

Humour in Troubling Time: Politically Satirical Graphics in Facebook and the Political Subjectivity of Digital Representation¹

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บทความนี้อธิบายถึงกระบวนการทำงานของการให้ความหมายของเนื้อหา (content) ที่ผลิตบนพื้นที่สาธารณะในโลกอินเทอร์เน็ต (online social space) ทั้งยังส่งผลให้เกิดความรู้สึกในการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองของผู้ที่บริโภคเนื้อหาในโลกอินเทอร์เน็ต โดยที่บทความนี้ได้ใช้ภาพกราฟฟิคล้อเลียนเสียดสีรัฐบาลเป็นตัวอย่างในการศึกษา เพื่อดูว่าแท้จริงแล้วการสร้าง ความหมายทางการเมืองจากเนื้อหาในโลกอินเทอร์เน็ตนั้นเป็นผลพวงของการที่ผู้บริโภคเนื้อหาเอาตัวเองเข้าไปอยู่ในพื้นที่ของโครงสร้างอำนาจ (subject position) ที่ผลิตโดยวาทกรรมทางการเมือง (political discourse) และภาษาของตัวกราฟฟิคเองก็เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของเครือข่ายนั้น ข้อเสนอแตกต่างจากงานศึกษาที่ผ่านมาที่มักจะให้ความสำคัญกับเนื้อหาในโลกออนไลน์เพียงอย่างเดียว ว่าเป็นพลวัตมากพอที่จะผลักดันให้เกิดการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมืองบนท้องถนน โดยที่บทความนี้จะชี้ให้เห็นว่าพลวัตนั้นเป็นสิ่งที่ถูกสั่งสมมาในประวัติศาสตร์ชุดหนึ่งและเนื้อหาในโลกออนไลน์เป็นเพียงส่วนหนึ่งของการปลดปล่อยอำนาจของวาทกรรม

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explain about how political contents in online social media perform a political role in raising the ideological aspiration among the online users. In particular, it examines the anti-government satirical

¹This paper is developed from the presentation on the same topic, which was presented at the 8th Humanities Research Forum in Thailand, which was held in Chiang Mai in November 2014. In this paper, the author has added more examples and has refined the argument, making clearer in terms of debate and the application of theories.

graphic which were circulated among the Thai Facebook users during the political upheaval in Thailand in 2013 and 2014, in relation to the subjectivity of the anti-politician discourse or in Thai *wathakam nakkan meuang lew*. Alternatively to the view which regards that content in online social media can help initiate the political movement in offline world, this paper uses these satirical graphic to argue that what really plays a significant role in reinforcing that process is the consensual act of identification by the users who hegemonically put themselves in the subject-position created by the political discourse and the languages of graphical content.

I. Introduction

How or to what degree the political contents in online space impact political engagement in physical space? This issue has been a subject of inquiry by scholars in different areas of studies, especially media and communication (for example, see Harlow, 2012; Langlois et al, 2009; Stein, 2009). Among these works, the study on the protest in Guatemala by Summer Harlow (2012) is the most explicit one that shows how the online contents plays a political role in initiating the political movement in the street in Guatemala. As Harlow explains how it works, “comments [in social media] were framed in such a way as to motivate others to get involved in the movement and participate in offline activities” (p. 238). In the context of Thai online political culture, even though internet and social media have become a significant part of Thai politics, an examination into how the contents in online social space influence the movement or, at least, interplay with discourse that reinforces the movement, still remains insufficiently examined. The past research by political scientists (Aim, 2014; Poowin, 2010) only address the passive function of the online social media, being a tool used by the state authorities to monitor the people’s political activities, especially those that are related to national politics. Still, none of this research has looked into how the online contents benefit the political movement by the people. In Aim’s survey (2014) of the digital culture in relation to national politics, the power and political impact created by the online contents in Thai society are hinted as she notes that at one time, during the

political crisis in 2014, the junta government had to shut down Facebook, despite only temporarily, because of heavy criticisms against the military in taking over the country were spread all over the online space.

The paper aims to shed light on the political role of the contents created in online social media and how they can function as such. The paper uses satirical graphics, which were initially made and circulated on Facebook only to mock or condemn the governmental authority, as a site of examination. During the political crisis in 2013 and 2014, contents in online social media, such as statements and textual-visual graphics, played a significant role in motivating the online users to come out into the street to join the protest against the government. In a way, these contents, which are made with patriotic signs such as national flag, or nationalistic proverbs, similarly serve as a propagandist advertisement made by the state in the past to raise the nationalistic concern. However, during the crisis, one type of online political contents that seem unfit to this propaganda category is satirical graphics, especially the one made against the key figures of the government then. Superficially looking through these only satirical graphics, they may look like other satirical cultural forms in the past such as political cartoon in newspaper or Chulalongkorn-Thammasat University student parades in annual tradition football match. However, if looking thoroughly in the comment box underneath these satirical graphics, where one could see the responses or interpretation of the graphic's viewers, these satirical graphics could be seen as if they are extreme propagandist text, motivating the online users to join the protest and overthrow the government. How can such a non-serious political texts generated meanings that directly or indirectly the online users to express so?

Through a semiotic analysis of the poster's language combined with the discursive approach, which emphasises on the subjectivity of language, the paper examines how the anti-government satirical graphics during a specific space and time of political crisis in 2013-2014 become part and parcel of the political discourse. The main argument drawn from the analysis of the power relations reflected from the language of satirical is that; only the political content in online social media alone would not be able to create the high level

hostility against the government, as seen reflecting in the comments. The high level of hostility which perhaps motivate many of the online users onto the street came from the users' own willing to reproduce the anti-politician discourse upon seeing the satirical graphics. This interpretation is of the political role of the content in online social media is different from Harlow (2012), which tends to view the move in the street as being instigated only by the content, which serves as a frame of reference (pp. 229-230). As this paper suggests, the uprising in the street could have possibly been initiated by the political discourse in which its power was re-authorised through the subject-position created by the language of satirical graphics and the online users' ideological experiences.

II. Humour in political crisis

Amidst the political turmoil in 2013 and 2014, the politically satirical graphics against the government emerged in online social space among other forms of political discourse and commentary. These anti-government graphics are unique in that they pose criticisms and condemn the key persons in the government, such as the Prime Minister, and other politicians, in the variety of exaggerating and laughable ways. By the look alone, these satirical graphics seem like the political satires in printed media or in the student's parade in the past that present a conclusive view in funny way of national politics. Nevertheless, because the online satirical graphics were circulated on the platform that allows multi-level of interaction and re-signification, their role in the political discourse is different from other forms of political satire.

II.I The Overview of Political Crisis in 2013-2014

The political crisis which brought about a long protest began when the Pheu Thai government was trying to pass an amnesty bill in November 2013, in which the bill was believed to help ex-Prime Minister in exile Thaksin Shinawatra (office: 2001-2006), to return home without any charge. The news about the passing of the amnesty bill draft drew many people including some of

the Red Shirts into the street to protest against the government² (Khaosod Online, 2013). Even though the bill was rejected by upper house and many representatives had made a vow to the public not to bring the bill back (Post Today Online, 2013), the people's enagement continued, from a temporary protest in different locations around Bangkok to long marches and the set-up of permanent protest stages. Even though the government reacted to the uprising by adopting a passive strategy, 'retrieve all the way' (*thoi sud soi*), in order to reduce the tension, the confrontation became worse. Public and governmental buildings were occupied by the protestors who used them to negotiate with the government. Even when the parliament was dissolved on 9th October and a general election was called, the confrontation between the mass and the authorities did not get better. One of the most serious incidents occurred there was an attack by armed force on both the police officers and the protestors, who were camping in different protest sites around Bangkok. The general election on 2nd February was not successful. Many anti-government protestors no longer believe in electoral politics and did not want the one-man-one-vote election to happen, as they see that the system will not produce 'good politicians' in the parliament. On the election day, many ballots were blocked by some of the protestors. In some area, the authorities even did not incorporate to carry out the vote casting. All the political chaos in the street was eventually 'ended' on 22nd May, when General Prayuth Chan-Ocha staged a military coup and has taken over the country.

To a great extent, the momentum in the street which was built up to when the military intervened could not be possible without an effort put by The People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), or known by the Thai abbreviation *Kor.Por.Por.Sor*. Right after the night when the amnesty bill was passed, Suthep Thaugsuban, the secretary-general of Democrat Party and some of the party's members resigned from the party and formed the political group which led the mass to protest against the government. Joined by various

²This group of the Red Shirts believed that the bill would set free the state authorities who were responsible in the mass killing of the Red Shirt protestor in Bangkok in 2010.

social groups, Suthep's PDRC was able to mobilise quickly and able to create great pressure for the government. One of the creative and effective strategies, which helped reinforce the mobilisation, was the Self-transformation of Suthep to appeal more dedicative to the movement. In the previous protest in 2006 against Thaksin by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or *Phanthamit*, the leader of the protest, Sondhi Limthongkul, re-addressed himself to his supporters as an ordinary down-to-earth man from a middle-class Chinese family, '*Luk Chin*' ('a child of the Chinese'). The image of Sondhi as a *Luk Chin* was effective as it could make a connection with many Sino-Thais in Bangkok, who also believed that Thaksin's regime shakes the stability of their economic status (Sittitthep, 2012). For the PDRC in 2013, however, Suthep adopted the term *Kamnan*, a title used to call a smallest position in provincial political administration, to call himself.³ As the demonstration went on, the name and image of *Kamnan* Suthep had become popular among the protestors and had become a significant icon who is a representative of 'a great mass of Thai citizen' or *Muon Maha Prachachon*, according to many protestors.

II.II Political Satires on Facebook

In the past recent years, the online social media, The street of Bangkok was not the only space where an anti-government movement took place. As Aim pointed out, the recent political movement by the PDRC was successful largely due to online mobilisation and actions" (2014). Facebook, has been able to draw more Thai users onto the platform. The statistic recently released at Thailand Social Awards in mid-2014 shows that in 2014 the number of Thai Facebook users has dramatically increased up to 53% percent, making up of 24 million users (about one-third of the total population). In this number, about 55 % reside in Bangkok (Sakawee, 2014). From this indication, one could interpret that the virtual space in Facebook has gained more popularity and, perhaps, has become another space, where more Thais engage in the political dialogue and campaigning the movement. In fact, the early phase of the mobilisation of

³The fact that Suthep really used to be a *Kamnan* when he entered into bureaucracy in the past also helped reinforcing his image in the protest sites.

the PDRC was owed greatly to the technology of the online social network. On 7 November, the public resistance against the amnesty bill, was possible and were able to gather thousands of white-collars in Bangkok business district area, through campaigns and appointments made through Facebook and other online social media platforms.

Apart from the campaigns which were used to directly draw the people out, there were other forms of political contents being circulated around, that were not directly meant to persuade people to join the protest, yet were able to raise concern from the online public the political crisis. Some of these creative discourses used in Facebook are, for example, statements of world's famous figure re-contextualised with Thai politics; graphic designs newly created and recycled from other popular cultures; and photos of Thai public figures and celebrities who joined the movement. All of these digital discourses were influential that they were able to draw attentions from many Facebook users into the page and exchange conversations and criticism one another, in which some of them go beyond the convention of the graphic and context of political crisis.

An example of the online political participation can be seen especially from the satirical graphics that make use of popular film, television or theatre's poster. Generally speaking, this type of satirical graphic borrows the images from the advertising posters of famous literary stories and photoshops the faces of targeted politicians onto the original cast. For example, in the poster titled *Nak Phaendin* (Picture 1), the faces of the Yingluck's government key figures are replaced the original cast of the show which is supposed to be the *Si Phaendin* (*Four Reigns*) musical show direct by Takonkiet Viravan. In the poster, a picture of the road traffic in flood is also laid in the background to denote a socio-political problem in which the figures in the photoshopped version of the show are related. Though the poster was made to look funny and satirical, the overall message of the poster is quite clear, that it is meant to condemn Yingluck and her politician colleagues for causing a problem to the country.

Even that, when this political satire poster was circulated during the peak of political crisis, the meanings as reflected from the comments below the poster show an interesting phenomenon about the meaning-making process in relation to Thai politics. In general, many comments the meanings made by the Facebook users that go beyond the convention of satire. In brief, some of them aggressively curse Yingluck and Thaksin to meet deadly end. More absurdly, some of the comments reflect something that is not, at all, related to the anti-Yingluck's political ideology, but, instead, to Buddhist teaching, for example (the significance of these comments will be discussed again in later section). The variety of the meanings given by these satirical posters, as reflected from the comment box, call for a close examination into how political meanings are created from the poster and are 'deferred' to the extent of which many of them are not related to the poster's original narrative. The following section explains about the process of signification from the post-structuralist point of view, which views meaning-making as a recycling process operated under a certain set of ideological worldview.



(Picture 1: Nak Phaendin, the satirical graphic made to mock and condemn Yingluck's government)

III. The posters in theory

In theory, the political significance of anti-government satirical graphic can be understood through a framework of the politics of representation, which combines semiotic method and discursive analysis of meaning-making process and ideological subjection.

III.I Signs and representations in the posters

Meaning deriving from the satirical graphic come from the combination of cultural signs used in the graphic interplay with one another to generate meaning. This approach of the construction of meaning is owned to theory of language initially developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1960), which is also applied to read visual language by Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1972; 1977). The main ideas of this approach is that one arrives at meaning by which a language, which serves as an unmotivated sign or code, invokes certain idea that has already existed in culture (Barry, 2002, pp. 41-43). For example, when many people who are familiar with English language hear the word 'hot' being put together with 'dog,' they would tend to think of the two jointed words as 'a sausage being served in a long-shaped bun.' Rarely, the word would be thought as a dog that is hot. For image-textual language, the system operates similarly. In his example of the Italian pasta advertisement *Panzani*, Barthes shows that the concept of 'Italian-ness' as represented from the advertisement, in fact, are given by the way in which many elements of image-codes, which may or may not be related to Italian-ness, are put together to form a myth of Italian-ness (1977, pp. 33-35). Nevertheless, this theoretical model used to explain how meaning is constructed in representation also faces a challenge. As particularly contested by the post-structuralist Jacques Derrida (1982[1974]), the Saussurian's signification model overlooks the fact that language does not work like a scientific experiment where one can capture a moment in time of the signification process to analyse the rule and generalise how language works. In fact, as shown in Derrida's (1997), a signification process of language operates in an open system. One cannot pinpoint a finalised settled or fixed meaning

from the signification process. Precisely, for Derrida, the meaning of signification is in its deferral.

When applying this signification process theorised by the structuralist and post-structuralist to look at the satirical posters and the way they interpret, one would see that it is the variety of cultural codes used to create the posters that interplay with one another to signify the concepts of political satire against the government. For example, the meaning of the poster that mocks Yingluck's management of flood in 2012 is arrived by the signification involving two main cultural signs, 'Yingluck figure' and 'flood in city.' When one reads this image-sign of Yingluck in the flood, one may also interpret it further beyond what are in the poster, for example the corruption regime. This is because the image-concept of Yingluck and the flooded Bangkok also signifies the corrupted political regime. From this example, one might also notice that in order to understand the sign language in representation, one needs to also be familiarised with the convention of the signs used in the image. For the Yingluck and flood poster, if the spectator has no idea about Thailand or Thai politics, this image would generate a different set of meaning. Such an emphasis on the cultural convention which maps the way one reads the sign language has been made since in Barthes' work (1977). Nevertheless, the emphasis is taken to examine further by the cultural theorist Stuart Hall, whose theory of power and representation is owed much to the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

III.II Ideological subjection in representation

In "The Work of Representation" (1997), Hall follows the semiotician precursors who argue that meaning is given from sign system or language code according to one's cultural convention in that sign or code. Nevertheless, for Hall, what seems to be interesting also is the ideological structure or power relations in each culture that subjects one interprets that sign language accordingly.

To examine the relationship between power structure and representation, Hall refers to Foucault's *The Order of Knowledge* (2005[1966]), which has an

example that helps Hall explain an ideological aspect of representation. In *The Order of Knowledge*, Foucault discusses at length about the painting by a Spanish Diego Velasquez, *Las Meninas* (1656). In general, Velasquez's painting shows a group of court members who gather in front of us (the viewer). In the group, there is a painter who is supposed to be Velasquez himself painting the subject who is set in the same position as the viewer of *Las Meninas*. In this angle, the viewer cannot see explicitly who is being painted, as the frame is also turned back to us. However, if one looks closely in the background of *Las Meninas*, one would notice a reflection of the King and his wife in the mirror and would be able to guess that the absent subjects in Velasquez's painting, who is supposed to be in the same position as the viewer, are the king and the queen. According to Hall, the complexity of what is shown and what is not in *Las Meninas*, as Foucault points out, explains quite well how representation and subject operate within power relations (1997, p.58). As Hall emphasises, even though representation may contain visible signs, what is about representation is not always what is visibly revealed. "Its meaning depends on how we 'read' it" (Ibid, p.59) and "meaning is there therefore constructed in the dialogue between the painting [representation] and the spectator (Ibid, p.60). And from the moment one realises what the representation is about or means, it is the same moment that the representation "produces a subject-position for the spectator" (Hall, 2007, p.60) to be dominated by the discourse which governs the process of meaning-making.

The creation and circulation of the politically satirical graphic, especially the anti-government ones, could be explained through this framework of power subjection in representation. As it will be shown in a more detailed explanation in the next section, the anti-Yingluck's posters are made from the sign languages which have been subjected to the cultural convention, or the regime of knowledge, of language that have been used to criticise Yingluck. This knowledge ranges from the myth of bad politician to 'a betrayal citizen who deserves to die.' When the satirical posters make fun of these figures, even though they may not be intentionally used to raise the aspiration of the

movement, the posters could be read in different variations of ways, which would help empowering the anti-government ideology.

IV. The posters in actions

The following analysis uses two examples of the satirical graphics, which were collected from Facebook. The two examples differ in a way that one still presents image and text that can closely be identified with the political movement in the street. The other is not quite related to the situation, when the protestors called for Yingluck to step down. Yet, the signs used in both of these graphics are the signs which have been politicised by the political discourse in the past. In this respect, when the two examples of satirical graphic are read by the Facebook users, the meaning can possibly go beyond than just what the graphics are trying to present.

IV.1 The bad politician discourse

The political discourse that dominates and subjects the cultural signs in the graphics examined in this paper are the discourse of morally bad politician. The idea of morally bad politician could be seen emerging as a popular discourse around early 1990s. During the political crisis in 1992, or known as Black May or *Phrued-sapha Thamin*, journalists created catchy moralistic brand-names, *Phak-Thep* ('Saint Party') and *Phak-Man* ('Devil Party'), to describe the ideological polarisation of the politicians. *Phak-Man* was mainly used to call the political parties who joined Prime Minister General Suchinda Kraprayoon, who rose to power through his military power (Siam Intelligence 2012), after vowing not to come back after staging the coup in 1991. Oppositely, the term *Phak-Thep* was used to define the oppositional party, such as Democrat Party and Phalang Tham Party, who then were opposed to military's government. The discourse of morally bad politician was materialised through the opposite force by the so-called good politician's involvement in the protest against the government in May 1992.

In the later period of mid-1990s, the ideological binary notion of bad politician was redefined again through a new linguistic concept created by

public intellectuals. For instance, in 2001, the public intellectual from the Royal Institute, Likhit Dhiravegin, published his opinion in Manager Newspaper and in his website to condemn the politicians whom Likhit saw as destroying the country. Likhit used the terms *nakkan-mueang 'nam lew'* (polluted-water politician) and *nakkan-mueang 'yi'* (yakky politician) to call a group of politician whom he believed were thinking only about their own advantages (Likhit, 2001). Especially, the phrases '*nam lew*' and '*yi*' in both terms play a very significant role in re-signifying the concept of bad politician to be more vivid and, also, sustains the oppositional concept of which there is such a thing as morally good politician.

In 2000s, the discourse and image of bad politician as proposed by Likhit seem to be more individually concretised, when Thaksin Shinawatra became a subject of the discourse. At the end of his first term (2001-2005), Thaksin's popularity among the urban middle class, especially in Bangkok, declined. Immediately, after he was elected for a second term (2005-2006), Thaksin was challenged heavily by *Phanthamit*, the political movement outside the parliament. Indeed, it was *Phanthamit* who helped transform the bad politician discourse to be re-defined through the body of Thaksin. In the *Phanthamit* protest, Sondhi and his fellow leaders revealed many information which prove as if Thaksin is the most corrupted politician in political history. Many times, Thaksin was also described by his opposition to be disloyal to the throne (*lom chao*). For example, a columnist from Manager Online, Chadchawan Chadsuthichai, constructed a dichotomy that places Thaksin as directly against the monarchy in his news article, "*khondi thamtam nai luang khonchua tham tam Thaksin*" (good person follows the king and band person follows Thaksin (Chadchawan, 2013).

The aforementioned examples taken from Thai political history show how the discourse of morally bad politician was constructed and sustained through various cultural practices. Especially in the 2000s, the discourse has been re-defined by the image of an individual politician, Thaksin, who still now dominates the concept of bad politician in the mentalities of many people. During Yingluck's administration, the same ideological concept was also

imposed on Yingluck. One of the main reasons was because of Yingluck's family bond with Thaksin and her political campaign initially advertised prior the 2011 election, which openly claims of her brother's power in her campaign, 'Thaksin thinks Yingluck does.' This references of Yingluck to Thaksin and the concept of morally bad and corrupted politician constructed in the past had made Yingluck to automatically be seen as morally bad even before she was elected to run the government.

IV.II The subjection of anti-Yingluck discourse in the posters

When the anti-government satirical graphics take on the figures of the two key politicians in the government regime, Yingluck and Thaksin, the meaning that are given when the anti-Yingluck/Thaksin view the graphic can possible go beyond the satirical convention. In *Nak Phaendin*, when Yingluck's face appears, many anti-government would her facial profile immediately invokes the historically long established ideological concept of bad politician. When her facial image is read together with the new title of the poster *Nak Phaendin*, the linguistic terms which in 1970s was used to refer to the threat created by the communist insurgency, the meaning of Yingluck as a bad politician is pushed even further to associate with national threat which deserves to be extinguished. This re-defined meaning of the notion of bad politician through the bodies of Yingluck and other politicians, and, most importantly, new cultural signs used in the satirical graphic, can be seen reflecting from the comments which many of them go beyond the satirical convention.

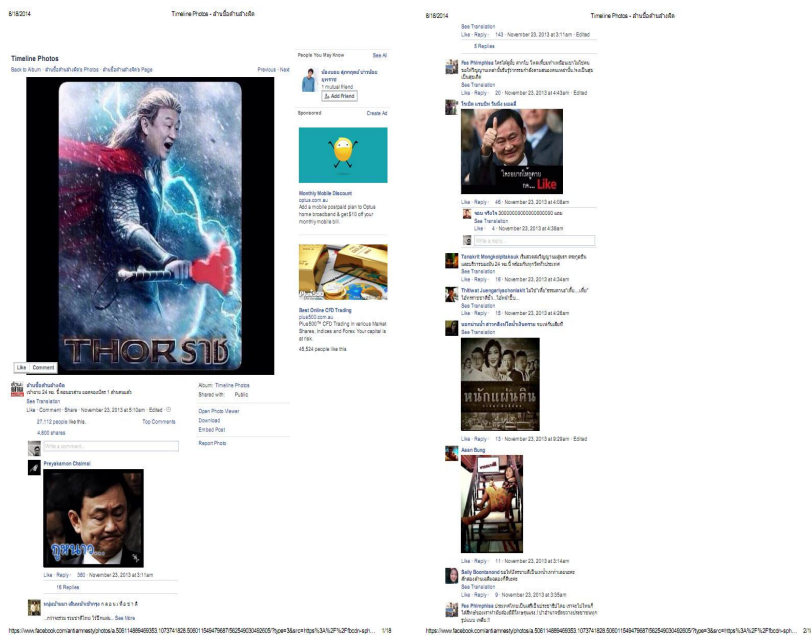
For instance, there is one type of the comments which aggressively criticises Yingluck by using obscene languages and slangs. As seen, for example, from "You all are bastard, and are scum of the earth. Traitor of the nation. You are shithead. You will die in hell," or "Go bury all of them in hell, don't let them come back. The wealth they earned from cheating should be stick in their mounts for them to use in hell." Some of the comments even go greatly beyond the original language of the graphic which is about politics. One comment responds to the graphic by inserting the image of Thai guardian

angel, or *Phra Sayam Thewathirat*, with a description telling how the land of Siam is owed to the favor of the angel. The production of meaning, which seems beyond the convention of the meaning of the satirical graphic, confirms an important point Hall and Foucault were trying to make in their explanation of power subjection in representation. Representation is constituent within the event that is shaped by the history. In this case, the satirical graphic does not just reflect the satirical meaning but also maintains the power of the anti-bad politician discourse, which for the past decade has been redefined through the moralistic binary oppositions such as 'Saint' and 'Evil'; 'polluted water' and 'clean water'; and most importantly through Thaksin and Yingluck's bodies. Most crucially, the re-authentication of the power of the discourse through the politicised cultural signs is quiet powerful, as it can almost completely erase the original meaning of the source-text of the graphic. The following example of *Thor-Rarad*, the anti-Thaksin graphic, illustrates the point.



(Picture 2: Comments made in response to *Nak Phaendin* satirical graphic)

In *Picture 3*, the poster uses the template from *Thor* (dir. Kenneth Branagh, 2011), a Hollywood blockbuster about a mythical hero rescuing the world. However, in the new phototshoped version, the face of Thaksin is replaced that of the original cast. At the bottom of the poster, the title of the original poster in English, THOR, is added further with the word *Rat*. In this context, for Thais, the English pronunciation of the word Thor would sound identical to *thor*, which originally means obstacle or bad. The word *thor* in Thai is usually used with other suffix to signify a fuller meaning. One of them is *thor-rarad* (people who are obstacle or bad), which means ‘tyrant’ in English. With this logic, when the English spelling Rad is added next to the English original title, THOR-Rad, the new title can be articulated in Thai to mean ‘a tyrant’ in English. With Thaksin’s face being photoshopped onto the original heroic film poster and the newly added linguistic title, which signifies the concept of tyranny, the original meaning of the poster is lost. The new meaning which can be interpreted by the Facebook users who are also subjected to the bad/Thaksin political can become harshly diverse.



(Picture 3: *Thor-Rarad* and comments made in response to the graphic)

For example, one comment goes, “not an ordinary damn (*hia*) creature but very damn very very tyranny.” Another one goes even more negatively, “at the end of the story, all of the family dies.” Most interestingly, some of the comments seem to suggest the viewer, not only just to get meaning, but to take a real action. As seen in one comment, “do not conform to authoritarianism. We must be confident in order to get rid of this corrupted cycle in politics. Civil disobedience is the way to show our incorporation and disagreement against the regime.” And similarly in, “my ticket is booked. I will be there [street] on this 24 November.” Of course, it cannot be justified totally that the users who wrote these comments were the same group who went into the street to protest. However, what we can learn from this kind of ideological comment is that the power of the political discourse which, as explained earlier, gets re-authorised through the satirical language in the graphic, can possibly bring about a physical action by motivating other users to actually go into the street.

What is shown in this section is how the bad politician discourse, which has been re-defined in the past mostly on Thaksin/Yingluck political camp, governs the representation in online social space. Even though the satirical graphics were made mainly for entertaining purpose, they can create the meanings that go beyond their initial intention. This is because these graphics make use of the sing languages that have been politicised by the discourse. When the viewers who are the subject of the discourse read the satirical graphic, they would possibly interpret these graphics more violently than the satirical convention. Most interestingly, some of the comments show that their interpretations are deeply rooted in the hostility sustained by the discourse, that they even persuade the online community to go into the street to join the actual protest.

V. Conclusion

Alternatively to the view which seems to suggest that political content in online social media can motivate the political action, this paper has shown such a process is far more complex than that. What really motivates one to read the content in online space and, perhaps, drive one to join the protest, is the

network of power created by the bad politician discourse. In this paper, it shows from a few examples of the satirical graphic that such a form of power can also be authorised through the language of the content that is not aimed to mobilise the protest. During the political crisis, there were also other types of political satires being circulated around. Many of them also criticise the anti-government itself. This paper has not yet counted these variations of the political satire in. A further study with a more critical understanding of the digital social network platform is highly encouraged to be done, in order to achieve a more nuanced conceptualisation of the political content and representation in online social media.

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