

A Communal Duty Model of Citizen Compliance

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Why do citizens choose to comply with the state? Democracies rely on a great deal of this voluntary compliance to govern effectively. While existing answers focus almost exclusively on payoffs, I introduce a different framework based on the ethical power of communities. Special communities such as the nation often instill a sense of responsibility to contribute to their welfare – a *communal duty*. When the state is seen as representing “my” nation, this communal duty provides an ethical motivation to comply with the state. Using voting, a form of citizen compliance that all democracies share, I test the model across paired surveys and experiments in South Korea and Taiwan, two places with contrasting degrees of nation-state alignment. The findings offer new theoretical and policy insight on how nationalism can help, not hinder, democratic governance.

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From everyday governance to national crises, democracies rely on a great deal of “quasi-voluntary compliance” from citizens (Levi 1997). Voting is entirely voluntary in most democracies, and even in areas with legal penalties such as taxes, the impossibility of universal monitoring means that democracies count on most citizens to choose to comply. During times of crisis, this reliance is even more acute since democracies are limited in the ways they can coerce or threaten citizens. Thus, scholars have long recognized that a central feature of well-functioning democracies is widespread voluntary citizen will to engage in state affairs (Tocqueville 2005[1835], Almond and Verba 1963, Banfield 1985).

From the individual’s point of view, however, voluntary compliance remains a puzzle. Going to the polls or filing taxes takes time and effort, but the returns are often unclear or uncertain. Since shirking does not exclude one from the benefits of citizenship, given the low chances of being caught, most individuals should be tempted to free-ride (Olson 1965, Hardin 1982). Under strict rationalist assumptions, no one should voluntarily comply with state demands (Downs 1957).

Why do many citizens comply with the state, even though it is costly? The question is more than a behavioral puzzle, but an important one for understanding how democracies work. Either implicitly or explicitly, most prior work approaches the question from a framework of expected payoffs. Across the theory of sanctions (Becker 1968, Allingham and Sandmo 1972), contingent consent (Levi 1997), social capital (Putnam 1993), and various incentive-based theories of turnout (Fiorina 1976, Fowler and Kam 2007, Gerber, Green and Larimer 2008), scholars have offered different answers for what may outweigh the individual’s short-term costs of compliance.

Yet the most impressive instances of citizen compliance seem to defy a strictly payoff-based logic. Why did some Nigerians wait for up to six hours under extreme heat to vote? What motivated South Koreans to donate to a bankrupt state that most likely could not pay them back? What possible incentive outweighs death in fighting for one’s country? In fact, voluntary compliance is arguably most important for stable governance when it defies low or negative payoffs. A comprehensive theory of compliance needs to be able to explain not only why citizens forgo their immediate interests, but also self-interest broadly defined.

This article introduces a different pathway to citizen compliance that highlights the ethical power of communities. The argument is intuitive: to special communities seen as integral to one’s identity, individuals often feel a sense of responsibility for their welfare – what I call a *communal duty*. For many, the nation is one such community. Then when the democratic state is seen as representing one’s nation, acts of citizen compliance invoke a communal responsibility. For many individuals, this communal duty motivates a citizen duty to the state, even when compliance is costly.

The idea that community or ethics matter in governance is not new. But in most studies, the variables ultimately work through the pursuit of interests. For example, scholars have shown that group identity serves as an alternative standard for self-interest (Lieberman 2003), creates common interests (Miguel 2004), or strengthens expectations of reciprocity (Levi 1997). Ethical values such as procedural fairness matter because they proxy the long-term utility of staying in a political system (Tyler 2006). At the same time, scholars have also recognized that certain identities in themselves have enormous power to induce sacrifices (Shils 1957, Geertz 1963). But exactly why they are able

to do so, and to what systematic consequence for democratic citizenship, have been theoretically and empirically underspecified. The main contribution of this article is to show the logic of how nations contribute to democratic governance through their capacity to motivate citizen compliance.

Theory

Individuals are citizens of a state, but also members of various communities. Some communities are special in that they come to be seen as an integral part of one's identity. Without them, it would be difficult to make sense of oneself as a person. For many individuals, the nation – true to its root meaning of “to be born” – is one such naturalizing community (Anderson 1983, Verdery 1993, Billig 1995).

Communities such as the nation often elicit a sense of responsibility to contribute to their welfare – a *communal duty*. Communitarian political theorists have long recognized communal attachments as the source of personal, social, and importantly, political obligations (Walzer 1990, Yack 2012). As Sandel (1984) argues, communal identity exerts “a moral force” that explains “to some I owe more than justice requires or even permits [...] in virtue of those more or less enduring attachments and commitments that, taken together, partly define the person that I am” (p.90). An illustrative example of communal duty can be found in family. When a family member needs help, many individuals respond not only when it is convenient or beneficial, but often *despite* great costs and uncertainty. That is, they respond in a principled and explicitly non-interest-based manner.

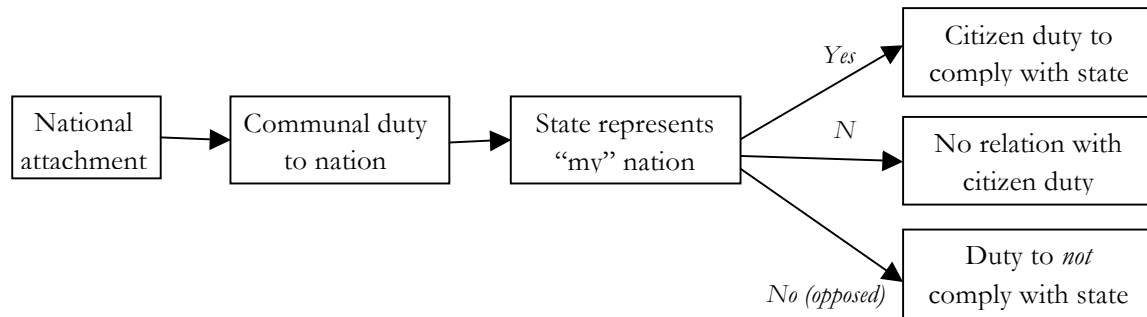
In moral philosophy, Kant (2005[1785]) famously claimed that fulfilling a duty is not a means to an end, but “good in itself” (p.56). Therefore a true Kantian would fulfill communal duty not for any of the benefits that follow, but simply because it is the right thing to do given who they are. Evidence that many individuals behave *as if* they were Kantians toward special groups is widely documented. For instance, evolutionary biologists claim that the capacity to act on moral commitments toward primary groups evolved as part of the genetic “fitness advantage” (Nesse 2001). Experiments in social identity theory (Tajfel 1981, Tajfel and Turner 1986) and behavioral economics find evidence of principled in-group favoritism, even in lab contexts where there are no material gains from doing so (Hogg and Abrams 1988).

My claim is that for many individuals, communal duty to the *nation* motivates citizen duty to the *state*. In advanced democracies,¹ citizen acts such as voting or paying taxes contribute to the welfare of not only the state, but ultimately, the national community it represents. Then when the state is seen as representing “my” nation, citizen compliance takes on communal significance. Federal elections and tax filings become rituals that invoke communal duty to the nation. For individuals with national attachment, this ethical commitment motivates a political duty to comply. This dynamic is reflected in interviews with dutiful voters who, when asked why they vote despite high costs, answered that “it is something I owe to society” (Blais 2000, p.111).

¹ By advanced democracies, I refer to states with stable and transparent democratic institutions, where the majority of citizens believe that despite the faults of the system, democracy is still – to borrow Linz and Stepan's (1996) phrase – “the only game in town” for the people's welfare. This scope condition is needed so that the citizen sees supporting the state as contributing to the welfare of the nation it represents.

Figure 1 shows sequential logic of the model. The relationship between national attachment and citizen duty varies systematically with the moderator variable, perceived nation-state alignment. This is not a vague story about the fervor of patriotism or collectivism. When the state is seen as representing a nation different from one’s own, there is no theoretical reason to expect any relationship between national attachment and citizen duty. In fact, when the state is seen as opposed to the welfare of one’s nation, communal duty should motivate active non-compliance to the state.

Figure 1. Logic of the Communal Duty Model of Compliance



Empirical Strategy

Empirically verifying the communal model comes with challenges on two levels. At the macro-level, deep structural factors such as the nature of democratization, cultural values, or ethnic diversity are potential confounders. At the micro-level, reverse causality between attachments to nation and state is often the deliberate result of successful socialization efforts by the state. Even if we can demonstrate a directional effect of national attachment on citizen duty, how to isolate the communal duty mechanism from utility maximization – when both can lead to the same outcome – is not obvious.

I address both macro- and micro-level threats to inference by using a two-stage research design that leverages both careful case selection and methodological form. First, South Korea and Taiwan were chosen because of the exceptional number of similarities in potential macro-level confounders. Only about 1,500 kilometers apart, both cases were colonized by Japan in the early 20th century, endured phases of military authoritarianism after independence, democratized autonomously, experienced fast economic development in the 1980s, have high degree of racial homogeneity, and are cultural strongholds of Confucianism.

Yet historical contentions predating democracy resulted in contrasting degrees of nation-state alignment in the two places. While South Korea is a prime example of a nation-state, in Taiwan, national identity is internally contested – meaning that nation and state remain misaligned for a significant portion of citizens. If the communal duty model is correct, then despite the impressive list of shared formative experiences in the making of the democratic state, the two places should yield contrasting relationships between national attachment and citizen duty.

Then within each case, I triangulate between two methodologies – surveys and experimental priming – to address micro-level threats to inference. While it is widely accepted that the inferential leverage of each method complements the other, surprisingly few studies actually use them together.

I start with cross-sectional national surveys in both places to assess three hypotheses from the communal duty model. First, when the identity of the nation and state are aligned, *national attachment should be positively related to citizen duty to the state*. This assumes that the individual's strength of communal duty to the nation increases monotonically with national attachment.

Second, the main relationship between national attachment and citizen duty should *vary predictably with degree of nation-state alignment*. At the individual level, the effect of national attachment should be significantly attenuated or absent for those with little to no nation-state alignment. So in Taiwan, even when holding all state-level variables constant, we should see heterogeneous effects of national attachment across different individuals. At the state level, this means that the effect of national attachment should be weaker in places where national identity is contested.

Third, if individuals are indeed motivated by communal duty, the theory of ethical commitment leads to a unique statistical model. If individuals behave as perfectly principled Kantians, then when communal duty is present, non-ethical considerations should not matter in the decision to comply. Only when the ethical imperative from communal duty is absent should the individual turn to assessing costs and benefits. There is an ordinal sequence between the two types of motivations. Following Blais and Achen (2010), this kind of lexicographic decision rule with two dimensions can be formally modeled in the present context as follows:

$$Pr(Y_i = 1) = Pr(d_i = 1) + Pr(d_i = 0 \& b_i \geq 0) \quad (1)$$

Individual i sees a duty to comply with the state, $Y_i = 1$, when she either has communal duty, d_i , or despite no communal duty, expects net positive benefits, b_i . But in reality, individuals often slip on ethical principles or find some not as important as others. Therefore relaxing the assumption that a sense of duty can only be binary and assuming independence between probabilities,² we can rewrite Equation (1) as follows:

$$Pr(Y_i) = Pr(d_i) + [1 - Pr(d_i)] * Pr(b_i \geq 0) \quad (2)$$

Equation (2) can be expressed as conditional probabilities given the observed estimates \hat{d} and \hat{b} of the true values. Take the following to be linear approximations of the probabilities: $Pr(d_i|\hat{d}_i) = \alpha_d + \beta_d \hat{d}_i$ and $Pr(b_i \geq 0|\hat{b}_i) = \alpha_b + \beta_b \hat{b}_i$. Substituting into Equation (2) gives the following:

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(Y_i|\hat{d}, \hat{b}) &= Pr(d_i|\hat{d}_i) + [1 - Pr(d_i|\hat{d}_i)] * Pr(b_i \geq 0|\hat{b}_i) \\ &= \alpha_d + \beta_d \hat{d}_i + \alpha_b + \beta_b \hat{b}_i - (\alpha_d + \beta_d \hat{d}_i) * (\alpha_b + \beta_b \hat{b}_i) \\ &= \alpha + \beta \hat{d}_i + \gamma \hat{b}_i - \delta \hat{d}_i \hat{b}_i \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

² Empirically, this appears to be an unproblematic assumption. The correlations between national attachment and the two incentives (strength of party preference and fairness of elections) considered in South Korea and Taiwan are only 0.10 and 0.21, respectively.

In Equation (3), communal duty and incentives each factor in the decision to comply, but they also *interact*, as represented by the parameter δ . This interaction effect empirically distinguishes communal duty from other interest-based mechanisms through which national attachment could influence citizen duty. If communal duty were simply a façade for self-interest or a psychic reward – just another source of utility – then it would simply be an additive term.³ However, if indeed communal duty functions as a commitment, then we should see *a negative interaction effect between national attachment and interest-based incentives for compliance*.

The survey data are useful for illuminating mechanisms, but their cross-sectional nature limits the ability to make firmly directional claims. Therefore, I also conduct a pair of experiments that randomly primes communal duty in both places. The same experimental treatment is essentially replicated in two different settings that contrast in the moderator variable, degree of nation-state alignment. If the theory is correct, then the treatment should yield significant boosts in citizen duty in South Korea, but not in Taiwan.

The inferential power of this study lies not in any single component, but precisely the triangulation between case selection and dual methodologies. A systematic pattern that holds across and within states, in both observational and experimental data, presents a strong empirical case for the validity of the communal duty model.

Empirical Setting

Looking at voting patterns, South Korea and Taiwan both appear to be stable democracies. Turnout in presidential elections is consistently higher than in most mature democracies, averaging 72.6% in South Korea and 77.9% in Taiwan (IDEA). The duty to vote is also widespread. Based on the surveys used in this study, 65% of the sample in South Korea and 72% in Taiwan believe that voting is more of a duty than a matter of personal choice. But underneath, very different nation-state alignments persist from divergent strategies used in nationalist movements.

South Korea: Strong Communal Duty to Comply in a Nationally Unified State

South Korea is regarded as a prototypical ethnic nation-state. Korean national identity as a uniquely ethnic community was largely solidified as a survival response to Japanese colonialism (Cumings 1984). Even if not politically autonomous, the Korean nation would stay continuous through the belief of a pure bloodline (Robinson 1988, Allen 1990). As a prominent nationalist leader Yi Kwangsu stated in *A Theory of the Korean Nation*: “Koreans cannot but be Koreans [...] even when they use the language of a foreign nation, wear its clothes and follow its customs in order to become non-Korean” (Shin 2006, p. 48). This racialized definition of the nation left little room for alternative identities, since doing so would betray one’s lineage. Thus, a homogenized definition of the nation persists in South Korea today. There is little doubt among the vast majority of citizens who identify as ethnic Korean that the state represents any other nation. South Korea therefore

³ Indeed this is how Riker and Ordeshook (1968) model duty in their calculus of voting: $P*B-C+D$ (P =probability of the vote being decisive, B =instrumental benefit of voting, C =costs, D =duty). However, “duty” in their model does not refer to the kind of ethical commitment in communal duty, but rather, a catch-all category for all kinds of “satisfactions” not directly contingent on the outcome of the vote (p. 28).

represents a straightforward case where, for most individuals, communal duty to the nation should motivate citizen duty to the state.

Taiwan: Weak Communal Duty to Comply in a Nationally Divided State

In Taiwan, a less successful nationalist strategy has left the island a “divided society” (Hsieh 2005). Until the mid-20th century, migrants from mainland China and native aborigines inhabited the island. The haphazardly ruled province of the Qing dynasty was lost temporarily to Japan until the colonizers surrendered the island back to China in 1945.

Ironically, the return to Chinese rule proved to be a “recolonization rather than decolonization” for most islanders (Edmondson 2002, p. 27). As the Kuomintang (KMT) military from China confiscated resources for the civil war on the mainland, many islanders felt betrayed by the abusive treatment at the hands of their own people. Tensions erupted in the “2-28 Incident” in 1947, when a mass islander protest was brutally put down by the KMT (Kerr 1965). The divide grew deeper as the KMT, who came en masse from the mainland after losing the Chinese civil war in 1949, initiated an aggressive re-Sinicization of the island. The KMT party invalidated the local dialect, customs, and identity of the islanders. Mainland Chinese culture was made “a kind of *totalizing* force in so far as its fate was perceived to be synonymous with the national destiny itself” (Chun 1994, p. 58).

Yet KMT efforts to indoctrinate a Chinese national identity on the island backfired. The aggressive imposition of a culture that had grown distant with decades of physical separation “ended up emphasizing, rather than muting, the differences between [the KMT’s] view of culture and that of the Taiwanese” (Wachman 1994, p. 46). Ironically, the KMT’s policies stirred the beginnings of a uniquely Taiwanese national identity, defined precisely by its differentiation from Chinese identity.

Taiwan nationalists gained political momentum through the *dangwai* (“outside the party”) movement in the 1970s, eventually pushing the exclusively KMT state to democratize. The idea of an independent Taiwanese nation, distinct from China, served as the ideological basis for the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Since democratization, political elites have appealed to the younger generation with a *xin Taiwanren* (“new Taiwanese”) identity, redefining Taiwan as a civic, democratic national community (Lee 1999). Thus under a single state, national identity remains bifurcated at the extremes. Which national community one identifies with is “a question of personal history” (Corcuff 2002, p. 19).

What about the identity of the state? In an electoral sense, since democratization, the KMT party has continued to dominate the presidency except for a DPP stint from 2000 to 2008. At the time of data collection, the KMT President Ma Ying-jeou had safely begun his second term. But also in a deeper sense, the legacy of the KMT’s nationalist indoctrination still casts a long shadow over perceptions about who the state represents. For example, regarding the state military, former Defense Minister Andrew Yang explains:

“[This] is a national armed forces. It doesn’t serve any political party. But ordinary citizens still get this idea that the armed forces is in favor of [the KMT], because you have a long history of the military, party, and country being unified as one entity. So they still have this impression.”⁴

Varying shades of nation-state alignment exist in Taiwan. For many citizens whose families have been on the island for several generations and identify as Taiwan nationalists, the KMT-led state does not represent “my” nation. Similar misalignment holds for the New Taiwanese. If Taiwan is a democratic nation, then by definition, it should be an independent state from the non-democratic China. But under the KMT, which fundamentally opposes independence from China, the state cannot fully align with this civic nationalist vision. The only citizens for whom nation and state are closely aligned, and for whom communal duty should motivate citizen duty, are the minority of self-identified China nationalists. Thus unlike South Korea, in Taiwan, there can be at best only a weak communal duty to comply with the state at the national level.

Survey Evidence

Data and Measures

I first test the micro-foundations of the communal model in the context of voting using national surveys from South Korea and Taiwan. The duty to vote is theoretically meaningful as the attitude that precedes actual compliance in the model, and empirically significant as a powerful predictor of turnout (Campbell et al. 1960, Knack 1994, Blais 2000, Campbell 2006). In South Korea, the duty to vote question was included in the Korean National Participation Study, a face-to-face, nationally representative survey of 2,047 respondents administered by Seoul National University. The survey was fielded in May 2012, several weeks before the legislative election. National attachment was not asked, so I proxy with national pride.

In Taiwan, I conducted an original survey using the nationally representative online panel maintained by the Election Study Center (ESC) at National Chengchi University. The survey was fielded for a week in July 2013 and a total of 1,004 panelists responded. To mitigate the problem of selection bias in opt-in samples, I used propensity score weighting to effectively match the Internet sample to the nationally representative sample from the 2012 Taiwan’s Election and Democratization Study (TEDS), a regular face-to-face survey also conducted by the ESC (Lee 2006).⁵

The most significant challenge in Taiwan is measuring national attachment. What “Taiwan” means depends on whom you ask. Scholars have identified two dimensions – independent statehood and cultural separatism – on which national identity is primarily contested (Hsieh 2005, Huang 2005). To capture these dimensions, I adapted the identity battery developed by Wang and Liu (2004) that allows respondents to identify the different components – territory, countrymen, legitimate

⁴ Author interview. November 18, 2013.

⁵ I combined both samples and generated propensity scores (p) by estimating the likelihood of “treatment” into the Internet sample based on age, education, gender, and ethnic self-identification. Individual survey weights were defined as $1/p$. After standardizing the weights to sum to the total N of the Internet sample, extreme observations with weights larger than three times the median (2.09) were replaced with that value to eliminate outlier effects.

government, and culture – of their nation.⁶ Based on those responses, I inductively categorized respondents into three national identity types: *Taiwan nationalists*, who see Taiwan as both politically and culturally independent from China; *New Taiwanese*, who see Taiwan as an independent state but part of a Chinese cultural community; and *China nationalists*, who see Taiwan as part of China both politically and culturally.⁷ By overlaying these categories with the general national attachment measure, I am able to extract the substantive meaning of attachment to “Taiwan” for each individual.

I consider two different incentives for voting. In South Korea, I use strength of partisan preference. The logic is straightforward: those with stronger preference for a specific party will have greater ideological or even material incentive to vote. In Taiwan, I use the perceived fairness of elections – how trustworthy the state is in counting and reporting votes. Citizens should be more willing to vote under a fair electoral system that promises long-term utility in participation.⁸ Both variables are meant to serve as compelling, not exhaustive, examples of incentives to vote.

The dependent variable, a sense of citizen duty to vote, is subject to over-report given the dominant norms on participation in advanced democracies. Over-report per se is not a problem as long as it does not vary with national attachment, but that seemed to be an unlikely assumption. Therefore I adopt the wording developed by Blais and Achen (2010) that asks whether the respondent thinks voting is a matter of duty or personal choice – an equally championed alternative to duty in a liberal democracy.

Table 1 shows the individual-level predictions. Comparing South Korea and Taiwan at the national level, the model predicts contrasting effects of national attachment on the duty to vote. When national attachment has a significant effect, if it is indeed working through the mechanism of communal duty, we should also see a negative interaction with the incentive to vote. Moreover, within Taiwan, as we move from Taiwan nationalists to China nationalist – from minimal to maximal nation-state alignment – the effect of national attachment should systematically increase.

Table 1. Individual-level Predictions from Communal Duty Model

Duty to vote	South Korea	Taiwan			
		All	Taiwan nationalists	New Taiwanese	China nationalists
Main effect of national attachment	+	null~+	null	null~+	+
Interaction with incentive	-	null~-	null	null~-	-

⁶ A detailed coding scheme is provided in the Appendix Table1.

⁷ I excluded respondents with self-contradictory or incoherent national identities (N=329). For example, those who said the two cultures are different, but that the territory of “my nation” still includes China, were excluded because it was unclear how to assess their degree of nation-state alignment and develop testable predictions. Including them in the national-level analysis does not change the substantive results, although they dilute the precision of the main estimates.

⁸ I used fairness of elections in Taiwan instead of strength of partisan preference for two reasons. First, the survey was not fielded close to a national election, so asking about strength of partisan preference in the election outcome was not sensible. Also, partisanship is too closely aligned with the national identity types.

Results

The specification model, based on Equation (3), is as follows:

$$\text{duty to vote}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{national})_i + \beta_2(\text{incentive})_i - \beta_3(\text{national} \times \text{incentive})_i + \beta_4(\text{controls})_i + \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

The coefficients of interest are β_1 , the main effect of national attachment, and β_3 , its interaction with the non-ethical incentive. Additionally, I control for the collectivist belief that the individual should always sacrifice for the group and level of interpersonal trust – two alternative reasons for why we may observe an effect of national attachment. I also control for well known predictors of turnout that include general level of political interest, age and age-squared to capture the non-linear effects of aging, level of education, and for South Korea only, party identification.

Table 2 shows regression models predicting the duty to vote. Model (1) shows the logistic estimates in South Korea, where duty to vote was a binary measure. As predicted, national attachment is positively related to the duty to vote, even after accounting for the effects of collectivist value and interpersonal trust. Model (2) ignores the linearity assumption to show the same specification in ordinary least squares (OLS) to make the coefficients more interpretable. Even for someone with no partisan preference, strong national attachment alone is still associated with an impressive 37 percent higher duty to vote.

Importantly, national attachment's interaction with strength of partisan preference is negative: as national attachment strengthens, how much one prefers a party matters less in the duty to vote and eventually reduces to zero, as evident by the size of the interaction term. This is precisely – and uniquely – what the theory of communal duty implies.⁹ The negative interaction also holds in both logistic and OLS specifications, making it unlikely that it is the spurious result of a ceiling effect.

The resulting picture is quite different in Taiwan. The national attachment coefficient in Model (3) is not even half the size of that in South Korea. Disaggregating by national identity type reveals a systematic logic behind this gap. We can see that the weakly positive main effect in Model (3) is sustained by the outsized positive effect among China nationalists in Model (6) – the only group for which communal duty should be a valid motivation to comply. The interaction between national attachment and the incentive is also in the negative sign.

In contrast, Models (4) and (5) show that for groups with little to no nation-state alignment in Taiwan, the effect of national attachment is essentially muted.¹⁰ This null effect is not due to less variation or lower levels of national attachment; there are no significant between-group differences. A more realistic interpretation is that for Taiwan nationalists and New Taiwanese living under a KMT-dominant state, citizen acts such as voting do not invoke a communal duty to “their” nation in the same way that they do for China nationalists. These individuals can still have a duty to vote,

⁹ Placebo test interactions that substitute national attachment with non-ethical incentives such as democratic satisfaction or interest in the election yield no meaningful interactions. On the other hand, substituting alternative measures of incentives in the place of partisan preference gives the same substantive results as in Table 2. Analyses are shown in Appendix Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

¹⁰ The difference in the main effect of national attachment between Taiwan nationalists (baseline category) and China nationalists, when tested in the same model using an interaction between national attachment and identity type, is significant ($p < .047$).

but as the outsized positive coefficients for political interest in Models (4) and (5) suggest, their willingness to comply is sustained more heavily by interest-based factors.

Table 2. Models of Duty to Vote in South Korea and Taiwan

Duty to vote	South Korea		Taiwan			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	Taiwan nationalists (4)	New Taiwanese (5)	China nationalists (6)
Communal						
National attachment	1.70*** (0.84)	0.37*** (0.17)	0.15* (0.09)	0.13 (0.09)	0.12 (0.10)	0.55** (0.25)
Incentives						
Strength of partisan preference	1.43*** (0.57)	0.32*** (0.12)				
Fairness of elections			-0.003 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	0.40 (0.26)
Interaction						
National x incentive	-1.81** (0.92)	-0.39** (0.18)	0.007 (0.16)	-	-	-0.37 (0.36)
Controls						
Collective values	0.27 (0.23)	0.05 (0.04)	0.12** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.09)	0.21** (0.08)	0.50** (0.17)
Interpersonal trust	0.56** (0.27)	0.11** (0.05)	-0.11 (0.08)	-0.18* (0.11)	-0.06 (0.12)	0.05 (0.27)
Political interest	2.13*** (0.25)	0.43*** (0.05)	0.30*** (0.05)	0.36*** (0.07)	0.21** (0.07)	0.04 (0.15)
Constant	2.93*** (0.60)	-0.10 (0.12)	0.30*** (0.10)	0.20 (0.14)	0.31** (0.13)	-0.51** (0.21)
Demographic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log pseudo-likelihood/ R-squared	-897.85	0.08	0.13	0.21	0.15	0.39
N	1567	1567	666	244	342	80

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10, two-tailed tests. All variables rescaled 0-1. All models except (1), which is logistic, are OLS.

Two alternative interpretations deserve attention. First, the results in Taiwan may be a KMT party incumbency effect, which would lead to very different conclusions about citizen. If party incumbency is driving the results, then during DPP rule, we would expect the patterns to flip, since the majority of Taiwan nationalists are DPP supporters. Using the TEDS surveys, I compared the reported turnout of China versus Taiwan nationalists in all national elections during the 2000-2008 DPP incumbency. To best isolate those motivated by the duty to vote, I only compared respondents with no preference in the election outcome. The results, shown in Appendix Table 4, are more consistent with the communal duty explanation: in almost all national elections during DPP incumbency, turnout was still higher among China nationalists than Taiwan nationalists.

The more serious concern is whether everything ultimately boils down to self-interest.

The negative interactions for South Koreans and China nationalists in Taiwan is evidence that national attachment functions through a commitment mechanism. But whether that commitment is based on the ethical capacity of identity as I have claimed, or a means to secure self-interest by supporting a state that favors one’s group, remains debatable. To clarify, I included the following question in the Taiwan survey: “How much do you approve or disapprove some of your tax money being spent to improve air pollution in mainland China?” This item specifies the beneficiary of the program as non-citizens living outside the island, but who are co-nationals in a broad sense only for China nationalists. If self-interest is the main driver, then no one’s national attachment should be related to support for such a policy, as it takes tax money away from the island. However, if communal duty is the mechanism, then for China nationalists in Taiwan, national attachment should drive support for this policy as it contributes to the greater Chinese nation, *even though it does not benefit them on the island*.

Table 3 shows clear support for the communal duty interpretation. For China nationalists only, strong national attachment is related to 30 percent higher support for the policy. It is difficult to imagine an exclusively interest-based account for these results without making extreme assumptions about the imminence of reunification or the direction of air currents carrying pollutants.

Table 3. Communal Duty versus Self-Interest in Taiwan

Support for using taxes to help mainland China	China nationalists	Taiwan nationalists
National attachment	0.30*	0.07
	(0.18)	(0.05)
Constant	0.28*	0.11
	(0.16)	(0.08)
Attitudinal and demographic controls	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.14	0.09
N	80	244

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10, two-tailed tests. All models are OLS regressions. All variables rescaled 0-1. Controls for collective value, interpersonal trust, age, age-squared, income class, and female.

Both cross- and within-country analyses show empirical patterns that are consistent with a communal framework of compliance. But so far, the mechanism of communal duty is implied in the statistical model, not directly observed. Also, while the models control for obvious individual-level confounders, selection issues are difficult to fully disentangle with cross-sectional data alone.

Experimental Evidence

The pair of experiments in this study serves a dual purpose. The first is to estimate the causal effect of communal duty in a way that the available observational data cannot. The second is to serve as controlled replications. Across both experiments, the treatment is identical: priming the salience of communal duty to the nation. What varies is the “field,” which in this case is two polities strategically chosen to differ on the moderator of the causal model – nation-state alignment. If the theory is correct and we have sufficient proof to show that the treatments worked as intended, then despite the same treatment, we should observe contrasting effects in South Korea versus Taiwan.

South Korea: Field Experiment in a Mobile Election

The field experiment in South Korea was designed around a mobile election hosted by the National Election Commission (NEC). The purpose of the election was to pilot test a new mobile voting application where participants vote via SMS text. A total of 2,097 valid participants were recruited internally from the NEC and notified of the election topics beforehand. The ballot included national issues, such as preferences over electoral rules and the national clean election campaign, as well as issues regarding NEC employee life. This mix of ballot items ensured that participants saw voting in the mobile election to be helpful to the state, but also carry real stakes for their own lives. This setup comes very close to mimicking an actual federal election without repercussions to real election results. The election was run twice across two days – August 13-14th, 2013 – and participants were randomly assigned to one of the days.¹¹ No observable event occurred between the two days that would significantly alter the calculus of voting.

The treatment was embedded in an email sent to participants via Qualtrics one day before the election. The control group (N=1073), assigned to Day 1, received a purely informational email on how to participate. The treatment group (N=1024), assigned to Day 2, received the same email with an explicit appeal to communal duty to the Korean nation as the reason to vote (bolded text in Table 4). At the bottom of the emails was a link to an optional pre-election survey that, among other times, asked whether the participant saw voting as a duty or a choice – the attitudinal mechanism that should precede turnout. Once participants voted through SMS text, their mobile numbers were matched with their emails to validate turnout.

Table 4. Experimental Treatment in South Korea’s Field Experiment

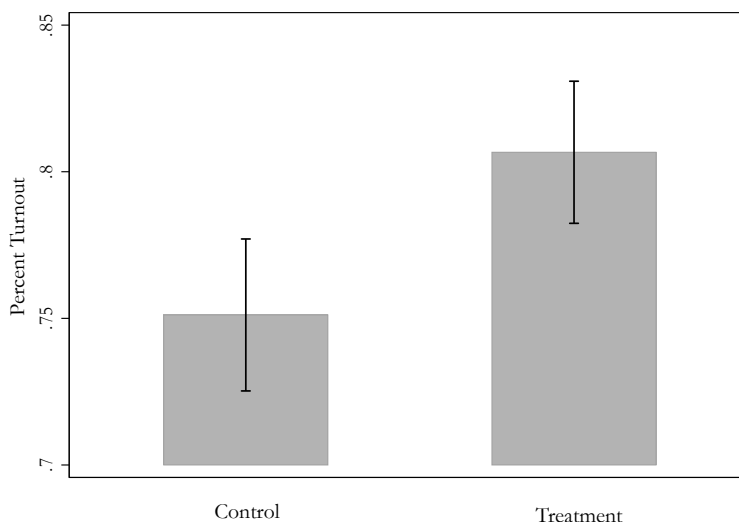
Email Text with Embedded Treatment
Hello, the NEC is conducting a mobile election. The purpose of this election is to test a new mobile voting application developed in partnership with Korea Telecom.
[TREATMENT ONLY] You are the face of Korea. Our forefathers’ sacrifices helped make our nation the democracy it is today. It is our DUTY TO THE KOREAN NATION to vote and do our part.
❖ Election date: 2013. 8. 13 ❖ Directions: On the morning of election day, step-by-step instructions and a unique login ID will be sent as a SMS text to your mobile phone or email. Your participation will take about five minutes.

As Figure 1 shows, the “communal duty” treatment significantly boosted turnout by 5.5 percentage points ($p < .002$). Exactly how meaningful is this increase? In the context of randomized turnout experiments, it is substantial. The effect size exceeds that of most studies using mailers or

¹¹ The NEC needed the election to be held twice for repeated testing of the new mobile application. Randomization was conducted by the NEC, which has conducted such procedures before for similar pilot tests. Employee information is protected, so I have no direct way to test if randomization produced balanced groups. However, given the strong significance of the treatment effect ($p < .002$), which already factors in the probability that randomization alone may have produced an unlikely result, the internal validity of the result remains high (Mutz and Pemantle 2011).

phone calls, and falls short only of induced social shaming (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008) and face-to-face canvassing (Green, Gerber, and Nickerson 2003) – two policies that in reality are difficult to sustain for ethical and practical reasons. Notably, the effect of the “communal duty” treatment is more than three times as large as the “civic duty” treatment in Gerber, Green, and Larimer (2008). Contrary to most get-out-the-vote policies that emphasize civic duty alone, this finding suggests that emphasizing the national community behind those commitments can be a more effective strategy.

Figure 1. Average Treatment Effect in South Korea’s Mobile Election Experiment



Error bars mark 95% confidence intervals

The worry with mailer experiments is whether subjects actually received the intended treatment by opening and reading the email. In this context, there is good reason to expect the average treatment effect (ATE) to be a close estimate of the complier average causal (CAC) effect. Qualtrics reported that all emails were successfully delivered to valid and non-empty inboxes. Moreover, because the email was titled “Directions for the Mobile Election,” it is reasonable to assume that most volunteers opened the email to learn how to vote through the new application. However, Qualtrics does not keep individualized data on whether emails were opened.

To directly estimate the CAC effect, I used participation in the pre-election survey as a proxy for receiving treatment. A total of 244 subjects from the control group and 113 from the treatment group chose to answer the survey. Since the link to the survey was placed at the bottom of the email, those who clicked it were more likely to have read the text. But subjects who clicked the pre-election survey link are not a random sample of all the individuals who read the email. Simply comparing turnout between pre-election survey takers in the control and treatment groups is thus problematic. To address this issue, using the nearest neighbor matching method, I matched the non-random survey takers from the control group to those in the treatment group, conditional on age, education, gender, and number of years spent at the NEC. This procedure gives a conditional CAC effect:

conditional on whatever pre-existing factors that led some subjects to take the pre-election survey, I have estimated the causal effect of receiving the “communal duty” prime.

Table 5 reports two additional estimates from the matching analysis. First is the conditional CAC effect. The good news is that the effect size remains at 5 percentage points, which lends confidence to the original ATE estimate. However, the estimate is not statistically significant, because as power analysis shows, the reduced sample size simply isn’t large enough.¹² The second estimate is the CAC effect on the duty to vote question in the pre-election survey. Individuals who received the “communal duty” prime before answering this question had a 13 percent higher sense of duty to vote. This finding is consistent with the theorized mechanism that communal duty leads to higher compliance by instilling a sense of citizen duty to the state.¹³

Table 5. Matching Estimates in South Korea’s Mobile Election Experiment

	CAC effect	t-statistic	N
Actual turnout	0.05	1.296	102 (Treatment)
	(0.04)		108 (Control)
Duty to vote	0.13*	1.749	102 (Treatment)
	(0.07)		107 (Control)

N is the number of units used for nearest neighbor matches. Bootstrapped standard errors (x500) in parentheses.

The South Korea experiment shows that in a place with widespread nation-state alignment, priming communal duty increases both the duty to vote and actual turnout. Of course, no experiment can truly randomize an aspect of identity such as communal duty. But if individuals’ responses to stimuli are indeed affected by salient or “top-of-the-head” considerations (Zaller 1992), then the experiment successfully demonstrates directional causality.

Taiwan: Survey Priming Experiment

The same experimental treatment should yield contrasting results in a place such as Taiwan, where nation-state alignment is absent for most citizens. I applied the same treatment – priming of communal duty to the nation – but adapted it to the sensibilities of Taiwan. The experiment came at the end of the Internet survey. The design was a news article comparison about the 921 Earthquake, a national disaster that hit the island in 1999. I chose this event for two reasons: first, earthquakes are an ongoing national problem for which the government could realistically request citizen compliance; second, natural disasters are moments of national exigency when the “moral glue” within a group is heightened (Lieberman 2003), lending a ripe context for priming effects.

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two versions of the article.¹⁴ The control group (N=504) read a “factual” frame article that described objective facts about the event, while the treatment group (N=500) read the “communal duty” frame article that emphasized sacrifice and

¹² The probability of successfully rejecting the null hypothesis of no effect, given the reduced sample size and known ATE size – which is most likely a lower-bound estimate of the CAC effect – is only 19 percent.

¹³ The treatment did not produce significant increases in other pre-election items such as interest in mobile voting or politics – attitudes that may affect the calculus of voting, but unrelated to the communal duty mechanism. This suggests that the treatment worked as intended.

¹⁴ Balance checks of pre-treatment covariates are in Appendix Table 5.

commitment to the nation. Table 6 shows the translated wording of each article. After reading the article, respondents were asked whether they thought complying with state requests for volunteer time or donations for the earthquakes is a duty or personal choice. Importantly, the article gave no specific definition of “the nation.”

Unlike in most experiments, the average prediction is a null effect. For most subjects who have little to no nation-state alignment, the treatment primes duty to a nation that is inconsistent with the nationalist identity of the state. Thus on average, there is no reason to expect the treatment to boost citizen duty to comply with the state. Of course, a null effect could also be due to a weak treatment. To check, I disaggregate the treatment effect by national identity type. If the communal duty model is correct and the treatment were effective, then despite a null effect in the aggregate, we should still see a positive effect for China nationalists – the only group with nation-state alignment.¹⁵

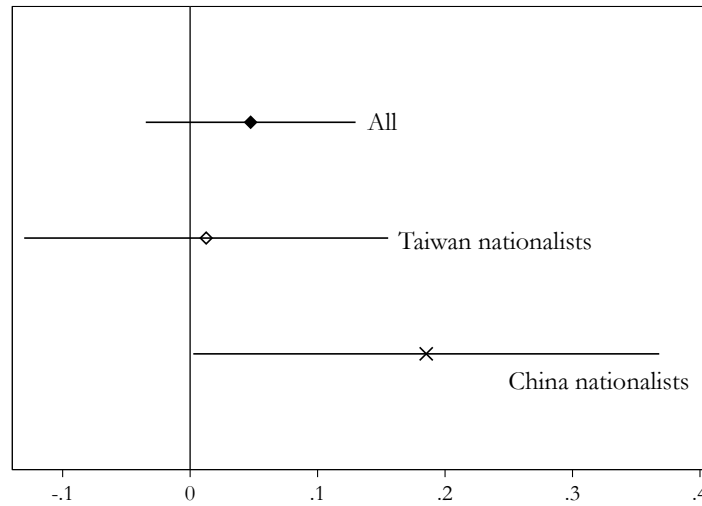
Table 6. News Frame Treatment in Taiwan Survey Experiment

Control	Treatment
<p data-bbox="337 756 652 783">“921 SHAKES THE ISLAND”</p> <p data-bbox="191 842 792 947">On September 21, 1999, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake hit the island at 1:47 in the morning. The disaster, called the “921 earthquake,” did permanent damage to the island’s economy and landscape.</p> <p data-bbox="191 951 797 1108">A total of 2,145 people died, with another 11,305 injured. 51,711 buildings collapsed entirely into the ground, contributing to the high death toll. The Taiwan Stock Exchange was also closed for almost a week, and several big factories were damaged, causing the country to take a serious economic hit. Nantou County was shaken the most, leaving the landscape in ruins.</p> <p data-bbox="191 1113 789 1163">In total, the damages added up to NT\$300 billion. It was the second deadliest earthquake in the island’s history.</p>	<p data-bbox="919 756 1341 810">“921 SHAKES ISLAND, BUT STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY”</p> <p data-bbox="824 842 1430 919">The “921 earthquake,” which hit the island with a force of 7.5 magnitude in 1999 and killed 2,145 people, was a tragedy, but also a moment that brought the national community together.</p> <p data-bbox="824 924 1425 1081">“In my head, any person under that rubble is my own father, mother, or child,” said a soldier who had not slept for several days digging the ruins for survivors. Citizens from all over the island donated food and water for victims, some even opening their homes. Many different charity groups raised a total of NT\$34 billion from individual donations.</p> <p data-bbox="824 1085 1417 1184">Despite being the second deadliest earthquake in the island’s history, many remember 921 as the rebirth of national community. It showed the world that people on the island can become one in dark times.</p>

Figure 2 shows the aggregate and disaggregated treatment effects. When looking at all subjects, as expected, the “communal duty” frame had a null effect on citizen duty to comply. This null effect holds for Taiwan nationalists, but importantly, we see a positive and significant treatment effect for China nationalists ($p < .047$). Those who read the “communal duty” article had a 19 percent stronger duty to comply with the state’s demands. Appendix Table 6 shows that controlling for key demographics and a powerful competing motivation – trust in the government to do what is right most of the time – does little to reduce this treatment effect.

¹⁵ Strict China nationalists only yield 83 subjects, so to maximize statistical power, I added 55 subjects who can be characterized as pragmatic China nationalists. They differ only on the “legitimate government” item, where they say “only Taiwan” – a more realistic position given the slim chance of the island government taking over the mainland. The gain in statistical power outweighs the slight loss in conceptual purity.

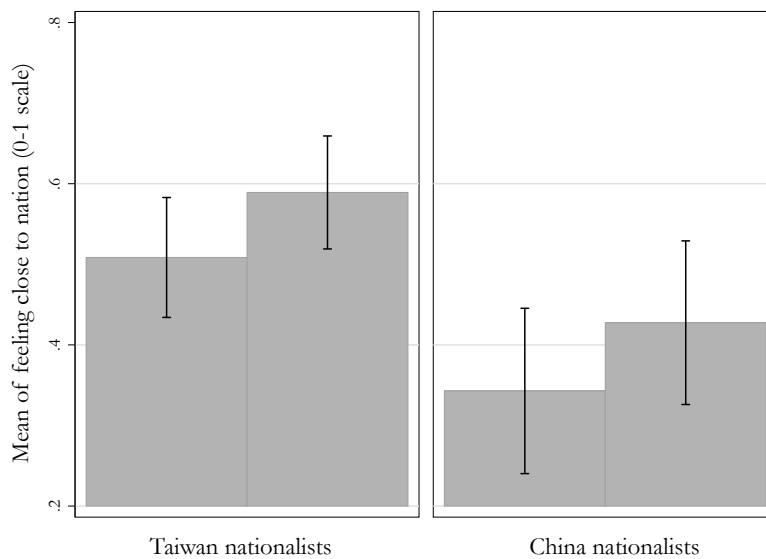
Figure 2. Aggregate and Disaggregate Average Treatment Effects for Taiwan Experiment



Estimates are regression coefficients of the treatment effect, with 95% confidence intervals

Did the treatment just work differently for China nationalists? A manipulation check suggests that this is unlikely. Immediately after the articles, I asked all subjects how close they felt to their national community – an affective proxy for the increased salience of communal duty. As Figure 3 shows, the “communal duty” treatment produced about a 10 percent affective boost for *both* Taiwan and China nationalists. However, appeals to communal duty seem to have fallen on deaf ears for Taiwan nationalists as it primed duty to a nation seen to be at odds with the current state.

Figure 3. Manipulation Check by National Identity Group



Error bars mark 95% confidence intervals

Each of these experiments can stand on its own, but the real inferential leverage comes from the cross-country replication. Together, the pair of experiments shows that priming communal duty to the nation increases citizen duty to the state and actual compliance, but only when nation-state alignment exists. The experimental results mirror the patterns in the observational data at both cross- and within-country levels, building a strong empirical case for the communal duty model.

Conclusion

This article asked why many citizens choose to comply with the state. While most theories are focused on expected payoffs, I highlighted the communal underpinnings of compliance. For many citizens of advanced democracies, voting and other forms of compliance are more than just exchanges with the state. They are also a “ritualized means of fulfilling moral responsibilities” to their national communities (Wuthnow 1982, p. 135). A citizen’s willingness to comply is best characterized as a weighted average between communal and interest-based motivations. The resulting picture of the democratic citizen is one that “neither denies the real concerns of individuals nor disregards the exigencies of society and the requirements of social life” (Stoker 1992, p. 377).

The article contributes to several theoretical and policy debates over the ambiguous role of nationalism in democratic governance. Nationalism, especially of the ethnic kind, has always sat uneasily with the individualist foundations of liberal democracy (Beissinger 2008). After numerous atrocities committed in the name of the nation, strong nationalism has become associated with “dangerous and powerful passions” (Billig 1995, p. 5) that promote collective obedience and jeopardize objective evaluations of government – a general hindrance to democratic stability.

Yet the findings of this study make a case for the positive capacity of nationalism. National attachment, when aligned with the identity of the state, is an important part of why citizens vote and otherwise comply with state demands. This empirical result lends support for the position of liberal national theorists (Miller 1988, Tamir 1995) and extends the vast scholarship on the positive effects of nationalism on development (Singh 2011) to the explicitly political domain of democratic citizenship. The article also formalizes a way in which the consequences of “primordial” attachments – largely abandoned in behavioral studies due to issues of measurement and causal clarity – can be systematically studied in the context of governance.

The policy implications for democratic state-building and the incorporation of new citizens are clear. The findings revive Rustow’s (1970) claim of “national unity” as a precondition for successful democratic transitions. Nation-building policies and nationalist rituals can be effective strategies for building a democratically committed citizenry, especially in newer democracies where the quality of state outputs and procedures is not yet reliably known to citizens. With regard to the political incorporation of immigrants in existing democracies, campaigns that help reorient their beliefs about belonging to the nation of their new state can be valuable additions to traditional approaches focused on cutting participation costs or increasing political ability.

Future research may nuance the normative implications of the communal duty model and explore its applications to different levels of governance. The logic of the model is not confined to the national level, but can be applied to governance puzzles at all levels of community. A lag in communal duty toward transnational communities could help explain why international entities such

as the European Union face difficulties with compliance, why some immigrants never “catch up” in terms of citizen engagement despite gains in political resource and ability, or how the same person can feel a duty to vote in national elections but not in local or municipal elections. The model is also not unique to democratic compliance. Authoritarian regimes can, and have, successfully linked the welfare of the national people to the regime and reaped the rewards of invoking communal duty. Like any other political resource, communal duty can be exploited. Just how sustainable such manipulations are is an empirical matter not examined in this study.

Appendix

Table 1. Categorization of National Identity Type in Taiwan

	Taiwan Nationalists	New Taiwanese	China Nationalists
N	247	345	83
Statehood Dimension			
My territory?	Taiwan only	Taiwan only	Taiwan and China
My countrymen?	People in Taiwan only	People in Taiwan only	People in Taiwan and China
My legitimate government?	Taiwan only	Taiwan only	Taiwan and China
Ethno-cultural Dimension			
Chinese and Taiwanese cultures are?	Different	Not different	Not different

Table 2. Placebo Test Interactions

Duty to vote	Substituted with:	
	Interest in election	Satisfaction with democracy
National attachment (substituted with placebos)	2.01* (1.12)	-0.83 (1.31)
Strength of partisan preference	0.40 (0.74)	-0.14 (0.80)
Interaction	0.10 (1.21)	1.12 (1.41)
Constant	-2.01*** (0.76)	-1.62** (0.79)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Log pseudolikelihood	-900.28	-899.37
N	1568	1566

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10, two-tailed tests. All variables rescaled 0-1. Models are logistic regressions and include same set of attitudinal and demographic controls as in Table 2 of the main text.

Table 3. Models of Duty to Vote in South Korea with Different Incentive Measures

Duty to vote	Alternative Incentive Measures	
	Interest in election	Satisfaction with democracy
National attachment	0.64* (0.37)	0.58* (0.41)
Incentive	2.65*** (0.39)	0.57 (0.46)
Interaction	-0.82 (0.60)	-0.82 (0.74)
Constant	-1.83*** (0.30)	-1.84*** (0.33)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Log pseudolikelihood	-1210.45	-1210.02
N	2041	2038

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10, two-tailed tests. All variables rescaled 0-1. Models are logistic regressions and include same set of attitudinal and demographic controls as in Table 2 of the main text.

Table 4. Reported Turnout During DPP Incumbency

	2001 Legislative	2004 Legislative	2008 Legislative
Taiwanese	63.7	54.1	72.4
Chinese or both	68.7	58.6	55.3
Difference (T-C)	-5.0	-4.5	17.1
N	52/50	94/97	161/105

Data from TEDS Legislative Election surveys. “Taiwanese” refers to subjects who self-identified as Taiwanese only. “Chinese or both” refer to subjects who identified as both or Chinese only. Turnout was compared only among those who expressed no preference in the election outcome, to best isolate those with a duty to vote.

I focus only on legislative elections, because presidential elections in Taiwan are unique in that they are moments of potential change in the national identity of the state. Such moments can invoke communal duty for both Taiwan nationalists and China nationalists, since the state is essentially up for grabs by either national community. The reason why the 2008 legislative election looks so different from the other two is most likely because it took place merely 10 weeks before the 2008 presidential elections, which many presumed the KMT would win. This probably invoked communal duty on the part of Taiwan nationalists to vote more than in “ordinary” times when the nationalist identity of the state was set as pro-China.

Table 5. Covariate Balance Check for Taiwan Experiment

	Control	Treatment	Difference (C-T)	p-value
Percent female	0.43	0.47	-0.04	0.19
Percent Taiwan Nationalist	0.23	0.26	-0.03	0.38
Percent New Taiwanese	0.35	0.34	0.01	0.71
Percent China Nationalist	0.14	0.14	0	0.97
Mean age category	0.33	0.32	0.01	0.35
Mean education	0.86	0.86	0	0.92
Mean collectivist belief	0.47	0.49	-0.02	0.27
Mean trust in government	0.20	0.21	-0.01	0.27

Table 6. Regression Analysis of Treatment Effect for China Nationalists

Duty to comply	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Treatment	0.19** (0.09)	0.18** (0.09)	0.15* (0.09)
Trust in government			0.17 (0.24)
Collective values			0.29* (0.17)
Education		0.21 (0.16)	0.16 (0.16)
Age		1.56*** (0.44)	1.46*** (0.44)
Age-squared		-1.25*** (0.44)	-1.26*** (0.43)
Female		0.20** (0.09)	0.20** (0.09)
Constant	0.51*** (0.07)	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.18 (0.16)
N	139	135	135

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10, two-tailed tests. Models are OLS regressions to keep the coefficients intuitive. All variables are rescaled 0-1.

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