

Small Parties in Taiwan's 2016 National Elections: A Limited Breakthrough?

Dafydd Fell*

ABSTRACT

Taiwan's 2016 elections featured intense competition between its smaller political parties. A record 18 parties contested the party list vote. This study examines how to explain the impact of these small parties in this election. Thus it is interested not only in those small parties that did make a breakthrough but also why others, despite running well organized and funded campaigns, were unable to enter parliament. The paper applied a framework proposed by Lucardie to explain the impact of small parties in Taiwan's 2016 elections. In other words, I examined the small parties' political project, resources and political opportunity structure to understand their electoral fortunes.

Keywords: Small parties, new parties, Taiwan, party politics

On 16 January 2016 Taiwan held combined presidential and parliamentary elections for the second time. Four years earlier the experiment of combining the two elections clearly reduced campaign costs but also meant that the presidential election completely overshadowed the 2012 parliamentary contest.¹ In contrast, in 2016 even after the Kuomintang (KMT) changed presidential candidates, the party was unable to narrow the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Tsai Ing-wen's commanding lead in the polls. This meant that the media gave much greater attention to the parliamentary election. The 2016 parliamentary election campaign was historic as it saw the most serious attempt by alternative parties that are not splinters from the two mainstream parties to make a parliamentary breakthrough since 1991. Moreover, one such alternative party, the New Power Party (NPP) won five seats and become Taiwan's third largest party.

Following the lifting of martial law and legalization of opposition party formation in the late 1980s a large number of parties were established. Some of these new parties did not centre their appeals on national identity but

* Dafydd Fell is the Reader in Comparative Politics with special reference to Taiwan at the Department of Politics and International Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He is also the Director of the SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies and the Editor of the Routledge Research on Taiwan book series. His email address is df2@soas.ac.uk

1 For a discussion of the 2012 elections see Gunter Schubert, "No Winds of Change: Taiwan's 2012 National Elections and the Post-Election Fallout," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 41, no. 3 (2012): 143-161.

instead could be categorised as leftist parties.² However, the party system initially was dominated by the ruling KMT and the main opposition party, the DPP. The party scene during the January 2016 national elections showed an interesting parallel to 1991, when Taiwan held what could arguably be called its first democratic national election. That election featured an alternative political party, the Chinese Social Democratic Party (CSDP) nominating over 50 candidates. The attempt was ultimately unsuccessful and Taiwan's party system has remained dominated by the two mainstream parties.³

Although the odds were stacked against such alternative parties, they had a historic window of opportunity to make a breakthrough in 2016 and thus to bring greater diversity to Taiwan's party system. The challenge of smaller parties in 2016 can be seen in a number of features of this campaign. Firstly, a record eighteen parties contested the proportional party list section of the parliamentary election. Secondly, the ranks of relevant smaller parties were no longer limited to parties that had split away from the two mainstream parties. Moreover, unlike in earlier elections, in 2016 a number of these alternative parties mounted serious and well funded campaigns. Previously under the current electoral system small parties had concentrated their efforts on the party list contest. In contrast, this time some of the smaller parties were able to run relevant campaigns in single member districts and even won three such seats.

In this study we consider how we can best explain the impact of these small parties in the 2016 election. We are thus interested not only in those small parties that did make a breakthrough but also why others, despite running well organized and funded campaigns, were unable to enter parliament.

I. SMALL PARTIES, NEW PARTIES OR NICHE PARTIES?

An initial challenge when examining non-mainstream parties is what is the most appropriate label to use? Hug defines new parties as "a genuinely new organization that appoints, for the first time, candidates at a general election to the system's representative assembly."⁴ Zons suggests that within the new party category it is analytically important to distinguish between two sub-types, what he calls "genuinely new parties and splits from existing parties."⁵ There are two problems with using the term new parties in the Taiwan context. The first is that many of the challenger parties are no longer new. For example, the Green Party Taiwan (GPT) has now been contesting elections for two decades. Another problem is that one of the most significant smaller parties over the last two decades is called the New Party (NP), thus there is much room for confusion. An alternative in the literature is the term niche parties. These are defined by Tromborg as "political parties that reject the traditional class-based orientation of politics, appeal to electorate groups that cross-cut the traditional left-right line of political division, and limit their

² Christian Schafferer, *The Power of the Ballot Box: Political Development and Election Campaigning in Taiwan* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); John F. Copper, "The Role of Minor Political Parties in Taiwan," *World Affairs* 155, no. 3 (1993): 95-110.

³ Ching-hsin, Yu, "The Evolving Party System of Taiwan, 1995-2004," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40, no. 1-2 (2005): 105-29.

⁴ Simon Hug, *Altering Party Systems: Strategic Behavior and the Emergence of New Political Parties in Western Democracies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 14.

⁵ Gregor Zons, "The Influence of Programmatic Diversity on the formation of new political parties," *Party Politics* 21, no6, (2015): 919-929, 919.

issue appeals to a few issues.”⁶ This term also has limitations in the Taiwanese context. Firstly, the left-right distinction has not been useful in Taiwan due to the lack of a relevant social democratic party. Although some of the parties contesting the 2016 elections did fulfil the second condition in Tromborg’s definition, numerous other challenger parties actually offered quite broad issue appeals. Instead in this paper we follow the example of Spoon in using the term small parties.⁷ This allows us to bring into the analysis all the relevant non mainstream parties.

Taiwan’s relevant smaller parties have invariably been splinters from the two mainstream parties, such as the NP that was created by KMT defectors in 1993.⁸ These splinter parties have at times won significant vote and seat shares such as the mid-late mid 1990s and between 2001 and 2005. Such parties largely relied on politicians defecting from the mainstream parties but also on advocating the core ideological appeals of the mainstream parties. In other words, Taiwan’s splinter parties neatly fit what Lucardie terms a *purifier party* that “clings to an existing ideology, which it feels is diluted or betrayed by one (or more) of the established parties. Quite often, the founders of this type of new party were dissident members of an established party which revised its traditional ideology.”⁹ Not only was the NP made up initially solely of defectors from the KMT but ideologically its core appeal was that it was the true protector of the KMT’s values. In contrast, the GPT has advocated a starkly different ideology from the mainstream parties and almost all its candidates have been political novices without electoral experience or mainstream partisan ties. Thus the GPT party represents what Lucardie terms as a *prophetic party* stressing a new ideology and issues that are perceived as being ignored or neglected by the mainstream parties.¹⁰ Overall Taiwan’s prophetic parties have not been competitive and the majority have contested a single election, and then essentially disappeared from the election scene.

II. EXPLAINING SMALL PARTY IMPACT

A key debate within the small parties literature is how best to explain their success or failure in electoral politics. One such approach is to focus on institutional factors, particularly, the electoral system. Such studies build on Duverger’s classic arguments that a single member district system favours a two party system, while proportional representation favours a multi-party system.¹¹ Since Taiwan adopted a predominantly single member district electo-

6 Mathias Wessel Tromborg, “Space jam: Are niche parties strategic or looney?” *Electoral Studies* 40 (2015):189-199, 190; James Adams et al., “Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and the Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties’ Policy Shifts, 1976-1998,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 513-29.

7 Jae-Jae Spoon, *Political Survival of Small Parties in West Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

8 For a discussion of Taiwan’s smaller parties see Dafydd Fell “Success and Failure of New Parties in Taiwanese Elections.” *China: An International Journal*, 3 no.2, (2005): 212-239; Dafydd Fell “Measuring and Explaining the Electoral Fortunes of Small Parties in Taiwan’s Party Politics.” *Issues and Studies. An International Quarterly on China, Taiwan, and East Asian Affairs* 50, no.1, (2014): 153-188.

9 Paul Lucardie, “Prophets, Purifiers and Prolocuters: Towards a Theory on the Emergence of New Parties,” *Party Politics* 6, no.2 (2000): 176-177.

10 Lucardie, 177. For a discussion of the GPT see Dafydd Fell and Peng Yen-wen (2016), “The Electoral Fortunes of Taiwan’s Green Party: 1996-2012,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 17 (1), 63-83.

11 For instance, see Ferdinand Müller-Rommel ed, *New Politics in Western Europe: The Rise and Success of Green Parties and Alternative Lists* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989).

ral system in 2005, this institutional approach would predict a squeezing of space for smaller parties. A second sociological approach links small party success to the salience of their core issues. Studies have attempted to link the salience of immigration issues or high levels of unemployment with the rise of radical right parties and between higher levels of post-materialism and the strength of ecological parties.¹² A further strand in the literature focused on the role of mainstream parties. For instance, Hug considers the interplay between established parties and new parties in the context of the emergence of new salient issues.¹³ Zons has built in Hug's earlier work by proposing that where existing parties present voters with a lower level of programmatic diversity then there will be a higher probability of new party formation.¹⁴ Meguid on the other hand focuses on the way that mainstream parties deal with the core issue appeal of niche parties. She argues that where mainstream parties take adversarial strategies towards niche party issues, the salience of the issue will rise and this should benefit the niche party's issue ownership and electoral performance. In contrast, niche party support will decrease where mainstream parties take either dismissive or accommodative strategies towards the niche partycore issue.¹⁵

In this paper we apply a comprehensive framework for explaining small party success proposed by Lucardie. This incorporates elements of a number of the approaches discussed above. Lucardie explains the impact of small parties with reference to their political project, resources and the political opportunity structure.¹⁶ In other words, we can understand the prospects for small parties in the party system by examining: (1) whether small parties offer a *political project* that addresses issues perceived as important by a significant section of the electorate, (2) whether small parties can gain sufficient human, financial and organizational resources to compete on the electoral stage, and (3) whether the overall political environment or opportunity structure is favourable to small party development. Like Spoon, we argue that small parties' fates are not entirely determined by the actions of the mainstream parties.¹⁷ Thus if they are able to offer an attractive political project, defined as a set of policy and ideological appeals, they have a greater chance of attracting electoral support. The emphasis on resources is particularly important in Taiwan as campaigning is highly expensive. Smaller parties must compete against the well funded large parties, the KMT and DPP. In fact the KMT was until recently described as the richest party in the world.¹⁸ Lastly, even if parties have an attractive set of policies and ample resources; whether they can have an electoral impact will depend heavily on the political opportunity structure. This thus would include institutional and sociological vari-

12 On radical right parties see Matt Golder, "Explaining Variation in the Electoral Success of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, (2003): 432-466. On the post materialist effect see Iannis Konstantinidis, "The impact of value orientations on election outcomes," *Comparative European Politics* 9, no. 1, (2011): 38-51.

13 Hug, *Altering Party Systems*.

14 Zons, "The Influence of Programmatic Diversity on the formation of new political parties."

15 Bonnie Meguid, *Party competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral fortunes in West-ern Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

16 Lucardie, "Prophets, Purifiers and Prolocuters," 175.

17 Spoon, *Political Survival of Small Parties in West Europe*.

18 Xu, Dianqing, "The KMT Party's Enterprises in Taiwan," *Modern Asian Studies*, 31 (2) (1997), 399-413.

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ables discussed earlier, but also important would be variables such as changes in the popularity of existing parties and the media structure.

III. THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL PARTIES IN TAIWAN

As recently as just five years ago a research paper on Taiwan's smaller parties could have been deemed a waste of time. Splinter parties had reached their peak in the first years of the DPP era (2000-2008). However, the introduction of the predominantly single member district electoral system and the revival of the KMT under Ma Ying-jeou contributed to a long-term period of small party decline after 2005. Not only did the People First Party (PFP) and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) disappear from parliament in 2008, all the relevant small parties suffered serious seat losses in local council elections between 2005 and 2010. November 2010 thus represents the nadir for small parties in Taiwan. In addition to declining electoral support a key factor undermining the smaller parties was large scale defection of politicians into the large parties the KMT and DPP, between 2006 and 2010.¹⁹

The prospects for smaller parties became rosier with the 2012 elections. That year the PFP and TSU returned to parliament with three seats each. Although it did not win seats the GPT won 1.7 percent of the party list, coming fifth ahead of the resource rich NP and showing the potential for a non-splinter alternative party to enter parliament. The small party revival continued into the November 2014 local elections. The two main splinter parties, the PFP and TSU, doubled their councillor numbers up to 9 each. From the perspective of diversity, this was the first time that multiple alternative parties had nominated in double figures, with the GPT, Tree Party and People's Democratic Front all nominating extensively. Moreover, what was even more significant was that many of these alternative party politicians were competitive at the local level for the first time, with the GPT winning two seats.

A critical question when examining smaller parties is which parties to include in the analysis. This is a hotly debated issue in the small party literature. Janda suggests any legal party gaining over 5 percent in a parliamentary election,²⁰ while Rochon's threshold is any party that has held at least one parliamentary seat.²¹ At the other end of the spectrum Harmel and Robertson argue against using these limited thresholds and prefer any registered party.²² To examine all registered parties or even all eighteen parties contesting the party list would leave little space for in-depth analysis. Past experience from 2008 and 2012 shows also that the majority of non mainstream parties registering national party lists have not been relevant parties. However, overly high thresholds on electoral performance would disqualify a number of potentially relevant smaller parties. Therefore in this study we followed the example of Fell in examining those parties that gained at least 1 percent of the national vote in parliamentary elections.²³ Therefore we bring the following parties into our analysis: (1) Splinter or purifier parties examined are the PFP, TSU, NP, the newly formed Republic Party (MKT) and

19 Dafydd Fell, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Patterns of Party Switching in Multiparty Taiwan," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14, no.1, (2014): 31-52.

20 Kenneth Janda, *Political Parties: A Cross National Survey* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

21 Thomas Rochon, "Mobilizers versus Challengers: Towards a Theory of New Party Success," *International Political Science Review* 6, no. 4 (1985): 419-439.

22 Robert Harmel and John Robertson, "Formation and Success of New Parties," *International Political Science Review* 6, no.4, (1985): 501-523, 508.

23 Fell, "Success and Failure of New Parties in Taiwanese Elections."

the Chinese Unification Promotion Party (CUPP), (2) Alternative or prophetic parties examined are the Green Party Taiwan Social Democratic Party Alliance (GPT/SDP), the New Power Party (NPP) and the Faith and Hope Alliance (FHA). The one party in this list that did not achieve 1 percent was the CUPP, however, we argue it deserves attention, as it was one of the highest spenders on campaign advertising in the election.²⁴

Before starting the analysis of the electoral performance by these smaller parties, we will briefly introduce those actors that warrant attention. Among the splinter parties, the NP is the oldest. It was formed in 1993 by defectors from the KMT and reached its peak in the mid 1990s, winning 12-14 percent of national seats and votes. However, the party began a long-term process of decline from 1998, culminating in its virtual elimination from the Legislative Yuan in 2001. Originally in 2016 the NP had only planned to nominate in two districts and only decided to nominate a party list late in the campaign. The PFP was established in 2000 by James Soong after his first presidential campaign, mainly recruiting politicians from the KMT and the NP. It ranks as the most successful of the splinter parties, winning approximately 15 to 20 percent of votes and seats in 2001 and 2004. At its peak in 2001-2 the PFP threatened to replace the KMT as the second largest party. It began its clear decline in 2005, and by 2010 it had almost lost all its elected politicians. It was able to return to parliament in 2012, winning three seats. In 2016 the PFP nominated 8 district candidates and also contested the party list. The PFP and NP tended to cooperate with the KMT and thus are often categorized broadly as belonging to the Pan Blue camp.

The TSU was established in 2001, recruiting politicians from both the KMT and DPP. However, since it was allied to the then ruling DPP, it is viewed as a Pan Green party. Like the PFP, it prospered in the 2001 and 2004 Legislative Yuan elections, winning approximately 5 percent of seats. However, the TSU also suffered an erosion of seats, votes and politicians after 2005 and lost its Legislative Yuan presence in 2008. The party then surprised observers by winning almost 9 percent of the party list vote in 2012 and three legislative seats. In 2016 the TSU only nominated two district candidates and again concentrated its efforts on the party list. The most recent addition to the group of splinter parties is the MKT. The party was only established in 2015 by a defecting KMT legislator Hsu Hsin-ying. The party nominated 13 district candidates as well as party list. Given that its founder Hsu is a former KMT member and it nominated a number of ex-KMT politicians, I have classified it as a Pan Blue splinter. The final purifier party that actively campaigned in 2016 is the CUPP. Although the party was established in 2005, the CUPP began to gain greater attention when its leader Chang An-lo led a group of supporters to protest against the Sunflower occupation in 2014.²⁵ The party nominated 14 district candidates and a party list in 2016. Although its candidates were not KMT defectors, its open pro unification stance suggests it is best classified as a Pan Blue purifier party.

The list of potentially relevant alternative parties is far shorter. The GPT was established in 1996. It had a number of competitive candidates and even won its first National Assembly seat that year. Subsequently, the GPT has consistently nominated candidates at the local and national level, though these

²⁴ Campaign spending by the CUPP is discussed in the section on resources later in the paper.

²⁵ Alison Hsiao, "White Wolf leads pro-pact rally," *Taipei Times*, April 2, 2014, 1.

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candidates have generally not been competitive. The party showed its potential to become a relevant party in the 2012 Legislative Yuan election. After its local elections breakthrough in 2014 the party contested the 2016 elections in an electoral alliance with the newly formed SDP. The SDP was established in 2015 by the sociologist and activist Fan Yun. Together the GPT and SDP nominated 11 district candidates and a party list. In the aftermath of the Sunflower movement in 2014 the Citizen's Union was established with the objective of creating a new political force more representative of civil society. However, internal splits led to the separate creation of the SDP and NPP in early 2015. The NPP's founders include the academic and Sunflower leader Huang Kuo-chang and the rock musician Freddie Lim. The party nominated twelve district candidates and a party list. The majority of SDP, NPP and GPT candidates are social movement activists without previous ties to the two mainstream parties. While the GPT, SDP and NPP are all progressive parties aiming to represent civil society, the final prophetic party offered a contrastingly conservative outlook. The FHA was established in 2015 by former NP and KMT legislator Joanna Lei together with pastors from a number of evangelical churches. It is widely regarded as a single issue niche party, established to prevent the passage of the same sex marriage bill. The party nominated 16 district candidates and a party list.

IV. ELECTION POLLS AND RESULTS

TABLE 1: PRE-ELECTION PARTY LIST SURVEYS

	TISR September 2015	TVBS October 2015	TISR November 2015	TISR December 2015	TVBS January 4, 2016	TVBS January 14, 2016
DPP	35.1	28	37.5	33.8	27	28
KMT	22.1	33	24.9	21.5	25	21
PPF	7.2	3	6.5	6.2	7	6
NPP	0.3	5	3.3	6.1	10	11
NP	0.1	0.5		1.8	4	3
TSU	1.9	3	2.5	2.1	3	2
MKT		2	1.1	1.4	1	1
GPT/SDP	1.4	2	1.4	1.5	2	2
FHA			0.4			1
MCFAP			0.3	0.3		1
NPSU				1.5		1
CUPP						

Note: Abbreviation not used elsewhere: MCFAP: Military, Civil Servants, Fire Fighters, Academics and Police Party, NPSU: Non Partisan Solidarity Union.

Sources: Taiwan Indicator Survey Research (TISR): Taiwan Mood Barometer Survey, Presidential and Legislative Yuan Election Survey News Release, September 14, 2015; Taiwan Mood Barometer, General Election and Party List Legislators Survey News Release, November 27, 2015; Taiwan Mood Barometer Survey, Survey before Polling Ban News Release, December 31, 2015; TVBS Poll Center: Presidential Survey Two Days Before the Election, January 14, 2016.

TABLE 2: PARTY LIST VOTE SHARES AND SEATS FOR 2012 AND 2016

	2012 Party List Vote	Party List Seats	2016 Party List Vote	Party List Seats
KMT	44.5	16	26.9	11
DPP	34.6	13	44.1	18
NP	1.5	0	4.1	0
PFP	5.8	2	6.5	3
TSU	9	3	2.5	0
NPP			6.1	2
MKT			1.6	0
GPT/ SDP	1.7	0	2.52	0
FHA			1.69	0
NPSU			0.63	0
CUPP			0.46	0
NHSU	1.24	0	0.41	0

Note: Abbreviations not previously used: NHSU: National Health System Unio
 Source: Central Election Commission Database: <http://db.cec.gov.tw/histMain.jsp>

TABLE 3: SEAT SHARES IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY
 (LEGISLATIVE YUAN) ELECTIONS

	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2008	2012	2016
KMT	59	51.8	54.7	30.2	35.1	71.7	56.6	30
DPP	31.7	32.9	31.1	38.7	39.6	24	35.4	60
NP		12.8	4.9	0.4	0.4	0	0	0
PFP				20.2	15.1	0.9	2.7	2.7
TSU				5.8	5.3	0	2.7	0
NPP								4.4

Source: Central Election Commission Database: <http://db.cec.gov.tw/histMain.jsp>

We can get a sense of the campaign and results from Tables 1-3. First Table 1 shows the pre election party list polls conducted by two survey companies. Naturally the two polling companies have differences in methodology and TVBS has a reputation for being more pro KMT; however, we can see some broad patterns of continuity and change in the support levels of the small parties during the campaign. While the PFP, TSU and GPT/SDP support levels were quite consistent during the campaign, both the NP and NPP support rates grew significantly in the months leading up to the election. When we examine Table 2 which compares the party list vote share and seats in 2012 with 2016, we can see shows how the market for smaller parties has increased and also become more competitive. While there were only four small parties gaining over 1.5 percent in 2012, there were seven such smaller parties in 2016. However, the number of parties actually winning party lists seats remained the same, with the NPP replacing the TSU in 2016.

Next Table 3 paints a picture of continuity and change in the actual parliamentary composition, showing the party seat shares in Legislative Yuan elections since democratization. This reveals that the major shift in the balance of power in 2016 occurred between the two main parties, with the DPP replacing the KMT as the dominant party and winning its first ever outright majority. In contrast, despite the growing support for small and especially alternative parties, the table suggests only a limited increase in parliamentary

diversity. In other words, only the PFP and NPP were able to pass the 5 percent threshold for party list seats. The NPP entered parliament for the first time, while the TSU experienced its worst ever vote share at 2.5 and appears to be even considering dissolving itself.²⁶ Other parties running active and organized campaigns such as the GPT/SDP alliance, MKT, FHA all fell well short of the five percent threshold. Despite being one of the highest spenders on advertising, the CUPP only managed to gain 0.46 percent of the vote. Another party feeling disappointed at the results was the GPT/SDP Alliance. Despite running a much more organized campaign than 2012 and with serious district candidates, the party only showed a modest increase from 1.7 to 2.5 percent. Poor results led party chairs/convenors at the GPT, SDP, MKT and TSU to offer their resignations.

In the next three sections we examine how the small parties' political project, political resources and political opportunity structure can explain their electoral fortunes in 2016.

V. POLITICAL PROJECT

Of all Taiwan's relevant parties the NP has been the most ideologically consistent.²⁷ Protecting the Republic of China (ROC) and opposition to Taiwan independence have been its constant themes. However, the party became increasingly extreme and narrowly focused from 1998, contributing to its subsequent electoral decline. In recent years the party has continued this shift towards the extreme end of the national identity spectrum. The party's appeal is clear from its website which describes itself as "the political party for Chinese" and lists unification as one of its four core appeals.²⁸ In other words, the NP is both close to the ideological stance of the KMT in the martial law era, as well as the Chinese nationalist discourse of the PRC. However, such ideological positions run counter to the trends in public opinion over the last three decades, such as the sharp decline in support for Chinese unification and levels of self identification as Chinese.²⁹ Thus the electoral market for the NP's appeals has been drastically reduced in modern Taiwan.

In 2016 the NP's election appeals included a mix of old and new themes. For example, a number of pro integration and Chinese identity appeals appeared on some of the NP's newspaper advertisements such as calling for a cross-strait peace agreement and opposition to what it termed the "Taiwan independence curriculum."³⁰ In addition, it appealed to voters unhappy at the rise of social protests movements and their causes. For instance, opposition to lifting the death penalty was raised³¹ and the NP's January 2, 2016 TV ad showed images of protestors outside the Legislative Yuan and then NP party list candidates appear with Star Wars style lifesavers, promising to "protest righteousness" and to stop the "evil force" from gaining a majority. This evil force is named in the numerous newspaper ads placed by the NP's Chiu

²⁶ Chang Hsiao-ti and Jonathan Chin, "TSU considering disbanding after election losses," *Taipei Times*, Jan 20, 2016, 3.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of the rise and decline of the NP see: Dafydd Fell, "The Rise and Decline of the New Party: Ideology, Resources and the Political Opportunity Structure." *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, 23, no.1, (2006): 47-67.

²⁸ <http://www.np.org.tw/>

²⁹ <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?class=203>

³⁰ *China Times*, Dec 17, 2015, 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Yi in national newspapers as the DPP.³² In fact NP ads placed heavy emphasis on the personality of Chiu Yi who had defected from the KMT after not being nominated. One ad reminded voters of Chiu's record of standing up to the DPP and exposing alleged corruption cases involving Chen Shui-bian and Tsai in 2012.³³ In 2008 and 2012 the NP had tried a similar purifier appeal; however the KMT's ideological shifts and closer ties to the PRC had squeezed the space for the NP. In contrast, with the KMT's replacement of its pro unification presidential candidate Hung Hsiu-chu, the NP was able to win over defectors with its traditional Chinese identity appeals.

Although the PFP is also a KMT splinter party, it has tended to take vaguer ideological and policy stances than the NP. In other words, though it has often used appeals such as protecting the ROC, it has largely steered clear of the unification appeals adopted by the NP. It proposes setting aside the unification versus independence dispute and insists that any future changes to Taiwan's status need the approval of the Taiwanese people.³⁴ Instead the primary appeal of the party has been to focus on the charisma and government ability of its chairman James Soong. The fact that Soong again mounted a presidential campaign offered a similar boost to the PFP's legislative party list. While in the DPP era the PFP was a close ally of the KMT, since 2011, a central PFP appeal has been to attack the Ma Ying-jeou led government. PFP politicians such as Liu Wen-hsiung have been regular participants in politics TV call in shows joining pro DPP pundits in attacking the KMT government's performance. In 2016, as in 2012, the PFP stressed that it stood for the ending of Blue Green conflict and even called itself a "third force."³⁵

The political platform adopted by the newly established MKT appeared quite similar to the PFP. Its selection of the ROC emblem (with a yellow background) as its party badge is further evidence it should be regarded as a Pan Blue party. At the party's opening ceremony the party flag and ROC flag were placed to the left and right of a portrait of Sun Yat Sen. The similarly moderate positioning compared with the PFP on the national identity spectrum can be seen in its first few lines of its party song, "Republic of China Republican Party, Love the People, Love Taiwan."³⁶ Nevertheless, like the PFP, the MKT was trying to convince voters that it is above the Blue Green divide. Thus it invited major politicians from the KMT, DPP, and PFP to give speeches at the party's founding ceremony. Lastly, like the PFP, the MKT's appeal was heavily concentrated on its leader, thus chairwoman Hsu Hsin-ying featured prominently in party propaganda. Nevertheless, the MKT faced the problem that its appeals offered little that distinguished itself from the PFP and its presidential alliance further blurred those boundaries.

The appearance of the CUPP was one of the most interesting elements of the 2016 election. While the KMT attempted to tone down its pro China image, the CUPP took an explicitly pro unification and pro PRC line. In numerous newspaper ads the CUPP openly advocated the PRC unification model of one country two systems. One such ad noted that, "Many friends that care about the CUPP have told us for the sake of votes do not emphasize the word unification; otherwise you will be labelled red. However, the red proposal for peaceful unification, one country two systems, is the best guar-

32 *United Daily News*, Jan 4, 2016, A1.

33 *China Times*, Jan 13, 2016, A7.

34 http://www.pfp.org.tw/Party_Show.asp?id=3

35 *Liberty Times*, Jan 10, 2016, B5.

36 <https://www.mkt.org.tw/Home>

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antee for the wellbeing of Taiwan's people."³⁷ The party's TV and newspaper ads also placed heavy emphasis on the image party leader Chang An-lo and how he would balance out or control the DPP in parliament.³⁸ Nevertheless, the party's poor results reveal the limits of PRC unification appeals to the Taiwanese electorate.

The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) had been the relevant party to the left of the DPP on the national identity spectrum since the early 2000s. It has tended to concentrate on opposing economic and political integration with China. Like the PFP, it has also relied heavily on the charisma of its de facto leader, Lee Teng-hui. He has tended to be prominently featured in the party's propaganda and played an important role in the party's fine performance in 2012. However, like the PFP, the TSU is vulnerable to the fluctuations in the popularity of its ageing leader. In 2016 the TSU used similar anti China appeals to earlier elections. For example, one of its TV ads showed a university student throwing the book *Formosa Betrayed* at President Ma and as he was being held to the ground by security agents shouting "Taiwan and China one country on each side." Lee did appear on some of the party's ads; however, he did not campaign as actively for the party as in previous elections.³⁹

Globally environmental parties face the challenge of being labelled as single issue parties. This naturally also applies to the GPT. The party has, however, benefitted from the high salience of a number of environmental issues over the last decade, in particular the controversy over the Fourth Nuclear Power Station. This salience was increased in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011. However, like ecological parties in Western Europe, the GPT has sought to broaden its appeal by addressing a range of alternative issue appeals.⁴⁰ For example, its activists have played prominent roles in a number of disputes that link environmental issues with land justice, such as the controversial Miramar resort project in Taitung. More importantly, the party has branded itself as a spokesperson for civil society, something particularly important given the growing strength of civil society since the KMT returned to power in 2008. Thus the majority of GPT/SDP candidates had rich experience as social movement activists. One particularly notable appeal has been over gay and lesbian rights, an issue on which the mainstream parties have tended to either ignore or take divided or ambiguous stances on. The GPT was the first party to nominate openly gay candidates in local and national elections. This emphasis was also apparent in the nomination of Hsu Hsiu-wen, a leading figure in the Taiwan Partners Rights Promotion Alliance on its party list. Another noteworthy element in the GPT's attempt to reach new voters has been to focus on labour related issues. The nomination of Chang Li-fen, the Secretary General of the China Telecom Union, at the top of its party list signified this new approach. A final element to the GPT/SDP's appeals was how it attempted to avoid any open cooperation with the DPP. In 2012 there was informal cooperation between a GPT candidate and the DPP, something which created bitter disputes within the party. Four years later, the GPT/SDP made keeping its distance from the DPP part of its appeal.

37 *China Times*, Dec 25, 2015, A1.

38 *China Times*, Dec 30, 2015, A1.

39 *Liberty Times*, Jan 15, 2016, A3.

40 Dan Houghton, "Small but perfectly formed? The Rise and Rise of Germany's Smaller Parties," *German Politics* 20, no.1, (2011): 186-199.

The key themes for the party in 2016 were visible in its Change TV ad.⁴¹ We first see images of before and after at the Miramar Resort, then before and after the TaPu land dispute case, we are reminded of the growing gap between GDP and wages, images of melamine milk to remind voters about food safety scandals, and it ends with the image of a couple kissing at a lesbian wedding ceremony. In short, the GPT/SDP attempted to play the role of a genuinely alternative party in its political project. The fact the party failed to reach five percent shows the challenges of such an alternative political project strategy.

The political project of the NPP had overlap with both the TSU and the GPT/SDP. While the GPT has tended to steer clear of directly engaging in the unification versus independence debates, the NPP adopted a position to the left of the DPP. Among the NPP's three basic advocacies, the first is, "The NPP advocates normalizing the country's status."⁴² Thus the party was competing for voters supporting independence with the TSU. Like the GPT, the NPP also markets itself as the representative of the new Taiwanese civil society. Party founder and district candidate Huang Kuo-chang was one of the three most prominent leaders of the Sunflower movement. An examination of the NPP's party list TV advertisement reveals the mixed appeals adopted by the party. The ad showed images of its candidates and supporters at a variety of protests such as the Sunflower occupation, anti nuclear demonstrations, protesting against the Ma-Xi meeting and gay pride parades. Another key feature in the ad was images of youth. Film directors Ke Yi-cheng and Wu Nian-chen explain the importance of youth entering parliament. NPP candidate Freddie Lim explains how they will help the DPP gain a majority but also supervise the DPP in government. And towards the end of the ad we see a rally scene showing the NPP's Huang with Tsai Ing-wen. Thus a major difference between the GPT/SDP and the NPP was that the latter had a closer working relationship with the DPP. For instance, the parties cooperated in a number of districts, with the DPP leaving three districts for the NPP to stand against the KMT and the NPP strongly backed the DPP's presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen. In other words, while the political platform of the GPT/SDP was clearly that of an alternative party, the NPP's includes elements of both an alternative and a Pan Green party. The election results suggest that the NPP's hybrid approach was more effective than those of both the GPT and TSU.

VI. POLITICAL RESOURCES

Taiwanese elections are extremely expensive and thus having sufficient resources to mount effective campaigns is a critical challenge to all parties. High candidate and party deposits, together with high levels of spending by mainstream parties place a severe strain on the meagre finances of smaller parties. One such example is the free market in political advertising, especially television advertising, which is one of the largest spending items in national elections. In this area small parties are unable to compete and thus are comparatively invisible in the mainstream media. In this section we particularly focus on the financial, human and organizational resources available to the relevant smaller parties.

41 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9z6iaXqNao>

42 <https://www.newpowerparty.tw/proposal>

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Comparatively the splinter parties have had greater ability to raise funds for campaigning. For instance, with a former president as its spiritual leader the TSU has been able to raise funds. The same applies for the PFP with Soong and a number of former legislators. Because the TSU and PFP both won legislative seats in 2012 on the party list they were also able to benefit from state funding subsidies, something not available to the NP.

The challenge of fund raising has been far more severe for the alternative parties. Finding money for candidate deposits and disputes over how to spend money has plagued the GPT throughout its history.⁴³ Since the GPT candidates usually did not gain enough votes to recover their deposits, the party and even candidates often went bankrupt after an election. Part of the reason that the GPT/SDP and NPP have become competitive relevant parties in 2016 is that they have managed to develop innovative approaches to generate limited but more effective fund raising.

TABLE 4: CAMPAIGN SPENDING ITEMS IN 2015-16

	Spending in 2015-16 (unit 1,000 NT\$)	Newspaper ads Dec 16 2015- January 15 2016	TV ads
NP	14,730	4	4
PFP	7,774	14	10
TSU	7,186	4	20
CUPP	12,578	16	5
NPSU	4,757	7	5
NPP	3,013	1	1
MKT	9,602	3	18
FHA	4,334	0	2
GPT/SDP	149	0	0

Note 1: The campaign spending column lists party campaign spending estimates for all major cable and terrestrial TV stations, daily newspaper, radio and magazine advertising between January 2015 and voting day on January 16, 2016. This does not include internet campaigning. It also does not include presidential campaign spending or advertisements purchased by individual candidates. Data supplied by the advertising analysis company Rainmaker XKM. For more information on Rainmaker XKM see http://www.xkm.com.tw/index_en.asp

Note 2: The second column lists the number of advertisements placed by the smaller parties between December 16, 2015 and January 15, 2016 in the *United Daily News*, *China Times* and *Liberty Times*. It also does not include presidential campaign spending or advertisements purchased by individual candidates. This was based on the author's collection of newspaper advertisements.

Note 3: The TV ads column represents the number of different ads purchased by the political parties in the one year prior to voting day. This does not include presidential or candidate ads and also does not include advertisements distributed solely on social media. Data supplied by Rainmaker XKM.

43 Fell and Peng "The Electoral Fortunes of Taiwan's Green Party,"63-83.

We can get a sense of how well funded the smaller parties were from their campaign spending on advertising. Table 4 shows small party advertising spending in the campaign, the number of purchased newspaper ads in the month leading up to voting day and the number of separate TV advertisements placed by small parties. This data can tell us a few things related to campaign resources. Firstly, many of the small parties were much better funded than previous elections. In fact during 2015 the CUPP was the second highest spending party on advertising, only beaten by the KMT. The CUPP bought the highest number of newspaper advertisements. In addition, the TSU, PFP, MKT, NP all spent large amounts on TV and newspaper advertising. In fact, the candidate that bought the most newspaper ads was NP candidate Chiu Yi, with 20 ads in three national dailies. Overall the Pan Blue splinter parties spent much more than Pan Green or alternative parties. The party type largely absent from this table is the alternative parties such as the GPT and NPP. The NPP bought a single TV and a newspaper ad on the eve of the election, while the GPT/SDP Alliance was almost completely absent in traditional media advertising.⁴⁴ In fact both parties relied more heavily on distributing their ads via social media rather than buying paid advertising. The GPT's campaign spending was much higher than in 2012 but this was limited to flyers, personnel costs and bus advertisements. Another lesson from comparing Tables 4 and 2 is that there is not a direct relationship between campaign spending and actual vote share. The NP and CUPP were by far the highest spending small parties on advertising but both failed to win any seats. The ratio of advertising spending and votes gained was especially poor for the CUPP, which was one of the lowest voter getters of all at 0.46 percent. Similar examples of expensive but failed campaign spending were the cases of the TSU, MKT and the FHA. In contrast, the NPP and GPT reveal the potential of campaigning using non traditional campaign advertising.

A closely related resource challenge for small parties is human resources; this is partly because politicians with rich election and government experience tend to be the most effective fund raisers. A critical reason why the splinter parties have performed better electorally has been their richer human resources. However, after the introduction of the new electoral system, human resources also became a serious problem for the splinter parties. The NP, PFP and TSU suffered a serious loss of electable politicians defecting (back) to the mainstream parties. Although the TSU and PFP recovered sufficiently to re-enter the Legislative Yuan in 2012, a lack of candidates that can be competitive at the district level has been a common problem for both parties. The TSU has been a party that has always lacked stars. Despite its legislators being in office during the second Ma term, none of them were able to become household names. This human resource problem for the TSU was visible in the fact that its district candidates performed very poorly in 2016. The PFP has been more successful at holding on and at times even receiving KMT defectors back such as Chang Shuo-wen in New Taipei City. Nevertheless, even where the DPP encouraged its supporters to vote for the PFP candidate in Taipei City District 4, Huang Shan-shan was unable to defeat the KMT candidate.

⁴⁴ The only exception was limited purchasing of radio advertising in the run up to the election.

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Given that statistically standing for an alternative party has invariably led to failure and may well bankrupt a candidate, it is not surprising that such parties have struggled to find candidates to stand at the district level. Former GPT leaders have often complained about the difficulty of finding candidates and also last minute nominations.⁴⁵ However, we can see some improvement on the issue of human resources in the case of the two alternative parties in 2016. Although the GPT/SDP district candidates generally knew they were unlikely to win election this time, they began their campaigns much earlier than in 2012. They ran much more serious campaigns than earlier district candidates and were much more competitive than in 2012. Thus it was surprising to see that these strong district GP/SDP Alliance campaigns did not have a larger positive knock on effect on the party list vote.

Human resources were an area where the NPP had a major advantage over the GPT/SDP. Unlike earlier alternative parties, the NPP managed to attract a number of stars that allowed it to be competitive in district races. Figures such as Freddie Lim, Hsu Yung-ming, Neil Peng and Huang Kuo-chang are all household names. The NPP's nomination of such stars partly explains why it was more competitive than other smaller parties such as the TSU, PFP and GPT in district races, even where the DPP did not nominate.

Beyond electoral politicians a key resource is party activists and party members. In the mid 1980s the KMT claimed to have well over 2 million members, equivalent to almost twenty percent of the adult population at the time.⁴⁶ One of the weaknesses of the splinter parties is that they have tended to be elite parties based around a group of politicians that defected from mainstream parties. They did not generally develop mass party membership structures, thus when splinter politicians defected back to the mainstream parties, their supporters followed. This weak grassroots base remains a serious weakness for the three main splinter parties. Thus one of the most interesting developments in 2015-16 was the rapid membership recruitment drive of the MKT after its formation. One report claimed it has already had well over 100,000 members by June 2015 and was thus the third largest party based on membership. Its chair claimed that it aimed to take over the two largest parties to become the largest in membership numbers.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the MKT's eventual poor election results raise doubts about the effectiveness of the party's membership drive and the reliability of its membership claims.

A final and again related element when it comes to resources is organizational resources. Once again the smaller parties were at a severe disadvantage. Even at their peak in popularity the splinter parties were much stronger at the national than local level. This meant that they struggled to develop local party organizations outside of Taipei. The limited revival of the splinter parties in 2012 and 2014 did not really change this organizational weakness. The alternative parties were even weaker organizationally and could perhaps in the past have been described as lacking any substantive organization. Former GPT Convenor Chen Man-li complained about the party suffering from loose organization.⁴⁸ The GPT only started to develop tighter organization after Li Gen-cheng became co-convenor in 2013. Key features include a more

45 For example see Fell and Peng, "The Electoral Fortunes of Taiwan's Green Party," 77.

46 Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition*, (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1989): 85-86.

47 Fang Bing-chao, "Aiming to exceed the second largest party, the MKT will nominate a presidential candidate," *Storm Media*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.storm.mg/article/54329>

48 Interview with author in Taipei, December 20, 2012.

institutionalised nomination system and the creation of active local party branches. One such feature was the attempt by the GPT to establish a Labour Branch and to gain endorsement from a large number of labour unions. One former GPT leader commented that this was the first time the GPT has had an organizational vote base.⁴⁹ However, the GPT's limited vote increase also raises question marks over the reliability of its new organizational model to translate into votes.

VII. POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

We can understand the overall political environment facing smaller parties through a number of dimensions. The first place to look is naturally the electoral system. The 2008 election revealed the devastating effect of the new predominantly single member district system on the small parties. As the smaller parties either gave up or became uncompetitive in single member districts, they also failed to reach the required five percent for the party list seats. However, if the electoral system was the key determinant of small party impact then we would not have expected to see small parties revive under the current system in 2012 and continue to increase their numbers in 2016. This shows that the electoral system cannot explain everything. In fact the results show that even if the threshold had been lowered to 3 percent as proposed earlier in 2015, the only other party that would have crossed the threshold to enter parliament was the NP. In fact parties such as the GPT have found it much easier to develop national campaigns focused on the party list than under the old multiple member district electoral system.

Since the alternative parties draw so many of their candidates from social movements, the growing strength of civil society over the last six years should have offered greater space for alternative parties such as the GPT/SDP and NPP. The advertisements discussed earlier revealed how both the NPP and GPT attempted to take advantage of this wave of social movement activism. To use Meguid's terminology, the KMT, NP and CUPP all took highly adversarial stances towards social movements, with numerous anti Sunflower references in their advertising.⁵⁰ However, the DPP also attempted to defuse this appeal by co-opting such appeals both through its election propaganda and nomination. In other words, the DPP adopted an accommodative approach to the niche parties' appeal. For instance, the DPP nominated record numbers of civil society activists. Particularly noteworthy was its nomination of three former GPT party candidates on the DPP's party list and two of these were former GPT convenors.⁵¹

The overall party system can offer opportunities and constraints on smaller parties. The key variable in 2016 was how despite the market for small parties increasing, the competition for such voters was much more intensive. For example, the following parties competed for voters dissatisfied with the KMT: NP, CUPP, MKT, PFP and to a lesser extent the FHA, while back in 2012 there had been only two such parties. Back in 2012 the GPT was the only alternative party, but in 2016 its space was squeezed by the arrival of the NPP and to a lesser extent the Tree Party formed by defectors from the GPT. The TSU faced a similar challenge as it now needed to compete not only with

49 Interview by author, Peng Yen-wen, Kaohsiung, January 9, 2016.

50 For example see the KMT's *I'm the Fifth generation* TV ad: <https://www.facebook.com/mykmt/videos/vb.131181017972/10153800594912973/?type=2&theater>

51 The former GPT Convenors nominated by the DPP were Chen Man-li and Yu Wan-ju.

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a revitalised DPP but also the newly formed NPP, and also two minor pro independence parties. Thus even though the proportion of party list votes going to small parties increased in 2016, the actual number of seats they gained in the party list remained the same as in 2012.

Another important element of the political environment has been the willingness of main parties and smaller parties to work in alliance. While such alliances were very rare in 2008 and 2012, there were numerous cases in 2016. However, the results in 2016 were quite mixed. The NPP was successful in all three districts where the DPP allowed it to stand alone against the KMT. However, where the DPP stood aside for the TSU, PFP and GP/SDP alliance and where the KMT stood aside for the NP, all four cases were unsuccessful. Past experience has shown the risks for small parties of working too closely with mainstream parties, as this contributed to the demise of the smaller parties in the period 2005-2008. The dangers were again revealed when the NPP lost significant numbers of its originally predicted voters. For example, in the final week of the election campaign the DPP issued a large number of TV and newspaper ads that called for voters concentrate their party list vote on the DPP. The fact that these ads tended to focus on DPP candidates with social movement backgrounds made it clear to voters that the party was trying to dissuade them from splitting their votes for small allied parties such as the NPP.⁵²

A final relevant element of the political opportunity structure has been technological changes. The growing use of internet and social media campaigning have played a critical role in allowing smaller parties to reduce their campaigning costs. The potential for using new media as an alternative to traditional media was shown in the 2014 Taipei mayoral election where the independent candidate Ko Wen-je was able to win election despite only minimal use of traditional TV and newspaper advertising against a heavy spending KMT rival. Naturally the large parties have also invested heavily in internet campaigning, however, 2016 again revealed the degree that social media has enabled the alternative parties to broaden their propaganda reach. Both the NPP and GPT had only minimal traditional advertising spending and relied very heavily on social media in 2016 but they were able to vastly outperform the big spenders among the splinter parties.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this study we have applied the framework proposed by Lucardie to explain the impact of small parties in Taiwan's 2016 elections. In other words, we examined the small parties' political project, resources and political opportunity structure to understand their electoral fortunes. We can see this in the contrasting electoral results achieved by the NPP compared with the GPT/SDP. The two both used similar progressive appeals and aimed to profit from the rise of Taiwan's social movements. However, the NPP's national identity appeals, richer human resources and alliance with the DPP gave it a clear advantage over its alternative rival.

What are the future prospects for Taiwan's smaller parties in the near future? Much will depend on how well the NPP and PFP perform in this new DPP era. The next electoral tests will be the 2018 local elections and then the 2020 national elections. It is likely that the small party options for voters will

52 For example see DPP ad, *Liberty Times*, January 8, 2016, A1.

again be quite different from 2016. Some parties like the MKT are likely to disappear. The traditional splinter parties are also likely to face a struggle to survive. For instance, with Soong unlikely to mount another presidential campaign, the PFP may struggle to pass the 5 percent threshold.

The new party system will naturally be affected by how the KMT copes with this setback. One DPP campaigner even suggested that the KMT will be replaced by the NPP as the second largest party.⁵³ This seems over optimistic. It does however seem unlikely that any of the KMT splinter parties will be able to replace the KMT, as the PFP threatened to do in 2001. Much will depend on who wins the post election power struggle within the KMT. If for instance Hung Hsiu-chu wins the KMT power struggle and continues the appeals used while she was KMT presidential candidate, then it is quite possible the party could split again or at least see large scale defections.

A final question for the future is whether a genuine alternative party can be competitive in Taiwan's party system. The NPP represents a hybrid party, with both alternative and splinter party features and it thus remains to be seen which features are dominant in its operation during this parliamentary term. The GPT/SDP alliance 2016 campaign revealed the possibilities and challenges for a genuine alternative party.

53 Interview by author, Kaohsiung, December 23, 2015.