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## ***Interpreting Political image of Donald Tsang in Alternative Media***

Wong Wai Kwok

The emergence and rapid development of the Internet facilitates the interaction amongst people, and the exchange of information. With the continuous upgrading and renewal of hardware and software, the merging of internet and cellular phones and laptop, the popularity of tablet computers, the adoption of user-friendly approach in sharing videos (e.g., YouTube) and social networking platforms (e.g., Facebook and Facebook groups), the popularity of information technology leads to people who can be receiving information without unceasing, as well as entertaining, sharing the personal feelings and observations in written, visual, or cinematic forms, thereby articulating collectively cyberspace. Such a cyberspace, in turn, becomes a powerful platform creating, producing and disseminating sub-culture, forging an alliance with various organizations, participating actively the political process, and facilitating the identity formation for such participants (Pini, Brown and Previte, 2004, p. 273).

In response to the existing political, social and economic context, the Internet serves as an important tool to provide information and facilitate communication, thereby creating an opportunity for those who can be active in the arena. Being labeled as “netizens”, they deliberately and spontaneously aggregate together and then deploy the harsh, critical, and humorous approach to write about and respond to the political institutions, leadership, and practices, aiming at challenging and even opposing the authorities. Some of them even adopt the abusive and porn language to express the grievances associated with the critical and desperate conditions resulting from the worsening political environment. Such netizens in general make the identical expectation, saying that their ideas, feelings and opinions which have been devalued and excluded from the mainstream society can be expressed, heard and acknowledged in the first instance, and then shared, circulated, discussed and reproduced during the course. As reflected by

Bell (2001) who highlights that “cyberspace is created through the stories we tell about it. There are different kinds of stories, which I call material, symbolic and experiential stories... Symbolic stories are the tales told in popular culture – in fiction, films, songs, adverts, -- and everyday life; these stories give us a set of resources for thinking about cyberspace (p. 51).” As a result of the accumulative narration and depiction of such symbolic stories, such materials constitute the Internet subculture. By resisting different forms of political inequality, including the absence of fair mechanism for vote casting, this provides an opportunity for those deprived utilizing the cyberspace and then taking the concrete actions to empower themselves. As Muhlberger (2004) reminds us that “if an event of sufficient concern occurs, the internet greatly increases the possibility of mobilization (p. 226)”, thereby combining the influential force from different places against the regime.

Such excluded views starting from the internal dissemination and sharing, and then formulating the non-mainstream assertions and viewpoints. The mainstream media then locates, investigates and report them, turning out to be the substantial and acceptable viewpoints that cannot be readily ignored and excluded, despite the fact that they may not be mainstream views ultimately. One of the notable example found in Hong Kong is that some netizens use the term “putting forward (the information) to newspapers (mainstream media) (*Tui Shang Bu*)”, meaning that the creative work of netizens through an the Internet platform (e.g., blogs, YouTube, Facebook) is discovered and reported in the mainstream media, regardless of proses or video clips. In fact, some netizens write in their own blog, and their views and feelings are being found, acknowledged, extracted and disseminated in different Internet platforms. This facilitates the articulation and dissimulation of public discourse (Hindman, 2009, pp. 105-109). In this regard, “putting forward (the information) to the newspapers” can be seen as the positive response to the Internet subculture, and be served as the alternative way questioning and challenging the ruling and ideology of the regime.

In retrospect, the Internet has been transforming from an information platform to a politicized arena, and then creating, producing and sharing political language. This paper examines the political narration and discussion of Donald Tsang in cyberspace, one of the key arenas of the alternative media, and analyzes how the political image and perception has been socially constructed in this light. By selecting various Internet platforms and interpreting Tsang's political image, perception and ideology, it is anticipated that the local political ecology can be approached, updated and reflected further. Most importantly, cyberspace provides another salient arena to holistically and critically reflect upon the understanding of political culture, meaning that while political culture is understood in terms of the findings resulting from the survey data, with the pre-set questions and options being imposed to the respondents. Researchers explain and interpret the data of political leaders and institutions as well as public policies. In fact, political culture can also be understood in terms of those people holding the common background, belief and identity, they deploy different ways to introduce, design and then (re-)produce such meaningful symbols and icons, with the aim to express their own feelings and views. According to Chadwick and Howard O' Reilly (2009), with the emergence of Web 2.0 after 2003 (which denotes the interactive media and platform, including blogs, YouTube, Wikipedia. At present, Web 3.0 is prevailed, with the notable examples of Facebook and Google plus), it is a trend that the Internet shapes politics, which are featured as "the Internet as a platform for political discourse, the collective intelligence emergent from the political web use, the importance of data over particular software and hardware applications, perpetual experientialism in the public domain, the creation of small-scale forms of political engagement through consumerism, the propagation of political content over multiple applications and rich user experiences on political websites" (Chadwick and Hoards, 2009, p. 4). Above all, cyberspace introduces and then facilitates political empowerment, for netizens can shape politics at varying degrees.

This paper introduces and examines four cases in relation to the political image and perception of Donald Tsang covering different Internet platforms, namely YouTube, Facebook group, Wikipedia and blogs. The selection of these cases is attributed to the following reasons: First, these cases are symbolic and meaningful in light of reflecting upon and responding to political context critically. The presentation of such cases, regardless of proses, songs or cartoons, reveals critically the Tsang's administration and leadership, as reflected in the deployment of critical and abusive language in connection with the current political context. Additionally, some cases are focusing on the collective wisdom of netizens in creating and producing the songs and cartoons, in addition to writing proses, with the significant number of surfers visiting their sites. This shows that the people generally recognize and then share the meaning of their works. And finally, the use of the similar theme to create various forms of works demonstrating in different internet platforms, showing that the meaning and message conveyed are acknowledged, and then reproduced and disseminated subsequently and coincidentally, aiming to imprint and reinforce the definite political belief and perception.

### **“I'll get the job done”**

In retrospect, the Tsang's political and personal image is depicted in the way that he wears the formal dressing with the bowtie during the open occasions, thereby being addressed informally as “bowtie Tsang”. In addition, when he entered the contest for the Chief Executive Election in 2006, he used “I will get the job done” (and “I will do the job better” in Chinese) as the campaign slogan. Photo 1 shows that the slogan is printed on the background wallpaper, where Tsang made a public speech during a press conference.



Figure 1

(Source: <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/images/apple-photos/apple/20070202/large/02la1p101.jpg>, dated February 2, 2007, accessed on May 25, 2012)

Being appointed Donald Tsang to be Chief Executive can be attributed to the resignation of Tung Chee-hwa in 2005 due to “health” reasons. The selection of Tsang from the perspective of the central authorities can be understood as which his solid background to civil service helps stabilize the political setting and persuade Hong Kong people by reassuming the governing capacity of the central authorities. Given the fact that Tsang was *de facto* marginalized in the decision-making arena during the Tung’s administration, presumably due to his civil service background with being associated with Anson Chan, Tsang’s distinctiveness has been seen and it is believed that the Tsang’s appointment could offer a fresh perspective to Hong Kong people. In the critical analysis, the deployment of “I will get the job done” and “I will do the job better” strongly implies that Tsang regards the Chief Executive as job rather than career, aiming to complete the “job” under the Beijing’s assignment and instruction, and this assertion is shared by a blogger whose opinion is shown below (Note: all faults arising from the quotation are faithfully preserved, with brackets for illustration and/or clarification):

As a Chief Executive, it is unacceptable that he regards (the Chief Executive) as a job. If this assertion is applicable to presidents or

national leaders, it is definitely a joke in an international setting. Being a manager, a chief executive officer, a minister, or a president is only a job with pay indeed.

But this statement is quite desirable if he could get elected. In case of disputes or policy blunder in the future, the Chief Executive can reply by saying that “I just do the job” and putting his responsibility aside. If some people still believe that his boss is Hong Kong people of 7,000,000, they are really ignorant. The genuine boss is the central government...

I recognize that my English is not so good, but when I interpret the campaign slogan in English “I’ll get the job done”, this means that I will do the job. Comparing with the campaign slogan of “I will do the job better” in Chinese, the English one is much worse. This looks like a person who works in order to get the pay at the end of the month, or a person who returns to the office in the morning and leaves after the office hours regularly. The mentality of mediocrity is clearly shown.<sup>1</sup>

In light of the campaign slogan, the below netizen adopts and rewrites the Tsang’s campaign slogan so as to harshly criticize the mentality of mediocrity of Tsang in being as a Chief Executive and to assert that the Tsang’s absence of commitment to be an excellent leader.

After Donald Tsang announced assertively that he would enter the election with the campaign slogan of “I will get the job done”, this slogan has become the talk of the town. The image of Tsang

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<sup>1</sup> “I will get the job done (with hesitation)”, <http://smlbkkmkimike.mysinablog.com/index.php?op=ViewArticle&articleId=436987>, dated February 6, 2007 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

overwhelms another potential candidate nicknamed the Bus Uncle, and his famous remark is: “You have pressure and I have pressure”.

It is most likely that “I will get the job done” would be a popular remark that being used and disseminated during the Lunar New Year. This campaign slogan has been rewritten differently in society and different forms of the slogan are shown below:

Construction workers: I will make the hole done.

Housewives: I will make the food done.

Mahjong players: I will make the game fun.

People in washroom: I will get the shit done.

Agents: I will get the commission done.

Fraudsters: I will get the money done.

Triad society members: I will get the tattoo done (in order to show the physical strength).

Prostitutes: I will get the job done.

Female artists: I will keep the good shape.<sup>2</sup>

When Tsang won in the election in 2007 through the small-circle election arising from the Election committee of 800 members, the slogan “getting the job done” has implied negatively which means the lack of commitment and undertaking in defending the local interests, namely the freedom of speech, democratization through the universal suffrage of both Chief Executive and Legislative Council elections, and the resistance of political manipulation and intervention from the Beijing authorities. Kay Lam, a famous local blogger, adopted and incorporated this theme into a song originally used for celebrating the tenth anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to China. He recomposed the

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<sup>2</sup> “(Turning) I will get the job done”, <http://www.hkforum.org/viewthread.php?tid=3574>, dated February 6, 2007 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

lyric completely and retitled the song as “Only relying on Bowtie (Tsang) to get the job” (*Botai Wengong Kaoli*). One of the sections highlights that the succession of Donald Tsang is resulted from the undemocratic election system and the political alliance with the pro-Beijing elites.

Only relying on Bowtie (Tsang) to get the job, because he can please his supervisor (i.e. the central government) throughout the entire century.

However, we do not have universal suffrage! The 800 votes (from the Election Committee members) are casted throughout the entire century.

The election is stupid, like imposing you on an unpopular chairperson, and you attend in a distasteful banquet.

Anger and arrogance are handing around

Laughs are high-sounding...<sup>3</sup>

From the above text, it is generally understood that the central government fully dominates the Chief Executive at the backstage, regardless of Tung Chee-hwa or Donald Tsang. Tsang is actually an actor under the orchestration of the Beijing authorities. Therefore, Tsang intentionally deploys the term “job” and claims “get the job done” instead of using the term “career”, which implies that he serves as a “servant” and then follows the master’s (central government’s) instructions without the intention and determination to be a political leader with the capacity to defend the public interest, presumably because he realizes that the central government would not grant the real power to the Chief Executive under the current political and institutional setting. In fact, there is no fundamental difference between the colonial and HKSAR eras in light of power sharing with local civil servants. Additionally, the netizens intentionally recomposed the lyric of the song about the tenth anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to

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<sup>3</sup> “Fujie” (a foul language which can be interpreted as “going to hell”), <http://evchk.wikia.com/wiki/%E7%A6%8F%E4%BD%B3>, accessed on May 25, 2012.

China, and deployed the inferiors (i.e. construction workers, housewives, fraudsters, prostitutes, female artists) who can be also diligent to get the job done, a metaphor that devalues Tsang's campaign slogan which lacks vision, undertaking and attraction, and expresses the political grievances in light of the methods of electing the Chief Executive. Overall, while some Hong Kong people think that Tsang can establish and maintain his governance with the heritage of civil service, this assertion seems to be illusionary in reality, given the influence of the Beijing factor in the domestic political setting, followed by the Tsang's lack of commitment and competence to defend local interests.

### **"donald tsang, please die"**

A non-mainstream band named My Little Airport who composed a song entitled "donald tsang, please die" and then uploaded to YouTube in May 2009.<sup>4</sup> Based on the record up to May 25, 2012, there are 178,842 hits for this clip, with 1,054 opting for like and only 85 choosing dislike.<sup>5</sup>

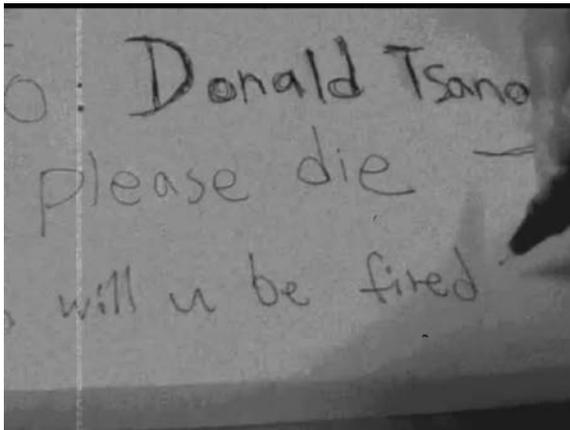


Figure 2

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the original song title uses "donald tsang" instead of "Donald Tsang".

<sup>5</sup> "My little airport – donald tsang, please die", <http://youtu.be/qiV0qSgfFeM>, dated May 15, 2009 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

(Source: A scene extracted from the video clip “My little airport – donald tsang, please die”, <http://youtu.be/qiV0qSgfFeM>, dated May 15, 2009 and accessed on May 25, 2012)

In terms of popularity, it is recognized that over 100,000 surfers visited the site, listened to the song and watched the video, showing the “popularity” of Tsang in cyberspace. The most important point is that the song has attracted the reporting of mainstream media, which is critical toward the government. When John Tsang, the Financial Secretary, visited Eslite Bookstore in Taipei City, found and then listened to the song, he felt embarrassed and throw the earphones away after 15 minutes (*Apple Daily*, August 30, 2010). Afterwards, one jockey disc played this song in his program at Radio Television Hong Kong. As a consequence, his program was terminated immediately and he was dismissed subsequently (*Apple Daily*, September 11, 2010).

With reference to the context leading to the popularity of the song, the Tsang’s controversial judgment of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre (some adopts the neutralized term “June 4 Incident”) is of saliance. Referring to his remark of this tragedy in a speech given at a debate in the Legislative Council on May 14, Tsang said:

I understand Hong Kong people’s feelings about June 4, but the incident happened many years ago. The country's development in many areas has since achieved tremendous results and brought economic prosperity to Hong Kong. I believe Hong Kong people will make an objective assessment of the nation's development...

I have mentioned that time flies and (Hong Kong people) in respect to the national development in different aspects. Not only the economic development, but also the excellent performance in other aspects, that contribute to economic prosperity and social stability. I think Hong Kong people would make a fair assessment in this regard.

I would like to reiterate that my view represents the opinion of Hong Kong people in general, and the opinion of citizens has affected my view. What I have just said is how I feel about the views of the people of Hong Kong (Tsang, May 14, 2009)<sup>6</sup>.

His opinion attracted the severe criticisms from the pan-democratic camp and the public, and 22 pan-democratic counselors left the council chamber after Tsang had given his speech. In response to the public antagonism, Tsang apologized and tuned his opinion slightly by saying that “I don’t mean that my view represents the opinion of Hong Kong people” (*Hong Kong Economic Journal*, May 14, 2009).

Tsang’s assertion of “economic achievement overriding the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre” is a crucial point in creating the song, as reflected in the language and words used.

donald tsang, please die

We must definitely take on the street (for protest)

donald tsang, please die

When will you be fired?

If a person chops off the Donald (Tsang)’s hands

This person becomes a Chief Executive twenty years later

Will Tsang himself determine not prosecute this person because of his achievement?...

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<sup>6</sup> Donald Tsang, “The full text for Question-and-answer Session of the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council” (in Chinese), <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200905/14/P200905140245.htm>, dated May 14, 2009 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

Despite Tung (Chee-hwa)'s poor performance

His conscience is better than yours.

The most impressive achievement during your rule is of strengthening the people's pursuit for democracy (My Little Airport, 2009).<sup>7</sup>

The lyric not only criticizes the Tsang's assertion of the tragedy, but also points out that Tsang's pleasing of the Beijing authorities is a sign showing the decay of his political and moral conscience, and only pursuing materialistic achievements resulting from the increasingly influence of China in political, economic and diplomatic aspects. By being offered such economic benefits as Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and individual visits after the rally in 2003, in the Tsang's eyes, Hong Kong people should express the gratitude to the central government. However, they seem not to accept it and turn out to be critical toward the central government. In order not to antagonize the central government, Hong Kong people should rectify themselves by changing the political stance being closer to the Mainland China. In addition, "the person chopping off the Tsang's hands" and "Tung Chee-hwa's conscience" are two interesting metaphors, highlighting that the truth should not be altered and distorted; otherwise, Tsang deserves to death without being sympathized. From a critical perspective, the mainstream Chinese culture regards "death" as a taboo, avoids making any associations with language and signs related to death, and emphasizes that the deliberate mention of death to anyone is an act of evilness, impoliteness and humiliation, as this may bring the misfortune to the people concerned. However, reiterating "donald tsang, please die" over the song can be understood contextually in the following manner: First, his view fully reveals that he unduly pursues political and economic interests without considering morality, sympathy and justice, and his "death" is deserved because it is the only way to get rid of his guilty, and express sincerely the apology to those who were massacred

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<sup>7</sup> My Little Airport, "donald tsang, please die", [http://www.mylittleairport.com/lyrics\\_04.htm](http://www.mylittleairport.com/lyrics_04.htm), accessed on May 25, 2012.

violently during the military suppression. Second, his subservient mindset also shows that his rule only brings about the harm to the society, including the increasingly polarization of the powerful and the powerless, the penetration of the economic, social, and political manipulation of the real estate developers under a popular term “property hegemony”. If he keeps “survived”, such harm will only be continuing and intensifying, so his “death” is a desirable to let Hong Kong people, having an opportunity to depart from this desperate condition. In connection with the last part of the lyric, the composer seems to believe that his maladministration would lead to public outcry, followed by the questioning and challenging of the existing political and institutional practices, and then driving the local democratization in the long run. As a matter of fact, this controversy has undermined the Tsang’s popularity, as reflected in which the number of participants in the June Fourth Candle Vigil increased drastically from 48,000 in 2008 to 150,000 in 2009 (*Apple Daily*, June 5, 2009). According to the Public Opinion Programme (POP) at University of Hong Kong, the popularity rate of Donald Tsang dropped significantly from 57 out of 100 marks in May to 53.4 marks in June 2009 (HKU POP, 2011).<sup>8</sup>

In short, despite the fact that no every one accept the assertion of which “Donald Tsang, please die”, it is generally certain that his opinion and mentality have attracted the public criticisms, and have contributed to the popularity of this subversive song in cyberspace and in society, coinciding with the increasing number of participants in the June Fourth Candle Vigil. The consensus of, and linkage between, netizens in cyberspace and citizens in society regarding the unpopularity of Tsang is of significance in this case.

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<sup>8</sup> “HKU POP releases popularity figures of CE Donald Tsang”, Public Opinion Programme, University of Hong Kong, [http://hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/popexpress/ce2005/donald\\_new/poll/datatables.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/popexpress/ce2005/donald_new/poll/datatables.html), accessed on May 25, 2012.

## From 'Act Now' to 'All Wrong'

The local institutional arrangement after 2007 is a crucial point for the future evolution of the local polity, notably the ways of selecting the Chief Executive and the representatives at the Legislative Council. The interim arrangement in 2012, in this respect, is of a key concern because the central government insists having a final say in terms of framework and practice without an intention to offer a detailed and consistent schedule. The final settlement in arrangement of the 2012's Chief Executive and Legislative Council elections, therefore, become an important political mission for Tsang demonstrating his competence to get the job done based on the central government's intention and stand. Given the failure of the Tsang's government in putting forward the political reform to the Legislative Council in 2005, and the coming of both elections in 2012, Tsang determined to adopt an assertive approach and promoted the political reform proposal by adopting "Act Now" (*Qimao*) as a slogan with the visual image shown below.



Figure 3

(Source: [http://images.wikia.com/evchk/images/7/78/2010\\_GovOfficial\\_actnow.jpg](http://images.wikia.com/evchk/images/7/78/2010_GovOfficial_actnow.jpg), accessed on May 25, 2012)

He emphasizes the abortive attempt in 2005 is undesirable because a golden opportunity has been missed for making the political reform possible. He said:

In 2005, our political reform could not be acted, and has been stagnated without moving forward. Five years later, this unsolved political system has been leading to unceasing debates, which have wasted our energy. The political environment in Hong Kong becomes unactable. We can no longer waste our time and waste another five years ahead.

At present, our government and our team call for the unity of Hong Kong people without wasting time and hesitation. Let's grasp this opportunity to walk forward toward the political reform and let's act now. Making democracy forward and moving toward universal suffrage.

Our colleagues, we act now for universal suffrage!

Our political appointed officers, we act now, act now and act now!

Chief Executive: We act now for passing the proposal for political reform in 2012!

Chief Executive: We don't stagnate, and do act now and move forward!

"Act now"! (Donald Tsang, May 29, 2010)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Donald Tsang, "The Chief Executive talks about the development of political system" <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201005/29/P201005290226.htm> (in Chinese), dated May 29, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

Deliberately adopting the term “unactable”, Tsang emphasizes the importance of “Act Now” which is a last resort for pushing and making the domestic political developments possible. If this term is unactable again, based on the Tsang’s assertion, Hong Kong would fall into the dilemma of struggles and antagonism. Of course, when Tsang adopted “Act Now” as the locus of promotion, his ruling team members under the Executive Council also follow and show up throughout the promotion, such as Leung Chi-hung, one of the members, said: “If (we pursue) a healthy development in political system, (we should) move forward”. Anna Wu, another member shared the same idea and said: “(Our political system) should move forward step by step. If we don’t move, then the problem would not be solved”. Ronald Arculli, who is also one of the members, mentioned: “The political system should be developed progressively and we would be in a win-win situation”<sup>10</sup>.

In response to those who disagree with “Act Now”, Henry Tang, the Chief Secretary for Administration, uses the dragon boat contest as a methapor, and criticizes those people holding disagreeing view would lead to delay in political developments. He insisted:

In racing a dragon boat during contest, the most important things are of achieving unity, knowing how to sweep with rhythm and mutual understanding, and sailing toward the finishing point, apart from skillfully managing speed and intensity by paddlers. Every paddler realizes that if they are uncooperative and sweeping the boat without coordination, the dragon boat would be hanging around.

The same assertion can be applicable in Hong Kong’s democratic development. All walks of life within society should compromise,

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<sup>10</sup> “Anna Wu’s total wrongness: Only the Beijing officials, not the Hong Kong people, do nothing”, <http://youtu.be/WS9CFftQ2RM> (in Chinese), dated June 5, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

accept the differences and look for the consensus. Let's work together to enlarge the democratic proportion according to the Basic Law and under the framework decided by the National People's Congress Standing Committee in order to fulfill universal suffrage in a gradual manner (Henry Tang, June 16, 2010)<sup>11</sup>.

When the Tsang's ruling clique promoted the political reform package in a full swing aiming to gain the support of the mainstream media, those holding the opposing views deploy the political language to engage in and unfold the counter-promotion. Hence, "All wrong" (*Chaocuo*) is created that directly aims at "All act", and criticizes the government misleading the public in terms of content and strategies. By promoting "All wrong" to challenge "Act now", the following three tactics are deployed:

First, some netizens adopts the official version of the picture and then adjusts and recreates it in a vivid manner, changing the slogan to "All wrong" (See Figure 4), or even "Collect skin" (See Figure 5, it is a term inspired and borrowed from the colloquial Hong Kong Cantonese which means shutting up or termination), meaning that the government's proposal turns out to be terminated, a tactics which is similar with the *kuso* culture found in Japan and Taiwan. Additionally, some netizens use the official version of the promotional sign and recreate it ironically and vividly by inserting such ironic slogans as "escaping", "unact", "not act to act now", "game over", and "cheat now". As red and blue are used the official promotional sign, and the color pattern looks like the party flag used by the Kuomintang, one masterpiece adopts the pattern similar to the Kuomintang's flag and labels the term "revolution (uprising)" so as to make political embarrassment to the pro-Beijing government (See Figure 6). By using such software as Photoshop to engage in "images redesigning" (*Gaitu*), it is a common

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Tang, "The Chief Secretary for Administration's Speech in Dragon Boat Contest, Shatin, 2010", <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201006/16/P201006160147.htm> (in Chinese), dated June 16, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

method used by netizens, making use of the familiar and official promotion items, selecting and then changing the words, remarks, signs and/or symbols in a subversive and reverse manner so as to insert and present the anti-traditional, anti-authoritarian, anti-mainstream and anti-hegemonic messages.



Figure 4

(Source: [http://www.stoneip.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/30609\\_1381120620025\\_1592228772\\_30954204\\_619013\\_n-600x257.jpg](http://www.stoneip.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/30609_1381120620025_1592228772_30954204_619013_n-600x257.jpg), accessed on July 21, 2011)



Figure 5

(Source: <http://www.stoneip.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/1g1-600x257.png>, accessed on July 21, 2011)



Figure 6

(Source: <http://youngleader2008.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/4.jpg>, accessed on July 21, 2011)

Second, some netizens create, produce their own video clips or reuse the official promotional videos and then adjust them, with intentions to arouse the public attention and association of the hegemonic messages produced by the mainstream media at first, to question and challenge the official discourse, and to expose the untold stories behind the official promotion, with the intention to arouse the public who may not be interested in, or may be indifferent to, the issue. The notable example is of Kay Lam using his blog and YouTube to promote the opposing views. Comparing with the government utilizing the abundant resources and promoting the proposal through the mainstream media such as television advertisements, newspapers, and through those officers engaging in the promotional shows, Lam's influence is not so influential. However, he insists that the official promotion of "Act now", to a certain extent, is the official initiative with the manipulation and deployment of public resources and social networking. The government successfully utilizes the large-scale promotion to internalize and enforce the public accepting the officially endorsed proposal without making any genuine discussion and consultation. He said:

The government has wasted the huge amount of money to promote "All act". The posters have been affirmed in the street. For example,

all lampposts have been affirmed with such posters in some of the middle-class housing estates on Hong Kong Island. The intensity of the official promotion can be comparable with that organized by the pan-democratic camp during the five-district referendum on May 16. The government tells the lie of the expenditure of the promotion, and over \$150 million have actually been spent on promotion without clearly stating, this looks like Empress Dowager Cixi (in late Qing dynasty) who made use of the public fund secretly to construct a luxurious garden.

Therefore, Kam Lam decides to recreate the miracle and spends zero dollars to produce the promotional video called “Cheat now” in order to respond to the shameless official promotion. Those political celebrities entering the Executive Council are being corrupted, such as Leung Chi-hung, Anna Wu and Ronald Arculli, because they help the government promote (the fake message to) Hong Kong people. They look like a gang pretending the others. They promote the proposal related to the engagement of the District Council members in the Legislative Council election by offering extra five seats, this looks like the grassroots election in the National People’s Congress (N.B. Voters can only cast votes without the right to nominate and become candidates), and poses a difficulty in phasing out the functional constituencies.

I don’t know how much and how many days the government has spent on producing such promotional videos. To me, only the voluntary helpers are available and there is no extravagant production team and expenditure. The government can use the public fund to do the useless

things, but why does the government claim no money when dealing with the “urgent issues of people’s livelihood”? (Kam Lam, 2010)<sup>12</sup>.

In fact, the big blunder made by Donald Tsang during the entire campaign is that he has no intention to consult the public in a genuine, equal and respectful manner. Instead, he deliberately misleads the public, threatens and blackens those who do not support the proposal and excludes all alternatives to tune the proposal. Referring to the video clip with taping the adjusted image (see Figure 7), Kay Lam criticizes the proposal which does nothing to phase out the functional constituencies; thereby it is a regression, not the progress, in political developments. The video clip, entitled “Cheat now” with 122,856 hits up to May 25, 2012, reveals that the government not only excludes and devalues the opposing views in order to pass the proposal in the Legislative Council in every means possible, but it also it has demonstrated the unfairness and biases in the process of public consultation and promotion. As deployed Alan Leong’s remark shown in the clip, this looks like an adjudicator who also enters the match concurrently, constituting the cheating throughout the course.



Figure 7

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<sup>12</sup> Kay Lam, “Cheating”, <http://plastichk.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post.html>, dated June 2, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

(Source: <http://youtu.be/yS-Y22kc7RI>, dated June 2, 2010 and accessed on July 25, 2012)

Afterwards, some netizens make use of and then readjust another promotional video for Christmas with MC Jin, a local artist, and Donald Tsang. During the video, “Act now” and “All wrong” are labeled continuously, with the aim to criticize the government and Tsang’s leadership (See Figure 8). One of the versions of this video clip is entitled “[Ironical engagement] MC Jin X Bullshit Donald hip hop stupid song ‘Ugly 2010’”, with 111,448 hits for this video clip at YouTube up to May 25, 2012<sup>13</sup>.



Figure 8

Subtitle: “HKSAR government acts now with you”

(Source: <http://youtu.be/-T3NAglanjik>, dated December 19, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012)

In short, the adoption and alternation of the official promotion by civic engagement opposing the proposal is manifested, as netizens have found that they have been excluded, misunderstood and marginalized during the political process and within the

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<sup>13</sup> “[Ironical engagement] MC Jin X Bullshit Donald hip hop stupid song ‘Ugly 2010’”, <http://youtu.be/-T3NAglanjik>, dated December 19, 2010 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

political institution. Hence, they organize themselves and produce the videos using ironic and harsh language in order to forcefully attack and criticize the hegemonic discourse advanced and promoted by the government, to arouse the public attention to, and discussion on, the critical issues, to educate the public upon reflecting such issues, and to transform fundamentally the public holding the taken-for-granted assumptions of doing nothing and letting it be in face of the governmental indifference.

### **“McDonald = Must not to be Donald”**

Given the fact that the name of “Donald” Tsang can be read as “*Dangnu*”, and “*nu*” in Cantonese means slavery and lackey. Critically reflected what Tsang has done during his administration, he sides unduly with the central government in terms of political stand and policy preferences, including the full integration with Mainland China. When Tsang mentioned in 2009 that economic achievement should override the Tiananmen tragedy, his popularity has dropped significantly. As reflecting in the HKU POP, Tsang scores an average of 55 marks in or before May 2009. Afterwards, his average scores drop to the early fifties and even below 50 marks in some moments (HKU POP 2011)<sup>14</sup>. Hong Kong Transition Project, another leading poll, also reveals that the percentage of indicating the dissatisfaction of Tsang’s performance increases from 37% in July to 52% in August 2008, and over half of respondents opt for dissatisfaction subsequently (DeGolyer, 2011). In this regard, a significant number of Hong Kong people believe that Tsang fails to defend local interests and political space given his pro-Beijing stand and opinions.

Some netizens deploy “McDonald” as the theme to design the visual image and produce the video in cyberspace, focusing on the Tsang’s pro-Beijing mentality. In light of *The Encyclopedia of Virtual Communities in Hong Kong*, [evchk.wikia.com](http://evchk.wikia.com), the entry and

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote 8.

visual image (See Figure 9) of McDonald are depicted and the latter one has been adopted for promoting July 1<sup>st</sup> rally. Referring the image, the heading “No Donald and Slave” is shown and can be understood as “not to be Donald Tsang and to be slavery”, reminding the public not to be subservient politically like Donald Tsang, ignoring and even sacrificing local identity and interests in face of the influence of the central government. The joining of the July 1<sup>st</sup>, in this regard, is the only appropriate way to resist being political slavery.



Figure 9

The Chinese heading at the bottom: “Don’t be Donald (Tsang), July 1<sup>st</sup> is suitable date for protest”

(Source: [http://images.wikia.com/evchk/images/0/07/20090701\\_no\\_donald1.jpg](http://images.wikia.com/evchk/images/0/07/20090701_no_donald1.jpg), accessed on May 25, 2012)

Apart from the visual image, some netizens produces the video consisting of Donald Tsang, the SAR government, the pro-establishment and self-censorship of the

mainstream media and then uploads to YouTube.<sup>15</sup> One interesting observation is that artists wear the face mask of such political celebrities as Donald Tsang, Henry Tang (who has been the Chief Secretary for Administration, and is currently a candidate of the Chief Executive election), Stephen Lam (who is the Chief Secretary for Administration, was the secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs), John Tsang (Financial Secretary), Leung Chun-ying (who was ex-Executive Council member and is currently another candidate of the Chief Executive election), Tsang Yok-shing (who is the party leader of the pro-Beijing's Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, DAB and a legislative councilor), and Gary Chan (who is the party member of the DAB and a legislative councilor). Also, the clip also includes the above pro-establishment celebrities who made the unpopular remarks in the public occasions. First, Tsang's remark on the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre is shown. Second, Lui Chi-wai, a pro-Beijing opportunist, remarked on the 1989 Massacre emphasizing the foreign subversion leads to domestic chaos at a public forum. Third, Tsang Yok-shing's calling of a Legislative council meeting with a subtitle of "in case of trusting him, you will be blind". Fourth, Cheung Kwok-kwan from DAB remarked on there are penguins in the North Pole in a TV program. Fifth, a news reporting narrating the Equal Opportunity Committee's head who spent the public fund for buying his private insurance. Sixth, a series of video clips showing the pro-establishment figures who supported the Link, a private enterprise, to manage all shopping malls in the public housing estates. As a result, rent goes up continuously and crazily and those who initially supported the decision suddenly changed their mind and opposed the Link. Seventh, self-censorship is in force in Television Broadcast Limited (TVB), a leading local television station. The head of the manager of TVB news department is modified in the video clip and a dog's head is affirmed on his head. Lastly, Gary Chan cannot pronounce the phrase "try my best" correctly in a television interview, and has read as "try my breast" instead. The entire

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<sup>15</sup> "Donald Tsang goes to hell and is not to be slavery (Beat it twice and thrice), <http://youtu.be/Us9lv6HhLKM>, accessed on June 29, 2009 and accessed on May 25, 2012.

clip is ended with the big visual image, showing the heading of “No Donald and No Slave”. Overall, despite aiming at Donald Tsang throughout the clip using the heading of “No Donald”, it actually covers those pro-establishment figures who are mocked and devalued thoroughly.

In June 2011, a series of scandals broke out because some government officers, Legislative counselors and indigenous persons over the New Territories were found that their premises with unauthorized building works continuously by mass media. One of the interesting news is about Donald Tsang whose premise with unauthorized building work was found and located in 64 MacDonnell Road, Hong Kong Island. Coincidentally, MacDonnell and McDonald are pronounced similarly, and the number 64 is associated with the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre which was broken out on June 4. In this context, some netizens mocked Tsang by saying that “Don’t be Donald Tsang, and memorize June 4”<sup>16</sup> (*The Encyclopedia of Virtual Communities in Hong Kong*, 2011). Overall speaking, when netizens mention “Don’t be Donald Tsang”, a sign that shows the more severe and harsh criticisms and attacks toward him.

In response to the increasing influence of netizens over cyberspace, the government decided to deploy Facebook and started a group called “Upper Albert Road” at <http://zh-tw.facebook.com/UpperAlbertRoad>, which means it is the road where the government headquarters is located (Note: A new government headquarters located in Tamar, Central, has been completed and all government departments located in Upper Albert Road will be moving to the new headquarters subsequently. Currently, the group has been retitled to be Chief Executive’s Office, HKSAR. This site was closed on July 1, 2012 when Tsang stepped down from the position), an action that shows the contestation between the government and netizens over the political sphere. However, only 37,975 supporters joined up to May 25, 2012. Given the fact that Facebook is an

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<sup>16</sup> “勿當奴 (Don’t to be Donald)”, <http://evchk.wikia.com/wiki/勿當奴>, accessed on May 25, 2012.

open platform and some netizens opt for joining the group, enter the harsh and negative views and then leave the group subsequently and continuously, “Upper Albert Road” Facebook group achieved so little in empowering Tsang and his government over cyberspace; instead, it becomes another open platform that netizens leave the embarrassing and irritating messages so as to criticize and even insult the government, as shown in Figure 10.



Figure 10

A pose appeared on the Facebook group “Upper Albert Road”

Illustrations:

1. The phase one of the project run by Hong Kong Youth Service Team has been undertaken. 15 places are offered to those who will (be assigned to) provide services in Shaoguan, Guangdong province in September this year. In order to let those interested parties know more about the program, Home Affairs’ Bureau will organize the meeting called “Talk about the Hong Kong Youth Service Team with the youth” and then brief the details on Friday, July 22. You can register by clicking the below hyperlink.

- 2a. Go for labor prisoning and brain washing
- 2b. Be careful of being checked (your) asshole and inserted a detector (to it)
- 2c. Youth group? Is it indeed the DAB Youth Group?
- 2d. Too dangerous and don't go

(Source: <http://zh-tw.facebook.com/UpperAlbertRoad>, dated July 20, 2011 and accessed on May 25, 2012)

By referring to the above cases, “the inclusion of the Internet in the media mix raise the new questions and challenges for citizens, journalists, politicians and governments alike” (Oates and Gibson, 2006, p. 1). In this connection, the government decides to make the public consultation of the regulation of cyberspace and the suppression of the dissenting voice by focusing on protecting copyrights to manage the adaption and re-creation of the original masterpieces. However, some worries are arisen on whether the government would move the first step toward the restriction upon cyberspace in the excuse of protecting copyrights, including the banning of such original masterpieces being modified and reproduced in such a way of criticizing the government and pro-establishment figures. In June, the government gazetted “Copyright (Amendment) Bill 2011”, regulating those adapted and reproduced works violating the copyrights, with the coverage of electronic media, internet forums, social networking platforms (*Sing Tao Daily*, June 3, 2011). In short, the adaption and reproduction of such original masterpieces in forms of songs, visual images, or video clips may be regarded as copyrights violation, a concrete action taken by the government to restrict upon cyberspace and impose the control over the freedom of expression.

## **Conclusion**

By reviewing, narrating and interpreting the political image of, and perception toward, Donald Tsang in forms of visual images, songs and video clips, this paper argues that the

criticism and mocking of Tsang is getting severe and harsher. One possible reason is that Tsang's image is reported deliberately and then positively in the significant number of the mainstream printed and electronic media, especially for the pro-government ones. Given the fact that a significant number of local mainstream media are inclined to get the insider's information from the government, maintaining a harmonious relationship with the central and SAR governments by positively reporting the government and pro-establishment figures and camps and negatively devaluing the pan-democratic camp and dissenting views seem to be a consensus. Also, the news is being tuned in such a way that the controversial element that may embarrass the government is swept under the carpet, including the inclusion of the official views and the exclusion of the dissenting perspective. However, such conformity is facing the resistance of, and challenge from, the netizens, given the changing and worsening political, economic and social context. Some highly consciousness citizens are aware of the unrepresentativeness and misleading of the mainstream media. The rapid development of information technology leads to the emergence of alternative media, focusing on cyberspace in the past four years, and facilitating such social movements as anti-High Speed Rail protests between 2009 and 2010 and protests against the dismantling of Choi Yuen Village between 2010 and 2011. Cyberspace has forged a domain that enjoys independence and autonomy, attempts to challenge the mainstream media and pro-establishment circle, and provides a platform for the powerless and the socially disadvantaged who can speak up and express the dissenting views. As Scott (1990) reminds us, "the undeclared ideological guerrilla war that rages in this political space requires that we enter the world of rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemizes, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity, ... this ambiguous realm of political conflict – was short of rebellion – the *site* of public political discourse" (p, 137).

And finally, viewing from political transformation, while Tsang's negativity is vividly presented through the collective engagement of different works and sharing of political language, such collective creations seem to prove that "One Country Two Systems" and

“Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong” are fragile and illusionary in reality. Donald Tsang, as a Hong Kong person and an elitist civil servant, sides with one country and sacrifices two systems, making Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong meaningless. He was dedicated to be a civil servant when he first became the Chief Executive, but has become a slavery before he steps down from the current position in June 2012, such a change remind us that Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong is unpromising in case Hong Kong people do nothing to defend two systems in face of unceasing political intervention and manipulation from the Beijing authorities.

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