

Barriers to the development of Green parties in the Asia-Pacific

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Abstract:

Although Green parties are an established part of many developed nations' electoral competitions, they have been far less successful at either establishing themselves or making any electoral headway in the Asia Pacific region. This may be seen to be in part due to unfavourable electoral conditions, but is also linked to the failure of a green politics based in post-materialism to find any fertile ground in developing nations. While developed nations such as Australia and New Zealand have well established and functioning Green parties, in contrast a number of Asia Pacific countries such as Taiwan, South Korea and Japan have, or previously had, electoral systems that might have assisted an emergent Green party, yet this has not occurred. This paper explores some of the reasons that may explain the non-success of Green parties in this rapidly democratizing region.

Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Green Network (APGN) counted, in 2012, a membership of 18 political parties across 13 nations. If we consider the Asia Pacific region to encompass the countries of the East Asia, in addition to those of South and South East Asia (including Pakistan, India and Nepal), this represents Green parties in just a third of nations in the region. In only Australian and New Zealand was there significant representation in national parliament. At the same time, Green parties across Europe have been entering local, state and national parliaments in increasing numbers and with increasing influence. It should equally be noted that in the Americas, with the exception of Mexico, and to a lesser extent Brazil, Green parties have had limited electoral success, with the same lack of success inhibiting African Green parties.

Yet developing nations could be argued to be fertile grounds for environmentally focused political parties. Wangari Maatai and the Green Belt Movement established a unique place in African environmentalism (Michaelson 1994), and the Chipko movement of India demonstrated the intersection of indigenous and environmental rights¹. Conservationists in Papua New Guinea have fought long and hard battles against logging and mining companies, especially where activities are illegal and environmentally destructive, with many innovative, locally sourced alternative development methods being proposed and enacted. (Harper and Rajan 2004)

¹ Bhatt (1990) notes the beginning of the Chipko movement as much a resource access issue as a conservation issue. Mawdsley (1998) argues the principle aim focus of the movement was economic, with local villagers initially demanding better access to forests for their own agricultural and economic development needs, prior to any demands for ecological conservation.

So, who or what are Asia Pacific Green parties, and what are the factors that are perceived to be inhibiting their growth within the region? This question requires firstly a clear definition of the Asia Pacific Region, before a delineation of the countries with function Green parties that are part of the APGN. Following this it is then possible to articulate the potential barriers to those parties further growth based on historical, cultural and structural factors, particularly those factors identified by party actors themselves.

Defining the Region

Some care needs to be taken in defining what nations the Asia Pacific region encompasses. This study will take as its starting point that we can redefine Asia Pacific into four contiguous regions: South, South East and East Asia, and Oceania. This would not include west or central Asia (encompassing the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan and former Soviet republics). The list of countries examined also does not include territories or overseas departments administered centrally, or where the politics of the territory is more like that of department or state (ie, French, New Zealand or US territories in the Pacific, such as Niue, Tahiti or Guam).

South Asia:

Can be seen to be those territories between Iran in the west and Burma in the east.

These nations are predominantly influenced through association with Britain either as colonies or association with colonies: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, plus the Maldives.

South East Asia

Encompasses those nations formerly divided between European powers: French (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos), Dutch (Indonesia/West Papua), Portuguese (East Timor), British (Burma, Singapore, Malaysia), Spanish/US (Philippines) or otherwise independent (Thailand, Brunei).

East Asia

Countries are for the most part independent: Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, Japan, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) (North Korea), Republic of Korea (ROK) (South Korea), although including one state formerly occupied by PRC/USSR (Mongolia)

Oceania

Encompasses those nations, predominantly island nations, almost entirely previously dominated or colonized by European colonial powers: Britain (Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Papua/Papua New Guinea (PNG), Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu); Germany/Britain (New Guinea, Solomon Islands); France/Britain (Vanuatu); France (French Polynesia, Tahiti); Germany/Britain/US/New Zealand (Samoa), or the US (Palau, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia) (see Lamour 2002).

Table 1. Green Party distribution in the Asia Pacific Region

	Nations with Green parties	No Green party
South	Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives
South-East	Indonesia, Philippines	Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei
East	Taiwan, Japan, ROK, Mongolia, Hong Kong	PRC, DPRK
Oceania	Australian, New Zealand, PNG, Vanuatu ² , Fiji ³ Solomon Is ⁴	Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Palau, Marshall Islands, Micronesia

Although there is a literature surrounding the activities of environmental organisations and groups across the Asia Pacific region, the activity of Green Parties is less well documented. This is at least partly linked to the nascent development of the parties themselves, but equally to the still-evolving nature of many of the democracies within the region. The relatively recent transition to democratic elections for many nations, let alone the development of both parties and party systems within many nations, leads equally to a lack of familiarity with party-ideological concepts, although client relationships may be equated to parties.

Asia Pacific Green Network

The APGN itself was established in 2005, at the first congress of the federation, held in Kyoto, Japan. Attending were representatives of 37 different organizations and parties, including 10 environmental and human rights NGOs, from across 23 countries (APGN n.d. b, p14). Of those 27 Green organizations, 11 are currently APGN members, of which three merged and the rest are either non-members or no longer in existence. The 2005 attendee's also included representatives of two established political parties, the Tongan Human Rights and Development Party and the Cambodian Sam Rainsy Party, neither of which continued their association with the APGN past this meeting.

The APGN list of current member parties (Table 1) includes parties in India, Pakistan and Nepal in South Asia, and Mongolia, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan in East Asia, as well as a variety of parties across what might otherwise be called 'Oceania', such as Australia, New Zealand and a number of Pacific island nations. There are also 3 parties representing China (not counting Taiwan), although only 1, in Hong Kong, is based on the Chinese mainland. Only the Papua New Guinea Greens is representative of parties in South East Asia, although there are nascent Green parties in Indonesia and the Solomon Islands. So while the spread is broad geographically, the number of countries covered is relatively small.

² Vanuatu Green Confederation attended the initial APGN formation meeting but never proceeded to become a member.
<http://www.asiapacificgreens.org/sites/default/files/APGN%20Kyoto%20Report%20%282.2005%29.pdf>: New (2011)

³ A Fijian Green party was formed and registered in 2008 but never contested an election (Fields 2013). Deregistered as a party in 2013 following changes to electoral laws.

⁴ A Solomon Islands representative attended a number of APGN meetings but no party has formally joined. See also Feinstein (2005).

Table 1. Member parties of the Asia-Pacific Green Network

Member Parties (14):	Associate Members (4)
Australia: Australian Greens	Australia: Federation for a Democratic China Australia
Hong Kong; Green Party Hong Kong	Nepal: Green Nepal Party
India: Uttarakhand Parivartan Party (UKPP)	Philippines; Philippines Greens
Japan: <i>Midori no Mirai</i> /Greens Japan	Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka Green Alliance
Mongolia; Civil Will Green Party of Mongolia	
Mongolia; Mongolian Green Party	Friends of APGN (4)
Nepal: Green Civil Society	China: China Green Man Society
New Zealand: Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand	Expatriates from China: China Green Party
Pakistan: Pakistan Greens	Indonesia: Sarekat Hijau
Papua New Guinea: Papua New Guinea Greens	Nepal: Apex Mission Nepal
Philippines: <i>Partido Kalikasan</i> /Philippine Green Party	
South Korea: Green Party of Korea	
Taiwan: Green Party Taiwan	
Taiwan: Taiwan Friends of the Global Greens	

(APGN n.d. a)

The congress occurred in the context of the establishment of the Global Greens at the Global Greens Congress in Canberra, Australia, in 2001. At the Canberra conference Green parties globally agreed to form into four federations; the African Green Federation, Asia Pacific Green Network, Federation of Green Parties of the Americas, and the European Green Party. The establishment of the Asia Pacific federation had been precipitated by the first Asia Pacific meeting of Green parties in Brisbane in 2000, and finally occurred as part of the preparations for the 2nd Global Greens Congress in Brazil in 2010. The original APGN structure was as a loose confederation, but following the 2nd APGN Congress in 2010, was reformulated as can be seen in Figure 1.

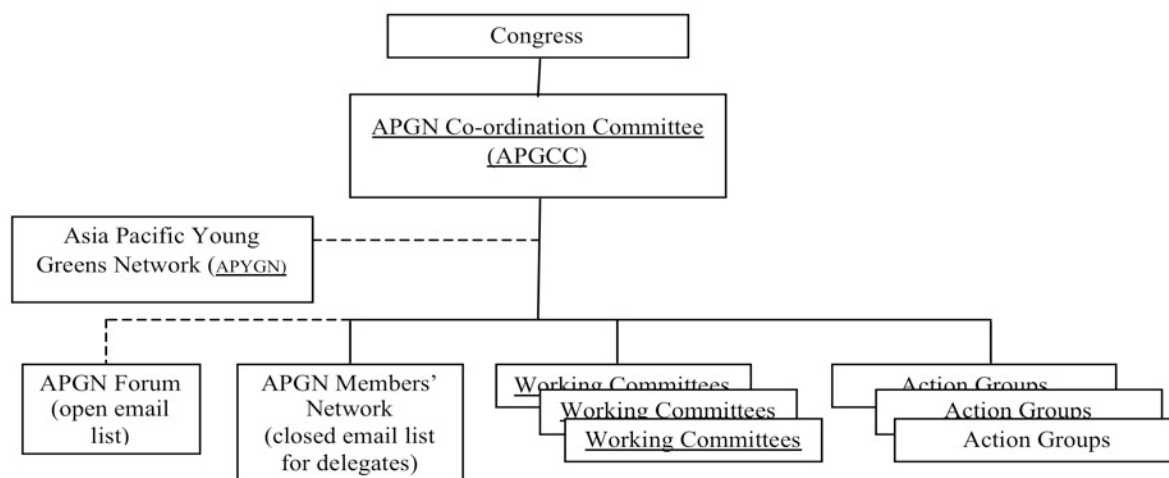


Figure 1. Organisational structure of the APGN
(APGN n.d. c)

The formal structuring of the APGN provides at least one framework in which to consider the relative potentialities for Greens parties in the Asia Pacific. As the primary focus of this paper is on the barriers to party development the a key element will be how senior members of the various constituent parties perceive the opportunities for, and barriers to, the party's growth in their nation.

Colonial influences

As Ahmed (2001) notes, the legislatures of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh all took their electoral systems from Britain. These are Westminster derived legislatures, with a first past the post (FPTP) electoral system and an executive drawn from the parliament, although each also rapidly developed directly elected Presidents. FPTP party systems tend to develop into two-party systems, where two large or major parties emerge, interchanging government and opposition, with a small number of minor parties at times able to win a few seats. In 1978 Sri Lanka changed to a system similar to a proportional representation (PR) system based on multi-member constituencies, but with a 12.5% threshold requirement (later reduced to 5%).⁵ Even with PR, the high threshold tended to discourage minor parties and entrench the two party system (Ahmed 2001, p27).

Equally, Lamour (2002, p40), in discussing the 'transfer' of power from former colonial powers, finds that most Pacific Islands initially opted for the system of their former colonial power ('Westminster' style in former British, Australian and New Zealand colonies, Presidential in former US and French colonies), although with a number of variants and crossovers. As Lamour also points out, 'It is an idealized and often archaic version of "Westminster" that is used to judge the actual practice of politics in Suva and Honiara as much as London.' (2000, p41).

Methodology

This research started from the premise that as little has been written about Green parties in the Asia Pacific then a documentary search would likely yield a relatively small number of primary sources, most notably those produced by Green parties themselves. At present there is a relatively small amount of material available in English, although there is potentially further material in a number of East Asian languages (Korean and Japanese in particular).

These documentary sources were then complemented by interviews with a number of available Green Party representatives, and a small number of environmentalists allied but for whatever reason not able to join or create a Green Party in their home country. The interviews were to be conducted at the Global Greens Conference in Dakar, Senegal in March-April 2012. However, due to time constraints only three interviews were conducted at the time with representatives from Nepal and PNG. Further interviews were conducted using Skype, as most participants from the Asia Pacific region at the Dakar conference were available via Skype.

⁵ http://www.parliament.lk/about_us/electoral_system.jsp

Table 2. Interviewees

Country	Interviewee	Position
Japan	Shuji Imamoto	Former National Organiser
Mongolia	Olzodyn Bum-Yalagch	Party Chair
Nepal	Raju Shestra	APGN Young Greens Steering Committee
	BK Dalit	Party Founding President
PNG	Andrew Kutapae	Party Secretary
Philippines	Rior Santos	APGN Secretary
Taiwan	Keli Yen	APGN Convenor
Vietnam	Huang Dao	(Environmental campaigner)

The interviews themselves were short (30 minutes) semi-structured interviews, with questions primarily focusing on eliciting what the respondents own estimation of barriers and hurdles for a Green party in their nation are or would be.

The interviews were conducted by Alex Bhathal, a former co-International Secretary of the Australian Greens, and herself a doctoral student examining immigration and population issues in the region as impacted by climate change. While Bhathal may be considered an ‘insider’ in respect of the proceedings at the conference, her access to the participants and to the broader APGN (and indeed her attendance at the conference) is key to being able to conduct the research. Co-researcher Stewart Jackson’s status as a former party office holder might also be seen as providing some level of ‘insider’ status, but this is tempered by a long absence from central party activities. What ‘insider’ status does afford in this instance is both access and a knowledge of the kinds of pressures, expectations and limitations that an emerging Green party might face.

Potential Barriers

From the examination of documentary and interviewee commentaries, eleven separate barriers were identified and examined. These ranged from the democratic (authoritarian regimes, and restricted democracies) to issues of development (repaid industrialisation and urbanisation).

Authoritarian regimes

Vietnam, Laos, PRC, DPRK and Brunei. These nations exist as substantially authoritarian/single party states, with a single or highly restricted number of parties contesting any election. In these instances, Green Parties would not be expected to exist, and none currently do as electoral vehicles although there is the Hong Kong Green Party campaigning on environmental issues (but not human rights or democracy issues) and the expatriate Chinese Green Party. Environmental organisations do exist to promote strictly environmental outcomes, but will operate entirely at the whim of the central party/parliamentary structure. Both Vietnam and PRC have semi-functioning environmental organisations and agencies, but these are generally poorly funded and have little power against state development plans. The nature of politics in Vietnam, for instance, means that discussion of ‘green’ issues is entirely restricted to environmental issues, with human rights or democracy not being discussed. Environmental issues need also to sit within a state framework, such that campaigning on energy issues is restricted to as the state has interests in expanding into nuclear energy power-systems.

Huang Dao (an environmental campaigner from Vietnam involved in the Global Young Greens) acknowledged “we have a very strong youth movement on environmental issues but still not the sensitive issues or to make radical change in terms of country security, like nuclear energy.” Dao goes further in suggesting that Vietnamese civil society is underdeveloped, from the many years of a monolithic state apparatus:

“The knowledge of the citizens about the right involvement in civil society is very limited, because we’ve been under for a long time under the leaning of the Communist Party, so there’s no[t] another party or other kind of movement [that] can oppose the government.”

Restricted Democracies

Nations such as Burma, Cambodia, Singapore, Fiji, Tonga and Malaysia, where electoral contests are both heavily securitized and fought within electoral systems that favour a single party or ethnic group. Reilly (2013) notes the shift, particularly amongst mainland Asian nations to, to more restrictive electoral systems, some favouring two party systems (with other parties effectively marginalized), while others such as Cambodia moving to a form of quasi-democracy, through electoral and media manipulation and the abandonment of open democratic systems (Human Rights Watch 2013). In a similar fashion, Singapore has a tightly controlled legislature and electoral system which has allowed the ruling People’s Action Party to continue to control 93% of seats in parliament with 60% of the popular vote (Carr 2011). The forms of manipulation, including barring of opponents from contesting elections, means that individuals tend to avoid electoral contests and the principal opposition party, the Workers Party, remains focused on democracy goals.

While Fiji has at times exhibited similarities, the flexibility of the existing parties within Fiji to respond to changing political circumstance, and gain support across ethnic divides, demonstrates that possibilities may exist even within an at times highly restrictive electoral mandate. Equally, the history of electoral management in Fiji is of attempts to engineer a ‘two-party’ system, but with highly variable results (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013). This again would appear to be the outcome of the development of Fiji’s new Constitution and electoral system (Kelly 2013). Fiji does need to be considered a special case given the size of the two principal ethnic groups, the history of political violence (with four coups in 19 years) and a concomitant desire for an electoral system that can provide at least a lessening of communal violence by encouraging parties to work across ethnic boundaries (Durutalo 2010). Although a Green party was registered in 2008 (Radio New Zealand International 2008), there have been no elections since that time. The prospects for a Green party in Fiji are likely to remain low, particularly as new laws promulgated by Fiji’s military government require parties to have at least 5000 members (Field 2013).

Tonga, by way of contrast, has elections, but within the framework of courtly rule. The 26 seat legislature is only partially elected, with 17 being elected from single member electorates, the rest being filled from the ranks of the traditional nobility. Parties do exist and operate, but within a restricted mandate where the executive (Prime Minister and Cabinet) are appointed by the Monarch, potentially for life (Act of Constitution 2010). Although the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands (formerly the Human Rights and Democracy Movement) holds 12 of the 17 commoner-elected seats it still has only a limited role in government, and no other party has polled more than 3% (Carr 2010). The prospects for a Green party are therefore limited.

In a similar fashion in Bhutan, itself a newly democratized nation, there are no formal restrictions on political parties, however, cultural restrictions upon the Lhotshampa minority within Bhutan have acted as a political restriction and have in the past lead to political violence (Evans 2010).

Newly democratized nations

Regimes in nations such as Taiwan, ROK, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan which have moved from authoritarian or restricted regimes to a more fully democratized status, but where parties and party systems are still in a state of flux. As Sherlock notes in relation to the Indonesian parliament, the adhoc mechanisms of the parliament and *fraksi* (parliamentary party fractions) have lead to the situation of positions on the party list to be treated as commodities related to fundraising, rather than based on merit or policy expertise (2012, 563).

Green parties are developing in some of these nations (Taiwan, ROK, Indonesia, and Pakistan), but remain small, generally unable to gain traction amongst the many competing parties and renewed interest in sustained economic development. The drive to entrench electorally a two-party system has also lead to increased marginalization of minor parties and candidates, through restricting proportional elements within the electoral system, and increasing thresholds for representation and high entry costs for contesting. Reilly (2013) has made the point that that opportunities for smaller parties appear to be greatest amongst maritime nations of the Asia-Pacific, such as Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines. This further suggests a geopolitical influence of the PRC and post-communist regimes upon mainland states to adopt stricter electoral regimes.

In Nepal, as in the case of a number of developing (and developed nations) there have been issues with the development of hydro-electric power schemes. Raju Sheshtra noted that the Greens are not strongly associated with campaigns around these and other environmental issues, the campaigning instead being seen as the province of NGOs, with political parties not overtly engaging in direct environmental campaigns or actions. BK Dalit noted equally that “NGOs are highly politicised in Nepal. If you talk about in Nepal most of the NGOs are affiliated with any one of the political parties. Some NGOs, most of the NGOs raise the issue under the influence of the political parties” suggesting that this restricts the level of action the Nepal Green Party can take.

Electoral violence

The electoral processes in India have over the years been marred by a series of problems and issues. As in Pakistan and Bangladesh, there are continuing claims of electoral fraud in favour of commercial and industrial interests. While there are instances across South Asia of violence, whether ideological (ie; Marxist insurgencies), terrorism (Pakistan), civil war (Sri Lanka), ethnic or religious violence (Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh, Bhutan) or combinations, this generally has not prevented the formation of multiple parties to contest elections.

Corruption and violence distorting the electoral process is also not restricted to South Asia, with nations as diverse as East Timor and the Philippines experiencing various levels of violence at times, although at times to a limited effect (Hickman 2009). The experience of the Pakistan Green Party in the 2013 Pakistan election, where a party worker was killed in

electoral violence while campaigning in the sole electorate the party contested, highlights the issues faced (European Green Party 2013). The Pakistan Green Party has also seen its Party Secretary summarily detained (although relatively quickly released) by security forces in 2012, and the threat of violence from both state and non-state actors remains a very real danger.

The Mongolian Green Party has also reported instances of electoral violence, with a former Civic Will leader assassinated. Following the 2008 legislative elections, there was widespread rioting with a number of people being killed and a state of emergency being declared (Bulag 2009).

Multiplicity of parties

The sheer number of electors and parties in India means that elections can be both costly and exhausting. The formation of multiple parties in a number of countries, India included, with a dilution of the influence of smaller parties such as the Greens, has also lead potential allies and supporters to seek out more influential political partners. However, this multiplicity of parties contesting elections has generally fallen across the Asia Pacific region over the past decade or so (2001-2013). This is part via electoral engineering to model two-party systems such as in many western democracies, but also due to a number of electoral hegemonies exerting considerable influence (Reilly 2008).

One such case has been Japan, with the Liberal Democratic Party exerting a considerable influence over government in the post-War period, and with it continued electoral manipulation. By contrast Thailand witnessed the emergence of the Thai Rak Thai Party in the period 2001-2006, with the two largest parties in the Thai parliament accounting for 95% of the seats (Croissant and Volkel 2010). In Mongolia the effect is even more extreme with the percentage of seats held by the two main parties not dipping below 94% between 1990 and 2008, with only 2 parties achieving more than 5% of the vote prior (Nohlen et al 2001; Carr 2012). At that 2012 legislative election 5 parties polled greater than 5%, but with 89% of the vote collected by three parties (Civic Will-Green Party garnered 5.6%) (Carr 2012).

At the other end of the spectrum, Indonesia generally has a large number of parties (9 in 2009) achieving 3% or greater, even with attempts to 'nationalise' party structures. In India, where in many of the Indian states there may be up to 11 effective parties in parliament (Chhibber and Nooruddin 2004), there has also been a rise in the number of contestants per seat (Yadav 1998). While there are just 7 national parties, there was a total of some 363 parties contesting elections across India at the 2009 Lok Sabha elections (Election Commission of India 2009). This means electoral competition for votes in single member districts is fierce, and electoral prospects daunting. Nepal has also experienced a growth in the number of contesting parties. Both Raju Sheshtra and BK Dalilt highlighted that there is a growing mistrust of the parties that do exist in Nepal, as they have not delivered on poverty eradication and development. At the same time, there are some 53 parties (representatives of 25 parties were elected at the last election in 2008), which means high levels of competition for limited resources, and based on significantly diverse platforms.

The situation in the Philippines, with many small parties, sometimes as offshoots of NGOs, the purpose and role of a Green party is constantly questioned. Rior Santos explained, "We cannot blame them because on our experience, in the Philippines [perspective], parties are sometimes not a real party" (see also Hicken 2009, 151-7). Santos goes on to explain that the

desire for power leads to the formation of front parties, echoing Tan's (2013, p84) conclusion that parties are rooted in "firstly personality, and secondly clan/provisional power bases", and providing these parties with extensive resources:

"These [parties] are just mechanisms for those to formalise a group who would like to get power and run by those who have lots of money and support those who run like a party. Because of that it destroys the legitimacy and the moral ground of having a party, it is always questionable."

Even more daunting is the case of PNG, which at the 2012 election had 46 registered parties contesting 111 seats, with 3127 candidates (including Independents) nominating, and some seats being contested by over 30 candidates. The election itself resulted in 21 parties being represented in the parliament (PNGEC 2012).

Resources (financial or otherwise)

Resources are a primary issue of concern for many small parties of whatever political hue. However, this may apply more specifically to Green parties as they would not normally rely on significant benefactors from industry or commerce, but from professional or middle class party members. The therefore restricted funding pool coupled with low average per capita incomes in many Asia Pacific countries mean parties are resource-poor, even if they have an extensive program and a pool of members. This may be particularly true of Pacific Island nations, where patterns of clientalistic relations mean that the payment of funds for voting is an expectation of sections of the population, and that without adequate financial resources Green parties will struggle to make electoral inroads. However, lack of financial resources is not in itself endemic to the Asia-Pacific region, with African Green parties equally expected to share such a restriction on activity.

The problem of resourcing is then further compounded when patronage or clientalistic relationship exist. Such relationships suggest an ongoing, iterative, relationship between client and party or patron, built potentially through personal contact, and perhaps only peripherally impacted by financial resources. To overcome this, new relationship would need to be built, but without access to either funds or being in a position to offer other inducements.

Certainly a feature of all the interviews was that resources were a significant factor inhibiting party growth, but with differing underlying causes. For instance, the PNG Greens, with some 800 members across a diverse nation with difficult terrain, experiences major communication problems, with campaigning very expensive based on transport costs. Andrew Kutapae noted that while the PNG Green Party had 800 members, distributed across the country, problems of transportation in a nation that has significant mountain ranges but poor infrastructure are a significant limiting factor for the party's growth. Even in Port Moresby, where Kutapae is based, the lack of physical resources to provide an office or party infrastructure limit the party's capacity to meet and engage with potential members. This is seen as less of an issue with other parties, based on their having MPs to supplement the party income.

A similar situation exists in the Philippines, with its disparate archipelago. Partido Kalikasan, although with 9 local Councillors, still has few financial resources and so struggles to promote the party and party ideals, as Santos explained: "We don't have a lot of resources in paying for paid advertising in television like the big parties." The resource issue also impacts

when traversing the terrain and island nature of the Philippines. Santos also noted the lack of public funding for electoral politics in most Asian nations, as compared the fairly generous public funding in many developed nations.

By contrast, BK Dalit noted that in Nepal the party struggles with limited resources without the wealthy patrons that normally support the other parties. This is compounded by a need not to be typecast as a party supporting particular sectional interests, further reducing the funding pool.

Clientalistic political relations

Pacific island nations in particular have been noted as having clientalistic relations between electors and politicians and this also extends to PNG (Kelly 2010; Lamour 2002, p41). Where political parties exist they may be more fluid in their parliamentary membership or exist more on the basis of personalities with limited party memberships. Anecdotally, observers from the Australian Greens have noted this relationship amongst Green parties in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, with the party from the latter (Green Confederation) being expelled from the APGN and Global Greens for such behavior. Certainly Fraenkel & Aspinall document repeated clientalistic behavior in the Solomon Islands, noting the flow of cash to several oustings of governments (particularly those not aligned to financial/commercial interests) (2013, 25-26; see also Nanau 2003). Lee (2008, 109), in discussing the Philippine party system, notes that parties tend to take socially conservative positions, acting as catch-all parties to avoid dividing or alienating sections of the electorate, and that “parties are essentially pyramids of patron-client relationships stretching from the remotest villages to Manila.”

If a commitment to internal (participatory) democracy is considered a hallmark of Green parties, then paternalistic or clientalistic patterns of leadership and decision making would appear anathematic.

However, Tomsa & Ufen (2013) suggest that a fuller understanding of clientalism needs to be made, separating it from corruption and vote buying, instead linking it to ongoing relationships between the voter and candidate. This may differ from direct patronage (where an elector may receive a position or role in return for their ongoing support) in that the client-candidate relationship must be ongoing. Tomsa and Ufen go on to suggest that (as in the work of Scott 1972) the relationship between the client and the candidate/patron is iterative, hierarchical and exchange based.

This further suggests that, if parties themselves are relatively fluid and not embedded culturally, a formalised 'Green' party would have ongoing difficulties in situations marked by clientalism beyond that which might be over-come by vote buying. In that instance, a Green party, or its candidates, would need to be seen in a patronage or hierarchical position within the community, or at least have access to such a relationship. This again would appear to be anathematic to Green notions of open participatory politics.

An unusual instance of clientelistic relations was highlighted by Shuji Imamoto from Greens Japan. For much of the post-war period, however, it has been dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party, which through forms of state corruption and electoral manipulation has managed to retain control of government for the bulk of this period. The focus remains on economic growth, with the result that environmental issues do not feature very prominently.

Even after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, which did raise significant issues of nuclear energy, there was no corresponding rise in influence, membership or vote for the Greens. Imamoto noted that the national party, Greens Japan, has only a small membership and has never elected an MP. While there have been some members of provincial parliaments and Councils, they have been elected as Independents. This highlighted a divide between national politics, where parties are deeply entrenched, and local/province level politics where parties are far less entrenched, to the point of anti-party narratives being expressed.

Imamoto also noted that in his view, Asian nations would be resistant to Green ideas/parties due to a reliance on “traditional views; “Because they are still connected to traditional politics and traditional interests at the local region and they want to become more economically wealthy, and traditional areas, many conservative people are living there so they can’t resist or refuse their demands and requests.” This statement appears to imply that traditional notions of clientelistic politics still wield a strong influence on voting patterns, as much as economic self-interest exists as a motivator to vote for more populist politicians. The focus on the ‘popular’ politicians also means a more ideologically driven Green party has trouble gaining media attention during election periods; “this time no popular person, no information and no money, so the situation is very difficult.”

‘Greenwashing’

As more traditional electoral parties become aware of environmental issues, especially when electors appear to be motivated on environmental matters, then those parties will start to adopt environmental platforms. This has occurred with parties across the political spectrum (with exception of those on the political and ideological margins such as fascist-oriented organisations, ie, Golden Dawn in Greece or Ataka in Bulgaria) and certainly across the western world (Carter 2013). This is in part to be expected as parties attempt to modify policies to suit their electors. Green parties obviously have an advantage with the environment, but have also been at the forefront of a number of social issues. What has been noted, from interviewees from Nepal, Taiwan and Mongolia, is the rise of ‘greenwashing’ or parties rebranding themselves as ‘green’ even when they do not maintain environmental platforms past elections. The Mongolian Green Part (MGP) did hold one seat in parliament between 1996 and 2000, and were part of a governing coalition. The formation of the Civil Will Party created an opportunity for the MGP such that a coalition was formed with Civil Will. This coalition last only one year, but at this point Civil Will changed its name to Civil Will–Green Party. This distracted many activists and caused confusion in the electorate, such that the MGP only registered 1.3% in the 2012 election. Olzodyn Bum-Yalagch described this as a difficult period for the party;

“They got our candidates, our choice of citizens who are going to work, it was misunderstanding. They can’t make the difference between two parties Civil Will and Green Party. That’s why we lost a lot of candidates and was a sad time and difficult time for us.”

While in most advanced industrial countries such as those in Western Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand, there is a public clearly aware of the difference between the electoral parties and their various stances on environmental and social issues, this is less of a case in newly democratised nations, such as in much of the Asia. This has particularly applied to environmental issues (even though Greens in a number of countries such as Nepal have also been heavily involved in pro-democracy movements and campaigns) and has had two principal effects which were emphasised by both BK Dalit and Raju Shestra. Firstly,

electors have developed a general mistrust of politicians electoral platforms, viewing them as self-serving statements; and secondly, as Green parties are often not yet sufficiently established in electors minds as a particular form of party ‘family’ or group, the issue of the environment is diluted and the Green message unheard. In extreme cases there have been candidates and parties making statements as if they were a ‘green’ party when they are more closely aligned to traditional ideologies such as communism or conservatism.

Rapid industrialization and infrastructure development

The rise of ‘Asian Tigers’ and the rapid transition from primarily agricultural to industrial manufacturing economies has brought significant pressures on both the environment and social fabrics of Asia Pacific nations. Indeed it might be argued that rapid industrialization, and a fixation on economic development has completely overtaken any concerns for environmental or social justice (Cole 2010). Although there is some evidence for ‘green’ growth models having some traction amongst these nations (Green et al 2010), this is still within an economic growth paradigm.

This raises a related issue of the role and place of indigenous peoples in developing nations generally. It was noted by several of the interviewee’s that while Greens have been raising human rights issues brought about by uneven and even corrupt development for a number of years, this has not translated into any electoral support. ‘Green’ or environmental issues are not therefore linked to indigenous issues, and although the concerns of poorer people should also be a Green issue, these were normally taken up as being class-based and the work of communist or socialist parties.

Coupled with rapid industrialization is the question of infrastructure development. When east Asian nations such as Japan and Taiwan industrialised in the post-WW2 period, they also put considerable resources and effort into economic and infrastructure development. Keli Yen suggested that this ease of communication and transport has enabled smaller parties such as the Greens to be able to move and communicate with a broad range of the community. However, the focus on economic development has deeply influenced Taiwanese electoral behaviour. As Yen noted in regards to the many rural electors, “they tend to not particularly have a feeling for abstract notions such as peace and justice”.

Mongolia has recently seen a surge in economic development with a commensurate rapid urbanisation of the population, with a consequential need for energy and employment. This has led to an increased focus on economic development, especially in the mining and energy sectors, including the mining of uranium. Bum-Yalagch noted that people still living more traditional (nomadic and herding) lifestyles conversely have a greater focus on the retention of the natural environment, potentially a positive for a Green or pro-environment party.

Lack of a viable ‘post-material’ class of voters

Inglehart, Bell and Parkin each discussed the rise of the post-industrial or post-material voter. These voters were characterised by being strongly influenced by non-material interests, separate from those electors influenced by concerns centred on class, religion or ethnicity, and issues of directly material consequence to them. Post-material electors typically have interests in environmental or social justice outcomes that do not necessarily directly impact their lives. Parkin (1968) described them as the “new middle class”, indicating that this group had attained a level of financial security, in conjunction with high levels of education. Green

parties, particularly in Western Europe, have drawn the core of their support from this group of voters. However, in the Asia Pacific region there would be some doubt as to the existence or size of such a group amongst the various polities. Although Inglehart (2000) proposes that economic development and democratic institutions leads to subjective well-being, each is also a pre-cursor to higher post-material values.

However, many of the nations of the Asia-Pacific cannot necessarily be said to have developed a strong post-material class. While Indonesia (or more precisely Java) has established and developed cultural practices that show a sophisticated understanding of power and politics (see for instance, Anderson (1972)), the post-colonial experiences of Indonesia suggests that development is far from even, with extreme disparities of power and wealth. Certainly, amongst maritime Asian nations, development has not progressed sufficiently that a large middle class has yet emerged, although in the large prosperous nations of Philippines and Indonesia such a group is rapidly growing. As Deegan-Krause (2007, 552) has noted, “few Asian countries have followed Western European cleavages patterns”, strongly implying that the development of post-material electors is hampered by much ideological or programmatic cleavages. Compounding this is the sheer size of the urban and rural poor populations, particularly in South Asia. Despite this Chan (2008, 60-61) argues that the rapid development of much of Asia has led to a process of ‘embourgeoisement’, with growing demands for social interests to be addressed, and a tendency for politicians to promote ‘catch-all’ policy programs.

So, as Keli Yen also noted, Green ideals tend to be only understood by city-based intellectuals and the well-educated. This can also be seen in age-based patterns of voting, with young people prepared to vote for a Green candidate, but older voters, as Yen states, “kind of immovable with their political worldview and their loyalties to their party”.

Organisational ‘unreadiness’

While a category of ‘organisational unreadiness’ might seem to typify the problems of any party responding to other restrictions on practice or resource acquisition, the phenomena of “we’re not ready” is one that has been highlighted in two of the most populace and recently vibrant democracy, Indonesia and Philippines. In both instances Green Parties have been nascent since the early 2000s, but it has only been more recently that they have shown an actual willingness to fully engage in electoral politics. Both countries have particular issues in respect of geography (separated islands with different language and cultural groups), are post-dictatorship, have ongoing separatist movements, and while having significant developing economies still show considerable poverty and under-development.

The case of the Philippines Green Party ‘*Partido Kalikasan*’ has not specifically been explored academically except by Unaldi (2009). Unaldi found that for the period between 2004 and 2009 the party congresses were consistently told “we’re not ready”, as the party slowly built local party chapters but without contesting elections. The Philippine electoral system, which is a mixed member system, utilising first-past-the-post method in single member constituencies and a proportional method with a national party lists (Shin 2013). The proportional section accounts for 20% of the available seats, with many seats being reserved for particular group and a 2% of votes set as a threshold to take up seats (Reilly 2007). However, these seats have not always been filled and have been of limited applicability for most parties. The focus is therefore on the constituency level seats, where the individual candidate is more important than the party.

The issue for a small environmentally focussed party is therefore when to announce and run for election. While the party has been building in the Philippines, it has not formally announced as a normal political party contesting constituency seats, instead staying registered as an environmental organisation. This ‘lack of readiness’ has meant that although there is apparently a constituency available to the party it has not tested this fully.

The case of Indonesia is similar, with *Sarekat Hijau* emerging from a decade long process where the largest of the non-government environmental organisations Wahli did consider standing people for election but consistently argued that the time was not yet right. The party has now been established and is an associate member of the APGN, but the restrictive nature of the registration process makes it difficult to be registered as a federal party. Nonetheless, Ufen (2008, 342) concluded that “a fair degree of party and party system institutionalisation has been achieved in Indonesia”, and goes on to suggest that parties have a clear social and political cleavages, giving rise to expectations that *Sarekat Hijau* could potentially establish an electoral base. Mietzner (2013) noted that in fact many former labour and pro-democracy activists from the Suharto period are now engaged in party politics, so it would seem reasonable that activists from environmental NGOs would also seek to be engaged, in what Meitzner has described as a “vibrant civil society that counterbalances the state” (2013, 29).

Conclusion

It is quite clear that many of the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific face multiple difficulties as they democratise. The issues that parties in each nation faces are therefore going to be to some extent country-specific. Certainly the issues faced by political and environmental activists in authoritarian regimes such as PRC or Vietnam is qualitatively different to those faced in established democracies of South Korea or Japan, or the messy (but ultimately vibrant) democracies of the Philippines and Indonesia. If there is one theme that does emerge, aside from the general lack of resources (physical and political), it is that many of the emerging Asian democracies are still plagued by clientelistic and paternalistic political relationships, which consequently undermine the open, transparent and participatory nature of much Green politics.

There certainly does appear to be some anecdotal evidence that these forms of relationship have significantly undermined the ability of the PNG Greens to operate during election campaigns, and have been responsible for Solomon Islands party activists from not becoming established or recognised as a Green party. The Vanuatu Green Confederation, which currently holds the Prime Ministership of Vanuatu, have been effectively barred from membership of the APGN and Global Greens on concerns surrounding exactly these forms of relationships. More generally, clientelistic political relationships, as outlined by Tomsa and Ufen (2013) restrict the capacity of small parties from gaining or expanding footholds in parliaments.

Outside of direct electoral and democratic constraints, there remains the place of environmental politics more generally. Each of the interviewees also identified, some more strongly than others, the government-driven imperative of economic development in their nations as being a significant barrier to political activism around either the environment or human rights more broadly. How this is overcome, or even worked with, remains a thorny question for political activists, and may constrain actions around either topic to providing

information or reports to both government and the general population. This then raises the potential for state suppression and political violence further undermining the potential or successful development of these parties. What is also suggested here, though, is that environmental issues appear to now be cast in the same light as human rights issues, potentially opening places for dialogue and combined actions between the different networks of political and social activists.

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