

## 7 The Relationship between Mainstream and Movement Parties in Taiwan

Case Studies of the New Power Party (NPP) and the Green Party Taiwan-Social Democratic Party Alliance (GPT/SDP)

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### Abstract

Since democratization began in the mid-1980s, Taiwan's party system has been dominated by two parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). However, smaller parties have at times played an important role, bringing diversity into the system, stressing different issues and representing neglected communities. These small parties tended to be those that split off from the mainstream parties, while alternative social movement parties struggled to be electorally relevant. The picture changed recently with the rise of two different types of movement parties, the New Power Party (NPP) and the Green Party Taiwan/Social Democratic Party Alliance (GPT/SDP). In this chapter we examine the relationship of these new players with the mainstream party, DPP, offering some thoughts on how the relationship affected the development of these alternative parties.

**Keywords:** Taiwan, small parties, movement parties, party system

Social movements are generally considered as outsiders in political systems. Nevertheless, movement activists can always supplement the extra-institutional tactics by participating in party politics to bring their issues on to the legislative agenda. In Taiwan, social movements have long faced the challenge of how to engage with political society. One option is to remain aloof of party politics and just try to influence or lobby political

parties from the outside. Nevertheless this runs the risk of losing political influence. To switch from street politics to the legislature in Taiwan, there are arguably three options for the social activists. Firstly, they can work with one of the two established mainstream parties, and it has been particularly common to see alliances with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (Ho 2003). An alternative is to work with, or form, social movement-oriented parties. Here there are two main options. They can work with a more DPP-allied movement party such as the New Power Party (NPP) or with parties autonomous from the DPP, such as the Green Party Taiwan (GPT).

The Sunflower Movement in 2014 was by far the largest social movement since Taiwan's democratization. It arose not only due to concerns about the China factor, but also was a response to what Chiavacci and Grano (in this volume's introduction) call 'new social anxieties and increasing normative diversity.' After being ignited by the abrupt attempt of passing the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement by the government in the legislature, the movement quickly escalated into a mass movement comprising different issues, ranging from social justice to labour and environmental politics as 'it was a culmination of a long series of contentions and a confluence of diverse streams of many CSOs in the past few years' (Hsu 2017). After the Sunflower Movement, the NPP had carried forward the dynamics of the movement to participate in the electoral politics of Taiwan. Compared to the rookie NPP, the GPT is a veteran in Taiwan politics, existing for more than two decades, despite its limited progress in terms of votes and seats. As mentioned in the chapter by Chiavacci and Grano as well as the one by Grano (in this volume), environmental protection movements have been the key social movement involved in Taiwan's political transition – for example, the GPT is a movement party that emerged out of an environmental CSO. The cases of NPP and the GPT offer us an excellent chance to contrast the development of movement parties in Taiwan.

A number of studies on small parties have theorized about how their relationships with mainstream parties can affect their development trajectories (Meguid 2008). Therefore, in this study we examine the relationship between two different types of movement parties, the NPP and GPT/SDP<sup>1</sup> with a mainstream party, the DPP, and consider how this relationship has affected their recent development.

Since democratization began in the mid-1980s, Taiwan's party system has been dominated by two parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the DPP.

1 The Social Democratic Party (SDP) officially ran in an alliance with the GPT in the 2016 campaign.

However, smaller parties have played an important role, bringing diversity into the system, stressing different issues and representing neglected communities.<sup>2</sup> Taiwan's smaller parties can be divided into two types. These are splinter parties and alternative parties. Splinter parties are those that split away from one of the two mainstream parties, often because of disagreements over policy issues or matters of nomination. Lucardie (2000: 176) has termed them 'purifier parties' that cling 'to an existing ideology, which it feels is diluted or betrayed by one (or more) of the established parties.'<sup>3</sup> The classic Taiwanese case is the New Party, which was established by KMT defectors in 1993 (Fell 2006). These can be distinguished from alternative or niche parties that Lucardie (2000: 177) calls 'prophetic parties,' which stress new issues and ideologies that have been ignored or neglected by the mainstream parties.<sup>4</sup> Given that many of these alternative parties owe their origins in Taiwan's social movements, Ho and Huang have recently termed them as 'movement parties' (Ho and Huang 2017). The most researched Taiwanese party in this category is the GPT, which was established in 1996 (Fell and Peng 2016). The NPP and SDP are more recently established examples of movement parties.

A key feature in Taiwan's party system has been that the splinter parties have fared better electorally than the movement parties. Before the emergence of the NPP, splinter parties had a far better record in winning significant numbers of votes and seats, however, they tended to see their support levels collapse within one or two electoral cycles. A critical factor in explaining the development of smaller parties is in their relationship with mainstream parties. In the case of splinter parties, once the mainstream parties appear to be returning to party ideology, then the purifier parties' supporters and politicians may return, often leading to a collapse in the purifier's electoral base. The decline of the New Party and People First Party are good examples of this pattern, losing support as their original party, the KMT, appeared to return to more orthodox positions on national identity (Fell 2005, 2014).<sup>5</sup> In contrast, movement parties in Taiwan have struggled to get any of their candidates elected at either the local or national level. Rochon has proposed that while splinter parties will initially perform better, alternative parties would perform better, 'once they had carved out an electoral niche

2 For a discussion of the development of Taiwan's small parties, see Fell (2005, 2014) as well as Ho and Huang (2017).

3 Rochon (1985) terms these as 'challenger parties.'

4 Rochon (1985) calls these 'mobilizers.'

5 The orthodox stance on national identity refers to a pro-national unification position, embracing the idea of Chinese national identity.

for themselves' (Rochon 1985). At least prior to 2016, Taiwan's case seemed to support the first part of Rochon's argument but not the latter part.

As the film director Wan Jen reminds us in his hilarious cross-Strait romantic comedy, *It Takes Two to Tango*. In other words, we need to consider the approaches of both the mainstream and smaller alternative parties in this relationship. In a classic study on small parties, particularly the prophetic parties, Bonnie Meguid (2008) argues that the best way to understand the development of challenger parties is by looking at the strategies of the mainstream parties. She suggests that mainstream parties can take dismissive, accommodative or adversarial strategies towards the prophetic parties' core issues. In other words, when mainstream parties pursue dismissive strategies the niche parties' core issue is likely to decrease in salience and its electoral support will decline. Where the mainstream party adopts accommodative strategies then the issue may rise in salience but because the mainstream party may take over issue ownership, it, rather than the niche party, will benefit electorally. The ideal scenario for the niche party is where the mainstream party takes oppositional or what Meguid (2008) calls 'adversarial attitudes,' as this will raise niche party issue salience, reinforce niche party issue ownership, and she suggests, enhance the small parties' electoral performance.

Nevertheless Spoon (2011) does remind us that the strategies of small parties can also affect their survival. She argues that if such parties can reach a balance between their ideals and vote maximization, then small parties can survive, even in the 'most unfavourable' institutional settings, for instance, the Green Party's victory in Brighton Pavilion in the 2010 UK general election. We are thus interested to see whether the small parties' relationship with larger parties can help us to understand the recent fate of movement parties in Taiwan. In our selected cases, the NPP adopted a much more welcoming strategy to cooperate with the DPP, while the GPT/SDP maintained distance with the mainstream parties.

To analyse the relationship between mainstream and movement parties, we consider what are the options for small parties in dealing with the mainstream parties? How did the different approaches to mainstream parties adopted by the NPP and the GPT/SDP lead to different electoral fortunes? In the first section of this chapter, we will define the concept of the 'movement party' to discuss their major characteristics. Then we will consider movement parties by examining the case of two such parties in recent years, the NPP and the GPT. In both cases, we analyse the relationship between these small parties and the mainstream parties. We also offer some thoughts on why these parties adopted such strategies and how the relationship affected the development of these alternative parties.

## The Concept of a Movement Party

Sidney Tarrow (2015: 94) denotes that 'movements frequently give rise to parties when movement activists transfer their activism to institutional politics.' The transition of activists from extra-institutional protests to institutional party politics often involves the formation of movement parties. Since social movements can bring 'significant change in the distribution of ideological views among voters,' Anthony Downs (1957: 115) argues that the outbreak of social movements provides a good opportunity for new parties to be launched successfully. According to Herbert Kitschelt (2006: 280), 'movement parties are coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition.' Representing the unrepresented salient issue is the *raison d'être* of movement parties. They are filling the void left by mainstream parties. In other words, they are prophetic parties that stress new issues. Kitschelt (2006: 280-281) further lists three general characteristics of movement parties. First of all, they often lack a formal organizational structure compared with office-seeking mainstream parties. Second, they focus on a small set of issues instead of a broad political platform. Third, the formation of movement parties does not necessarily mark the abandonment of extra-institutional demonstrations of the social activists, they can alternatively switch their battlefield from the parliament back to the street.

Movement parties often find themselves falling into the dilemma of whether they should invest in organizational structure to become more mainstream to broaden their support base and, ultimately, increase their electoral fortunes or remain as a single-issue party. Developing a more general party platform to appeal to more issues could target more constituencies, however, it would easily lead to accusations that it has become another purely 'office seeking' mainstream party. Movement parties have a rather long history in Taiwan, which could be dated back to the Workers' Party in the 1980s (Ho and Huang 2017). Ho and Huang (2017: 344) argue that the electoral victory of NPP in 2016 'represents the culmination of nearly three decades of effort by civil society activists to elect their own representatives, rather than relying on the sponsorship of more established politicians.' Nevertheless, Fell is more cautious, categorizing the NPP as 'a hybrid party, with both alternative and splinter party features' (Fell 2016: 58). Therefore, from the perspective of Taiwan's party system, the emergence of NPP is an important case to analyse and explain.

## The Emergence of the NPP

The NPP was established in January 2015 following the split of the activists' group the Taiwan Citizen Union (TCU). The TCU was originally formed before the Sunflower Movement, with the aim of nominating candidates to run in the 2016 parliamentary election in order to 'break the dominance' of the mainstream parties (TCU 2014). The manifesto of the TCU was signed by 35 activists and professionals, including the founding members of the later-formed NPP, for instance, Lin Fong-chen, Huang Kuo-chang and Chiu Hsien-chih.

On 18 March 2014, the Sunflower Movement broke out and the legislative chamber was occupied by activists for over three weeks. Much about the NPP, from its personnel to its electoral campaigns, clearly show that the party owed its origin to the Sunflower Movement. The NPP leader, Huang Kuo-chang, was one of the leaders in the Sunflower Movement. Other prominent figures in the movement, including the charismatic student leaders Chen Wei-ting, Wei Yang and Lin Fei-fan, openly endorsed NPP candidates in the 2016 Legislative Yuan election by featuring in the NPP's electoral campaigns.<sup>6</sup> In the campaigns they never shied away from showing their close ties with the Sunflower Movement. An example is the NPP's party list TV ad. This ad opens with the Sunflower slogan 'Reject the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA)' and shows images of Sunflower protests as well as the Sunflower occupation itself. Later in the ad their party list candidate Jang Show-ling is described as an 'Anti-CSSTA Fighter' in the campaign.<sup>7</sup> In the NPP's manifesto, it says that 'We promise to continue to be an activist party. Wherever there are injustices, the NPP will be there. NPP will always push for reform, fighting for the people.'<sup>8</sup>

## The Significance of the NPP

In the 2016 Legislative Yuan election, the NPP won three seats in the single-member district election and two seats in the proportional representation

6 For example, see Lin Fei-fan's video advertisement: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBjFo\\_d96Og](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBjFo_d96Og) (12 December 2019), and Chen Wei-ting's endorsement: <https://goo.gl/vNMpdM> (12 December 2019).

7 Advertisement featuring the Sunflower Movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6p8i5Fx1Gg> (12 December 2019).

8 New Power Party, 'Women de Chengnuo' (Our promise), <https://bit.ly/3i1lrW> (12 December 2019).

elections.<sup>9</sup> These five seats made the NPP the third-largest party in the parliament. The victory of the NPP also signifies a change of the political landscape in Taiwan. Previously, small parties in Taiwan, for instance, the PFP and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), were purifier parties (Fell 2014). Party members broke away from mainstream parties to form the new parties. In contrast, the newly formed NPP has many of the attributes of a prophetic party (Lucardie 2000). Its candidates did not have previous election experience before with mainstream parties and it focused more on new issues (Fell 2016: 52). It could be argued that it is the first movement party to win more than a single parliamentary seat in Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> The room for small parties in Taiwan under the current legislative electoral system is small (Fell 2014). The success of the NPP has at the same time replaced the TSU in the parliament and allowed it to overtake the PFP to become the third-largest party. The third-largest-party status was reaffirmed by the party identification surveys conducted by the Election Study Center, NCCU. In December 2016 the NPP's party identification was 4.1%, higher than the PFP's 2.3% and one year later there was a slight decline in the NPP's support to 3.8%, compared to the PFP's 1.3% (ESC 2019). In other words, in both seats and support rates, the NPP has become the third party in Taiwan ahead of the traditional splinter small parties.

### **The Ambiguous Relationship with the DPP**

The 2014 Sunflower Movement was not merely against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement; it was about the underlying quality of democracy. Dafydd Fell denotes that from the slogan of Sunflower Movement – 'Protect Democracy, Return the CSSTA' – the movement was caused by a perception of the failure of regular party politics (Fell 2017b). Thus, the movement was not only targeting the then governing party, the KMT, but also the whole establishment, including the largest opposition party, the DPP. The formation of the NPP is the perpetuation of the Sunflower Movement. To a certain extent, it intended to keep some distance from the DPP. In its manifesto, it states that the alternation of governing party could not solve

9 NPP won 6.1% of vote in the party list election, see Central Election Commission, <http://engweb.cec.gov.tw/> (12 December 2019).

10 The sole exceptions are the GPT's one National Assembly seat in 1996 and the Chinese Social Democratic Party's single seat in 1992. The Worker's Party did hold a seat in the Legislative Yuan for over two years but in that case the legislator had been elected for the DPP in 1986 and defected mid-term.

the societal problem in Taiwan, but the formation of the NPP is to break the 'political imagination' in Taiwan.<sup>11</sup> This is in line with the TCU's aim before the Sunflower Movement.

The NPP is a product of the Sunflower Movement and, thus, it theoretically and fundamentally distanced itself from the DPP. Nevertheless, the two parties did come close to an alliance in the NPP's initial period. The DPP adopted an accommodative approach to the NPP after its foundation. The DPP party leader, Tsai Ing-wen, openly welcomed the foundation of the NPP by saying that 'even if the new party [the NPP] does become a competitor of the DPP, we [the DPP] will continue to work with these friends and maintain a friendly relationship' (*LT* 2015a).

The relationship between the NPP and the DPP has often been ambiguous, especially when it is compared with another nascent movement party, which also split from the TCU, the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The SDP did not endorse and cooperate with the DPP during the election. Conversely, the NPP adopted a semi-alliance strategy with the DPP. It worked closely with the DPP to cooperate on the nomination of candidates. In the three single-member districts seats that the NPP won, the DPP did not nominate candidates and openly supported the NPP candidates.<sup>12</sup> The cooperation between the DPP and NPP did not only involve the DPP giving way to the NPP, it also happened the other way round. In the New Taipei City (1<sup>st</sup> District), the founding member of the NPP, Feng Kuang-yuan, gave way to a DPP candidate, Lu Sun-ling, in order to avoid a DPP-NPP competition within the same district. In the end, Lu successfully won the seat in that district (Lin 2015a).

In addition, the NPP also nominated eight 'token candidates,' which means that they were 'mission-oriented' and nominated only for the sake of promoting the party list election. Among these candidates, seven out of eight 'token candidates' were nominated in the same district that the DPP had nominated candidates, they campaigned for the NPP party list election but did not campaign for their own district election (*LT* 2015b). It is noteworthy to point out that some DPP candidates voiced their dissatisfaction towards these 'token candidates' as they might still get a considerable number of votes in the single-member district elections under the party label of the NPP even without campaigning. In addition, there was one district where there was open tension between the DPP and NPP candidates – in Hsinchu City, where the NPP nominated one of its founders, Chiu Hsien-chih, to stand

11 New Power Party, 'Women de Chengnuo' (Our promise), <https://bit.ly/3i1llrW> (12 December 2019).

12 They are Freddy Lim in Taipei City Fifth District, Hung Tzu-yung in Taichung Third District and Huang Kuo-chang in New Taipei City Twelfth District.

against the veteran DPP politician Ke Chien-min. However, despite this being a traditionally safe KMT district, the DPP's Ke narrowly came out on top.

The NPP openly endorsed and supported the DPP presidential election candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, in the electoral campaign (Fell 2016: 52). Huang, the NPP leader, pleaded with voters that 'although I and Chairlady Tsai are not from the same party, our heart is Taiwanese. We both support reform. [...] Please vote for Chairlady Tsai to save the government! Please vote for me to change the parliament!'<sup>13</sup> The emphasis of Taiwanese identity highlighted the fact that it was a shared value for the DPP and NPP, which allowed cooperation between the two parties.

Both parties also jointly formed a united electoral campaign headquarters during the elections.<sup>14</sup> For instance, a number of DPP politicians, including the high-ranking figure Chen Ju, openly campaigned for Huang. She supported Huang and claimed that Huang's NPP represented 'a progressive power' (Lin 2015c). Moreover, in an NPP PR election ad there is a scene where the NPP's Huang shares a stage with Tsai. The ambiguous relationship is clear in the NPP campaign in which the party says: 'We will gain over half seats in parliament, that is, the DPP plus NPP getting a majority. We will take responsibility for supervising the DPP ([government]}' (Lin 2015b).

However, the semi-alliance between the NPP and DPP did ultimately backfire when it came to the electoral fortunes of the NPP, especially in the PR seats. The NPP originally expected to win four or five seats on the PR list (Ho and Huang 2017). The DPP attempted to adopt an accommodative strategy towards the NPP in its own PR list nomination, as it nominated eight social movement activists on the PR list to appeal to the social movement supporters. Moreover, the DPP, sensing the threat that the NPP posed to its PR list, decided to adopt a strategy of highlighting these social movement candidates in the final weeks. These candidates thus featured heavily in both newspaper and TV advertising as election date approached.<sup>15</sup> The DPP's accommodative strategy also applied to its issue approach in the campaign. For example, Tsai's advertisements made appeals to core social movement themes that the DPP had largely neglected in recent earlier campaigns, such as marriage equality and land justice. We will return to this in more detail in the section on the GPT.

13 New Power Party, 'Xieshou Nuli Rang xia Yidai you Weilai' (Working together for a better future), <https://bit.ly/35ATruF> (12 December 2019).

14 Ibid.

15 For example, see the DPP's newspaper ads on the front pages of the *Liberty Times* on 8 and 9 January 2016.

## Overlapping between the NPP and the DPP

The party platform of the NPP reflects a degree of institutionalization of the party. It is far more than a single-issue party. In its party platform, it discusses nearly every issue in Taiwan and advocates a series of policy reforms, ranging from national identity, constitutional reform, to environmental politics, multiculturalism and child care. It operates like a mainstream catch-all party. In the official party introduction, the 'normalization of Taiwan as a nation-state' is the first principle and it is no different to Taiwan Independence.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the DPP and the NPP hold similar positions in support of Taiwan's independence.

However, the broad spectrum of its party platform actually reflects the many facets of the Sunflower Movement. The major activists group during the movement, the Democratic Front against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (DFACSSSTA), comprised a total of 37 civil society organizations, including the feminist group Awakening Foundation, the Taiwan Rural Front and the Taiwan Labour Front. This shows the occupation of the Legislative Yuan represented far more voices than only opposition to the CSSTA. As a product of the Sunflower Movement, the NPP also developed a complete and well-rounded party platform. However, this risked the NPP appearing to overlap with and too closely resemble the DPP. The distinction between the DPP and the NPP was blurred. The DPP could easily adopt an accommodative approach to focus on the same issues. As a result, voters would find it increasingly hard to distinguish between the two and, in the long term, the mainstream party would benefit electorally.

## The NPP and Other Smaller Parties

Thus far we have mainly focused on the relationship between the NPP and the DPP. However, previous studies have also shown that competition and cooperation between rival smaller parties can also be critical in their development. One such example had been the way the PFP hollowed out the NP's support between 2000 and 2001 (Fell 2017a). One key element in the NPP's success was the way it took an accommodative approach towards the TSU's ownership of the anti-China message. Both parties used such appeals in their TV advertisements. For instance, in the NPP's TV ad we see a protest

16 New Power Party, 'Jiben Zhengce Zhuzhang' (Our policy), <https://bit.ly/31g8tDo> (12 December 2019).

scene against the meeting between Ma Ying-jeou and Chinese President Xi Jinping, while the TSU warned of Taiwan becoming another Hong Kong. However, the NPP's vote share and the collapse of the TSU's vote share in 2016 suggests the NPP's accommodative strategy had allowed it to steal the ownership of the issue.

In summary, NPP adopted a semi-alliance approach with the DPP. Although there were instances of competition and arguments in the cooperation, both parties benefitted from the alliance. The NPP became the third-largest party in Taiwan and the DPP won historic presidential and parliamentary victories in 2016. However, the alliance also made the NPP less distinctive and less like as a 'prophetic party' compared with the older movement party, the GPT.

### **The Green Party Taiwan (GPT)**

Taiwan's Green Party was established in January 1996. Thus, it can be seen as part of the second wave of movement parties following the first wave, which was dominated by leftist parties (Fell 2005). Although Ho argues the GPT was part of the attempt by the environmental movement to regain autonomy from the DPP, it also had an ambiguous relationship with the party in the GPT's early history (Ho 2003). For instance, in 1996 party figures were divided over whether they should support the DPP's candidate in the first direct presidential election. In the GPT's initial phase, despite being largely ignored by the DPP, the mainstream parties did leave some scope for the GPT to emerge. The ruling KMT had an openly pro-nuclear policy and the DPP was showing mixed signals on environmental issues (Ho 2003). After the GPT's promising start in 1996, it failed to make a breakthrough in the 1998 local elections. The party then collapsed and appeared to have followed the same pattern as the leftist parties of ceasing to contest elections.<sup>17</sup>

The GPT that emerged in the aftermath of the 2008 national elections was distinct enough to be seen as a brand-new party. The membership, leadership and core issues were quite distinct from its predecessor. In addition to its emphasis on environmental issues, the party broadened its appeal on subjects such as LGBT rights and labour issues. A further key change was that it had a much clearer position on keeping a distance from its former ally, the DPP. On the back of the party's new approach it was

17 For the next few years the GPT at either did not join elections or nominated a token candidate.

able to develop electorally to move to the brink of becoming Taiwan's first relevant alternative party by the eve of the 2016 national elections.

What explains the changed relationship with the DPP? The first place to start was the experience of the DPP's first time in power (2000-2008). There were quite high expectations when the DPP came to power and it did appoint a number of key environmentalists into government positions. Most notable were Chen's first environmental minister, Edgar Lin, and Chang Kuo-long in Chen's second term. However, in interviews with GPT members and supporters there was a high degree of dissatisfaction with the DPP government (Fell and Peng 2016: 78). A notable sore point was the DPP's failure to deliver on its anti-nuclear pledges, in particular, the resumption of construction of the fourth nuclear power station. It also failed to resolve the issue of the nuclear waste disposal site on Lanyu Island.<sup>18</sup> The sense of betrayal comes through quite strongly in the award-winning documentary *How Are You, Gongliao?* (2004) made by prominent GPT supporter Tsui Shu-hsin. Increasingly, the DPP was viewed as taking a similar developmentalist approach to its predecessor, the KMT. In order to stay in power, the DPP was seen as compromising with big business to the detriment of the environment and the rights of workers. For example, a number of GPT figures interviewed spoke of their frustrating experience while serving on the Environmental Impact Assessment Committee (Fell and Peng 2016: 77-78).

We also found a strong sense of anti-DPP sentiment among many GPT members and supporters interviewed. This was partly due to similar frustrations from their experiences of DPP rule, but also we found many GPT supporters came from families that did not have clear political affiliations or whose parents were Pan Blue supporters. In fact, when we examine the GPT's electoral record and where it nominated, we can see that non-DPP voters have made up a significant portion of its support base.

One way that we can see the dislike of the DPP was in the case of the Pan Han-sheng candidacy in Taipei in 2012. Pan Han-sheng was the closest the GPT had to a political star and was standing for election to the legislature from Taipei City District 7. In this case an informal agreement was reached between Pan and the DPP to allow him to stand with DPP backing. Given that this was not the result of a party-to-party agreement, it was a controversial case of collaboration. Although the DPP did offer Pan support, some in the party opposed him and a rebel DPP candidate did stand. Towards the end of 2012, long after the election, a GPT focus group found high levels of resentment directed at Pan for the way he handled the campaign. The vast

18 For a discussion of the anti-nuclear movement, see Grano (2015: 60-91).

majority of interviewees were critical with only a small number focusing on the fact that Pan was the GPT's top vote getter and helped raise party visibility.

When we asked GPT voters it was clear they had a clear preference for taking a non-allied positions regarding the mainstream parties. In fact, when asked why voters preferred the GPT one of the most common answers we found was distaste for mainstream parties. A quote from a previous interviewee said that 'in fact you can't say the GPT particularly attracts me, but that the other parties hold no attraction at all to me' (Fell and Peng 2017: 187). We found many younger generation voters were critical of what they saw as the repetitive debates over national identity between mainstream parties. The inconsistent record of the DPP in supporting environmental issues also strengthened GPT supporters' decision to vote for the GPT.

We can see that the mainstream parties' strategies towards niche party issues favoured the GPT in 2012. The Fukushima accident had raised the salience of the nuclear issue and in addition other value shifts benefitted the GPT, such as growing support for LGBT rights. The ruling KMT had adopted a highly developmental position and was still pushing ahead with the fourth nuclear power station (Fell and Peng 2016). The DPP candidate in 2012, Tsai Ing-wen, did mention a nuclear-free homeland but it was no longer a core member of the anti-nuclear movement. When it came to social movement-related issues, the DPP stance corresponded to Meguid's (2008) dismissive approach.

The experience of 2012 meant there would not be a repeat of the Pan experiment. In fact, the tensions were so high that Pan ended up establishing a brand-new party, the Trees Party, to contest the 2014 local elections. In many ways 2014 was the GPT's most professional campaign to date. One problem was that the party did not contest seats in its traditional stronghold of Taipei, leaving this for the Trees Party. The GPT's desire to avoid even the impression of an alliance with the DPP was made clear in the case of Yang Zhi-xiang. Yang had been nominated as a GPT candidate in the Hsinchu city council election but his nomination was revoked partly due to his joining the Taiwan Independence Election Alliance.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the election, the GPT won two seats and had become the most significant movement party. However, there was trouble brewing as rather than joining the GPT, there were moves a foot to create a new social movement party (discussed in the previous section), initially known as the TCU.

19 See the GPT news release: <http://www.greenparty.org.tw/news/20141015/190> (12 December 2019).

On the surface 2016 should have been the moment that the GPT made its great breakthrough at the national level. It was the largest and oldest alternative party, with a fine track record of involvement in a range of social movements. With the advent of the Sunflower Movement, there was a sense of optimism in the social movement sector. The GPT had made a breakthrough at the local level in Taoyuan and Hsinchu in 2014. Moreover, the GPT had established an alliance with the newly formed SDP, a party that had strong candidates in Taipei. In interviews even on the eve of the election there was optimism that the party had a real chance to break through the magic 5% required to win party list legislative seats. However, when the results were announced, it was the NPP that was celebrating and the GPT was left bitterly disappointed. Despite the fact that it had run a much better funded and organized campaign than in the past, the GPT was only able to increase its vote share from 1.7 to 2.5%. The GPT's relationship with both the mainstream parties and other challenger parties can help us to understand this failed breakthrough in 2016.

The KMT (and NP) were even more adversarial on issues related to social movements, however, this probably had only limited impact on the GPT because the KMT concentrated its attacks on the DPP and the NPP. Similarly, both the DPP and NPP attempted to claim ownership of key issue areas on which the GPT was campaigning. For instance, both the DPP and NPP campaigned for marriage equality, attempting to steal this once GPT-owned issue. Thus, to a certain extent, the GPT was not able to benefit from the rising salience of its core issues.

We can also measure the relationship through nomination practice. While the DPP left the NPP three seats to contest against the KMT, it only gave one such seat to the SDP's Fan Yun, in one of the safest KMT seats in the country. The DPP was more willing to offer seats to the PFP or KMT defectors than those on the SDP/GPT alliance. We have discussed the way the DPP attempted to adopt an accommodative strategy towards the NPP niche issues in the final weeks of the campaign. This probably had a detrimental effect on both movement parties, as their eventual PR list was below what some had been expecting. Another way the DPP threatened the GPT was through its nomination strategies. It chose to nominate two former GPT co-convenors on its PR list and a former GPT National Assembly candidate. They were Yu Wan-ju, Chen Man-li and Wang Jung-chang. The damage was more severe in the case of Yu, as she had officially only ceased to be co-convenor in early 2015.<sup>20</sup> In fact, all three featured prominently in DPP newspaper and TV

20 Yu served as GPT's co-convenor from March 2012 to March 2015.

ads in the final weeks.<sup>21</sup> Thus, we can say that the DPP was using a mix of adversarial and accommodative strategies to deal with the GPT.

We can see the antagonistic relations between the GPT and the DPP in the case of Fan Yun. Fan was the only SDP/GPT Alliance candidate that the DPP did not nominate a candidate to run against and so her cooperation with the DPP was closely scrutinized by GPT members. Her level of cooperation was much lower than that seen in the Pan case, but when she did appear publically with the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen, she was subjected to harsh criticism from GPT members. After the election, she admitted that she had underestimated the cleavage between the DPP and the GPT members. Another example is that Fan participated in the DPP candidate Ke Chien-ming's book launch two weeks before the election. Fan claimed that she showed up as an audience member. However, GPT and other social activists, including Chen Wei-ting, heavily criticized Fan's cooperation with the DPP. The GPT issued a statement to criticize Fan's behaviour as 'incompetent' and voice their discontent to Fan and the SDP (*LT* 2016). Once again, we can see how the GPT tried to avoid even the slightest impression that it was a DPP ally.

Looking back at the 2016 results, what lessons can we draw for the GPT in terms of its relationship with other parties? The DPP's strategy was actually very successful as it not only limited the seats of its ally party (NPP) but also prevented the emergence of a genuine alternative party in the GPT. What of the GPT? Did it make mistakes in its inter-party relations? The failure to create either a single united alternative party or at least an electoral alliance of the three or four social movement parties played a role. It even handled relations with its ally poorly, to the degree that it would not be able to recreate the GPT-SDP alliance in 2020. If there had been a single united alternative party in 2016, though it might not have won district seats, it probably would have performed well enough to win party list seats. During the campaign there was clear tension between the NPP and GPT, as they fought for a similar set of voters on the party list. Even the presence of the small Trees Party undermined the GPT's fortunes, particularly in the party list contest. This could have been avoided if the party had been able to bring Pan back into the fold or to establish an alliance. In other words, for the GPT the poor relationship with other challenger parties also contributed to the failed breakthrough.

Could the GPT have performed better if it had followed the NPP's model of a semi-formal alliance with the DPP? We think this is unlikely for a couple

21 See e.g. the DPP ad in *Liberty Times*, 5 January 2016.

of reasons. The GPT had limited appeal to the DPP as it did not nominate strong district candidates and by the eve of the election the DPP was strong enough that it could probably have won more seats by offering up fewer seats to other parties. It is hard to imagine GPT members and supporters accepting such an agreement. In many ways the GPT's distance from the DPP was one of its few clear selling points at a time it was being squeezed by the NPP and DPP. Moreover, the way the NPP's PR vote collapsed also reveals the dangers of too close an alliance with a mainstream party.

## Conclusion and Future Prospects

In this chapter we have examined the development of two of Taiwan's movement parties with reference to their relationship with mainstream parties. We have examined both sides of the relationship. In other words, we followed Meguid's (2008) framework to look at the strategies that mainstream parties adopted towards small parties. In addition, we examined the alliance strategies adopted by our two case study movement parties. We showed that an examination of this two-way relationship can help us to explain the development of such movement parties. At least in the short term the NPP's hybrid issue approach, combined with its alliance with the DPP, did allow it to break into parliament at the first attempt.

An important finding of our chapter is that in addition to the relationship between small and large parties, an important variable is the interrelationship among rival challenger parties. In other words, forming relationships between parties is the key to thriving in Taiwan's party system. As we have shown, in 2016 the mutual relationship between the smaller alternative parties did have a major effect on their election fortunes. The failure to develop a single united movement party, or at least a viable alliance of similar parties was critical in the GPT's failure to capitalize on the momentum it had been building since 2012. Without cooperating with mainstream parties, will the movement parties be able to coordinate nomination and avoid multiple movement party candidates fighting for the same district? Will they be able to develop a system for mutual support for movement party candidates to reduce campaigning costs?

We can get some idea from the local elections in 2018. These were naturally more straightforward as these were using the MMD electoral system, so small parties could potentially win seats without mainstream alliances. The DPP had enjoyed historic success at the local level in 2014 and thus it was not surprising it lost seats in 2018 to the KMT as a result of widespread

disappointment in Tsai's government. There were large numbers of voters unconvinced by either the KMT or the DPP. Nevertheless, there were no signs that any of the older splinter parties are able to step back in and take advantage, as they continued to lose seats in 2018. Therefore, this was another historic window of opportunity for the alternative parties. Compared to 2014 or 2016, the field for movement parties was much more crowded with the NPP, GPT, SDP, Labour Party and Taiwan Statebuilding Party all running serious campaigns. As the 2018 campaign developed it became clear that there were tensions between the main challenger parties, especially between the NPP and the others. In the end, the election resulted in significant numbers of movement party politicians entering local assemblies for the first time, with sixteen seats for the NPP, three for the GPT and one for the SDP.

Looking further ahead to national elections in 2020, the challenges for the movement parties will show similarities and differences in their inter-party relations. If the NPP tries to follow a similar strategy to 2016, it is possible voters will punish it in the way they have other parties that allied too closely to mainstream parties, as predicted by Rochon. In fact, the movement party approach perpetuated since the Sunflower Movement received support from voters. However, the more institutionalized and catch-all party-like structure of the NPP could easily lose its movement party features. Its close ties with the DPP means that it runs the risk of losing autonomy in the policies it advocates. Whether the NPP can anchor itself to the party system in Taiwan remains to be seen, however, the early success of the NPP in the 2016 elections has undoubtedly shown that a semi-alliance strategy is a possible way for small parties to thrive under the unfavourable political environment in Taiwan. If the NPP does decide to remain in a semi-alliance with the DPP, then there should once again be an opportunity for a genuine alternative party. Whether this will be the GPT, a new SDP-GPT alliance or something else, is still uncertain at the time of writing in the autumn of 2019.

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