

Left or Right? Investigating Potential Ideological Biases in Contemporary Direct Democracy

Altman, David. 2019. *Citizenship and Contemporary Direct Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
(Chapter 5)



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

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

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

A bird's-eye view of the last citizen-initiated mechanisms of direct democracy (CI-MDDs) held in Switzerland leaves us with a very strident conservative flavor



Liechtenstein (prince powers); Uruguay (age of criminal responsibility); Latvians (second official language); Croatians, Slovakia, Slovenia (gay rights).



I wonder if this conservative taste is generalizable to other latitudes, and therefore, weather it is a distinctive characteristic of contemporary direct democracy

Research Questions

Is direct democracy mainly used and capitalized by extremist forces in society. If it does, which are those forces?

Answering these questions is crucial to filling the gap between two irreconcilable positions:

- a. For some, MDDs are the paramount example of a citizenry obsessed with revolutionary changes,
- b. For others, these MDDs are notable examples of ultramontane groups avoiding change at any price.

“...mainly used...”

(H1) Regardless where CI-MDDs are triggered, instigators of these CI-MDDs have been steadily moving rightwards at the ideological continuum.

(H2) While in the so-called developed world, citizen-initiated mechanisms of direct democracy have their stronghold in the right (same as above), at the developing world, in the left.

“...mainly capitalized...”

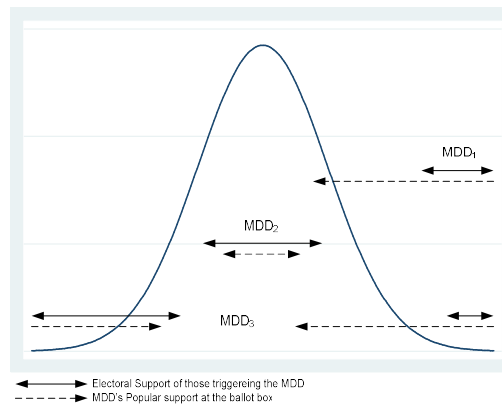
Two focal points to think this problem: (a) everyone is sincere and they really seek to win the popular vote, (b) they instrumentalize it for a hidden agenda (mobilize people, capture more activists, dominate the political agenda, etc)

(H3a) If the ultimate objective is to win, then: the more to the right instigators are, the higher the probability the CI-MDD is approved.

(H3b) If the capitalization is about increasing the electoral support instigators have (regardless approval), then: the more to the right instigators are, the more the capitalization obtained.

2. Variables and case selection

- All MDDs transpired in contexts where:
- $v2x_polyarchy$ (V-DEM) ≥ 0.75
 - Existence of political parties



2.a. Gravitational Ideological Center

$$GIC = \frac{(L * -2 + CL * -1 + C * 0 + CR * 1 + R * 2)}{(L + CL + C + CR + R)}$$

(where L = % of the vote of instigators of the left, etc.)

A potential problem with GIC arises when instigators come from the extremes of the ideological divide, and have more or less equal sizes. $GIC-D = \sum F_i * |x_i - GIC|$. Nonetheless, less than a handful of cases show this combination.

2.b. Capitalization

$$Capitalization = \left(\frac{MDD_{support} * 100}{Instigators_{support}} \right) - 100, \text{ where}$$

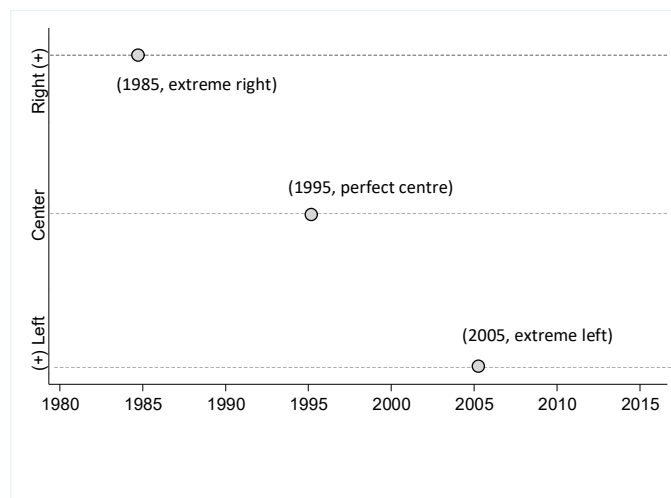
$$MDD_{support} = \frac{MDD_{turnout} * MDD_{backing}}{100}, \text{ and}$$

$$Instigators_{support} = \frac{Election_{turnout} * Instigators_{backing}}{100}$$

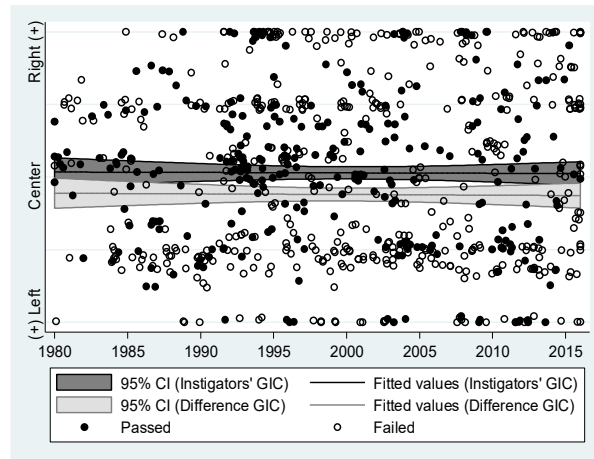
Table 1 Summary Statistics

	Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
All MDDs	GIC _{instigators}	744	0.058	1.169	-2.00	2.0
	GIC _{governments}	758	0.319	0.798	-2.00	2.0
	Difference GICs (GIC _{inst} - GIC _{govt})	744	-0.241	1.242	-3.33	3.8
	Capitalization	744	113.646	537.077	-100.00	11385.3
CI-MDDs	GIC _{instigators}	409	-0.023	1.317	-2.00	2.0
	GIC _{governments}	423	0.376	0.697	-2.00	2.0
	Difference GICs (GIC _{inst} - GIC _{govt})	409	-0.364	1.538	-3.33	3.8
	Capitalization	409	199.878	705.232	-99.34	11385.3
TD-MDDs	GIC _{instigators}	335	0.157	0.950	-2.00	2.0
	GIC _{governments}	335	0.247	0.905	-2.00	2.0
	Difference GICs (GIC _{inst} - GIC _{govt})	335	-0.090	0.707	-3.00	2.4
	Capitalization	335	8.365	117.927	-100.00	662.1

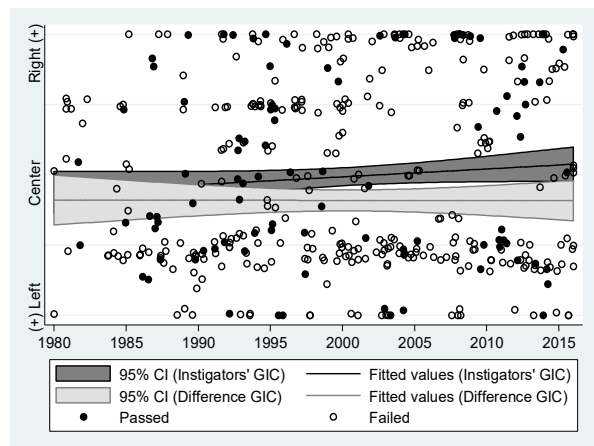
Gravitational Ideological Center of Instigators since 1980



All MDDs: From where in the ideological divide instigators come from?

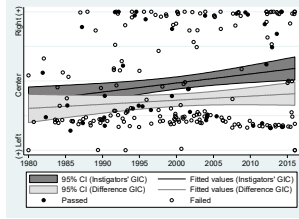


All CI-MDDs: From where in the ideological divide instigators come from?

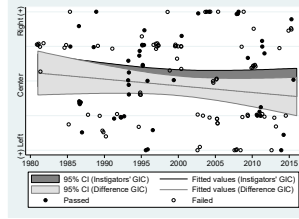


Maybe regional differences? ...

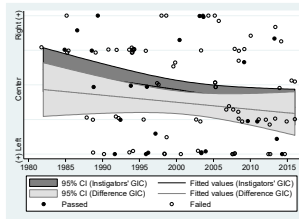
From where in the ideological divide instigators come from?



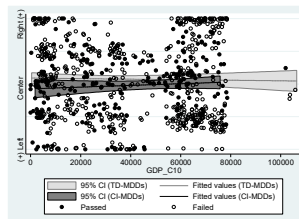
Switzerland



OCDE (~CHE)

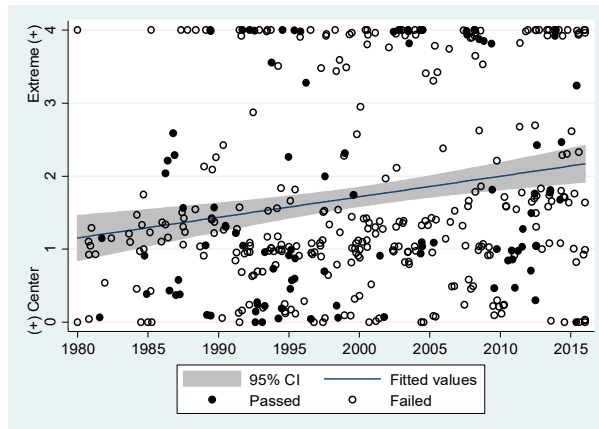


~OCDE



Maybe income? ...

Degree of Instigators' Extremism by Acceptance



Logistic and OLS models of Acceptance and Capitalization

	(1) Acceptance (logit)	(2) Acceptance (logit)	(3) Capitalization (linear)	(4) Capitalization (linear)
Citizen-Initiated (CI)	-1.891*** (0.222)	-1.798*** (0.221)	217.187*** (41.068)	233.666*** (41.344)
GIC _{Instigators}	-0.230 (0.168)		15.869 (30.173)	
GIC _{Instigators} * CI	0.326 (0.190)		75.111* (35.963)	
Diff_GICs		-0.213 (0.186)		-6.322 (40.544)
Diff_GICs * CI		0.247 (0.200)		85.737 (43.772)
GDP_C10	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Growth	-0.031 (0.033)	-0.028 (0.032)	-0.922 (6.407)	0.226 (6.425)
Constant	0.486 (0.316)	0.448 (0.314)	51.495 (43.130)	31.169 (43.054)
N	743	743	743	743

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Who uses MDDs the most?

No particular tilt in the instigators ideological leanings (Instigators' GIC is not statistically skewed to any particular side). However, certain patters if we control for regions or countries (nonetheless, w/o being statist. sig. yet).

For whom, this is the best game? (Capitalization)

No relationship between GIC_{instigators} & GIC_{difference} on P|acceptance|. Nonetheless, there is a strong and significant relationship between instigators GIC and capitalization increase (as long the MDD was CI-MDD).

[The more to the right instigators are, the more they capitalize. The intuition that instigators instrumentalize CI-MDDs for objectives beyond the mere approval of the vote is robust].