

| | | Policy Preference | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Status Quo** | **Change** |
| **Agenda-Setter** | **Authorities** | Legislative Counter-Proposals | Plebiscites / Obligatory Referendums |
| | **Citizens** | Optional Referendums | Popular Initiatives |

# Status Quo Bias?

Types of MDDs based on their agenda-setters and policy preferences
(1980-2016, n=1141)

| | | Policy Preference | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Status Quo | Change | Total |
| **Agenda-Setter** | Authorities | **36**<br>3.16<br>(*SR=66.66*) | **667**<br>58.46<br>(*SR=72.86*) | **703**<br>61.61<br>(*SR=72.54*) |
| | Citizens | **197**<br>17.27<br>(*SR=35.02*) | **241**<br>21.12<br>(*SR=19.50*) | **438**<br>38.39<br>(*SR=26.48*) |
| | Total | **233**<br>20.42<br>(*SR=39.91*) | **908**<br>79.58<br>(*SR=58.70*) | **1141**<br>100<br>(*SR=54.86*) |

Key: Frequency, cell %, Success Rate [This table does not include micro-states]

# Status Quo Bias? Model

Democracy
Directionality
Quorums (*)
Executive Recommendation
Govt. days in office
Govt. days in office^2
Double Majorities
Concurrent Vote
Participation
Participation * Quorums
Growth
Inflation
Social Fragmentation
Switzerland
Previous MDD Experience
Subject: Int' Affairs

# Directionality

A major flaw: literature tends to aggregate the results of MDDs without paying sufficient attention to the directionality or intention of the questions.

For example, an approved referendum in Slovenia or Switzerland means exactly the opposite in Latvia or in Uruguay.

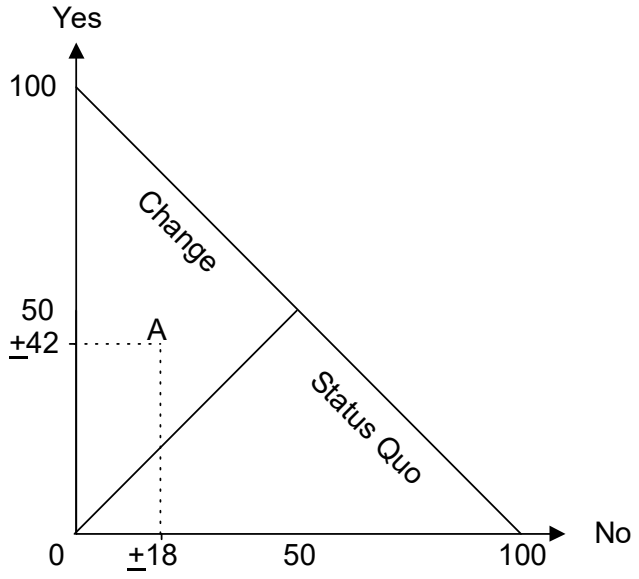
> In the first pair of countries, the people are asked whether they want to sustain the law in question (e.g., **"Do you approve that the Law on part-time work, which was adopted by the National Assembly in its session of November 16, 2010, shall become effective?**" (Slovenia 2010)).
>
> On the other hand, in the second set, they are asked if they support abolishing said law (e.g., "**Are you in favor of the abolition of the amendments to the Law on National State Security of March 1st, 2007?**" (Latvia 2007)).

This simple fact undermines the suggestion that citizens voting in MDDs tend to behave in a risk-averse manner (i.e., against political change), as suggested by some authors.

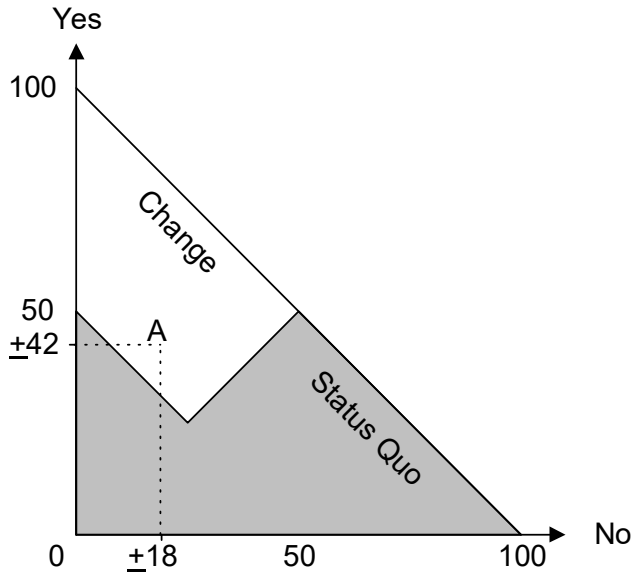
# Quorums

"Every One of Us Is a Former Embryo" (Posters in Rome against Referendum on "Procreazione Medicalmente Assistita"), June 2005.

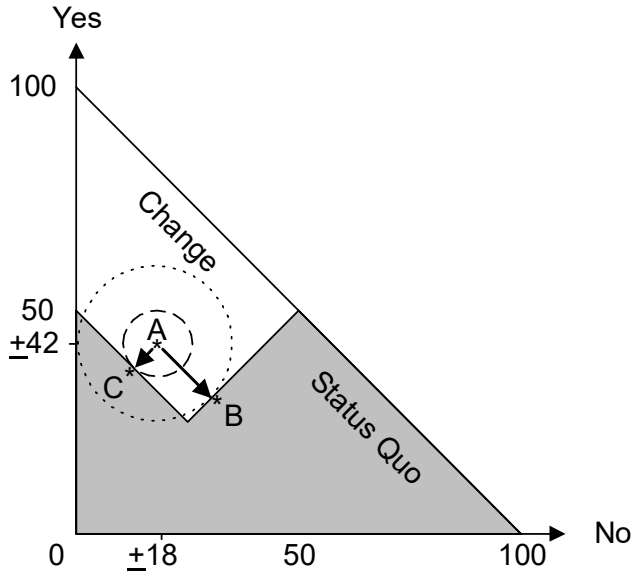
## Quorums




## Quorums



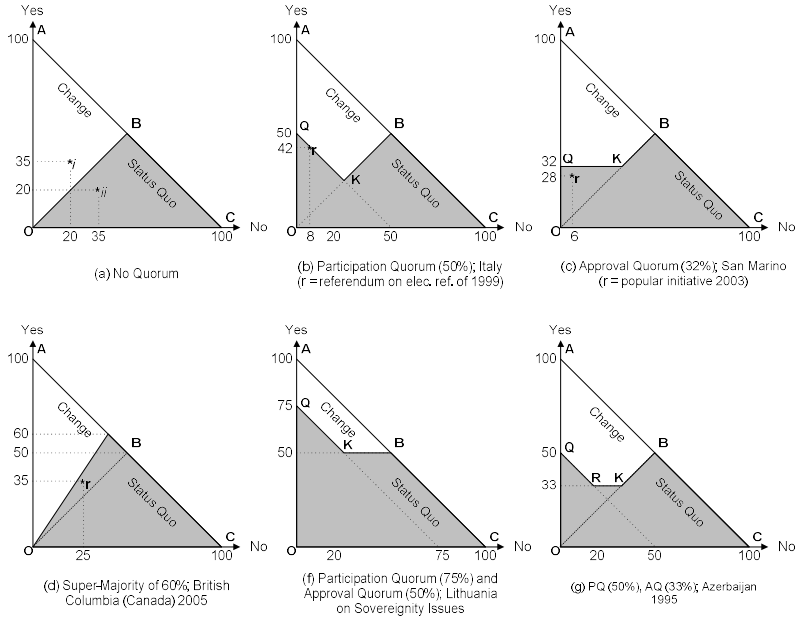
# Quorums




"*What is the principle of wisdom, if not to abstain from all that is odious to God?"* Pope Benedict XVI. [Strong demobilization campaign].

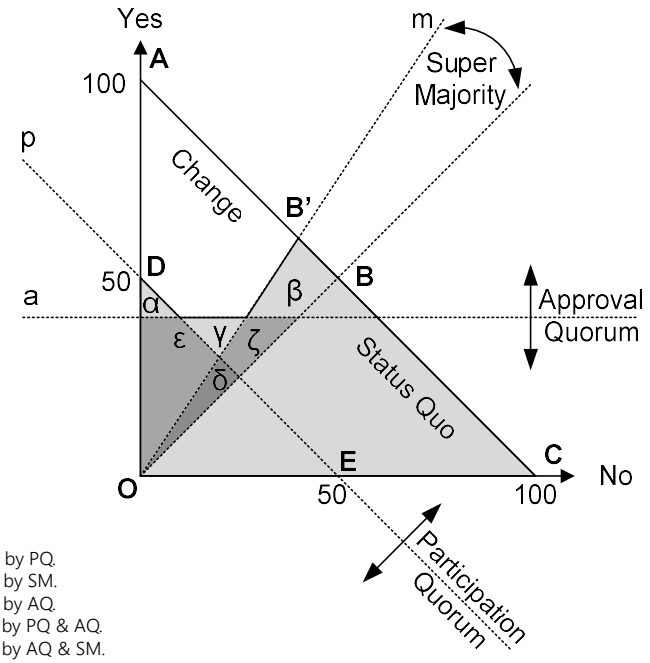
# Quorums

Calculating the Status-Quo Surface (SQS)



# Quorums

## Calculating the Status-Quo Surface (SQS)




Any point in sector **α** is defeated by PQ.
Any point in sector **β** is defeated by SM.
Any point in sector **γ** is defeated by AQ.
Any point in sector **ε** is defeated by PQ & AQ.
Any point in sector **ζ** is defeated by AQ & SM.
Any point in sector **δ** is defeated by PQ & AQ & SM.

TABLE A4.1 *Typical quorums and their status quo surface (SQS)*

| Participation quorum at: | SQS | Approval Quorum at: | SQS | Super majority at: | SQS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 50.00 | 0 | 50.00 | 0 | 50.00 |
| 5 | 50.13 | 5 | 50.25 | 5 | 50.00 |
| 10 | 50.50 | 10 | 51.00 | 10 | 50.00 |
| 15 | 51.13 | 15 | 52.25 | 15 | 50.00 |
| 20 | 52.00 | 20 | 54.00 | 20 | 50.00 |
| 25 | 53.13 | 25 | 56.25 | 25 | 50.00 |
| 30 | 54.50 | 30 | 59.00 | 30 | 50.00 |
| 35 | 56.13 | 35 | 62.25 | 35 | 50.00 |
| 40 | 58.00 | 40 | 66.00 | 40 | 50.00 |
| 45 | 60.13 | 45 | 70.25 | 45 | 50.00 |
| 50 | 62.50 | 50 | 75.00 | 50 | 50.00 |
| 55 | 65.13 | 55 | 79.75 | 55 | 55.00 |
| 60 | 68.00 | 60 | 84.00 | 60 | 60.00 |
| 65 | 71.13 | 65 | 87.75 | 65 | 65.00 |
| 70 | 74.50 | 70 | 91.00 | 70 | 70.00 |
| 75 | 78.13 | 75 | 93.75 | 75 | 75.00 |
| 80 | 82.00 | 80 | 96.00 | 80 | 80.00 |
| 85 | 86.13 | 85 | 97.75 | 85 | 85.00 |
| 90 | 90.50 | 90 | 99.00 | 90 | 90.00 |
| 95 | 95.13 | 95 | 99.75 | 95 | 95.00 |
| 100 | 100.00 | 100 | 100.00 | 100 | 100.00 |

# Quorums

1. At the individual level: Potential violation of secrecy of personal vote.
2. At the aggregate level (1): Strong demobilization efforts, calling for no show-ups…
3. At the aggregate level (2): Potential massive disappointment with DD and maybe democracy itself (particularly East Europe; Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia, etc).

TABLE A4.2 *Summary statistics*

| Variable | Obs. | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Electoral Democracy Index | 1,141 | 0.693 | 0.275 | 0 | 1 |
| Quorums (SQS) | 1,141 | 0.536 | 0.062 | 0.5 | 0.84 |
| Executive Recommendation | 1,141 | 0.271 | 0.912 | −1 | 1 |
| Directionality | 1,141 | 0.796 | 0.403 | 0 | 1 |
| D0 (CI = 0, DIR = 1) | 1,141 | 0.585 | 0.493 | 0 | 1 |
| D1 (CI = 1, DIR = 1) | 1,141 | 0.211 | 0.408 | 0 | 1 |
| D2 (CI = 1, DIR = 0) | 1,141 | 0.173 | 0.378 | 0 | 1 |
| D3 (CI = 0, DIR = 0) | 1,141 | 0.032 | 0.175 | 0 | 1 |
| Concurrent Vote | 1,141 | 0.081 | 0.272 | 0 | 1 |
| Social Fragmentation | 1,141 | 0.585 | 0.224 | 0.0079 | 0.9975 |
| Switzerland | 1,141 | 0.276 | 0.447 | 0 | 1 |
| Subject: Int'l Affairs | 1,141 | 0.063 | 0.243 | 0 | 1 |
| Participation | 1,132 | 55.371 | 20.963 | 4 | 100 |
| DD Experience | 1,141 | 19.460 | 28.088 | 1 | 110 |
| Growth | 1,141 | 2.187 | 4.835 | −27.2 | 33.6 |
| Inflation | 1,141 | 49.040 | 345.759 | −37.9 | 8954 |
| Govt. Days in Office | 1,141 | 1,490.227 | 1,913.599 | 4 | 14,306 |
| Double Majorities | 1,141 | 0.094 | 0.198 | 0 | 0.83 |

# Status Quo Bias?

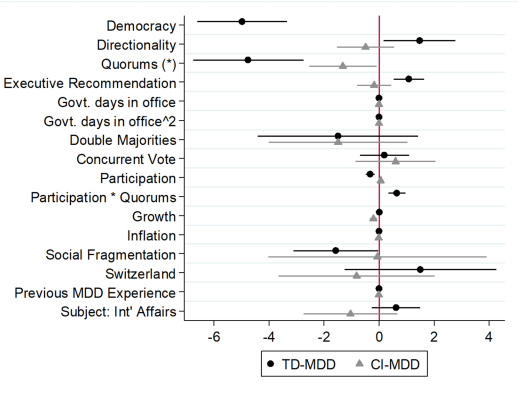



TABLE A4.3 *Binary panel logistic regressions: determinants of success rate*

| | (1) TD-MDD | (2) CI-MDD |
|---|---|---|
| Democracy | −4.976*** | |
| | (0.834) | |
| Directionality | 1.477* | −0.486 |
| | (0.667) | (0.532) |
| Quorums (SQS) | −47.578*** | −13.154* |
| | (10.250) | (6.225) |
| Executive Recommendation | 1.085*** | −0.179 |
| | (0.282) | (0.316) |
| Govt. Days in Office | −0.001*** | 0.001+ |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Govt. Days in Office^2 | 0.000** | −0.000 |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Double Majorities | −1.488 | −1.485 |
| | (1.487) | (1.288) |
| Concurrent Vote | 0.200 | 0.602 |
| | (0.452) | (0.741) |
| Participation | −0.324*** | 0.060*** |
| | (0.083) | (0.012) |
| Participation * Quorums | 0.642*** | |
| | (0.158) | |
| Growth | 0.015 | −0.202** |
| | (0.028) | (0.067) |
| Inflation | 0.000 | −0.014 |
| | (0.000) | (0.018) |
| Social Fragmentation | −1.563* | −0.055 |
| | (0.786) | (2.022) |
| Switzerland | 1.500 | −0.813 |
| | (1.410) | (1.452) |
| Previous MDD Experience | 0.000 | −0.009 |
| | (0.009) | (0.007) |
| Subject: Int' Affairs | 0.619 | −1.036 |
| | (0.448) | (0.867) |
| Constant | 27.793*** | 3.837 |
| | (5.639) | (3.809) |
| N | 694 | 438 |

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. (Coefficient and Std. Err)

# Status Quo Bias?

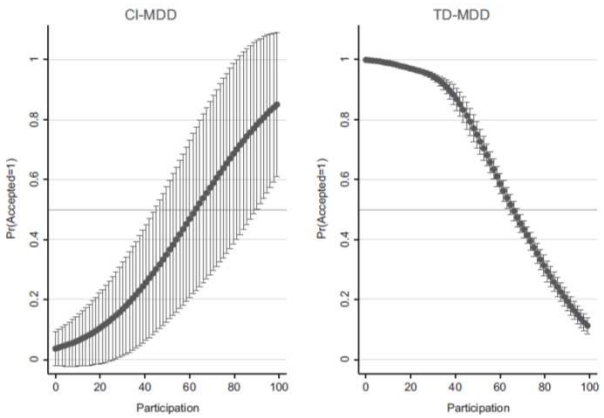



FIGURE 4.2 Participation and the probability of success

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# Status Quo Bias?

Legislative success rate by bills' origin in selected democracies

| | | | Government | | | Private Members | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **IDE (V-DEM)** | **Country** | **Covered years** | **Bills** | **Laws** | **Success** | **Bills** | **Laws** | **Success** |
| 0.805 | Argentina | 1983-2014 | 2,410 | 1,595 | 66.18 | 65,284 | 2,700 | 4.14 |
| 0.864 | Canada | 2001-2015 | 809 | 442 | 54.64 | 3,523 | 110 | 3.12 |
| 0.852 | Chile | 1990-2017 | 2,092 | 1,493 | 71.37 | 8,380 | 717 | 8.56 |
| 0.892 | Czech Rep. | 1998-2013 | 1,576 | 1,235 | 78.36 | 1,067 | 357 | 33.46 |
| 0.898 | Denmark | 1987-2016 | 6,526 | 5,984 | 91.69 | 847 | 104 | 12.28 |
| 0.917 | France | 2000-2015 | 2,679 | 1,150 | 42.93 | 15,530 | 152 | 0.98 |
| 0.888 | Germany | 2006-2017 | 1,392 | 1,292 | 92.82 | 651 | 205 | 31.49 |
| 0.800 | Hungary | 1990-2010 | 2,577 | 2,264 | 87.85 | 2,207 | 547 | 24.78 |
| 0.840 | Japan | 2000-2014 | 1,720 | 1,570 | 91.28 | 1,511 | 408 | 27.00 |
| 0.837 | Lithuania | 2012-2016 | 1,525 | 1,188 | 77.90 | 3,145 | 1,259 | 40.03 |
| 0.886 | Portugal | 2009-2017 | 674 | 614 | 91.10 | 6,807 | 2,690 | 39.52 |
| 0.857 | Slovakia | 2002-2012 | 1,184 | 834 | 70.44 | 929 | 173 | 18.62 |
| 0.857 | Slovenia | 2002-2016 | 2,375 | 1,989 | 83.75 | 550 | 112 | 20.36 |
| 0.869 | Spain | 1977-2000 | 1,296 | 1,024 | 79.01 | 1,031 | 112 | 10.86 |
| 0.904 | UK | 2000-2016 | 506 | 450 | 88.93 | 1,680 | 84 | 5.00 |
| 0.877 | USA | 1991-2016 | . | . | . | 218,516 | 5,552 | 2.54 |
| 0.890 | Uruguay | 1985-2014 | 3,367 | 2,539 | 75.41 | 5,303 | 1,229 | 23.18 |
| | **Average** | | | | **77.73** | | | **18.00** |
| | **Average Success Rate** | | **TD-MDDs** | | **72.54** | **CI-MDDs** | | **19.50** |