

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title : State Control of Radio and Television
Programs in Thailand
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The control and intervention by the government on radio and television political related programs have caused problems for radio and television stations as mass media to perform their political roles completely and freely. Despite the fact that at present Thailand is pursuing the path of democratic political development as well as the principle of rights of the general public to be informed, to express their opinions freely, and also freedom for the mass media, all of which are considered as one of the main principles of democratic government and/or

its instrumental organizations with the power to control radio and television programs. Not only during an era when the country was under the power of military government that radio and television mass media were controlled strictly, but also with government coming into power politically, efforts had been endeavored by the public sector to do the same. Perhaps this is because the process of political mass communication by radio and television stations being one of the most important devices in setting agenda which could possibly influence certain attitudes and concepts audiences in Thai societies as a persuasive lead with a final result of concluding a public consensus at another level. Therefore, thereby controlling radio and television mass media also means an effort to control the attitudes of the people in a society not to go against the government more or less.

This research study : "State Control of Radio and Television Programs in Thailand" is aimed at studying factors which enabled the Thai government to control and intervene political functions made by radio and television programs, as well as the mechanism being used by the government in the past and currently to affect state

control and intervention. The results of the research study revealed that significant factors which enabled the government to make such control and intervention on the political functions by radio and television programs because the structure under concession of radio and television system was under the influential structure of political power of the government or relevant public offices since the origination of radio and television institution in Thai society. The radio and television structure similar to that of a public office or organization emphasizes instructions through chain of command and this typical structural control was the result from the Act dealing with radio and television broadcasting B.E. 2498, which had been made with an objective to grant a concession to the Thai Television Co., Ltd. in the beginning and other similar organizations to be established to carry out their broadcasting operation in the form of monopoly.

Structural control is one of the key political controlling mechanisms and the reason it's still valid because the Act dealing with radio and television broadcasting B.E. 2498 is still looking after this is the

National Commission on Radio and Television Activities, which has been appointed to replace the Commission on Radio and Television Administration in 1992 after the denounced Black May unrest in Bangkok, with its structural framework of civil servants as panelists and the rest of panelists through an appointment by the government. At present, the National Commission on Radio and Television Activities is responsible for the control and looking after the contents of the programs, the responsibility for the contents in the programs and advertisements of which were vested with individual stations for consideration.

The control mechanism at station level is comprised of National Commission on Radio and Television Activities Regulation's procedures, and commercial terms and conditions the station had over a private sector business on the concession. For this reason, it is practically obvious that a private sector business would try to avoid confronting with the station or government for the sake of its stability in running a information technology age and the multiplication of Thais with medium income revenue are affecting political contents, information classification being presented on radio and television are

becoming greater quantitatively and qualitatively to serve the increasing demand of information consumption of medium-income revenue earners as well as Metropolitan urban societies. This fact, together with the development of radio and television mass media to become professionals with obvious targeted market, plus frequent emergence of mass media technocrats appearing on radio and television screen with issues of problems contributing direct impacts to the status quo political incumbents, therefore, tend a conflict between the government and mass media from time to time, whereas radio and television stations are still under their old structure of public type, with controlling commission who cannot really be completely liberal on its scope of work, and could be easily dominated by the government for control and freedom of the mass media in general. The most effective means to solve this particular problem is a reform of the concession of the radio and television structure by enacting a legislation to declare that radio (and television) frequencies are public resource, thereby enable the feasibility of the reform of their title. Then all radio and television frequencies are revoked and recalled for an allocation to be administered by the private sector partially in the free



market with controlling mechanism of license, and transformation into a public company partially to prevent monopoly by large firms established, also with an appointment of controlling, neutral, liberal commission working the allocation of radio frequencies as well as controlling and supervising of radio and television broadcasting in terms of public service quality and intervention from the government and public organizations, so that radio and television mass media can perform their political functions justly and freely.

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