

## ABSTRACT

It goes without saying that the role of mass media in Thai society nowadays is phenomenally increasing as well as its influence. Thus, it is not exaggerating to say that the images of the government, both negative and positive, are mainly depended upon how the media presents them. Nevertheless, this kind of relationship, more often than not, leads to the conflict between the two parties.

While the government blames the media for its unreliable news-presenting that leads to the defamation of people concerned, to protect itself, the media strikes back, claiming that what it presents is just fact and fact alone. More, the media also says that its duty is to present what happens in our society with utmost precision. In other words, the media is a “mirror” objectively reflexing the truths and nothing else.

Such ethical claim is paradoxical in itself. For how can one play a role of a mirror by reporting only the truth, meanwhile, calls himself a “watchdog,” the catchword suggesting that he also gets involve in the situations by alarming, protesting, criticizing or revealing what is going wrong in our society, the roles that beyond the capability of the stand-still mirror.

Noticeably, sometimes the media goes over the borderline through constructing the reality itself by mean of giving definitions to the social and economic events. This means, if speak radically, the media is shaping and constructing common perception of the people on some events, albeit its claim of neutrality.

Another role of the media that rarely mentioned is the “agenda-setting”. In fact, it is not the news receivers who decide for themselves which news they want to consume and which is not, but the media who really takes this “decision-making-process” for them and without their awareness.

Thus, for the media, to deal with news “objectively” and “neutrally” is just the idea beyond materialization, because such a claim contradicts to the its deep nature, the conclusion elucidated in my thesis titled: Thai Press and Prime Minister: The Case Study of Leadership of Chuan Leekpai (1992-1995)

During the election campaign on September 1992, Mr. Chuan Leekpai gained broad supports from several Thai leading newspapers. Many of them joined force to orchestrate that Mr. Chuan was much more qualified than his rivals, pointing out that he had been known as “Mr. Clean hand” and relatively more compromising when compared with one of his strong rival, Maj.-Gen Chamlong Srimuang. They both fought side by side to topple down the the then-prime minister Suchinda Kraprayoon. Mr Chuan’s slogan, “holding on to the democratic principles” also responded to the public expectation then.

After his victory, some of the newspapers even praised Mr. Chuan as the role model of Thai politicians who brought light to Thai society, in term of the democratic development. But he did not have to wait for too long for his relationship with the newspapers to turn sour. They criticized him and his ministers of their administrative failures. Ironically, his once praised qualifications, later became his much criticized drawbacks.

In my thesis, I intend to show that the newspapers’ information is not free from any ideology and bias. The readers should be aware that what they consume is not “pure fact” flowing straightforward from the mirror. Otherwise, the readers will easily fall prey to the manipulation of the media.