

MASTER'S THESIS

Online video political satire in post-handover Hong Kong: the competition for discursive power in Mainland China and Hong Kong relationship

Lau, Hiu Ming

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between mainland China and Hong Kong has not been smooth since the 1997 handover. The relationship has deteriorated further in the past decade, and at the same time the Chinese government has been tightening its grip on Hong Kong with a series of national policies.

With this backdrop, some among Hong Kong's media have adopted video political satire as their way of reporting, thereby pushing video political satire into the limelight. Political satire in Hong Kong has a long history, but it did not receive much attention until the emergence of video political satire in the digital age. Hong Kong media that supports both the pan-democratic and pro-establishment camps utilise political satire as a political weapon to criticise and delegitimise the opposing camp.

This study has modified Hallin's sphere as its theoretical foundation, and the sphere of legitimate controversy is understood as the battlefield between the pro-establishment and pan-democratic camps. Political satire is used as a weapon to jam the discourse of the opposing camp in the sphere of legitimate controversy.

This study investigated the influence of online video political satire in post-handover Hong Kong, in light of the increasingly intense relationship between mainland China and Hong Kong. Six long-held ideological struggles have been used as analytical tools to identify the embedded packages. This study has achieved three research objectives: it has identified the changing face of political satire in the digital age, namely, the shift from political cartoon to video political satire; it has displayed the difference in production synergies from individual-based producers to institutional-based producers; and it has challenged the

assumption that political satire is subversive in nature by uncovering the ideological packages of different political camps.

This thesis has chosen four policy cases as case studies. These policies are highly related to China and are controversial. This study employed quantitative content analysis, qualitative content analysis and interviews with relevant stakeholders. Results showed that video political satire has room to include more varied information than the political cartoon, including the effect on audio and visual elements. Video political satire also has higher spreadability as it is distributed online, whereas the political cartoon is disseminated via newspaper. The different production synergies (from individual-based to institutional-based) are constituted by individual freedom and the self-positioning as a journalist. This study could link video political satire study in Hong Kong to a wider scope of foreign political satire research, which mostly focuses on individually-produced political satire works. This study also revisits the concept of culture jamming, and has developed an advanced concept called discourse jamming. Unlike cultural jamming, discourse jamming neither assumes that political satire is subversive nor that it is an “eye-opener” which jams mainstream culture. Discourse jamming is a more flexible concept, indicating that political satire can be used by both the pan-democratic and pro-establishment camps.

TABLES OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 CONTEXT OF STUDY	4
1.1.1 <i>The political situation in Hong Kong: 20 years after the handover</i>	4
1.1.2 <i>Media manipulation? Tightening grip and setting up the mouthpiece</i> ...4	
1.1.3 <i>Demobilisation by media</i>	6
1.1.4 <i>Emerging influence of Political Satire: An Overview</i>	7
1.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	10
1.2.1 <i>Definitions of terms</i>	11
1.3 THE ORGANISATION OF THE CHAPTERS	11
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 WHAT IS SATIRE?	13
2.1.1 <i>Two types of Satire: Juvenalian and Horatian</i>	15
2.2 POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE POLITICAL ENTERTAINMENT FIELD	17
2.2.1 <i>Political Satire: Information or entertainment as primary?</i>	17
2.2.2 <i>Political Satire: fake news or alternative journalism?</i>	18
2.3 POLITICAL SATIRE AS COUNTER-NARRATIVES	19
2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PLACING POLITICAL SATIRE INTO HALLIN’S SPHERE.....	22
2.4.1 <i>How satire works in countries with a different political system</i>	25
2.5 CULTURE JAMMING AS ACTIVISM.....	26
2.5.1 <i>Political Satire as political culture jamming</i>	28
2.5.2 <i>Is satire truly subversive?</i>	29
2.5.3 <i>From individual efforts to institutional efforts</i>	32
2.5.4 <i>Theoretical modification: discourse jamming</i>	33
2.5.5 <i>Why study of individual professional satirists is not enough?</i>	33
2.6 IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES IN HONG KONG.....	35
2.6.1 <i>Identity crisis</i>	35
2.6.2 <i>Nationalisation and localisation</i>	38
2.6.3 <i>Depoliticisation</i>	39
2.6.4 <i>Means to opinion expression in protest</i>	43

2.6.5 <i>One country, two systems: national sovereignty, local autonomy and localisationalism</i>	44
2.6.6 <i>What is the rule of law?</i>	45
2.7 SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	49
3.1 METHOD	49
3.1.1 <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	50
3.1.2 <i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	50
3.2 PROCEDURES.....	54
3.2.1 <i>Content analysis</i>	54
3.2.2 <i>Interview</i>	55
3.3 CASE CHOSEN	56
3.3.1 <i>NPC's decision on Hong Kong's Electoral Reform</i>	56
3.3.2 <i>Multiple-Entry Permit Plan of Mainlanders</i>	58
3.3.3 <i>Belt and Road initiative in Hong Kong</i>	59
3.3.4 <i>Co-location arrangement</i>	60
3.4 SUMMARY	61
CHAPTER 4 THE CHANGING FACE OF POLITICAL SATIRE	62
4.1 CARTOON VS VIDEO POLITICAL SATIRE	63
4.1.1 <i>Characteristic 1: video political satire dissembles online</i>	64
4.1.2 <i>Characteristic 2: video political satire has a different media format</i> ..	64
4.1.3 <i>Characteristic 3: video political satire has higher spreadability</i>	64
4.1.4 <i>Characteristic 4: video political satire contained more factual information</i>	65
4.1.5 <i>Characteristic 5: video political satire is produced by a group of producers</i>	66
4.2 FROM INDIVIDUAL TO INSTITUTIONAL: INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN THE SEEMINGLY BOUNDARYLESS WORLD.....	66
4.2.1 <i>Cartoonist: Individual freedom as a columnist in a newspaper</i>	67
4.2.2 <i>Political satirists in the West: Whatever they want</i>	69
4.2.3 <i>Individual with limited freedom: Video political satire in Hong Kong</i>	71
4.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGING FACE OF POLITICAL SATIRE.....	76
4.4 SUMMARY	77

CHAPTER 5 FIGHT FOR DISCURSIVE POWER: POLITICAL SATIRE AS A WEAPON	79
5.1 MAPPING VIDEO POLITICAL SATIRE IN HONG KONG	79
5.2 STANCE OF MEDIA, MAIN CHARACTER AND OVERALL STORY VALANCE	80
5.3 IDEOLOGICAL PACKAGES IN VIDEO POLITICAL SATIRE.....	83
5.3.1 <i>Ideological Struggle 1: Hong Kong is not China?</i>	83
5.3.2 <i>Speak Out Hong Kong: Request on autonomy is the same as independence</i>	86
5.3.3 <i>TV Most: Local Hong Kong officials should put Hong Kong people first</i>	89
5.3.4 <i>Apple Daily: Chinese officials should stop bringing Chinese culture to Hong Kong</i>	92
5.4 IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE 2: DEFINITION OF “DE-POLITICISATION”	95
5.4.1 <i>Speak Out Hong Kong: Troublemakers</i>	96
5.4.2 <i>Speak Out Hong Kong: Stop politicising the campus and youngsters</i> .	98
5.5 IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE 3: STANCE TO RADICAL MEANS IN PROTESTS.....	100
5.5.1 <i>TV Most: Yes radical means are used---but with a good reason</i>	102
5.5.2 <i>TV Most: Police handle the protesters forcefully</i>	103
5.5.3 <i>Apple Daily: Shift focus to the opponents of radical means</i>	105
5.5.4 <i>Speak Out Hong Kong: Violence is wrong. Period.</i>	106
5.6 IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE 4: ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS.....	107
5.6.1 <i>Apple Daily: One country, two systems ensure the uniqueness of Hong Kong</i>	108
5.7 STRUGGLE 5: DEFINITION OF THE “RULE OF LAW”	109
5.7.1 <i>Speak Out Hong Kong: Rule of law refers to strictly following the law; whoever breaks the law should be punished!</i>	111
5.7.2 <i>Apple Daily: Political problems should be dealt with by political means</i>	112
5.7.3 <i>TV Most: Selective enforcement of law</i>	113
5.8 SUMMARY	115
CHAPTER 6 VIDEO POLITICAL SATIRE AS A POLITICAL TOOL FOR DISCOURSE JAMMING	116
6.1 THE CHANGING FACE OF POLITICAL SATIRE.....	117
6.1.1 <i>From individual-based producer to institutional-based producer</i>	118

6.2 POLITICAL SATIRE AS A WEAPON: THE EMBEDDED IDEOLOGICAL PACKAGE	119
6.2.1 <i>Ideological struggle 1: Hong Kong is not China?</i>	119
6.2.2 <i>Ideological struggle 2: Definition of “de-politicisation”</i>	120
6.2.3 <i>Ideological Struggle 3: Stance to radical means in protests</i>	121
6.2.4 <i>Ideological Struggle 4: One country, Two systems</i>	122
6.2.5 <i>Struggle 5: Definition of the “rule of law”</i>	122
6.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION	123
6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	124
6.5 LIMITATIONS	125
REFERENCE	127
APPENDIX 1 CODEBOOK	136
APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	141
APPENDIX 3 SELECTED TIME FRAME	157
APPENDIX 4 STANCE TO DIFFERENT CHARACTERS	158
APPENDIX 5 LIST OF VIDEOS EXAMINED	161
APPENDIX 6 CURRICULUM VITAE	170