It has been five years since the Sunflower movement, and as its leaders have moved into politics or pursued other goals, it might seem that student movements have waned — at least compared with the flurry of activity that started with the Anti-Media Monopoly Movement in 2012 and culminated in the occupation of the Legislative Yuan in 2014.

During the nine-in-one elections in November last year, many young people seemed disappointed by both the pan-blue and pan-green camps, preferring to vote only on referendums that interested them.

However, students remain emboldened to voice their opinions, make demands and achieve visible results.

In February, a group of high-school students stopped their school from publicizing college exam results in an effort to prevent the media from focusing on top students, which fosters academic elitism and invades students' privacy. Other high-ranking schools across Taiwan followed suit. That would not have seemed possible 10 years ago.

On Saturday last week, an alliance of students returned to a familiar topic: the media. This time, they looked to improve quality and combat fake news, especially items originating in China aimed at undermining Taiwan's sovereignty.

A coalition of university and high-school groups held a news conference to announce the establishment of the Youth Front for Boycotting Fake News, saying that it had already won the backing of groups from more than 100 schools, as well as 50 experts.

Although Taiwan has long been plagued by sensational, biased and poor-quality television news programs, outright fake news of all sorts has become rampant, especially in the run-up to last year's elections.

This is a topic that affects all Taiwanese, regardless of political affiliation (except for those who

support Chinese rule). The news can be heavily biased in either direction, and balanced and verified reporting is a crucial element to a properly informed public.

Television is rightfully being targeted by the front first, as it is still the primary news source for older people — the segment least likely to go online to verify information. Media literacy is increasingly important in this era of information overload, and it is encouraging that students are taking it upon themselves to create change and make use of their tech savviness.

The inclusion of experts in the coalition shows that it is not just running high on youthful idealism, but has a clear focus with the necessary expertise.

Whether someone leans toward the pan-blue or pan-green camp, all can agree that a healthier news industry is needed — and that Beijing is a proven foreign threat that is trying to undermine Taiwan's freedom of information, influence elections and cause panic.

The Anti-Media Monopoly Movement opposed the buying of Taiwanese media companies by entities with substantial investments in China, while the Sunflower movement was against former president Ma Ying-jeou's (□□□) Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement with China. In neither case was China directly meddling with Taiwan.

Perhaps the fake news issue, if promoted properly, could become less clouded by local infighting and more energized by people starting to look at it as a genuine threat to national security. It might be wishful thinking, but students represent unbridled energy and hope. When they decide to take a stand, it seems that anything can happen.

The civic power of Taiwanese society should not be overlooked now that the Sunflower movement is over.

There is no telling where this new student movement will go, but it is healthy for a democratic society to see young people trying to generate the next wave of student activism.

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