

# National Identity, Willingness to Fight, and Collective Action

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## Abstract

Why do people risk their lives fighting in wars? This article looks beyond group grievance and material benefits, to add another psychological mechanism explaining why people choose to fight and *not* to fight – perceived collective action. An individual is much more likely to fight when they perceive that others will also fight. Contrary to social identity theory and social pressure theory, the effect of perceived collective action is stronger among those who have a weaker national identity because they are more likely to rationally calculate the chance of winning by accounting for others' decisions. To mitigate the endogeneity in post-conflict cross-sectional surveys, we conducted a survey experiment ( $n=1001$ ) in Taiwan manipulating perceptions of others' willingness to fight in a potential China-Taiwan military conflict. Experimental evidence supports the hypotheses that perceived collective action works only on weak Taiwanese identifiers. The result holds in robustness check and in another nationally representative survey.

Keywords: Collective Action, Social Identity Theory, Civil War, Nation-building, China Politics, Survey Experiment

Word Count: 9050

## **Introduction**

Why are people willing to risk their lives fighting in civil war? Much of the literature on civil war advances greed and grievance theories to explain this seemingly irrational action, with a focus on rebels' economic motivations (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et. al 2009). Other research builds on that focus to put forward a broader range of motivations. For example, in an ethnographic study of fighters in post-war Sierra Leone, Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein (2008) point out the role that access to individual resources play, demonstrating that poverty and lack of access to education are positively associated with participation in war and theorizing that these indicators of grievance may simply be factors that increase the likelihood of violence more generally. Stathis Kalyvas and Matthew Kocher (2011) explore the benefits provided by militant groups during the Greek Civil War and the Vietnam War to participants, finding that the resources provided by such groups meant that participants were often safer and less likely to be killed than nonparticipants. Güneş Tezcür (2016) finds that Kurdish rebels in Turkey are motivated by a sense of "collective identity threat" gained through political activism (248).

The commonality among the three cases above is that they all frame participation in a conflict, and specifically joining a militia or rebel group, as collective action. However, they miss an important characteristic of the concept: the individual's perception of others' actions. Examining collective action at the individual level employs the assumption that individuals will behave in the same way whether they are alone or in a group. However, Mancur Olson's (1965) work challenges this assumption and demonstrates its fallibility. Instead, individuals examine the actions of the collective, for example protest, and rationally choose to free ride. That choice is derived from perceptions of others' actions. Similarly, social psychology has found much evidence

that people behave differently when they are accompanied by others (see Zajonc 1965), and political science research has shown that people in dictatorships falsify their preferences when they are not sure how many others are on their side (Kuran 1987). Thus, the above three cases use, but do not operationalize, this core idea of collective action into their analyses – the role of the collective. In fact, the operationalization of collective action in the context of war and militant groups ranges widely from formally joining a rebel group or militia (Ginges and Atran 2011) to participating in any violent or rebellious action (Shadmehr and Bernhardt 2011).

A stronger test of collective action must ask: Does the perception of others' behavior matter to one's own decision to risk their life in a civil war? Specifically, do individuals look to others' behavior before deciding on their own course of action? Much of the literature that examines collective action and conflict either does not account for individual perceptions, focusing instead on group perceptions (Maher 2010; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008), or focuses on individual perceptions but without establishing a causal mechanism between that and perceptions or actions of others in the group (Kalyvas and Kocher 2011; Koehler et. al 2016; Güneş 2016; Klandermans et. al 2002; Masters 2004). Additionally, while some research acknowledges that individuals have different perceptions based on different group identifications (Kalyvas 2006; Hornsey et al. 2006; McLauchlin 2015), most does not.

Using Taiwan as a case study, this article advances our understanding of motivations to collective action in three ways:

(1) We review and re-emphasize the role of collective action in the analysis of civil war and risk behavior. Most articles operationalize collective action as “joining the fight” or “willingness to fight,” but they do not deal with Olson's collective action problem directly.

(2) To deal with the issue of social projection (Krueger 2007), i.e. that one decides to participate and so imagines that others will also participate (or they tend to observe that others also participate), we will provide experimental evidence manipulating a sample of Taiwanese respondents' perceptions of others' behavior in the case of civil war. Doing this allows us to examine the causal mechanism more directly.

(3) We will show that the perception of others' actions matters differently depending on the strength of a person's national identity. When people do not have a strong national or group identity, they will be much more likely to exert a deliberately rational calculation, rather than the automatically generated emotions regarding war participation (Kahneman 2011). People who do not have a strong national identity are much more likely to rely on others' behaviors to decide their own action.

This paper will proceed as follows. First, we will review the literature on collective action and participation in the conflict, as well as the role identity is theorized to play in such interactions. Second, we will explain and discuss our own hypotheses. Third, we will explain our methodological approach, and then we will demonstrate and discuss results. We will then conduct a robustness check on our analysis and replicate our finding from the experiment in another nationally representative survey. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of where our findings fit within the prevailing literature.

## **Literature Review**

### **A. Fighting and Collective Action**

While some research on collective action cite moral preferences (Ginges and Atran 2011) or perceived effectiveness of the action (Hornsey et al. 2006) as motivating factors, the most

prevalent literature on war participation explains the rationale of fighters in two ways: group grievance and material benefits. Fighters are motivated by a sense of collective threat – a threat towards a group with which they identify (Maher 2010). In most of the literature, this is an ethnic identity which differentiates them from other groups. In such a context, fighters may perceive that their ethnic group is being exploited or oppressed by other groups, making identity salient in motivating political action, including violence (Koehler et al. 2016). Alternatively, fighters may be motivated by the material benefits made available to them through their participation in rebel groups or militias. These groups may be able to provide resources, including protection and pay, that participants would otherwise be unable to access (Parkinson 2013; Kalyvas and Kocher 2011).

If these two reasons are the most relevant motivations for participation, then all members of the group have a rational reason to join the fight. If an ethnic group is under threat, then each individual from that group is also threatened and would benefit by uniting in the face of their adversary. If militias are better positioned to provide safety and security, everyone should seek them out. Thus, even though the risk to an individual in taking up arms is high, the risk of not joining may be greater. However, we never observe mass participation in any civil war, even an ethnic rebellion.

The reason for this paradox lies in the nature of war as a form of collective action. Success in war is often contingent, or perceived to be contingent, on the number of the people on either side and their willpower. Even in the scenario of asymmetric war, the will of the people is crucial for the weak state to win or to prevent the war from happening (Arreguín-Toft 2001). Because of this, a potential participant would not only consider group grievances and material benefits, but also account for whether other people will fight or not. Indeed, some recent studies suggest that an individual whose friends or relatives choose to fight is also much more likely to fight (Atran et al.

2014; Parkinson 2013). Such individuals are also less likely to desert their unit (McLauchlin 2015). Additionally, social structures, including kinship networks, can frame the concept of collective threat and influence the choice of individuals to fight or flee (Shesterinina 2016; Güneş 2016). Ethnic minorities, in particular, may be strongly motivated by group conformity (Hechter and Okamoto 2001).

Aside from connections through family and friends, individuals can also observe the actions of others outside their direct circle. Individuals may be encouraged by the sight of other protesters in the streets (Steinert-Threlkeld 2017) and may be able to organize through cell phones and social media (Pierskalla and Hollenbach 2013; Enikolopov et al. 2016; Little 2015). Together, this research suggests that individuals who might otherwise not take violent action are motivated to do so at the behest of others. There is also a growing literature on “devoted actors” – individuals whose conviction in a cause inspires others who would otherwise approach the choice to join a fight more rationally (Atran 2016; Atran et al. 2014). There is thus significant evidence that individuals do look to the actions of others before deciding to participate in collective action, emphasizing the importance of such perceptions as a key component of the definition of collective action.

## **B. Fighting, Identity, and Collective Action**

Conventional wisdom holds that shared identity removes collective action problems in several ways. First, ethnic groups are often in a better position to sanction noncontributors (Blattman and Miguel 2010). Second, social projection, a psychological mechanism wherein one believes or imagines that others are doing the same as oneself (Krueger 2007), is strongest for people with a strong group identity. When people have a group identity, it means that the concept and image of the group have a positive connection to their self-image, which in turn serves as a

cognitive heuristic when they want to make an inference as to others' behavior. For example, U.S. voters with stronger partisan identifications are more likely to exaggerate the level of political polarization because they assume that others share similar attitudes (Van Boven et al. 2012; Westfall et al. 2015). Additionally, when a person joins the fight, they are much more likely to observe that others also joined the fight. By contrast, if one simply stayed home, they are less likely to observe participation. Indeed, many studies simply equate collective action with group identity or ethnicity, assuming that those with a stronger identity will be more influenced by the mechanisms of collective action that rely on perceptions of others' behavior.

**We argue the opposite.** We argue that the effect of collective action should be strong among those who do not have a strong group, national, or ethnic identity. When a person is mobilized by a group identity, they care less about personal gain or loss. Moreover, a strong identity will bias their information processing, so they will tend to collect information that fits their preference – that others also fight. Therefore, the reality of others' behavior becomes less important to those with a strong identity. By contrast, people who are not mobilized by identity or nationalism are much more likely to rationally calculate the expected costs and benefits of participation. In such a scenario, what others will do plays an even bigger role in their decision-making process. When they find that many of their relatives or friends are joining the fight, those observations mean that (1) the chance of winning is higher, since it increases as more people join, and (2) their own decisions are much more likely to be monitored and evaluated. Therefore, the effect of collective action will be stronger on people without a strong national identity.

## Hypotheses

Following the discussion above, the relationships between identity, collective action, and the willingness to fight can be summarized in the following two hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: People who perceived that others would fight are more likely to fight.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: People with weaker national identity are more influenced by the behaviors of others.*

It is worth noting that the collective action mechanism we raised in the article is different from the social pressure theory on turnout rate (Gerber et al. 2008; Bond et al. 2012) in several aspects. Social pressure theory assumes that turnout itself is the social norm, so that people are afraid that their absence will be noticed by their neighbors. In this scenario, however, they were not achieving something together with their neighbors, and the election outcome was not decided by the number of participants; instead, the outcome was decided by the vote share of candidates. Moreover, the experiment designed by Alan Gerber et al. (2008) did not provide subjects with information as to whether or not their neighbor will vote, but merely warned the subjects that their voting record would be publicized and read by others. Unlike collective action in wartime, where all participants face a considerable cost, the neighbors in Gerber et al. (2008)'s experiment only serve as judges, not comrades. Therefore, social pressure theory relies heavily on the moral value of voting in one's mind. If the impact of collective action is driven by social pressure theory, then we should observe that people with a stronger group identity are more greatly influenced by the information of collective action. However, we argue that people with a stronger group identity are more likely to be biased with regards to that information and always overestimate the level of participation. Instead, it is those who have a weaker identity who care more about whether others will fight in wartime.

## **Data and Method**

### **A. Context**

The drawback of many studies about identity and war participation is that they heavily rely on cross-sectional surveys and data collected after the conflict (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Tezcür 2016). Psychologically and methodologically speaking, post-conflict surveys make it hard to distinguish the effect of group identity and collective action as a result of self-projection, as discussed above. Therefore, to test our hypotheses while avoiding these methodological issues, we conducted a representative survey experiment in Taiwan to investigate whether Taiwanese people would be willing to fight against Chinese forces in the event of an invasion.

After the Chinese Civil War, the nationalist Kuomintang government retreated to Taiwan in 1949, and the Communist government (PRC hereafter) has seen Taiwan as a breakaway province of China since then. Even though the last direct military conflict between China and Taiwan was in 1958, PRC has never given up the idea of re-unifying Taiwan by force. Before Taiwan held its first direct presidential election in 1996, PRC conducted a series of missile tests in the Taiwan Strait. When the first pro-independence Taiwanese president, Chen Shui-bian, was reelected in 2004, PRC established the Anti-Secession Law in 2005 indicating reunification by military attack (“Text of China’s Anti-Secession Law 2005”). After the second pro-independence Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-Wen, won the presidency in 2016, PRC sent fighter jets, bomber flights, and warships around Taiwan several times (for a review, see Wang 2017). A recent report lists Taiwan as one of most likely places in the world where another World War could begin (Farley 2017).

There are four advantages to using Taiwan as a generalizable case to test the relationships between nation-building, willingness to fight, and collective action. First of all, the military threat

from PRC is real, and previous survey studies show that fear of military invasion is the most important reason why the majority of Taiwanese people do not support the idea of independence; without the threat of war, the level of support increases from 40 percent to 80 percent. (Wang et al. 2015). Since the threat of war alone tremendously impacts public opinion, it evidences that war is still salient to Taiwanese people when they are making political decisions.

Second, Taiwan has become a fully-fledged democracy and enjoys a high degree of freedom of speech and academic freedom. Academic institutions have conducted several surveys regarding Taiwanese people's willingness to fight against China since 2002 (Taiwan National Security Surveys), so Taiwanese people are familiar with such items in survey questionnaires. Hence, when Taiwanese people are answering questions about their willingness to fight, they are more likely to answer them honestly without the threat of sanctions or punishment by Taiwanese authorities.

Third, all male Taiwanese citizens must serve in the military from four months to three years. Defending against a Chinese invasion has been the main scenario of military training since 1949. Military training and its spillover effects increase the likelihood that Taiwanese people's response to the willingness to fight questions is not just lip service. Rather, it is rooted in a realistic concept of what such a fight might entail. A recent study shows that Taiwanese people who perceived the usefulness of military training are more likely to say that they would defend against an invasion by China (Yeh et al. 2019). The compulsory military training in Taiwan also enables us to extend our samples from former militants in previous studies to ordinary and representative citizens for exploring the psychological mechanism linking collective action and willingness to fight.

Fourth, the diverse national identity of Taiwanese people offers an opportunity to examine how national identity moderates the effect of perceived collective action on willingness to fight. Nation-building is the *process through which governing elites make the boundaries of the state and the nation coincide* (Gellner 1983, p.4). After Taiwan began to democratize in 1987, an exclusive Taiwanese identity emerged rapidly, and many Taiwanese citizens gradually changed their identity from an exclusive Chinese identity or “both Taiwanese and Chinese” dual identity to an exclusive Taiwanese identity. According to the most recent telephone survey conducted by National Chengchi University (NCCU hereafter) in December 2018, about 55 percent of Taiwanese people describe themselves as Taiwanese exclusively, while about 38 percent ascribe to a “both Taiwanese and Chinese” dual identity, and only 3 percent choose an exclusively Chinese identity.<sup>1</sup>

## **B. Operationalization of Dual Identity**

Within the Taiwanese context, we hypothesize that Taiwanese people who claim a dual Taiwanese-Chinese identity are more susceptible to the effects of collective action. Social identity theory suggests that the group that one is attached to is the source of self-esteem and pride (Tajfel and Turner 2001). When one has a strong connection between their self-image and exclusive national identity, their behavior is much more likely to be driven by group grievance or emotional arousal. They are more likely to believe that other people will also fight in the war, just like them. Therefore, they may overestimate the chance of winning and choose to fight regardless of the

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<sup>1</sup> Taiwan National Security Studies Surveys (2002-2019). *Program in Asian Security Studies, Duke University*. Retrieved from <https://sites.duke.edu/pass/data/> Date: July 30, 2019.

behavior of others. However, if they identify with both the Taiwanese and Chinese identities, that dual identity cannot serve as a heuristic for them to make a decision, especially in a zero-sum game scenario like a war between China and Taiwan. Unlike those who identify exclusively with one side or another, an individual who identifies with both sides in a war cannot see any outcome as a source of pride. They are therefore more likely to account for other objective factors and how they relate to their personal affairs in the conflict, such as the chance of either side winning and whether others will fight on a specific side. Previous studies show that Taiwanese people who claim a dual identity are much more likely to choose “maintaining the status quo” on the issue of cross-strait relationships than those who choose an exclusively Taiwanese or Chinese identifier (Lin 2012). Moreover, choosing a dual identity also positively correlates with perceived economic benefit and military threat from China (Wang 2017).

Therefore, we argue that Taiwanese people who have a dual identity are more likely to be influenced by information about how others will behave in the war, and they should have a lower tendency to participate in the war in the control group. Meanwhile, Taiwanese people with an exclusive Taiwanese identity will be less susceptible to the behavior of others, and they should have a higher willingness to fight in the control group.

### **C. In-depth Interview and Pre-Registration**

Before implementing the survey, we conducted an in-depth interview to examine whether ordinary Taiwanese people can understand the item descriptions in the questionnaire. Usually, researchers put complicated sentences or try to capture complex ideas that ordinary people do not understand. Moreover, it was necessary to test if Taiwanese subjects were uncomfortable answering the questions about willingness to fight. Between June 10 and June 17, 2018, six

Taiwanese respondents of various backgrounds were recruited through an online post. None of them had studied political science or international relations. All male subjects had served in the military. Table 1 provides basic information for the six subjects participating in the in-depth interview.

<b>Subject No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Political Orientation</b>
1	Male	28	College	Library	Pan-Green
2	Male	35	College	Law	None
3	Male	41	Master	Electrical Engineering	Pan-Green
4	Female	24	2yr College	Accounting	Pan-blue
5	Female	31	Master	Physical Health	Pan-Green
6	Female	58	PhD	Computer Science	Pan-blue

The procedure of the in-depth interview was as follows: The subjects were asked to read each question first and reply immediately if he or she did not understand the description. Before reading the options, the subjects were asked to imagine his or her answer. After that, the subject checked if that answer appeared in the options. This procedure was repeated until the subject completed the whole questionnaire. It took about 45 minutes for each subject to complete the in-depth interview. After completion, subjects were compensated with NTD\$500 (about USD \$16). Fortunately, subjects in the in-depth interview understood most of the questions and options, and they did not feel any discomfort answering any of the questions.

After the in-depth interview, the whole survey was pre-registered (the project's registration link will be provided once accepted). In the pre-registration, the final version of survey design, the procedure of survey implementation, the number of subjects, and the R code for analysis were all uploaded for review. The two pre-registrations were completed before June 28, 2018.

#### **D. Data Collection and Experimental Design**

During July 6-9, 2018, 1003 subjects were recruited through PollcracyLab, an online questionnaire platform maintained by National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan. PollcracyLab built and maintained the subject frame based on the Taiwan government's household registration records. Because PollcracyLab is established under National Chengchi University, a top research university in Taiwan, it can get access to official household registration records for academic proposes. Therefore, all Taiwanese citizens have a non-zero probability of being invited for registration by PollcracyLab, a crucial foundation establishing the representativeness of any sampling procedure. Compared with another opt-in platform such as Amazon MTurk or Survey Sampling International, PollcracyLab can recruit Taiwanese subjects from diverse and representative backgrounds.

PollcracyLab sent 1003 invitations for recruiting samples (we only asked for 1000, but PollcracyLab sent 1003). In the invitation letter, the subjects were asked to participate in a survey titled 'Survey of Public Opinion and Political Participation.' Subjects were informed that they could skip any question they found hard to answer or that they did not want to answer, and their answers will be kept anonymous. The anonymity of the subjects was ensured because PollcracyLab was responsible for both recruiting respondents and sending the gift cards as compensation, and all identifiable information was cleaned before the dataset was sent to the researchers. The researchers thus do not have any subject-identifiable information and hence cannot contact any respondent directly.

Overall, the questionnaire includes 31 items. Subjects were first asked to report their news consumption, level of political interest, and partisanship. They were then randomly assigned to one of the three groups below:

**Control Group:** *“Although we do not want another war, we would like to ask you the following question: If China decides to invade Taiwan by military force, will you resist?”*

- I will choose to resist
- I will not resist

**82% Group:** *“According to a newly published academic survey, when asked the question “If China decides to invade Taiwan by military force, will you resist?” about 82% of Taiwanese respondents say “Yes.” Although we did not want another war, we would like to ask you the following question: If China decides to invade Taiwan by military force, will you resist?”* ○ I will choose to resist ○ I will not resist

**18% Group:** *“According to a newly published academic survey, when asked the question “If China decides to invade Taiwan by military force, will you resist?” about 18% of Taiwanese respondents say “Yes.” Although we did not want another war, we would like to ask you the following question: If China decides to invade Taiwan by military force, will you resist?”* ○ I will choose to resist ○ I will not resist

Clearly, the major difference between the three versions of this question (Q11 in the survey) is the information respondents were given about others’ behavior. The **Control Group** provides no information on how other Taiwanese people will behave, the **82% Group** implies that most Taiwanese people will fight, and the **18% Group** indicates that most Taiwanese people will not fight.

There are two major reasons for designing two treatments and one control group. First, if the theory of collective action applies to the case of a Chinese invasion, we should expect that the treatments will strongly influence Taiwanese people’s willingness to fight. Furthermore, by comparing the two treatments and the control group, we can observe what people usually believe by default when there is no additional information. That is, if the respondents in the control group

behave similarly to those in the 18% group, we can tell that Taiwanese people generally believe that fighting against China has about 18% of the population's support without additional information. The same logic applies to the comparison of the 82% group and the control group.

After the items of collective action and willingness to fight, respondents were then asked a series of questions related to Taiwan politics, Taiwanese identification, and their military training experience before. In the end, subjects were debriefed and compensated NTD\$100 (about USD \$3) by PollcracyLab.

Overall, 1001 completed the survey (99.8%), and two dropped out during the survey (0.2%). The low dropout rate implies that the length of the questionnaire did not create a substantial cognitive burden on the subjects, so they could mostly focus on the questions and were not distracted. Moreover, the research assistant at PollcracyLab told us that they did not receive any complaints during this survey implementation. It is common that some respondents call the office and complain that some surveys were too long, too hard to answer, or that the compensation was not enough. None of those complaints appeared from our survey. This positive report from PollcracyLab also enhances our confidence in the validity of this survey experimental design.

#### E. Representativeness and Randomization Check

Table 2 illustrates the background information of our subjects recruited by PollcracyLab. Compared with the population of Taiwan, our sample is younger and has more Pan-Green supporters (who tend to support independence), fewer non-partisans, and more males. This distribution is not surprising: even though all Taiwanese people have a non-zero probability of being recruited by PollcracyLab, those who are frequent Internet users are more likely to answer the online survey, and those who are interested in politics are more likely to accept our invitation.

According to the PollcracyLab establisher’s report in 2012, the subjects are still nationally representative among those who are below 50 (Yu 2012).

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of the PollcracyLab2018 Subjects

<i>Gender</i>	Male	543 (54.3%)
	Female	458 (45.8%)
<i>Age</i>	20~29	184 (18.4%)
	30~39	326 (32.6%)
	40~49	274 (27.4%)
	50~59	150 (15.0%)
	60 up	65 (6.5%)
<i>Education</i>	Elementary or None	3 (0.3%)
	Middle School	4 (0.4%)
	Senior High	124 (12.4%)
	Junior College	182 (18.2%)
	College and up	688 (68.8%)
<i>Monthly Family Income</i>	Below NTD \$20,000	45 (4.5%)
	\$20,000~\$50,000	223 (22.3%)
	\$50,000~\$80,000	347 (34.7%)
	\$80,000~\$150,000	286 (28.6%)
	\$150,000 and above	90 (9.0%)
<i>Party Identity</i>	Pan-Blue	394 (39.4%)
	Pan-Green	483 (48.3%)
	None	124 (12.4%)
<i>Ethnicity (Father’s origin)</i>	Mainlander	144 (14.4%)
	Non-mainlander	857 (85.7%)
<i>National Identity</i>	Exclusive Taiwanese ID	522 (52.2%)
	Dual ID	450 (45.0%)

Before the analysis, we conducted randomization checks to see if our PollcracyLab respondents were evenly assigned to the treatment and control groups. The one-way ANOVA analysis shows that the background of respondents are not significantly different between the two treatment and control groups in aspect of gender ( $F = 0.153$ ,  $p = 0.86$ ), age ( $F = 1.6$ ,  $p = 0.19$ ), level of education ( $F = 0.84$ ,  $p = 0.43$ ), level of income ( $F = 1.88$ ,  $p = 0.15$ ), father’s origin ( $F = 1.45$ ,  $p = 0.23$ ), exclusive Taiwanese identity ( $F = 1.09$ ,  $p = 0.34$ ), and partisanship ( $F = 1.03$ ,  $p = 0.36$ ). Since there is no difference between groups, we assume that the Pollcracylab respondents among the three groups share the same characteristics.

## Results

### A. Collective Action and Willingness to Fight

Since the randomization test yields no difference among groups, we can simply compare the mean of each group. When the information about the behavior of others was not mentioned, 47.4 percent of subjects in the Control Group are willing to resist. In the Treatment 18% Group, 44 percent of subjects chose to resist. The chi-squared test shows no difference between Treatment 18% Group and Control Group ( $p = 0.41$ ). In the Treatment 82% Group, 58.7 percent chose to resist. The chi-squared test shows that the difference between Treatment 82% Group and Control Group is statistically significant ( $p < 0.005$ ). This simple comparison supports the hypotheses that the perception of others' actions would motivate citizens to engage in risk behaviors.

To control the potential influences from confounding variables, Table 3 presents the average treatment effect of the two treatments estimated by logit regression models. The dependent variable is binary coded as the respondent's willingness to resist the invasion. The simple model only includes the two treatments, while the full model controls for a series of socio-demographic variables.

Table 3. Logit Regression Model explaining Taiwanese willingness to Fight, Pollcracylab 2018

	DV: Willing to Fight = 1	
	Simple Model Full sample	Full Model Full sample
Treatment 82%	0.455** (0.157)	0.494** (0.170)
Treatment 18%	-0.140 (0.155)	-0.198 (0.168)
Control: Sex, Age, Edu, Income, PID, Ethnicity, Taiwanese Identity		YES
Intercept	-0.103 (0.110)	0.609 (0.600)
n	997	960
AIC	1372.3	1230.5

*Note: \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$*

In both the full sample simple and full models, the 82% treatment significantly increases one's willingness to fight, while the 18% treatment has no effect. On average, when an ordinary Taiwanese respondent was exposed to the 82% poll result, his or her willingness to fight will increase 12.1 percent [95% confidence interval 5.6% to 17.7%] based on the results of Full Model in Table 3. By contrast, when an ordinary Taiwanese respondent was exposed to the 18% poll result, their willingness to fight decreased by 5.4 percent [1.5% to -10.2%].

The 82% treatment effect estimated by the logit model provides further evidence of how the perception of collective action influences one's decision to risk their lives fighting in a war. Since the treatment only manipulates the respondent's perception of how other Taiwanese people will behave, this experimental design can rule out the methodological issue of social projection and material benefit. The result indicates that citizens indeed take other people's action into account when they are making such a risky decision.

At the same time, it is not surprising that the 18% treatment has no impact on the respondent's willingness to fight. One possible explanation is that 18% fits the respondents' expectations, so their belief was not updated. For example, in the 2019 Taiwanese National Security Survey, about 22% of Taiwanese people gave a positive answer when asked whether they would fight for Taiwan or not in an open-ended question (33 percent gave no response owing to the open-ended design). Therefore, 18% might not be low enough to decrease the respondent's willingness to fight.

## **B. National Identity, Collective Action, and Willingness to Fight**

Among the 1001 subjects, 52 percent exclusively identified as Taiwanese, while about 45 percent have a dual Taiwanese-Chinese identity. Therefore, we simply separated the two groups

of people and ran the regression analysis on each. The first two models in Table 4 show the treatment effects among the exclusive Taiwanese identifiers, while the last two models present the treatment effects among dual identifiers. Once again, the two simple models only include the two treatments as dummy variables, while the two full models contain the same socio-demographic variables except for national identity (which has been used for categorization).

Table 4. Logit Regression Model explaining Taiwanese willingness to Fight, Pollcracylab 2018

	DV: Willing to Fight = 1			
	Simple Model Exclusive TID	Full Model Exclusive TID	Simple Model Dual ID	Full Model Dual ID
Treatment 82%	0.194 (0.225)	0.215 (0.234)	0.839*** (0.157)	0.894*** (0.257)
Treatment 18%	-0.268 (0.222)	-0.395 (0.233)	0.090 (0.250)	0.031 (0.256)
Control: Sex, Age, Edu, Income, PID, Ethnicity		Yes		Yes
Intercept	0.584*** (0.157)	1.849* (0.872)	-0.926*** (0.183)	0.331 (0.861)
n	519	516	447	443
AIC	683.3	670.0	572.2	565.8

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4 clearly shows the heterogeneous treatment effect between exclusive Taiwanese identifiers and dual identifiers. Neither the 82% nor the 18% information treatment influenced Taiwanese identifiers' willingness to fight. The estimated effects are not distinguishable from zero. By contrast, the 82% effect is the strongest among dual identifiers. The effect is robust and strong even other variables are controlled. On average, the information that 82% of Taiwanese people will fight will increase a normal dual identifier's willingness to fight from 30.2 percent to 51.6 percent, a 21.4 percent increase [12.4% to 29.6%].

Figure 1 shows the simulated willingness to fight among exclusive Taiwanese identifiers and dual identifiers based on the two Full Models in Table 4. We drew the variance-covariance matrix of the two Full Models 500 times and calculated the willingness to fight in the Treatment and Control Groups, respectively, controlling all other variables at their mean value. The error bars

indicate the 95% confidence intervals of the distribution. In Figure 1, exclusive Taiwanese Identifiers are much more likely to fight (62.4% in the Control Group), which is twice as high than for those with a dual identity. However, exclusive Taiwanese identifiers' willingness is not changed after they receive the information that others will or will not fight. By contrast, even though the dual identifiers were less willing to fight, their willingness was boosted after they knew others will also join the fight.

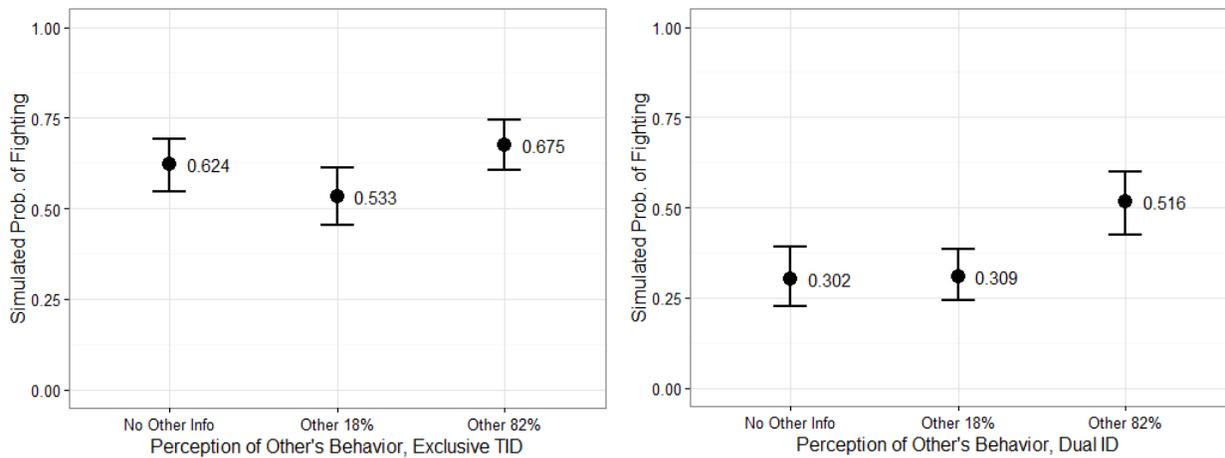


Figure 1. Collective Action, National Identity, and Willingness to Fight, Pollcracylab2018

### C. Robustness Check – Military Service Experience

One linking psychological mechanism between the rational calculation and the willingness to fight could be previous military training experience. In Taiwan, all adult male citizens are required to serve in the military from four months to two years, with exceptions for health or religious reasons; adult female citizens can also volunteer to join the military. In our dataset, 527 in 543 (97.1%) of male subjects had served in the military before, while 0% of female subjects did. Since service experience and gender are highly correlated, the robustness checks for these variables are conducted separately.

First, the gender dummy variable is statistically insignificant in all models in Table 3 and 4. The insignificant result shows that there is no gender bias in Taiwanese participants' willingness to fight. When the interaction term between gender and the two treatments are put into the regression, the interaction terms are both insignificant in all models. Hence, there is no evidence that gender (a proxy for military service) moderates the effect of collective action or national identity.

Similarly, when we put the previous military service experience (as a dummy variable) into the regression models and drop the gender dummy, the effect of military service experience is also insignificant. When the interaction term between the military service and the two treatments are put into the model, the interaction terms are also not significant. Besides, the patterns shown in Table 4 are not changed at all – the 82% collective action treatment only works for dual identifiers regardless of their military experience. We can thus conclude that the perception of collective action and national identity are still the two driving forces in Taiwanese people's willingness to fight, while previous military training experience does not moderate such a linkage.

#### **D. Robustness Check – External Validity**

If the perception of others' behavior during wartime has heterogeneous impacts on exclusive and dual identifiers' willingness to fight, as our experiment suggests in Table 4 and Figure 1, we should observe a similar pattern in representative surveys. To be specific, the effect of the perception of other's behavior should be stronger among dual identifiers with regards to their decision to fight in war.

To test the external validity of our survey, we exploit a nationally representative Taiwan National Security Survey conducted in 2016 (TNSS2016).<sup>2</sup> This telephone survey was sponsored

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sites.duke.edu/pass/> Access: December 12, 2019

by Duke University and was conducted by National Chengchi University between November 18-22, 2016. We choose this wave because 2016 was the year of the presidential election, with Taiwan undergoing its third presidential turnover early that year. Moreover, China significantly increased its navy activities in late 2016, including the militarization of several islands and rocks in the South China Sea and the sailing of China's first aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Taiwanese people responding to the survey would be naturally primed to think of the cross-strait military conflict.

In TNSS2016, 1069 respondents were asked the open-ended question, "*Q18. When China and Taiwan come into conflict, what will you do?*" We used this question to create a binary variable where respondents who answered "fight", "join the military," "resist," and "support our own government" are coded as "willing to fight", while others are coded 0. Among the 823 respondents who answered this question, 244 were coded willing to fight (29.6%).

In the same survey, respondents were asked, "*Q19. When China and Taiwan go to war, do you think most Taiwanese people will resist?*" with responses of "*Certainly Not,*" "*Probably Not,*" "*Probably Will,*" and "*Certainly Will.*" The responses were coded from -2 to +2. In the end, respondents were also asked their national identity. They were coded as 1 for exclusive Taiwan Identity, and 0 for dual Taiwan-China identity.

We then used a logit regression model with interaction terms to analyze the interactive effect between national identity and perception of others behavior on the willingness to fight, as is shown in Table 5. In this table, the partial coefficients of both exclusive Taiwan Identity and perception of other's willingness to fight are positive, indicating their positive impact on one's

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/china/2016/07/160718\\_south\\_china\\_sea\\_drills](https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/china/2016/07/160718_south_china_sea_drills) Access: December 17 2019

willingness to fight. However, the interaction term between these two variables is significantly negative. The negative interaction term indicates that, among exclusive identifiers, the effect of perceptions of others is smaller. In other words, exclusive identifiers' willingness to fight was less influenced by the perception of other's behaviors, compared with the dual identifiers. The results in Table 5 reflects the pattern we identified in the survey experiment.

Table 5. Logit Regression Model explaining Taiwanese willingness to Fight, TNSS2016

	DV: Willing to Fight = 1	
	Simple Model	Full Model
Exclusive Taiwan Identity	0.746*** (0.195)	0.716*** (0.220)
Perception of other's behavior in the war	0.371*** (0.107)	0.478*** (0.116)
ETID × Perception of others	-0.229+ (0.130)	-0.313* (0.140)
Control: Sex, Age, Edu, Income, PID, Ethnicity		Yes
Intercept	-1.458*** (0.158)	-2.408 (0.597)
N	787	773
AIC	936.9	861.94

Note: +  $p < 0.1$  \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

To further illustrate the interactive effect in Table 5, Figure 2 shows the simulated probability that one non-partisan respondent will fight given their identity and perception of others. All other variables are controlled at their mean values, and the errorbars present the 95% confidence intervals of simulated results in 500 simulations. In this figure, it is clear that the dual identifiers are much more susceptible to the perception of others when they are deciding to fight or not. When Taiwanese people believe firmly that others will also fight, the difference between dual and exclusive identifiers disappears. But when they think others will not fight, it is the exclusive national identity that pushes Taiwanese people to fight – dual identifiers do not respond in that same way.

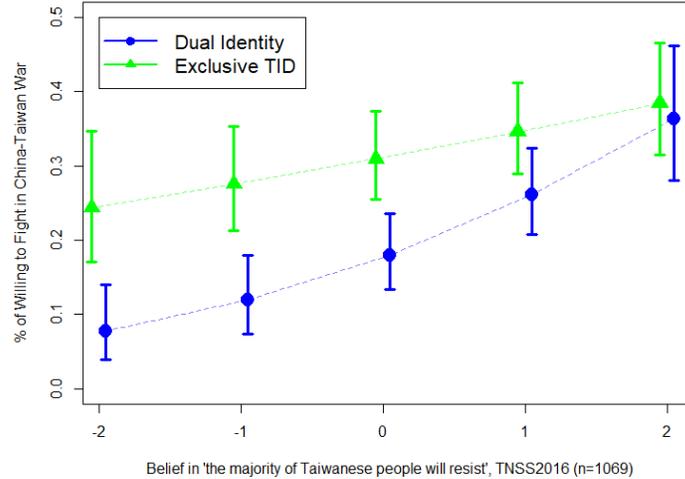


Figure 2. Collective Action, National Identity, and Willingness to Fight, TNSS2016

Therefore, the TNSS2016 survey demonstrates the pattern that we expected to see based on our experiment – dual identifiers are much more likely to be influenced by their perception of others when they are deciding to fight or not. Meanwhile exclusive identifiers are mainly driven by their national identity. Once again, the result suggests that the perception of others’ behavior plays a distinguishable role with the function of national identity on the willingness to fight.

## Discussion

Our survey experiment in Taiwan shows that the perception of others’ behavior matters when a citizen is deciding whether to risk their lives in a war. Using an experimental design, we provide causal evidence that people increase their willingness to fight *after* they perceive that others are much more willing to join the fight. This result may demonstrate the individual-level psychological mechanism through which cell phone access and social media can be used to coordinate people to join a revolution against an invasion or dictator (e.g. Pierskalla and

Hollenbach 2013). The experimental design also helps mitigate the social projection problem and provides a clearer estimation of the effect of collective action information. The result remains robust in several robustness checks, and the same pattern implied by the experiment can be found in another national representative survey, the TNSS2016.

Moreover, our evidence shows that the psychological mechanism of collective action is stronger among people who do not have a strong group identity. Instead, these people engage in a rational estimation of collective action because they are not “worked up” by the group identity. Therefore, we suggest that the mechanism of collective action is distinct from that of group grievance (Weinstein and McCartan 2008) and collective threat (Maher 2010). Both group grievance and collective threat highlight in-group and out-group differences, so people with a stronger in-group identity are much more likely to sacrifice themselves for the group, as is predicted by social identity theory. By contrast, perceived collective action plays a much more important role in mobilizing those who do not have a strong group identity. These people “stay cool” and care more about how others around them behave, and they take others’ actions into account before deciding what risks they are willing to take.

We suggest that the findings in this article are not driven by social pressure theory (Gerber et. al 2008). If social pressure is the mediator linking information of other’s behavior and one’s decision, then the effect should be stronger among the exclusive Taiwanese identifiers – others in your group also fight, why don’t you? However, our empirical evidence does not support such a mechanism – weak identifiers clearly demonstrate greater susceptibility to the behavior of others. An alternative explanation could be that these weak identifiers adopted a dual Taiwanese-Chinese identity because they care more about social norms and traditional values – they did not want to give up their motherland identity easily. However, this explanation is not adequate, because those

who value their motherland identity should choose to not fight even if they know that others will fight. To sum up, we suggest that the collective action theory still plays an essential and distinct role in explaining why or why not some people choose to fight.

Our findings speak to studies of secession movements and mobilization. Specifically, our findings echo previous studies showing that different people may be mobilized by different psychological mechanisms. In many independence-seeking regions, people tend to have both the “motherland” identity as well as their new national identity. For example, since 1980 about 40 percent of Catalans consider themselves both Catalan and Spanish, while about 50 percent identify as more Catalan than Spanish in 2012 (Serrano 2013); in Quebec, about 30 percent consider themselves as both Quebecois and Canadian, while another 50 percent identify more strongly with Quebec (Mendelsohn 2007). Dual identity in Taiwan is therefore far from a unique case. Our findings suggest that while nationalistic campaigns may mobilize exclusive Quebec and Catalan identifiers, the action of the dual identifiers in these two regions is more likely to be influenced by how they perceive the action of others in their regions.

Similarly, Wang (2018) shows that Ukrainians who joined the three-month-long 2004 Orange Revolution (which was also risky given the snowing weather and the violent threat from Russia) in the beginning are very different from those who joined later. Wang found that the Ukrainian subjects who joined the protest prior to the fraud on Election Day had a stronger tendency to prefer a Ukraine closer to the European Union, while the latecomers had a higher level of patience – an important psychological factor indicating that they care about what could happen to them personally in the long run. In the modern era, mass protests or revolutions usually take weeks, months, or even years to reach a conclusion, and both this article and Wang’s (2018) findings suggest that different people may be mobilized by different psychological mechanisms.

One weakness in the experimental design is that it does not measure respondents' perceived chance of winning. We argue that when an individual perceives that others will fight, they are also much more likely to fight because they believe that the chance of winning is higher. However, we take this assumption for granted without further verification. It is possible that dual identifiers follow the behavior of others without further consideration or out of guilt, rather than a rational calculation of the chance of winning. Future work should explore linkages within the collective action mechanism.

Another important future research agenda is whether collective action may further form an exclusive national identity. In this article, we assume that national identity is a long-term psychological attachment that serves as an unmoved mover. However, in regions seeking secession or independence, the change in the distribution of national identity usually cannot be explained by generational replacement. From 1980 to 2012, the proportion of those identifying more with Catalonia than with Spain increased by around 40 percent (Serrano 2013); from 1992 to 2014, the proportion of those identifying as Taiwanese exclusively rather than Chinese increased from 18 percent to 60 percent (Wang 2016), but dropped to 50 percent after 2014; from 2008 to 2018, the proportion of people identifying more with Hong Kong than with China increased by around 20 percent.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is likely that a successful collective action coordinated by the people can further form the boundary of the imagination of “who we are” – the crucial element of national identity formation. For example, on June 17, 2019, more than two million Hong Kongers went out

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<sup>4</sup> HKUPOP, 2019. “Categorical Ethnic Identity (per poll)” Retrieved from [https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/eid\\_poll\\_chart.html](https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/eid_poll_chart.html). Access date: July 30, 2019.

into the streets and protested against the Hong Kong extradition bill, which reduced the judicial independence of Hong Kong from PRC. This number represents one-fourth of the total Hong Kong population. When a dual Hong Konger – Chinese identifier witnesses such a massive crowd on the street peacefully chanting “Who has not sung yet? Who has not sacrificed for our City yet?” (a revised version of “Do you hear the people sing?” from *Les Misérables*), wouldn’t such a scene push them towards embracing an exclusive Hong Kong identity? Future work can pay more attention to the relationship between collective action and the nation-building process.

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