Aram Hur, Narratives of Civic Duty: How National Stories Shape Democracy in Asia. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022. 264 pp. ISBN 9781501764847.

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Aram Hur's *Narratives of Civic Duty: How National Stories Shape Democracy in Asia* explores a core question in democratic theory: why do citizens feel obligated to support democratic institutions? Against expectations that civic duty emerges from democratic culture or institutional incentives, Hur posits an alternative: civic duty is rooted in national narratives. Through what she terms a "national theory of civic duty," Hur argues that citizens are motivated by their nation's moral stories about the relationship between people and state. When those stories depict the democratic state as representing the national community, civic duty is high. When the state is seen as alien or oppositional, duty falters.

This theoretical framework challenges the conventional dichotomy that nationalism is inherently illiberal. Hur contends that nationalism is politically malleable: its civic or anti-civic effects depend on how the nation-state relationship is historically imagined. South Korea's example, where ethnic nationalism has coalesced with democratic obligation, illustrates how strong civic duty can emerge when the nation and state are tightly bond. Taiwan, by contrast, with its fragmented identity narratives and a contested state, exhibits weaker or conditional civic obligations.

Hur tests this theory through a well-designed most similar systems design (MSSD) comparison of South Korea and Taiwan, supplemented by chapters on Germany and cross-national survey data. South Korea and Taiwan are particularly well-suited for MSSD, as both experienced Japanese colonialism, postwar authoritarian rule, rapid economic development, and transitions to democracy in the late 20th century. These shared structural and historical factors control for many plausible confounds, allowing Hur to isolate the explanatory power of divergent national identity formation, particularly the contrasting nation-state linkages embedded in each country's dominant national story. Hur combines narrative analysis of over 200 personal accounts with survey and experimental data to demonstrate how citizens internalize different moral obligations to the state. The Germany chapter illustrates how civic duty can remain stunted when national identity and statehood diverge, even after institutional reunification. A cross-nationa

Part I outlines the theory. Chapter 1 introduces the puzzle of civic duty, focusing on South Korea's "gold drives" during the 1997 crisis. Chapter 2 outlines the national theory of civic duty, arguing that perceptions of moral obligation are shaped by national narratives, not simply by culture or institutional norms.

Part II provides the empirical core. Chapter 3 contrasts South Korea's unified, ethnic national narrative, which links the state and people, with Taiwan's fragmented national identity, rooted in colonial and authoritarian divisions. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that these narratives shape civic behaviors. In South Korea, national pride motivates compliance with civic obligations, even among overseas Koreans. In Taiwan, civic duty is more conditional, especially among those who see the state as historically dominated by a non-native ruling class.

Part III expands the scope. Chapter 6 shows that East Germans, socialized under a different regime

and narrative, continue to show weaker civic duty than West Germans. Chapter 7 uses cross-national survey data to demonstrate that nationalism is correlated with civic duty only when state belonging is perceived. Chapter 8 concludes by arguing that national stories can be reshaped to foster civic resilience or be co-opted by populists to exclude others.

Hur's study is a welcome contribution that rethinks the relationship between nationalism and democracy. Her comparative findings show that moral narratives linking nation and state can instill in citizens a sense of democratic obligation. However, an underexplored implication of this argument warrants further consideration: the content of those national narratives – especially their ethnic exclusivity or inclusivity – may influence how democracies adapt to social change.

Hur's study is a welcome contribution that rethinks the relationship between nationalism and democracy. Her comparative findings compellingly demonstrate that moral narratives linking nation and state can instill in citizens a sense of democratic obligation. However, a further implication of this argument deserves attention: the content of those national narratives, especially their ethnic exclusivity or inclusivity, may shape how democracies adapt to social change.

In particular, Hur's findings highlight the persistence of ethnic nationalism in South Korea and the enduring state–society compact established in the mid-20th century. South Korea's civic duty rests on a narrative of ethnic homogeneity and historical struggles that tightly bind the Korean people to their state. This has been powerful for cohesion, but it also means that the democratic Korean polity still heavily equates national membership with shared ancestry. Research on Korean national identity has observed that nationhood remains rooted in bloodline, and institutions to foster a more inclusive civic identity have lagged. The very strength of ethnic national attachment that Hur credits for South Korea's democratic engagement could pose a serious challenge for the near future: as South Korea faces immigration and demographic change, will non-Koreans or those outside the dominant ethnonational frame be integrated into the "circle of we"? If the national story remains one of a single bloodline, newcomers may be perceived as outsiders.

Hur's work, focused on the national majority, hints at this issue and does acknowledge that strong nation–state linkages can be manipulated by populists to exclude others, particularly in Chapter 8. Still, she stops short of fully theorizing or empirically examining how ethnic national attachment might be re-politicized in the context of immigration and demographic change. The implication is that South Korea's democracy might need to consciously broaden its national narrative if it is to integrate a more diverse populace while maintaining strong civic unity. What, then, are the implications for feelings of civic duty in this more diverse republic? This is a crucial question to consider.

Taiwan's trajectory offers an instructive contrast. Although its fractured national identity once undermined civic duty, Taiwan's democratization enabled a more inclusive civic nationalism. The emergence of a multiethnic "Taiwanese nation," rooted in democratic values rather than ancestry, has enabled civic obligation to extend beyond the legacy of a Sinocentric state. The government's recognition of "New Residents", including Southeast Asian immigrants and their children, further signals a national story under revision. While not without complications, Taiwan's civic turn may better position it to sustain democratic engagement in a pluralistic future.

In conclusion, *Narratives of Civic Duty* is a theoretically compelling and empirically rich study that demonstrates how national narratives shape democratic citizenship. Hur's analysis encourages scholars to view nationalism as a politically contingent force: one that democracies can recast to widen or narrow the bounds of civic belonging. Who counts as part of the nation, in these stories, will determine who is seen as deserving and capable of civic duty. Hur solves a key puzzle in Asian democratic development while inviting future-oriented reflection on national inclusion amid demographic change.