

Compulsory Voting and Parties' Vote-Seeking Strategies

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Abstract: *I advance a theory about how compulsory voting affects the behavior of political parties. The theory suggests that parties will pivot toward programmatic vote-seeking strategies and away from clientelistic tactics, such as vote buying, where voting is compulsory. I test my expectations in three separate studies, using several data sources and empirical approaches. In Study 1, cross-national analyses show that parties behave more programmatically under compulsory voting and that vote buying is less common where voting is mandatory. In Study 2, synthetic control and difference-in-differences analyses show that a switch to compulsory voting in Thailand produced an increase in programmatic vote seeking. In Study 3, a list experiment conducted in tandem with a natural experiment shows that compulsory voting leads parties to rely less on vote-buying tactics in Argentina. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings, which together are broadly supportive of my theoretical expectations.*

Replication Materials: The data, code, and any additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political Science* Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/QBHGRG>.

Turning out to the polls is mandatory in nearly 30 countries. In many of these, politicians are engaged in deliberations over the abolition of compulsory voting. Conversely, in many countries with voluntary voting, there are active debates over the adoption of a legal requirement to vote. Such deliberations have produced recent changes to electoral law. Chile, Cyprus, and Fiji all recently made voting voluntary, whereas Bulgaria and Samoa introduced compulsory voting, as did two Indian states for local elections.

As a widespread and frequently deliberated electoral rule, it is important that compulsory voting's consequences are well understood. To this end, it is well known that compulsory voting increases turnout (e.g., Birch 2009, chap. 5; Blais 2006; Cancela and Geys 2016) and makes the voting population more reflective of the electorate (e.g., Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Miller 2017; Hoffman, León, and Lombardi 2017; Jaitman 2013; Singh 2015). There is also a burgeoning literature on the effects of compulsory voting on vote choices (e.g., Dassonneville et al., forthcoming; Dassonneville Hooghe,

and Miller 2017; Katz and Levin, 2018; Selb and Lachat 2009; Singh 2016, forthcoming-b), the success of the left and right (e.g., Bechtel, Hangartner, and Schmid 2016; Birch 2009, 120–28; Fowler 2013; Hoffman, León, and Lombardi 2017; Miller and Dassonneville 2016), political sophistication (e.g., Birch 2009, chap. 4; Córdova and Rangel 2017; de Leon and Rizzi 2014; León 2017; Loewen, Milner, and Hicks 2008; Sheppard 2015; Shineman 2018), and attitudes toward democracy (e.g., Birch 2009, 112–15; Singh, forthcoming-a). Still, little is known about how compulsory voting affects the ways in which political parties seek electoral advantage.

I advance a theory about compulsory voting's effects on parties' vote-seeking strategies. The theory argues that, due to their beliefs about the character of compelled voting populations, parties perceive more utility in emphasizing their issue stances and ideological positions where voting is mandatory than where it is not. From this, I predict that parties will pivot toward programmatic vote-seeking strategies and away from clientelistic tactics, such as vote buying, under compulsory voting.

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I test my predictions with three separate studies. In Study 1, I examine whether compulsory voting is linked to particular vote-seeking strategies using expert-provided measures of party behavior from the Varieties of Democracy project (Coppedge et al. 2017a). Results from an analysis of 140 countries over a period of more than 40 years indicate that parties behave more programmatically where voting is mandatory—and that vote buying is less common. Both associations are strongest where abstainers are most likely to be meaningfully sanctioned. Additional analyses of separate measures of party vote-seeking strategies from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (Kitschelt 2013; Kitschelt and Freeze 2011) corroborate these findings.

While Study 1 demonstrates an association between compulsory voting and party strategies, Studies 2 and 3 do more to probe the causal effects of compulsory voting on party behavior. In Study 2, I use synthetic control and difference-in-differences methods to estimate the effect of Thailand's adoption of compulsory voting on programmatic vote seeking. In Study 3, I conduct a list experiment in conjunction with a natural experiment in Argentina to determine the effect of compulsory voting on the extent to which parties engage in vote buying. Study 2 shows that the adoption of compulsory voting in Thailand led to an increase in programmatic vote seeking, and Study 3 shows that compulsory voting causes parties to partially eschew vote-buying tactics in Argentina.

The evidence from the three studies is together broadly supportive of my theoretical expectations. This updates the understanding of both the effects of compulsory voting and the broader relationship between electoral structure and party behavior. In the final section of the article, I consider how these findings connect to debates over the utility and justifiability of compulsory voting.

How Compulsory Voting Affects Parties' Vote-Seeking Strategies

I start from the assumption that political parties and their candidates are chiefly concerned with maximizing vote shares. Downs's (1957) models of party competition, and those directly inspired by Downs (e.g., Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook 1970; Shepsle 1991), focus on how parties locate themselves in policy space in order to attract voters. Other models of vote-seeking behavior in the Downsian tradition further consider how parties respond to non-policy traits of the electorate, such as partisanship and sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Erikson and Romero 1990).

Electoral structure is a key determinant of the ways in which parties conduct themselves when seeking votes (Cox 1990; Downs 1957), and much of the relationship between electoral structure and parties' vote-seeking strategies is driven by the effect of electoral rules on the character of the electorate. Calvo and Hellwig (2011), for example, show not only that parties locate themselves in ideological space with reference to the utility functions of voters, but also that voters' utility functions are themselves shaped by electoral rules. Karp, Banducci, and Bowler (2008, 95) suggest that the higher levels of voter efficacy that manifest under proportional representation impact the ways in which parties seek votes.

Like other electoral rules, compulsory voting shapes citizens themselves. And, as vote-seeking political parties take into account their perceptions of the demographics, attitudes, and political preferences of citizens when formulating their vote-seeking strategies, compulsory voting will also affect the ways in which they seek votes. As compulsory rules are most likely to shape participation and other electoral outcomes where sanctions for abstention are steep and enforced (e.g., Panagopoulos 2008; Singh 2011), the extent to which compulsory rules shape the composition of the voting population and, in turn, party strategies will depend upon the severity of penalties for abstention and the degree to which these are enforced.

Compulsory voting's upward impact on participation levels out inequities in turnout, thus increasing the proportion of the voting population that is of low socioeconomic status—and less engaged with politics (e.g., Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Miller 2017; Hoffman, León, and Lombardi 2017; Jaitman 2013; Singh 2015). Yet, at the same time, compulsory voting may tackle disengagement. Scholars have long argued that, by incentivizing information gathering, compulsory voting imparts a sense of civic duty and produces political knowledge and interest (e.g., Barthélemy 1912; Broomall 1893; Elliott 2017; Engelen 2007, 32; Holls 1891; Lijphart 1997, 10; Nerincx 1901; Tyson 2016). As such, compulsory voting can arguably make the voting population more representative of the electorate and serve as a vehicle for political education.

A number of studies find evidence of a positive link between mandatory voting and political sophistication (e.g., Córdova and Rangel 2017; Gordon and Segura 1997; Sheppard 2015; Shineman 2018), and compulsory voting is further shown to increase the extent to which individuals identify with political parties (Dalton and Weldon 2007; Huber, Kernell, and Leoni 2005; Singh and Thornton 2013). Still, others find little or no evidence of a positive effect of compulsory voting on political sophistication (e.g., Birch 2009, chap. 4; de Leon and Rizzi 2014; León 2017; Loewen, Milner, and Hicks 2008; Selb

and Lachat 2009, 575, fn. 1). Thus, while it is clear that compulsory voting increases turnout and thereby iron out socioeconomic disparities in the voting population, evidence regarding the effect of compulsory voting on political sophistication is mixed.

How then will compulsory voting shape parties' vote-seeking strategies? First, as compulsory voting reliably boosts turnout, especially where sanctions are strong and enforced (e.g., Panagopoulos 2008; Singh 2011), parties will see relatively little utility in voter mobilization. As individuals will already have external incentive to vote, parties will instead focus on persuasion.

Second, parties' perceptions of the character of the voting population will shape the nature of such persuasion efforts. Where turning out is mandatory, voting populations will contain a comparatively high proportion of individuals of low socioeconomic status. This wider array of voters should increase for parties the utility of broad, catchall policy programs. At the same time, it should decrease the utility of subgroup-targeted appeals. This is borne out in a formal model of electoral competition by Bugarin and Portugal (2015), who show that mandatory voting incentivizes parties to take into consideration the preferences of the whole electorate. In addition, as parties can expect the electorate to be more engaged with political parties where voting is mandatory, they will stand to gain more by promoting their "brands" (Singh and Thornton 2013, 193).

Parties will also take into account the degree of political sophistication in the voting population. This is consequential because political sophisticates are more likely to alter their vote choices in response to policy-based and issue-relevant information (e.g., Kam 2005; Lau and Redlawsk 2001), to conceive of politics with reference to left-right ideological structure (Harbers, de Vries, and Steenbergen 2013), and to vote based on ideological considerations (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Federico and Hunt 2013; Jacoby 2009; Stubager, Seeberg, and So 2018).

Although, as discussed above, empirical evidence is mixed with regard to the relationship between compulsory voting and sophistication, parties are likely to operate under the supposition that the link is positive. Democratic political elites tend to hold sanguine views of status quo electoral institutions (Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger 1997). In Australia, for example, national politicians favor maintaining its mandatory voting law by a ratio of nearly four to one, and this affinity is not due solely to its impact on their electoral fortunes (Bowler, Donovan, and Karp 2006). Records of debates over the implementation of compulsory voting confirm that elected leaders often see it as a way to reinforce civic

duty and engender political awareness (Hughes 1968; Maldonado 2015; Malkopoulou 2011). For example, in deliberations over the introduction of compulsory voting in Belgium, the country's prime minister argued that it would serve to educate voters about the competing candidates (Malkopoulou 2011, 157). Perceiving a relatively sophisticated electorate, political parties will thus see utility in playing up their policy stances and ideological positions where turnout is mandatory.

Implications: Programmatic Vote Seeking and Vote Buying

Increased emphasis on policy and ideology among political parties implies the adoption of programmatic vote-seeking strategies. Programmatic strategies involve non-contingent policy bundles aimed at large groups (e.g., lower classes, social conservatives), which are reflected in parties' left-right ideologies (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Clientelistic strategies, alternatively, are characterized by the targeting of specific groups with offers of quid pro quo exchanges. While programmatic and clientelistic vote-seeking strategies are not mutually exclusive, parties that behave programmatically are less likely to also behave clientelistically (Hicken 2011, 305). Thus, compulsory voting should lead parties to favor programmatism over clientelism, especially where the compulsory rules have "teeth" and are thus more likely to be effective. This first observable implication is expressed in hypothesis form as:

H1: Compulsory voting increases the extent to which parties are programmatic, rather than clientelistic, in their vote-seeking efforts, especially where rules are routinely enforced and penalties for abstention are substantial.

A balancing toward programmatism and away from clientelism implies that parties will be less likely to employ common clientelistic methods. Here, I focus on vote buying, a widespread strategy (Schaffer 2007) that can be classified as clientelistic (Hicken 2011; Stokes 2009). There are further reasons to expect a negative relationship between mandatory voting and vote buying beyond the shift toward programmatism associated with compulsory voting, and the mechanisms behind this expectation differ conditional on the type of vote buying. I consider three of the vote-buying varieties addressed by Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter (2014): "negative vote buying," "turnout buying," and "positive vote buying."¹

¹These labels differ slightly from Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter (2014), who term negative vote buying "abstention buying" and positive vote buying simply "vote buying."

Respectively, parties may bribe individuals who are indifferent or in opposition not to vote, they may give money or favors to supporters who are unlikely to turn out in exchange for their participation, or they may purchase support from those likely to vote against them.

Negative vote buying should decrease under compulsory voting because it gives individuals added incentive to turn out; one's participation allows him or her to avoid a monetary or nonmonetary sanction. This, in turn, makes negative vote buying more expensive for parties. Turnout buying should also decrease where voting is compulsory, as individuals are already mobilized by the threat of a penalty for abstention. That is, it is unnecessary for parties to purchase their supporters' participation where they are already likely to turn out. The predictions of the formal model of Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter (2014) align with this logic.

Turning to positive vote buying, on the one hand, Abraham (1955, 9) notes that individuals who turn out against their free will are likely to feel that they "ought to be recompensed" (see Birch 2009, 105), which could increase opportunities for positive vote buying. This was noted very early on by Blackstone (1753/1893, 165) and is also present in more recent work (Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2014). On the other hand, if parties expect compulsory voting to increase political sophistication, they will see less utility in positive vote buying due to an expectation that relatively sophisticated voters will be less susceptible to their efforts.

Compulsory voting should have an unambiguously downward impact on negative vote buying and turnout buying. I also expect that the shift toward programmatism, coupled with parties' perceptions of a relatively sophisticated electorate under compulsory voting, will lessen the prevalence of positive vote-buying efforts.² The mechanisms through which compulsory rules decrease vote buying should operate most forcefully where such rules are sharply sanctioned and reliably enforced. This set of observable implications is expressed in hypothesis form as:

²There are few empirical examinations of the link between compulsory voting rules and parties' vote-buying efforts, and the findings that do exist are contradictory. León (2017) conducts a field experiment in Peru, in which individuals were randomly provided with information about a recent decrease in the fines for abstention under the compulsory voting law, and finds no evidence that easing the fines affected the incidence of self-reported vote buying. However, he finds that it increased the average price paid for a vote. Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter (2014, 425), using a difference-in-means test, find that individuals in countries with compulsory voting are more likely to answer affirmatively when asked whether they received offers of gifts or favors in exchange for their votes. Neither analysis distinguishes among different types of vote buying.

H2: Compulsory voting decreases negative vote buying, turnout buying, and positive vote buying, especially where rules are routinely enforced and penalties for abstention are substantial.

Compulsory Voting, Programmatism, and Vote Buying: Empirical Tests

I conduct three studies to assess the impact of compulsory voting on programmatism and vote buying. Study 1 uses cross-sectional regressions to analyze party strategies across countries with voluntary and compulsory voting, as differentiated by the strength of sanctions for nonvoting and the likelihood of their enforcement. In Study 2, I employ synthetic control and difference-in-differences methods to identify the effects of Thailand's switch to compulsory voting in the 1990s on programmatic vote seeking. In Study 3, I design and analyze a list experiment conducted in conjunction with a natural experiment in Argentina to identify the effects of its compulsory rule on vote buying.

Study 1: Cross-National Patterns in Compulsory Voting, Programmatism, and Vote Buying

In this first study, I leverage variation in the existence and strength of compulsory voting across countries to examine whether it is associated with party strategies. To gauge strategies, I use data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project (Coppedge et al. 2017a),³ a large-scale undertaking that seeks to measure multiple dimensions of democracy across countries and over time. For my purposes, V-Dem's Party Linkages and Election Vote Buying measures are particularly useful. Like many of the subcomponents of democracy assessed by V-Dem, these are created with the assistance of roughly 2,800 country experts (Coppedge et al. 2017c, 4).

The experts rate countries on an ordinal scale with regard to each subcomponent about which they are questioned. Item response theory (IRT) models are fit to the ordinal ratings. V-Dem's IRT approach allows for the fact that experts working on different cases might apply ordinal scales differently and vary in their reliability. It also leverages the ratings of experts who score multiple countries over multiple years to produce spatially

³I use version 7 of the V-Dem data.

and temporally comparable scales. Because IRT models treat the ordinal ratings as reflections of a continuous latent concept, their output consists of interval-level scales (Coppedge et al. 2017c, 30–31).

The Party Linkages scale ranges from *clientelistic* to *programmatic*. The Election Vote Buying scale ranges from *widespread vote buying* at one extreme to *no vote buying* at the other. Negative vote buying, turnout buying, and positive vote buying are not distinguished. I rescaled both measures to range from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating more programmatism and more vote buying. In Section 1 of the supporting information, I provide the wording of the questions and the response options shown to V-Dem experts, as well as a broader discussion of the quality of the V-Dem measures.

In the 1972–2015 period under study (see below), 30 countries in the V-Dem data mandated turnout for one or more democratic⁴ elections. Above, I put forth that compulsory voting is more effectual where sanctions for abstention are sharper and more likely to be enforced. Thus, following Fornos, Power, and Garand (2004) and subsequent authors (e.g., Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Kostadinova and Power 2007; Kouba and Lysek 2016; Singh forthcoming-a; forthcoming-b; Ugglä 2008), I produce a four-part measure of compulsory voting. Using information from V-Dem, I create the following categories:

VV: Countries with voluntary voting.

CV_{low}: Countries that mandate voting but do not employ or enforce sanctions for abstention.

CV_{med}: Countries that have and enforce legal sanctions for abstention, but impose minimal costs upon abstainers.

CV_{high}: Countries that mandate turnout and enforce sanctions, which impose considerable costs on offenders.

In Section 2 of the supporting information, I provide a list of countries in the sample that used compulsory voting in at least one election, the range of election years in the sample during which voting was compulsory in these countries, and information on the classification of compulsory voting rules for each country.

I account for other variables that have a potential link with both mandatory voting and parties' vote-seeking strategies. First, I control for economic and democratic development. Both are linked to parties' vote-seeking strategies (Kitschelt and Kselman 2013) and may also be associated with compulsory voting, the use of which is relatively widespread in the developing countries of Latin America. Economic development is measured with per

capita GDP, expressed in thousands of constant dollars. Data are from the World Bank (2017).⁵ Democratic development is measured using the Polity IV Index (Center for Systemic Peace 2017), which has a theoretical range of –10 to 10, with higher values indicating more consolidated democracy. Because both economic and democratic development have a curvilinear relationship with party strategies (Kitschelt and Kselman 2013, 1468–70), I also include the square of each measure.

Rule of law is also a potential confounder, in that compulsory voting is more likely to be enforced where the rule of law is stronger and, at the same time, generally illegal clientelistic strategies, such as vote buying, are less likely to be employed. I control for rule of law using V-Dem's index of law transparency and enforcement predictability. V-Dem's IRT approach, as discussed above, is used to create an interval-level measure of rule of law, with higher values indicating more transparency of the law and predictability of enforcement.

I also control for the type of electoral system. Although the empirical link between electoral system structure and citizen–politician linkages is tenuous, there is theoretical reason to suspect one exists (Kitschelt 2000), and countries with compulsory voting are relatively unlikely to use a majoritarian electoral system for legislative elections. I account for the electoral system by coding elections in countries that use a majoritarian rule for elections to the lower (or only) house as 1 and assigning others a 0.

Further, as presidentialism may be associated with vote-seeking behavior (e.g., van de Walle 2003), and because most countries in the data with compulsory voting are presidential, I include a variable that takes on a 1 for presidential systems and 0 otherwise. Federalism also affects party strategies (Müller 2007) and may be associated with compulsory voting.⁶ I account for federalism with a binary variable coded 1 for federal countries and 0 for those with unitary systems. I also include a control for countries located in Latin America due to its association with compulsory voting and because of the pervasiveness of clientelistic vote seeking in the region (e.g., Hilgers 2012). Latin American countries are assigned a 1, and others are assigned a 0. Finally, I include time trends within each country to help account for the possibility that both compulsory voting laws and vote-seeking strategies are mutually dependent on unobserved, time-varying factors.

⁵For Taiwan, GDP indicators are from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

⁶Many countries with long-standing compulsory voting rules, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, and Brazil, are also federal.

⁴I exclude years in which a country was deemed not free or unassessed by Freedom House (2018).

In the models in which the level of programmatism is the outcome variable, data on all variables are available for 4,129⁷ country-years in 140 countries from 1972 to 2015. When vote buying is the dependent variable, the number of country-years drops to 1,240, as V-Dem only assesses vote buying during election years. Because the data are tiered, with country-years clustered in countries, I fit multilevel models that include a country-specific random intercept.⁸

I first estimate the relationship between compulsory voting and the extent to which parties seek votes programmatically. I differentiate countries according to both the existence and level of compulsory voting by including separate indicator variables for each level of mandatory voting and excluding voluntary systems as the reference category. As shown in Model 1 of Table 1, and further illustrated in the left-hand panel of Figure 1, all else being equal, parties are predicted to be least programmatic in their vote-seeking efforts in countries where voting is voluntary and in countries with unenforced compulsory rules. In countries with moderate compulsory rules, parties are more programmatic, and in countries where compulsory rules are strictly enforced and strongly sanctioned, parties are especially likely to seek votes programmatically. These patterns align with the predictions of Hypothesis 1.

The results of Model 2 of Table 1 report the estimated relationship between compulsory voting and parties' vote-buying efforts. The coefficients on the indicators for each level of compulsory voting are again progressively larger in magnitude. Compulsory voting is negatively associated with vote-buying efforts, most notably where rules are strongly sanctioned and enforced. This pattern is further illustrated in the right-hand panel of Figure 1, in which it is apparent that the predicted level of vote buying is similar in countries with voluntary voting and weak compulsory voting, but it is substantially lower in countries with moderate compulsory voting. In countries where compulsory rules are strictly enforced and strongly sanctioned, vote buying is least common. These patterns align with the predictions of Hypothesis 2.

⁷V-Dem advises against using estimates produced from the ratings of three or fewer experts from 2013 on (Coppedge et al. 2017b, 28). For this reason, I dropped 37 observations from the sample. This does not substantively affect the results of the models.

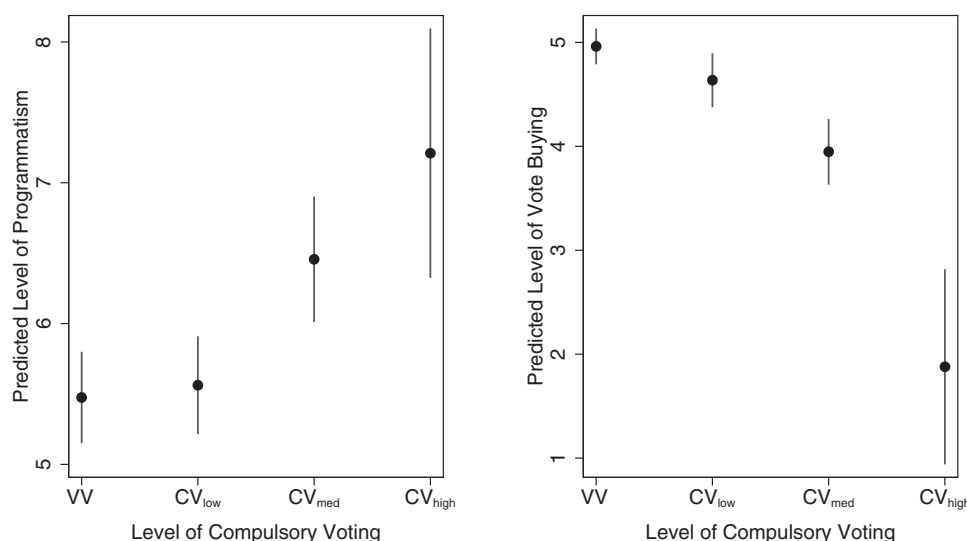
⁸The country-specific time trends included in each model absorb much of the intra-country variance in the dependent variables. When the time trends are removed, results indicate that about 80% of the unmodeled variation in the dependent variables exists across countries.

TABLE 1 Compulsory Voting, Programmatism, and Vote Buying across Countries

Dependent Variable	Level of Programmatism (1)	Level of Vote Buying (2)
<i>Compulsory Voting</i>		
CV _{low}	0.087 (0.078)	−0.326 (0.134)
CV _{medium}	0.981 (0.178)	−1.014 (0.168)
CV _{high}	1.735 (0.439)	−3.083 (0.485)
<i>Controls</i>		
Economic Development	0.027 (0.011)	−0.101 (0.011)
Economic Development ²	−0.0003 (0.0001)	0.001 (0.0003)
Democratic Development	0.023 (0.004)	−0.063 (0.008)
Democratic Development ²	−0.004 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Rule of Law	0.271 (0.020)	−0.254 (0.045)
Majoritarian Electoral System	−0.053 (0.047)	0.356 (0.097)
Presidential	−0.079 (0.057)	0.052 (0.118)
Federalism	0.767 (0.439)	0.273 (0.134)
Latin American	−1.307 (0.463)	1.459 (0.192)
Time Trends	✓	✓
Constant	4.790 (0.196)	5.963 (0.127)
Country-Years	4,129	1,240
Countries	140	140
χ^2	3,688.901	2,522.603
Prob > χ^2	<0.001	<0.001

Note: Results are from multilevel linear regressions. Standard errors are in parentheses. The level of programmatism is a scale provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more programmatism. The level of vote buying is a scale also provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more widespread vote buying.

Reestimations of Models 1 and 2 that combine the CV_{med} and CV_{high} categories—in line with the trichotomous measures of compulsory voting used in some extant studies (e.g., Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita 2014; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Miller 2017)—are shown in Section 3 of the supporting information. The trend of

FIGURE 1 Compulsory Voting, Predicted Programmatism, and Predicted Vote Buying across Countries

Note: Predicted probabilities are calculated from multilevel linear regressions reported in Models 1 and 2 of Table 1. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. The level of programmatism is a scale provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more programmatism. The level of vote buying is a scale also provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more widespread vote buying.

stronger compulsory voting having a larger association with the outcomes remains, and the confidence intervals on the predictions associated with the highest category of compulsory voting shrink considerably. Additional analyses depicted in Section 3 of the supporting information show that reclassifying Australia's compulsory voting law from the CV_{med} to the CV_{high} category does not substantively alter the results of Models 1 and 2. I also conduct further analyses using measures of parties' vote-seeking strategies gathered from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP; Kitschelt 2013; Kitschelt and Freeze 2011). As detailed in Section 4 of the supporting information, analyses of the DALP data corroborate the findings presented here.

Study 2: The Effect of Compulsory Voting on Programmatic Vote Seeking in Thailand

When attempting to ascertain the causal effect of compulsory voting on an outcome, the relevant counterfactual is the value of that outcome in the absence of compulsory voting. Comparing countries with and without compulsory voting, as in Study 1, may not provide a credible counterfactual, as countries differ on many unobserv-

able characteristics potentially related to both compulsory voting and the outcome of interest. Further, it is possible that compulsory voting is itself a result of strategic party behavior (Helmke and Meguid 2008).

To address such endogeneity concerns, I use a synthetic control design (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010, 2015; Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003). Synthetic control imputes a missing counterfactual by creating an artificial comparison unit constructed from a weighted average of "donor units." The weights are chosen so that the comparison unit closely resembles the "treated" unit under study.

Thailand's switch from voluntary to compulsory voting in 1997⁹ provides an opportunity to estimate the effect of compulsory voting on party behavior.¹⁰ I focus on programmatic vote seeking, which is captured with the

⁹Thailand's shift to compulsory voting came along with a new constitution, which also brought about, among other things, a new electoral system. I discuss the constitutional reform in detail in Section 6 of the supporting information, in which I also conduct analyses of other countries that experienced similar electoral changes absent compulsory voting and find no evidence that they produced shifts in programmatism.

¹⁰Aside from Chile and Kazakhstan, Thailand is the only country in the sample that switched to or from a countrywide, routinely enforced compulsory voting law. Other countries in the sample, such as Fiji and Italy, also experienced changes to or from compulsory voting, but did not enforce the regulation. Chile's switch to voluntary voting was first implemented in 2012, giving too few

Party Linkages scale employed in Study 1. Unlike vote buying, V-Dem assesses party linkages annually across countries, making the measure amenable to a synthetic control design. In Section 5 of the supporting information, I provide more details on the compulsory rule in Thailand, which was moderately enforced and came with meaningful penalties.

I construct a synthetic version of Thailand that most closely matches its level and trend in parties' programmatic vote-seeking tactics¹¹ in the period up until the shift to compulsory voting. I keep with the range of years observed for Thailand in Study 1, 1973–2013, and I restrict the donor pool to countries that did not use compulsory voting during this period. The pool includes 104 countries, which are listed, along with their relative contributions to Synthetic Thailand, in Section 7 of the supporting information.

Figure 2 plots the trajectory of party programmatism in Thailand and Synthetic Thailand, and Figure 3 plots the gap in programmatism between the two units. Although the trends in programmatism are similar before the intervention, they diverge sharply in the posttreatment period. The estimate of the treatment effect of compulsory voting is the difference in programmatism between Thailand and Synthetic Thailand after compulsory voting was introduced. In the postintervention period, the level of programmatism averages 3.81 in Synthetic Thailand, and in real Thailand it averages 6.01. Thus, the mean level of programmatism is 2.20 units—or nearly 60%—higher in Thailand than in its synthetic counterpart after compulsory voting.

To initially assess the statistical significance of this finding, I follow common practice (cf. Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010; Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003; Bechtel, Hangartner, and Schmid, 2018; Fowler 2013; Heersink, Peterson, and Jenkins 2017) and use placebo tests to determine how often a result of this magnitude would have come about if I chose as my treated unit a ran-

dom country instead of Thailand. That is, I apply the synthetic control method to each country in the donor pool, none of which actually implemented compulsory voting during the period under study. I then remove countries whose pretreatment synthetic unit fit was poor as compared to Thailand's (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010, 502–3).¹² If effect sizes in the placebo analyses are of a magnitude similar to that found for Thailand, this would call into question the significance of the finding for Thailand. If the gap estimated for Thailand is unusually large, this would suggest a significant effect of the introduction of compulsory voting.

Figure 4 shows the results of the placebo analyses. As compared to the other countries, Thailand's gap in programmatism relative to its synthetic unit is abnormally large. Indeed, the gap size for Thailand is a clear outlier; the increase in programmatism after 1997 in Thailand exceeds what would be expected by chance alone. Of course, this pre-post analysis of a single country does not allow me to ascertain whether the strength of compulsory voting laws matters for programmatism. However, the results from the synthetic control analyses do support Hypothesis 1's expectation that compulsory voting increases the extent to which parties are programmatic.

To further assess the statistical significance of the post-intervention jump in programmatism in Thailand, I estimated the effect of its shift to compulsory voting on the level of programmatism using difference-in-differences (DiD). The estimated causal effect from the DiD model is 1.87 units—similar to the effect of 2.20 units estimated using the synthetic control model—and it is much larger than its associated standard error of 0.13. Further details of the DiD analysis are provided in Section 8 of the supporting information.

Figure 4 shows the results of the placebo analyses. As compared to the other countries, Thailand's gap in programmatism relative to its synthetic unit is abnormally large. Indeed, the gap size for Thailand is a clear outlier; the increase in programmatism after 1997 in Thailand exceeds what would be expected by chance alone. Of course, this pre-post analysis of a single country does not allow me to ascertain whether the strength of compulsory voting laws matters for programmatism. However, the results from the synthetic control analyses do support Hypothesis 1's expectation that compulsory voting increases the extent to which parties are programmatic.

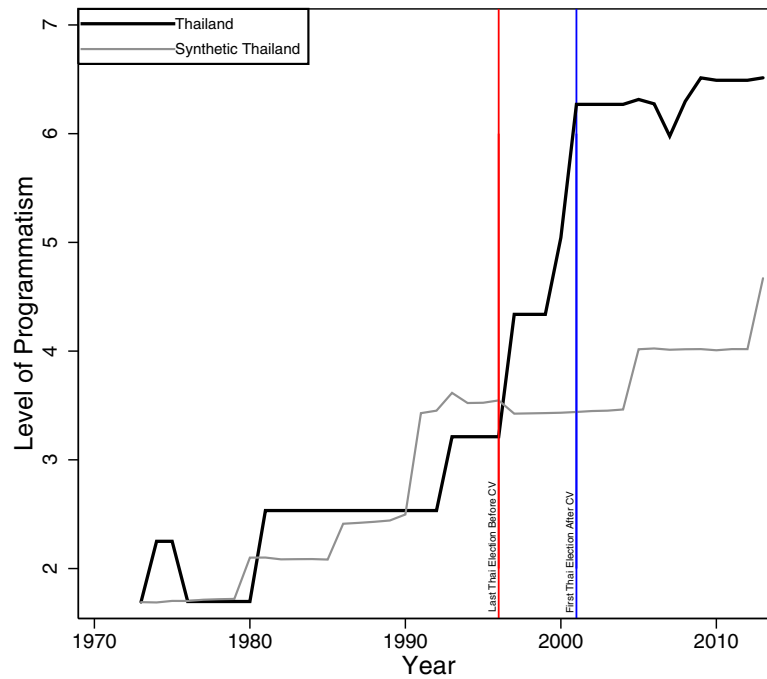
Study 3: The Effect of Compulsory Voting on Vote Buying in Argentina

Hypothesis 2 predicts that compulsory voting has a downward effect on three different types of vote buying: negative vote buying, turnout buying, and positive vote buying. While Study 1 provides evidence that vote buying overall is less prevalent where turnout is mandatory, it

¹¹As is common (e.g., Fowler 2013; Heersink, Peterson, and Jenkins 2017), results are substantively insensitive to the incorporation of other variables into the weighting algorithm.

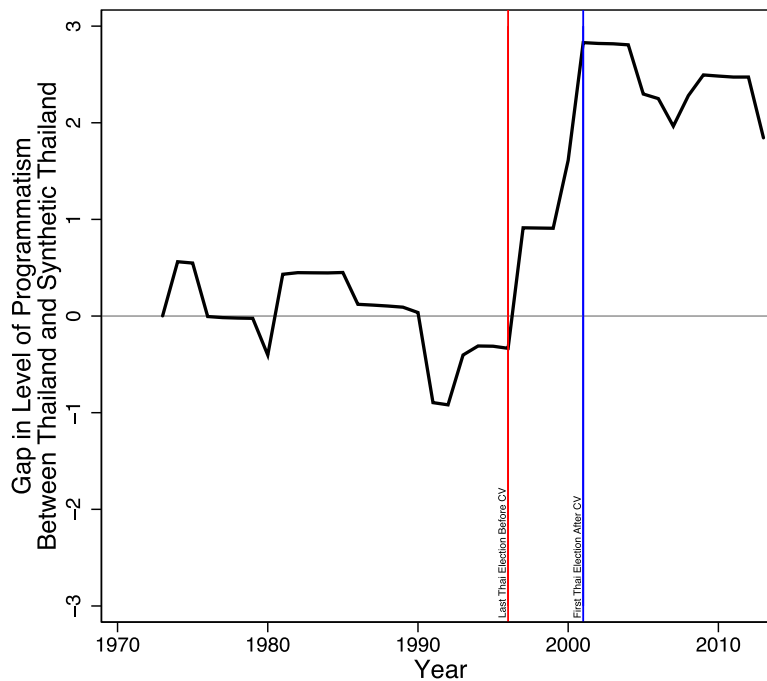
¹²Taking a conservative approach (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010, 502–503), I eliminate countries that have a pre-intervention (1972–96) mean squared prediction error (MSPE) of more than double the size of Thailand's. The MSPE is the average of the squared discrepancies between the level of programmatism in the treated unit and in its synthetic counterpart during the pre-intervention period.

FIGURE 2 Trends in Programmatism, Thailand vs. Synthetic Thailand



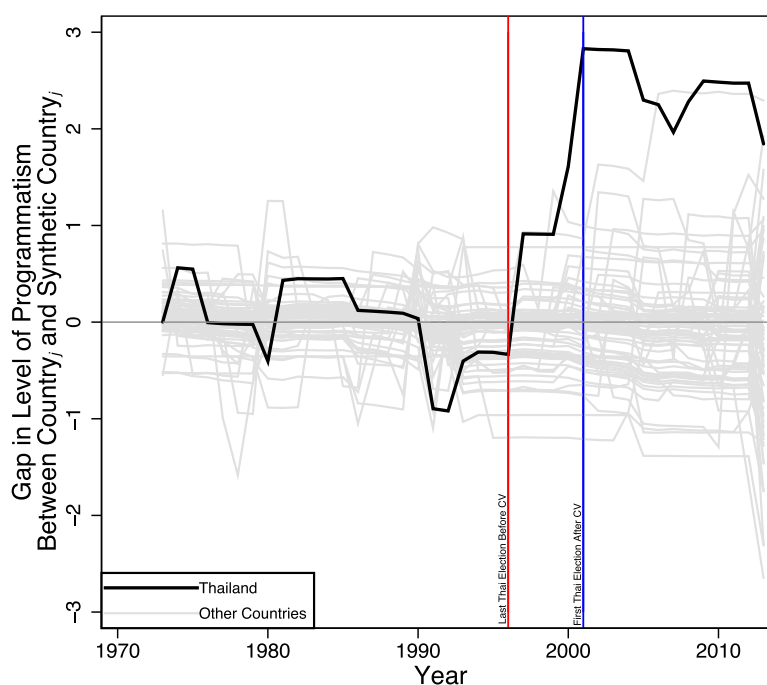
Note: The level of programmatism is a scale provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more programmatism.

FIGURE 3 Programmatism Gap between Thailand and Synthetic Thailand



Note: The level of programmatism is a scale provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more programmatism.

FIGURE 4 Programmatism Gaps for Thailand and Placebo Countries



Note: The lighter lines represent countries from the donor pool. The darker line represents Thailand. The level of programmatism is a scale provided by the Varieties of Democracy project, with higher values indicating more programmatism.

does not differentiate the types of vote buying. To further investigate the relationship between compulsory voting and each variety of vote buying, I conduct a list experiment that considers each separately, and I implement it in conjunction with a natural experiment in Argentina.

Argentina provides a good setting in which to estimate the effect of compulsory voting on vote buying. First, vote buying is prevalent (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Carlin and Moseley 2015; Weitz-Shapiro 2014). Second, turnout is mandatory by law, but only for those aged 18–69; for individuals aged 16–17 and over 70, turnout is optional. As individuals around the ages of 18 and 70 are quasi-randomly assigned to compulsory and voluntary voting rules, the Argentinian compulsory voting system sets up a natural experiment. In Section 5 of the supporting information, I provide more details on the compulsory voting rule in Argentina.

Here, I leverage the cutoff age of 18. Although individuals in Argentina also become eligible to legally purchase alcohol and tobacco at 18, there is little reason to believe such eligibilities should affect experiences with vote buying. Further, school grade levels are determined by a pupil's age at the beginning of the school year, which is in March. Thus, one's age at the time of elections, which

are normally held in October, does not define his or her educational cohort. Any observed differences among individuals slightly above and below age 18 are thus unlikely to be confounded by a “compound treatment” (see Eggers et al., 2018). As with the pre–post analysis of Thailand in Study 2, this approach cannot assess the extent to which variation in sanction severity and enforcement matters. However, due to quasi-random assignment to compulsory and voluntary voting conditions, any average differences in experiences with vote buying among individuals just below and above age 18 can be plausibly attributed to compulsory voting.

I use a list experiment to unobtrusively measure experiences with the different types of vote buying, which may go underreported if asked about directly (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012). The logic of the list experiment is as follows: First, the sample of respondents is split randomly into control and treatment groups. Each group is asked the same question and given the same list of response options. For those in the treatment group(s), there is an additional response option that includes a sensitive item. Respondents are not asked to reveal which items they select; they need only to indicate how many they (dis)agree with (if asking about attitudes)

or experienced (if asking about behaviors).¹³ An estimate of the proportion of respondents reporting an attitude or a behavior consistent with the sensitive items can be deduced by calculating the difference in the mean number of items selected by individuals in the control and treatment groups (Blair and Imai 2012).¹⁴

I fielded an original list experiment in Argentina in the 10 weeks following its October 2017 legislative elections.¹⁵ I conducted the experiment within a survey that I administered online using Qualtrics. To obtain respondents, I hired Netquest Corporation to recruit individuals from its proprietary list of Argentinian panelists.¹⁶ Within the survey, each respondent saw the following prompt:

Below is a list that mentions various activities. Please indicate whether they were carried out by political alliances or parties during the campaign for the legislative elections held in October. Please do not indicate which ones, only HOW MANY.

Individuals were then randomly assigned to the control and treatment groups. For those in the control group, the following items were presented:

- They put up campaign posters or signs in your neighborhood.
- They visited your home.
- They placed campaign advertisements on television or radio.
- They sent a celebrity to visit your home.

There was one treatment group for each type of vote buying. For each, one of the following additional items was presented:

- They offered you a gift or a favor to abstain from voting. (negative vote-buying treatment)
- They offered you a gift or a favor to vote on election day. (turnout-buying treatment)
- They offered you a gift or a favor to change your vote choice. (positive vote-buying treatment)

Imai (2011) develops a technique with which one can predict responses to sensitive items with individual-specific characteristics.¹⁷ I use Malesky, Gueorguiev, and Jensen's (2015) implementation of Imai's nonlinear least squares two-step estimator to determine whether the likelihood of being approached with a vote-buying offer—negative, turnout, or positive—varies as a function of the requirement to participate in elections. I measure the requirement to vote with a variable coded 1 for those who were aged 0 to 365 days above age 18 years on the day of the election and 0 for those who were 1 to 365 days below age 18.¹⁸ In Section 10 of the supporting information, I show that results are similar when I reduce or expand this bandwidth. I control for gender, as a check for covariate balance revealed the proportion of females in the 18-year-old group significantly exceeds that of the 17-year-old group.

Results, which are displayed in the middle row of Figure 5, partially support Hypothesis 2's expectation that compulsory voting decreases each type of vote buying. The predicted probability of receiving a negative vote-buying offer is about 29 percentage points lower among those who are compelled to vote, but this estimate is statistically uncertain. For turnout buying, there is no meaningful difference among those subject to compulsory and voluntary voting. Positive vote buying, though, has a clearly negative relationship with compulsory

¹³To preserve anonymity, it is important that the response options include both a very "easy" item that all respondents will likely select and a very "difficult" item that none will likely select.

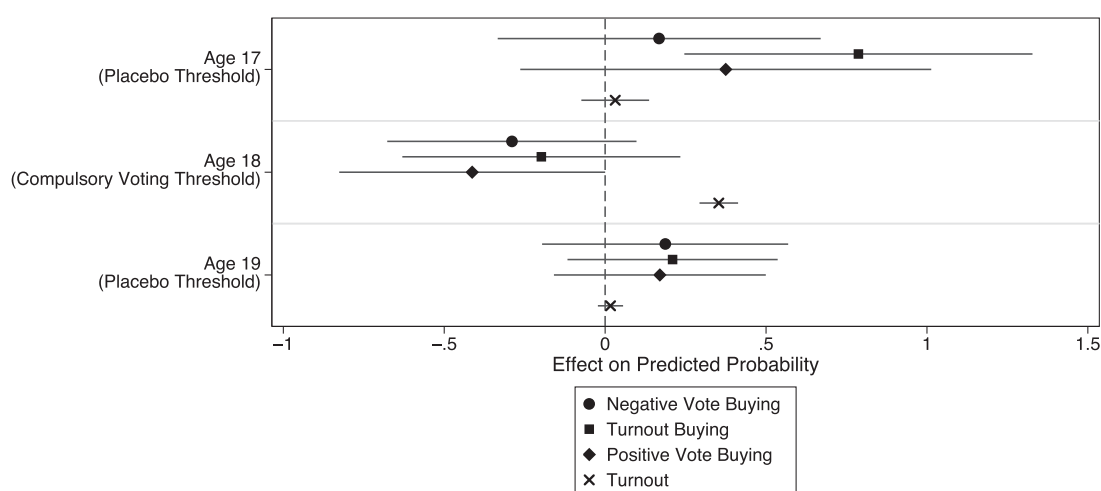
¹⁴This requires random assignment and two assumptions: First, individuals are truthful with respect to the sensitive item. Second, the inclusion of the sensitive item in a treatment group does not affect how individuals respond to the control items. In Section 9 of the supporting information, I examine covariate balance across the control and treatment groups to investigate the quality of the randomization process. Results shown there suggest that the mean values of several covariates do not meaningfully differ across groups.

¹⁵The University of Georgia's institutional review board approved this study in Protocol ID#STUDY00002811.

¹⁶I required that Netquest restrict their invitations to individuals aged 16–19. Members of Netquest panels receive points for completing surveys, which can be redeemed for gifts such as movie tickets and mobile electronic devices. A total of 1,231 respondents aged 16–19 at the time of the elections completed the survey and successfully answered an attention check question.

¹⁷With the Imai (2011) approach, the number of nonsensitive items selected among individuals in the control group is regressed on covariates. Next, estimated coefficients are used to predict values for those in a given treatment group, which are then subtracted from the total number of items actually selected. This difference gives the estimated propensity to select the sensitive item for each individual, which can be used to estimate the relationship between the likelihood of engaging in the sensitive behavior and the covariates for those in the treatment groups. Difference-in-means estimates calculated at different values of a covariate can also be obtained by subsetting the data. However, this cannot easily account for multiple variables at once or for continuously measured variables. Another approach involves interacting treatment status with the covariates of interest, but this is less efficient, less generalizable, and more bias prone than the Imai estimator.

¹⁸This is similar to a regression discontinuity (RD) design, in that I compare outcomes among observations just below and above an exogenous threshold. I do not use RD because it estimates the causal effect at the threshold, around which I have very few observations: There are only 31 individuals in the treatment groups who turned 18 within 1 month before or after the election (six in the negative vote-buying treatment, eight in the turnout-buying treatment, and 17 in the positive vote-buying treatment).

FIGURE 5 Compulsory Voting and Vote Buying in Argentina

Note: The predictor variables identified on the vertical axis are dummies coded 1 for individuals within 365 days above the listed age, and 0 for those within 365 days below that age. Each type of vote buying is measured as the estimated probability of a party offering to purchase one's abstention (negative vote buying), participation (turnout buying), or preference (positive vote buying), as calculated via the two-step procedure described in the text. Turnout is one's reported participation, coded 1 for valid, blank, and spoiled votes, and 0 for abstention. Point estimates represent the difference in the predicted value of the outcome variable for those above the thresholds as compared to those below, adjusted for differences in gender ratios on either side of the thresholds. Horizontal lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. The number of observations in the negative vote-buying analyses are as follows: age 17 threshold, 71; age 18 threshold, 130; age 19 threshold, 156. The number of observations in the turnout-buying analyses are as follows: age 17 threshold, 61; age 18 threshold, 134; age 19 threshold, 165. The number of observations in the positive vote-buying analyses are as follows: age 17 threshold, 62; age 18 threshold, 120; age 19 threshold, 154. The number of observations in the turnout analyses are as follows: age 17 threshold, 373; age 18 threshold, 687; age 19 threshold, 830. Data are from an original survey conducted after Argentina's October 2017 legislative elections.

voting—the predicted probability of receiving a positive vote-buying offer is about 41 percentage points lower among those subject to mandatory voting. This is surprising in light of theoretical work that expects a positive link between compulsory voting and positive vote buying (e.g., Gans-Morse, Mazuza, and Nichter 2014), but it is supportive of the idea that parties expect compelled electorates to be relatively politically sophisticated and thus unreceptive to positive vote-buying offers. Figure 5 also shows that self-reported electoral participation is, unsurprisingly, more likely among those compelled to go to the polls; the predicted turnout rate is about 35 percentage points higher among those subject to compulsory voting.

The top and bottom rows of Figure 5 represent placebo tests, in which I assigned the age threshold to be 1 year below or above the true compulsory voting cutoff of 18. The individuals included in these analyses are thus uniformly subject to voluntary and compulsory voting, respectively. There is little difference in exposure to vote buying between those on either side of the placebo thresholds, although those within 365 days above age 17 are more likely to receive a turnout-buying offer. Further,

as is evident in the figure, reported voter turnout is balanced above and below the placebo thresholds.

Discussion and Conclusion

To date, most inquiries into the relationship between electoral structure and party behavior focus on electoral systems. This article updates the understanding of this relationship, adding a theoretical and empirical exposition of the role compulsory voting plays in shaping how parties seek votes. On the theoretical side, the idea is straightforward: Parties shift their vote-seeking strategies toward an emphasis on policy and ideology in response to compulsory voting, as they perceive it will make the electorate more receptive to such programmatic appeals. This also implies a balancing away from clientelistic tactics, such as vote buying. On the empirical side, Study 1 shows that, across countries, parties behave more programmatically and vote buying is less common under compulsory voting; Study 2 shows that parties in Thailand behaved more programmatically as a result of the country's adoption of

compulsory voting; and Study 3 shows that compulsory voting leads parties to rely less on vote-buying tactics in Argentina.

These findings relate to or inform several academic and practical debates over compulsory voting and its consequences. First, the literature is ambiguous about the relationship between compulsory voting and political sophistication in the electorate. One body of research argues that compulsory voting merely brings the politically unsophisticated to the polls; another maintains that it generates political engagement and knowledge. This article shows that parties do more to emphasize their issue stances and ideological positions where voting is compulsory, and they rely less on clientelistic tactics. Thus, while I do not examine voter sophistication directly, the uncovered patterns suggest that parties at least behave as if compulsory voting enhances political engagement and knowledge.

This article's findings also speak to deliberations over compulsory voting's effects on electoral integrity. Proponents of compulsory voting often argue that it is linked to cleaner elections. In recent debates in Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico, for example, political leaders argued that mandatory voting reduces the relative impact of purchased votes on electoral outcomes. More broadly, elections are more likely to meet international standards for integrity where programmatism features over clientelistic strategies (e.g., Norris 2015, chap. 6). This article's findings of a link from compulsory voting to programmatic vote seeking, taken one step further, imply that compulsory voting enhances overall electoral integrity. Still, across countries, Birch (2009, 107–8) finds no evidence of this. Future studies of compulsory voting and electoral integrity will do well to leverage intra-country or intertemporal variation in the requirement to vote.

Even if compulsory voting has desirable effects, its moral justifiability remains a subject of dispute (cf. Brennan and Hill 2014). There are also potential drawbacks: Compulsory voting may trigger antidemocratic sentiment among those who would prefer to abstain (Singh, forthcoming-a), and voters' choices and stated preferences may be less correspondent where voting is mandatory (e.g., Dassonneville et al., forthcoming; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Miller 2017; Selb and Lachat 2009; Singh 2016). This article shows that compulsory voting induces parties to balance toward programmatism. This informs debates, both academic and practical, over the consequences and value of compulsory voting. Whether or not compulsory voting is, overall, a justifiable and worthwhile electoral policy is a question I leave to such deliberations.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Table A1: Countries with Compulsory Voting Included in the V-Dem Sample and the Classification of Compulsory Voting Rules

Table A2: Countries with Compulsory Voting Included in the DALP Sample and the Classification of Compulsory Voting Rules

Figure A1: Compulsory Voting, Predicted Programmatism, and Predicted Vote Buying Across Countries: Three Category Classification of Compulsory Voting

Figure A2: Compulsory Voting, Predicted Programmatism, and Predicted Vote Buying Across Countries, Alternate Classification of Australia's Compulsory Voting Rule

Table A3: Compulsory Voting, Policy Emphasis, and Programmatism Across Political Parties

Figure A3: Compulsory Voting, Predicted Policy Emphasis, and Predicted Programmatism Across Political Parties

Figure A4: Programmatism Gaps for Treated and Placebo Countries

Table A4: Synthetic Control Donor Countries and Weights

Table A5: Compulsory Voting and Programmatism Across Countries, Difference-in-Differences Model

Figure A5: Covariate Balance Across Groups in the List Experiment

Figure A6: Compulsory Voting and Vote Buying in Argentina, Varying Bandwidths