

Chapter 16

Political Mobilization Strategies in Taiwan's Sunflower Student Movement on March 18, 2014: A Text-Mining Analysis of Cross- National Media Corpus

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ABSTRACT

Taiwan's Sunflower Student Movement on March 18, 2014 has been characterized as a social movement with its sophisticated integration of social and mobile media into mobilizing Taiwanese society through participant recruitment and resource mobilization domestically and globally. Ample research has contributed the roles of these emerging media platforms as one of the main reasons for its success. This study was based on resource mobilization theory (RMT) to examine the roles of new communication technologies on mobilizing resources. This chapter focuses on the resource mobilization strategies by activists and organizations of the 318 Sunflower Student Movement. A large-scale text mining study was developed to examine how cross-national English media have described this social movement in Taiwan. Results and implications were discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's *318 Sunflower Student Movement* in 2014 has impacted and restructured the island country's political landscape (Chiou, 2014). As predicted in an earlier study by Yang and Kang (2017), its repercussions have been widely felt in Taiwan's subsequent presidential and legislature elections in 2016, which results in then ruling KMT's collapse in terms of controlling central government and its majority to the opposition party, DPP. Dr. Ing-Wen Tsai ultimately became the first female president after replacing the unpopular China-friendly President Yi-Jeou Ma (Bardenhagen, 2014; Rahaula, 2015) and defeated the KMT's Presidential candidate, Eric Chu (Bush, 2016). Dr. Tsai has won 56.1% of the popular vote, compared with 30.1% of KMT's Eric Chu and 12.8% of PFP's James Soong (Bush, 2016). DPP also won the dominant majority in the Legislative Yuan, achieving 68 out of 113 seats (Bush, 2016; Kuo, 2019). The sweeping victory of DPP in 2016 has given Dr. Tsai sufficient political capital for her social and political agendas (Bush, 2016). With her full control of the Legislative Yuan, DPP also finalized its pension reforms in 2017 to reduce the privileged benefits of civil servants, teachers, and military personnel (Schubert, 2017). In May, 2019, Taiwan also became the first Asia country to legalize same sex marriage (Kuo, 2019).

On March 12, 1930, Mohandas Gandhi began his march to the sea to protest British monopoly on salt in India (The History Channel, 2010), civil disobedience movement, or civil resistance movement similar to Gandhi's, has swept most parts of the world because of many social issues related to the corporate power, unemployment (particularly among the youth and less skilled workers), income inequality, wealth distribution, etc (Penney & Dadas, 2014). The *Yellow Jacket Protest* in France was also triggered by French's president's tax reforms, but has its root in the country's high cost of living and people's sense of being left out by the political elites (Smith, 2018). In Hong Kong, the month-long *Anti-Extradition Law Protest* is also deep-rooted in the special administrative region's rising property price and lack of opportunities for its youths (Associated Press, 2019; Chan, 2019; Pao, 2019). Like other social movements and protests, they serve as an important function in a robust democracy (Jha, 2008) when the pressure in the society needs to be released, metaphorically speaking.

In Taiwan, increasing numbers of social and civil disobedience movements have also been attributed to government tax and real estate policies, frictions due to closer economic ties with China, strategies and tactics when dealing with China, etc (Cole, 2014). The depressing job prospect and stagnant salary for many Taiwanese youths has continued to affect every aspect of Taiwanese society (Smith, 2017). For example, a total of 720,000 highly trained Taiwanese have moved to China to seek better job opportunities and higher salaries (Smith, 2017). Small social movement groups (such as *Citizen 1985* and *the Black Island Nation Youth Alliance*) have risen as a result of these increasing tensions (Cole, 2014). Compounding with the worsened social situations in Taiwan are the threats from China's rising hegemony (Kelly, 2014) and intentionally meddling with Taiwan's identity and affairs (Smith, 2017). China intends to expand her sphere of influence to cover a wide area of Asia and to replace the U.S. as the region's dominant player (Lind, 2018). From a geo-political perspective, China's grand strategy is "prioritize land power and aim to become preponderant on the continent before it can challenge US' command of the global commons and kick it out from its natural zone of influence" (The Policy Tensor, 2013, para 35). The hegemony of China has increasingly impacted on Taiwan's ways of lives. China has long made its intention clear to use economic integration as the strategy to dilute Taiwan's local national identity and ultimately subdue to its own "One China" principle (Smith, 2017) to recognize Taiwan as part of China.

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