

DOCTORAL THESIS

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

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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.

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