

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

This chapter comprises of three main parts: Content Findings, Interview Findings, General Conclusion.

#### 5.1 Content Findings

##### 5.1.1 Period 1: January 6-13, 2001

##### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	9	1		10 (17.5%)	3			3 (18.8%)		3 (50%)	
Neutral	29	9	1	39 (68.4%)	8	1		9 (56.2%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (50%)	
Negative	7	1		8 (14%)	4			4 (25%)	6 (37.5%)		3 (100%)
Total				57 (100%)				16 (100%)	16 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)

Table 5.1 *Bangkok Post* January 6-13, 2001.

**The Nation**

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	5	1	1	7 (12.5%)	5		1	6 (20.7%)	2 (13.3%)	7 (70%)	1 (33.3%)
Neutral	33	11	3	47 (83.9%)	12	5	2	19 (65.5%)	7 (46.7%)	2 (20%)	2 (66.7%)
Negative	1	1		2 (3.6%)	3	1		4 (13.8%)	6 (40%)	1 (10%)	
Total				56 (100%)				29 (100%)	15 (100%)	10 (100%)	3 (100%)

Table 5.2 *The Nation* January 6-13, 2001.**b. Inference**

- News: *Bangkok Post* published more negative news on Thaksin than *The Nation*.

The percentage of negative images in *Bangkok Post* was 14%, in comparison with *The Nation*'s 3.6%. While the amount of news was almost equal in the two newspapers, *The Nation* spared most percentage of news for building neutral images of Thaksin with 83.9% while *Bangkok Post*, only 68.4%.

- Comment: Though the total number of comment items was bigger in *The Nation* (29 items) than in *Bangkok Post* (16), again, *The Nation* spared most percentage of comment for neutral images (65.5%) while *Bangkok Post*, only 56.2%. Also negative images appeared more in *Bangkok Post*'s comment (25%) in comparison with *The Nation*'s 13.8%.

- Letter to the editors: The total number of letters published was not much different in the two newspapers. But *Bangkok Post* offered only letters with neutral and

negative images with the percentage of 62.5% and 37.5%, respectively, while *The Nation* covered also positive image with 13.3%, neutral: 46.7% and negative: 40%.

- Photo: *Bangkok Post* offered the same proportion of positive and neutral photos depicting Thaksin while in *The Nation* Thaksin appeared with good image most (70%), followed by neutral image (20%) and negative (10%).

- Cartoon: The two newspapers presented the same number of cartoons (3). All the cartoons in *Bangkok Post* were negative while the majority of *The Nation*'s cartoons were neutral, the minority was positive. *The Nation* did not have any negative cartoon on Thaksin.

- Conclusion: *Bangkok Post* introduced more critical views on Thaksin than *The Nation*.

### c. Analysis

This week coverage focused on the landslide victory of Thai Rak Thai in the general election. It was the first time in Thailand's history that a party had secured over 50% of the seats in parliament. The newspapers presented different points of view on Thaksin. Positively, he won majority of the voters in the election due to his strength as a wealthy modern politician with very fresh ideas on policy platform and projects improving the lives of grassroots. At the same time, many of drawbacks in his character, his ideology and his involvement in an asset conceal trial had made Thai people doubt about him and future of the country.

#### • Positive

- + Thaksin has a shrewd business acumen, strong ambition in both business and politics. [Now Is Not The Time To Be Taking Risks (*BP* 11/1/2001); Now Comes The Hard Part: Keeping The Faith (*TN* 9/1/2001)].

- + Thaksin is very decisive. [Decisive Steps in Drug War (*BP* 13/1/2001)]

- + Thaksin is adventurous and bold. [Pojamarn, The Practical "Silent Partner" (*TN* 9/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin has the utmost confidence in himself. [Foreign Borrowing Declared Off-Limits (*BP* 12/1/2001); “Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN* 8/1/2001); Thaksin Hints At “Drastic” War On Drug Trade (*TN* 13/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin has good CEO qualities: ability to delegate, ability to choose suitable people for certain jobs. [“Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN* 8/1/2001)] He is a capable national leader. [Chinese Minister Sees Free-Trade Area Spanning Asia (*TN* 11/1/2001); At Last, Foreign Media Show Some Respect (*TN* 12/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin has a vision in new technology. [IT Looks To Be In Safe Hands With Thaksin (*TN* 13/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin is determined to work for the country no matter what happens. [Time to Turn The Voice of The People into Decisive Action (*BP* 7/1/2001; Bangkokians Take A Risk In Leap of Faith (*BP* 7/1/2001), Global Media Spotlight On Thailand (*TN* 7/1/2001) He is patriotic. [A Plea To Next PM For Environmental Clean Up (letter) (*TN* 10/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin has a happy personal life. [Photo (*BP* 7/1/2001); Photo; Small Spending Spree For Winner (*TN* 8/1/2001); Photo, Pojamarn, The Practical “Silent Partner” (*TN* 9/1/2001), Photo (*TN* 13/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin recruited both old and new politicians to join his party under slogan “Think a new, do a new”. [People Have Made Their Will Known (*BP* 13/1/2001)]

+ Thaksin’s policies are clear-cut and he offers a systematic way of getting things done. [People Have Made Their Will Known (*BP* 13/1/2001)]. Thai Rak Thai’s campaign went straight to the hearts of poor people. [Isan Pins Hopes On Thaksin Promises (*BP* 8/1/2001)] Thaksin’s youthful looks and success in telecommunication business were an added advantage in attracting young voters. [What Teenagers Feel...; A Victory For New Money Politics (*TN* 7/1/2001)]

+ Thai Rak Thai has a clever marketing strategy, sells its leadership and good teamwork. [Now Is Not The Time To Be Taking Risks (*BP* 11/1/2001); “Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN* 8/1/2001)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is impatient, incautious and arrogant. [“Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front; Thaksin On Orchestras, The Golden Goose And Leadership (*TN 8/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin only tries to serve his own interest as opposed to the nation’s. [There Seems A Case For Interference, (letter) (*BP 9/1/2001*); Keep Maid’s Hands Off Control Of iTV,;...And Save iTV From Being A Political Tool; What’s Thaksin Ever Done For The Country, (letters) (*TN 8/1/2001*); Better To Change iTV To myTV, (letter) (*TN 9/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin’s CEO-style will be inappropriate and impractical when it comes to leading a nation. [Unlike Chuan, CEO Thaksin Will Take Risks (*TN 8/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin reacted excessively to perceived criticism; has often tussled with foreign press. [Thai Rak Thai Busy Drafting Policy For New Administration (*BP 10/1/2001*); “Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN 8/1/2001*); Foreign Sceptics “Don’t Understand, Should Not Judge” (*TN 10/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin tends to think that money can solve problems, overcome obstacles. [“Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN 8/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin intends to form a government with an absolute majority. [Thaksin Aims For 320 Seats (*BP 6/1/2001*); Doubts Temper General Optimism (*BP 8/8/2001*); Chart Pattana Now Wants in Thai Rak Thai “Not Keen” On Chart Thai (*BP 9/1/2001*); Strong Government “Bad For Democracy” (*BP 12/1/2001*)]

+ Sometimes, he cannot control his emotions – there have been outburst when things have not gone his way. [“Genhis Khan” On New Battle Front (*TN 8/1/2001*)] He is impulsive. [Time For Road Rage Right At The Top (*BP 10/1/2001*)]

+ Some of his policies contradict each other: his commitment to globalisation vs. his promises to establish a village fund and offer a debt moratorium to farmers, his policy of not selling state agencies to foreign firms vs. globalisation. [Unlike Chuan, CEO Thaksin Will Take Risks (*TN 8/1/2001*)]

+ Most of Thai Rak Thai’s schemes are not based on reality. There is wonder from where Thai Rak Thai will get money to fulfill its campaign pledges and a doubt that the strategies may create more public debt in the long term. [“Genhis Khan”

On New Battle Front (*TN 8/1/2001*), Positive Market Reaction Likely (*TN 8/1/2001*); Dr Thaksin's Dilemma; Wrong Prescription For Community Leaders (*TN 12/1/2001*)

+ In this election, Thaksin uses tactics to spend a huge amount of money to buy up MPs from other parties and uses promises of state money to attract voters nation-wide. [On The Threshold of New Politics (*TN 10/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin won in an "emotional", not a "rational" election. [Chavalit Waits In The Wings, (letter) (*BP 9/1/2001*)]

+ Thaksin was found guilty by the National Counter-Corruption Commission of trying to conceal assets. The case would be transferred to the Constitutional Court. If found guilty, Thaksin would have to quit the premiership and be banned from politics for five years. [Cartoon (*BP 7/1/2001*) (*BP 8/1/2001*); Thaksin Case Set For Court (*BP 9/1/2001*); Global Media Spotlight On Thailand (*TN 7/1/2001*)]

### 5.1.2 Period 2: August 3-10, 2001

#### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	10		2	12 (19.4%)					2 (13.3%)	3 (60%)	
Neutral	31	14	2	47 (75.8%)	11			11 (68.8%)	6 (40%)	2 (40%)	4 (80%)
Negative	3			3 (4.8%)	4	1		5 (31.2%)	7 (46.7%)		1 (20%)



Total		62 (100%)		16 (100%)	15 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
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Table 5.3 *Bangkok Post* August 3-10, 2001.**The Nation**

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	12		1	13 (22%)	2			2 (11.8%)	3 (18.8%)	10 (71.4%)	
Neutral	36	8	1	45 (76.3%)	7	2		9 (52.9%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (21.4%)	4 (66.7%)
Negative	1			1 (1.7%)	6			6 (35.3%)	3 (18.8%)	1 (7.1%)	2 (33.3%)
Total				59 (100%)				17 (100%)	16 (100%)	14 (100%)	6 (100%)

Table 5.4 *The Nation* August 3-10, 2001.**b. Inference**

• News: *Bangkok Post* offered a little more news on Thaksin (62) than *The Nation* (59). Both newspapers described Thaksin neutrally in most percentage of news (*Bangkok Post*: 75.8, *The Nation*: 76.3%). *Bangkok Post* presented fewer positive images (19.4%) and more negative images (4.8%) comparing with *The Nation* (22% and 1.7%, respectively).

• Comment: The total number of comment items was not much different between the two newspapers. Both published mostly neutral image comment. *Bangkok Post* had no positive comment while *The Nation* had 11.8%. *Bangkok Post*, however published fewer negative comment (31.2%) than *The Nation* (35.3%).

- Letter to the Editors: Though the total number of letters was almost the same, *Bangkok Post* offered most percentage of letters with negative images (46.7%), smaller percentage for neutral images (40%). *The Nation*, in the meantime, offered most percentage with neutral images (62.5%) and an equal number of negative and positive images (18.8%).

- Photo: *The Nation* published nearly triple number of photos as *Bangkok Post* (14 and 5). Most percentage of photos in both newspapers presented Thaksin's good image. Yet *Bangkok Post* had no negative photo while *The Nation* had 7.1%.

- Cartoon: Both newspapers offered almost the same number of cartoons. More neutral cartoons could be found in *Bangkok Post* (80%) than in *The Nation* (66.7%). Both newspapers offered no positive cartoons on Thaksin.

- Conclusion: *Bangkok Post* tended to introduce more negative images of Thaksin from objective views (news, letters to editor). The subjective news of the newspaper (comment), however, depicted Thaksin less negatively than *The Nation*. *The Nation* tended to still utilise more variable means to depict Thaksin (more photos, more letters, more cartoons).

### **c. Analysis**

This period witnessed the Constitutional Court ruled 8-7 in favour of Thaksin on a charge of having concealed assets. In the last week of 2000, The National Counter-Corruption Commission (NCCC) indicted Thaksin for concealing some 4.5 billion baht in assets at the time of his cabinet service in 1997. The case was then moved to be considered by the Constitutional Court. If found guilty, Thaksin might have ended his premiership and been excluded from politics for five years. The decision of the Constitutional Court gave Thaksin a chance to continue his premiership as the willingness of majority of the voters favouring him.

#### **• Positive**

- + Thaksin has a happy family. [Wife Proves to Be Pillar of Strength (*BP* 4/8/2001); Murkey Verdict Clears Thaksin, Relaxed on "Judgement Day" (*TN* 4/8/2001)]



+ Thaksin was not guilty of asset concealment. [PM Puts on Brave Face During Trial (*BP* 4/8/2001); Photo (*BP* 4/8/2001); Sanan Congratulates PM, Snubs Graft Agency, Court (*BP* 4/8/2001); Photo (*TN* 4/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin is willing to work with NCCC to fight corruption. [(PM Discovers the Silver Lining (*TN* 4/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin controlled his pain inside for the sake of the country. [PM Discovers the Silver Lining (*TN* 4/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin is even stronger, more decisive, competent, active, ambitious and confident after the trial. The verdict outcome is seen as bringing stability to the country. [Senators Demand Purge of Cabinet Crooks; Broader Role Suggested for Provincial Governor; Top Politicians Discuss Measures to Achieve Bureaucratic Reforms (*BP* 5/8/2001); New Role for Some Governors (*BP* 6/8/2001); The Time Has Come to Get to Work, (letter) (*BP* 6/8/2001); 12-Year Plan to Take in Toddlers; Project Afoot to Encourage More Public Participation (*BP* 7/8/2001); Three Thai Dies in Border Skirmish (*BP* 8/8/2001); PM Guarantee (*BP* 9/8/2001); Older Kids Need Not To Go To School, (letter) (*BP* 9/8/2001); The Leash Snaps, Outcome Seen As Bringing Stability, PM's Acquittal: Big Spending to Continue? (*TN* 4/8/2001); Red-tapes Reform to Get Big Push, "Red Tape" Cutting Begins Now, A Boost for PM – Poll (*TN* 5/8/2001); Ambitious Agenda for Reform, PM Seeks Provincial "CEOs" (*TN* 6/8/2001); 12-Years Free Education to Run From Pre-School (*TN* 7/8/2001); Axe ready to fall on government offices (*TN* 7/8/2001); Time is Ripe For Civil Service Reform (*TN* 8/8/2001); PM Targets "Rogue" Police, (*TN* 8/8/2001)]. He is nicknamed as "national saviour". [Verdict Frees Thaksin as "National Saviour" (*TN* 5/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin is outspoken and self-criticised. [Clouds Gone, PM Reaches for the Sky (*TN* 6/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin is a popular politician, who commands an extraordinary amount of respect from the people. [Photo (*BP* 4/8/2001); Lucky Decision, But Welcome, People Say (*BP* 4/8/2001); PM to the People: Thanks for the Moral Support (*BP* 5/8/2001),

Photo (*BP* 8/8/2001); Put Our Decision Behind and Move Forward, (*TN* 8/8/2001)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is impulsive and tend to talk without deep thinking. [Charter Is Not Thaksin's to Amend (*BP* 7/8/2001); Some Thought First Would Help Thaksin; Don't Blame the Messenger (*BP* 9/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin intentionally hid assets to avoid paying tax. [Ruling Sends Out the Wrong Message, (letter) (*BP* 6/8/2001); Thaksin Owes Many People An Apology; Real World Is Full of Things to Detest; Fairness Would Have A Charity Benefit, (letters) (*BP* 8/8/2001); The Verdict Only Means Money Talk (letter) (*TN* 4/8/2001); Thaksin Verdict: Only in Thailand (*TN* 10/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin acts over his power and tends to destroy the credibility of independent agencies. [Emboldened PM Slams Court, Panel (*BP* 5/8/2001); Hands Off, PM Warned (*BP* 6/8/2001); A Long Dictatorship is Just Beginning, (letter) (*BP* 7/8/2001); Charter Is Not Thaksin's to Amend (*BP* 7/8/2001); What A Difference A Few Days Make, (letter) (*BP* 8/8/2001); cartoon (*TN* 5/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin gives priority to family members and friends. [Shake-up Involves 400 Senior Officers (*BP* 6/8/2001); Thaksin's Class Pals Get Boost (*BP* 9/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin holds bad attitude to media. [Premier Irked Over Printed Comments (*BP* 6/8/2001); PM Cools to Media (*TN* 6/8/2001)] He used political and business clout to tame media. [Police Warning on Thaksin Trial Article Earns Derision (*BP* 8/8/2001); Thaksin Sets the Alarm Bells Ringing, (*TN* 7/8/2001); To Special Branch: Disrespectfully Yours..., (*TN* 9/8/2001); Thaksin Verdict: Only in Thailand, (*TN* 10/8/2001); Former iTV Reporters to File Counter Suit, (*TN* 10/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin's policies showed drawbacks. [Vocal Opposition to Planned Changes (*BP* 8/8/2001); Lure of Easy Profits Leads to Shortcuts (*BP* 8/8/2001); Doubt Over Economic Policies (*TN* 8/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin paid lip-service through his policies. [Media Watchdogs Turn Frantic and Disoriented (letter) (*TN* 6/8/2001)]

+ Thaksin was self-aggrandised. [(Thaksin Should Show Humility (TN 7/8/2001)]

### 5.1.3 Period 3: October 16-23, 2003

#### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	6	4	4	14 (20.3%)	2			2 (16.7%)	4 (66.7%)		
Neutral	37	9	6	52 (75.4%)	8	1		9 (75%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (100%)	2 (100%)
Negative	3			3 (4.3%)	1			1 (8.3%)			
Total				69 (100%)				12 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 5.5 *Bangkok Post* October 16-23, 2003.

##### *The Nation*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	5	1	1	7 (12.3%)	4			4 (28.6%)	1 (25%)		

Neutral	34	11	2	47 (82.5%)	4			4 (28.6%)	3 (75%)	8	1 (50%)
Negative	3			3 (5.2%)	5	1		6 (42.8%)			1 (50%)
Total				57 (100%)				14 (100%)	4 (100%)	8 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 5.6 *The Nation* October 16-23, 2003.

### b. Inference

- News: The amount of news in *Bangkok Post* was much more than in *The Nation*. *Bangkok Post* introduced more positive images (20.3%) in comparison with *The Nation* (12.3%), while fewer negative images (4.3%) and *The Nation* (5.2%).

- Comment: *The Nation* offered a little more comment items (14) than *Bangkok Post* (12). Most of *Bangkok Post*'s comment described Thaksin neutrally (75%) while most of *The Nation*'s were negative (42.8%). However, *The Nation* also introduced more positive comment items on Thaksin (28.6%) than *Bangkok Post* (16.7%).

- Letter to the Editors: *Bangkok* introduced a little more letters (6) than *The Nation* (4). But most of *Bangkok Post*'s letters were positive on Thaksin (66.7%), while most of *The Nation*'s were neutral (75%). There were no negative pictures of Thaksin in the eyes of the readers in this period.

- Photo: *The Nation* published much more photos on Thaksin (8) than *Bangkok Post* (3) though 100% of photos were neutral in both newspapers.

- Cartoon: The number of cartoon was exactly the same in the two newspapers (2). But cartoons in *Bangkok Post* appeared all neutral toward Thaksin while *The Nation* split equal percentage for neutral (50%) and negative (50%) images.

- Conclusion: In this period, Thaksin's image in *Bangkok Post* seemed to be more neutral, and even more positive than depicted in *The Nation*. *The Nation*, as usual, published much more visual illustrations, i.e. photos.

### c. Analysis

This period saw the prominent role of PM Thaksin in promoting the country's image through Apec Summit meeting. Thaksin wanted to use the forum to showcase Thailand's economic recovery after the Asian economic crisis, his government's success and his efforts to emerge as a regional leader. The period marked the highest peak in Thaksin's political career.

• **Positive**

+ Thaksin is the most visionary leader in the region. [Thaksin Hailed By US Group; Take Time To Ensure The Greatest Benefit (*BP* 16/10/2003); PM Wants Unlimited Cargo Flights to China (*BP* 19/10/2003); Thaksin Hailed As ASEAN Leader (*BP* 20/10/2003); Future Challenges For Southeast Asia (*BP* 20/10/2003); PM Modest About Praise For Leadership; Roh Lauds Thaksin For Creative Ideas (*BP* 22/10/2003); Thaksin Called The Most Dominant Leader of The Region (*TN* 16/10/2003); A Great Guide To Become A Regional Leader (*TN* 17/10/2003); Kingdom To Give Tax Breaks (*TN* 18/10/2003); A Summit To Remember For Every Leader ; We Value Ties With Thailand: Bush; Thaksin Zeroes In On The "Next Mahathir" Role (*TN* 19/10/2003); Another Crunch Time For Apec (*TN* 20/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin is a good leader of the nation: capable, thoughtful, active, hard-working and innovative. [PM Takes Time Out For Students' Views (*BP* 16/10/2003); PM Raises The Bar For Good Leadership, (letter) (*BP* 17/10/2003); The Tough Job Of Eradicating Slums (*BP* 18/10/2003); Six More Farmers Face Arrest For Trespassing (*BP* 19/10/2003); Seeking Success At Apec (*BP* 20/10/2003); Apec Trade Links Will Help Spur WTO Talks (*BP* 21/10/2003); Barge Show Wows Dignitaries; High Shipping Cost Abac's Main Concern; Cards For E-Citizens (*BP* 22/10/2003); International Advisory Panel Of IT Experts A Good Idea, (letter) (*BP* 22/10/2003); Summit Cost Slightly Over One Billion, But "Worth Every Baht Spent", Says Thaksin (*BP* 23/10/2003); Protests Could Cost Us Future Apecs (letter) (*BP* 23/10/2003); Bush Set To Give Thailand Non-Nato Ally Status (*TN* 16/10/2003); Hu's Visit More Than Symbolic; Apec Oct 14: An Odd Juxtaposition (*TN* 17/10/2003); Kids Pleas Strike The Heart (*TN* 18/10/2003);



Thaksin At Abac (*TN* 19/10/2003); Bilateral Initiatives Coming Thick and Fast (*TN* 21/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin wins the hearts of the people and becomes the pride of the country. His popularity increased after Apec. [Offer The Respect The Fallen Deserve (letter) (*BP* 17/10/2003); Radio Callers Say Govt Gave Poor Notice Of Road, Bridge Closure (*BP* 23/10/2003); It's Time The Government Showed Respect For The Heroes of October 14 (letter) (*TN* 19/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin is modest. [PM Modest About Praise For Leadership (*BP* 22/10/2003); Thaksin Honours Mahathir (*TN* 22/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin loves his family. [PM Off To England With Family (*BP* 23/10/2003)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is not patient. [Take Time To Ensure The Greatest Benefit (*BP* 16/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin is impulsive in speaking and action. [Funny PM Irks Chuan (*TN* 18/10/2003); What Did We Gain From It All? (*TN* 23/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin is allergic to criticisms by academics, NGOs and the media. [Is it Hubris that Defines Thaksin (*BP* 17/10/2003); cartoon (*TN* 17/10/2003); Anti-Terror Now Permanent (*BP* 23/10/2003); PM Thaksin: A Complicated Leader In A Hurry (*TN* 20/10/2003); Thaksin and Bush: The Message of Mistrust (*TN* 21/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin may bring danger to the country with the implementation of solid counter-terrorism measures as commended by the US and his US-ally policies. [Harsh Words For Government Over US Support (*BP* 19/10/2003); Anti-Terror Centre Now Permanent (*BP* 23/10/2003); Farmer Slip Through Check Point (*TN* 18/10/2003); Protesters Tell Bush To Go Home (*TN* 20/10/2003); Bold New Deals: Symbolism Over Substance (*TN* 23/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin rushes to promote free trade rather than establishes sustainable development. [Sustainable Development Summit Call (*BP* 19/10/2003); Critics Say Negative Trade Impacts Ignored (*TN* 19/10/2003)] His populist programmes shows



drawbacks. [Loan Sharks Are Circling In the Capitalist Sea (*TN* 19/10/2003); Warning On Biotech Hub Plan (*TN* 21/10/2003)]

+ Thaksin violated human rights by his war-on-drugs since the beginning of 2003, forcing repatriation of Burmese refugees who could be persecuted when they returned home and flowing beggars back to Cambodia, stopping human rights and other activists from entering Thailand and threatening local groups planning to protest during the Apec summit. [Leaders “Must Help Stop State Violence” (*BP* 19/10/2003)]

#### 5.1.4 Period 4: October 24-31, 2004

##### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	1	3		4 (10%)	1			1 (5.9%)	1 (12.5%)		
Neutral	22	5	1	28 (70%)	11		2	13 (76.5%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (100%)	
Negative	8			8 (20%)	3			3 (17.6%)	4 (50%)		2 (100%)
Total				40 (100%)				17 (100%)	8 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 5.7 *Bangkok Post* October 24-31, 2004.

##### *The Nation*

Level	News	Comment	Letter	Photo	Cartoon
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	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	2	3		5 (11%)							
Neutral	20	4	2	26 (57.8%)	5			5 (33.3%)	2 (14.3%)	6 (100%)	
Negative	14			14 (31.2%)	10			10 (66.7%)	12 (85.7%)		2 (100%)
Total				45 (100%)				15 (100%)	14 (100%)	6 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 5.8 *The Nation* October 24-31, 2004.

#### b. Inference

- News: The total of number of news on Thaksin was slightly smaller in *Bangkok Post* in comparison with *The Nation*. The percentage of neutral images in *Bangkok Post*'s news was much bigger than that in *The Nation*: 70% and 57.8%. At the same time, the proportion of negative images in *The Nation* was bigger (31.2%) than in *Bangkok Post* (20%).

- Comment: Though the number of comment items was not much different in two newspapers (*Bangkok Post*: 17; *The Nation*: 15), *The Nation* spent the majority for negative images (66.7%) while *Bangkok Post* spent majority for neutral images (76.5%). There was completely no positive image in *The Nation* while *Bangkok Post* depicted Thaksin positively in 5.9% of the comment items.

- Letter to the Editor: *The Nation* introduced more letters (14) than *Bangkok Post* (8) and also had much more percentage of negative views on Thaksin through readers' opinions (85.7%) than *Bangkok Post* (50%). There was also completely no positive ideas on Thaksin in *The Nation* while *Bangkok Post* had 12.5%.

- Photo: *The Nation* published 6 neutral photos of Thaksin while *Bangkok Post* had only one.

- Cartoon: The number and the way describing Thaksin through cartoons were exactly the same in the two newspapers: 2 negative.

- Conclusion: *The Nation* appeared to spare more illustrations and content to highlight a negative portrait of Thaksin while *Bangkok Post* turned to be more neutral, even a little more positively when describing Thaksin.

### c. Analysis

This period coverage expressed the climax of Thaksin's violent measurement to the South situation – Tak Bai incident, in which more than 80 local people lost their lives. The public voiced concern over his dictatorship and cruelty in dealing with the case. Many of Thaksin's drawbacks and malfunctions had made many people lose their belief in him.

#### • Positive

- + Thaksin is decisive and determined. [Time To Get Out Of Plum Village (*BP* 26/10/2004); Thaksin: I'm Not Quitting; No Snap Poll (*BP* 29/10/2004); Cornered PM To Face Public (*TN* 29/10/2004)]

- + Thaksin is a national leader fully in control of his country's destiny. [Kid Gloves For PM At FCCT Dinner (*BP* 27/10/2004); NTC Told To Speed Up Master Plan (*BP* 30/10/2004); South Belongs To All Thais (letter) (*BP* 30/10/2004); Africa Is Export Goal (*BP* 30/10/2004); Bird-Migration Action "Urgent" (*TN* 24/10/2004); Why Economic Matters In The South (*TN* 25/10/2004); Combining Acting And Business (*TN* 26/10/2004); Rice Left Off Japan FTA To Overcome Impasse (*TN* 29/10/2004); Mahathir Proposes Autonomous Region (*TN* 30/10/2004)]

- + Thaksin is creative. [Elite Card Firm Vows To Pay Ad Bills Soon (*BP* 28/10/2004); House Calls For Poor Will Be A Costly Cure (*TN* 25/10/2004); Govt To Give Out Baby "Starter Kits" (*TN* 28/10/2004)]

- + Thaksin is a competent politician. [Parties Gear Up For Fierce Campaign (*BP* 30/10/2004); Party Stronger Than Ever, Says PM (*BP* 31/10/2004). He is

willing to work with the Democrats and Mahachon as his future coalition partners [Compromise Still Necessary (*BP* 24/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin's materialism policies have still been irreplaceable. [Put Up Or Shut Up (*BP* 24/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin is widely supported in provinces. [Parties Gear Up For Fierce Campaign (*BP* 30/10/2004); TRT Confident In Northeast (*TN* 25/10/2004); Northerners Rally In Support of PM (*TN* 30/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin loves his family. [PM Takes A Break (*TN* 24/10/2004); Photo (*TN* 28/10/2004)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is impulsive. [Banyat Upset Over PM's Vanishing Act (*BP* 25/10/2004); PM Should Tell Nation Where He Is (*BP* 25/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin doesn't tell the truth. ["We Were Kicked, Beaten And Hit With Rifle Butts" (*TN* 29/10/2004); Thaksin Fails To Reveal All (*TN* 30/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin's populist policies linked with his benefits. [Ruling Party's Power A Cause For Concern (*BP* 26/10/2004); Knocking On The Doors Of The Poor (*TN* 27/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin is insensitive, has no willingness to understand people with different needs, aspirations and different beliefs. [Tak Bai Product Of Closed Minds (*BP* 29/10/2004); Police Showed Incompetence (letter) (*BP* 29/10/2004); Thaksin Urged To Offer Apology (*BP* 30/10/2004); Government Faces Candle-Light Protest (*BP* 30/10/2004); Pisarn Ready To Be Punished If Army At Fault (*BP* 31/10/2004); Body Count Spirals During PM's Reign (*TN* 27/10/2004); PM: Deaths Due To Religious Fasting (*TN* 27/10/2004); Global Outrage As Grim Details Emerge; PM Shows No Remorse (*TN* 28/10/2004); It Wasn't Inhumane Treatment (*TN* 28/10/2004); Anger, Concern, Defiance (*TN* 28/10/2004); Joint Sitting Planned To Grill Govt (*TN* 28/10/2004); Time To Get Active About Promoting Peace (*TN* 28/10/2004); The Govt Should Move Quickly To Build Trust; Blaming The Fast Will Not Help The Situation (letters) (*TN* 28/10/2004); Fasting Is A Moral Exercise, Not A Health Hazard (letter) (*TN*

29/10/2004); PM's Attitude Has Brought Disgrace To The Nation; Tak Bai Was Not An Example Of Buddhism in Practice; A Crime Against Humanity Has Been Committed (letters) (TN 30/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin implemented a wrong violent measure causing the death of more than 80 people and made the situation in the South worse than before. [81 More Dead, Riot Toll Hits 87 (BP 27/10/2004); Warnings Of Bloodbath In Wake Of Mass Deaths (BP 27/10/2004); Death Toll Secrecy Deplored (BP 28/10/2004); Crackdown Condemned By Region's Top Muslims (BP 28/10/2004); Tak Bai Shatters All Hope Of Peace (BP 28/10/2004); Suffocates Doesn't Fly (BP 28/10/2004); Indonesia Press Vent Fury At Tak Bai Deaths; Southern Bloodshed Deserves Answers; Tak Bai Questions Remain; Tak Bai Product Of Closed Minds (BP 29/10/2004); Horrible "Mistakes" Made Deliberately (letter) (BP 29/10/2004); Cartoon (BP 30/20/2004); We Were Spared The Usual Story (letter) (BP 30/10/2004); Body Count Spirals During PM's Reign (TN 27/10/2004); Trouble South At "Point Of No Return" (TN 27/10/2004); Photographs Contradict Govt; Witnesses Tell Of Protesters Beaten (TN 28/10/2004); Anger, Concern, Defiance (TN 28/10/2004); Crackdown Will Only Hamper Progress In The South (TN 28/10/2004); Some Demonstrations Are More Popular Than Others (letter) (TN 28/10/2004); Muslim Press Hammers PM; "We Were Kicked, Beaten and Hit With Rifle Butts"; Independent Probe Needed; The Current Approach Is Not Working; Sensitivity Needed In The South; Getting A Grip On The Terror Threat (TN 29/10/2004); Muslim Leaders Blame PM (TN 30/1/2004); A Government Capable of Addressing the Complex Problems In The South Is Needed (letter) (TN 30/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin lost people's belief that he can solve Thailand's problems: poverty, social evils, bird flu outbreak, unrest in the South, rising fuel prices ... There are even voices that he should resign. [Poverty, Prostitution Not Simple Problems (letter) (BP 28/10/2004); Cartoon (BP 28/10/2004); Muslims To Ask King To Change Government (BP 29/10/2004); Blast Buries Recovery Hopes of Businesses (BP 30/10/2004); Parties Gear Up For Fierce Campaign (BP 30/10/2004); Nothing Honest About That Mistake (letter) (BP 30/10/2004); GDP Means Very Little To The Man In The Street (TN



24/10/2004); Has Thailand Lost Its Conscience? (TN 28/10/2004); Why Is This Govt So Willing To Kill People Who Oppose It? (letter) (TN 28/10/2004); A Catalogue Of Missteps And Serious Problems (letter) (TN 28/10/2004); A Government Crisis in Crisis Management (TN 29/10/2004); Cartoon (TN 30/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin believes that money can solve problems. [Tak Bai Product Of Closed Minds (BP 29/10/2004); PM in TV Appeal For Understanding (BP 30/10/2004); A Prescription From A Disillusioned Doctor (TN 28/10/2004); Muslim Leaders Demand Action Against Officials (TN 31/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin's policy to Burma situation is not appropriate. [Cartoon (TN 24/10/2004); If You Are For The Junta, You Are Against The People (letter) (TN 27/10/2004)]

+ Thaksin is unwilling to admit to any international criticism. [It Wasn't Inhumane Treatment (TN 28/10/2004)]

### 5.1.5 Period 5: February 6-13, 2005

#### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	10	4		14 (26.4%)					2 (12.5%)	3 (33.3%)	
Neutral	28	6	2	36 (67.9%)	14			14 (82.4%)	9 (56.3%)	6 (66.7%)	2 (100%)
Negative	3			3 (5.7%)	3			3 (17.6%)	5 (31.2%)		



Total		53 (100%)		17 (100%)	16 (100%)	9 (100%)	2 (100%)
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Table 5.9 *Bangkok Post* February 6-13, 2005.***The Nation***

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	13	3		16 (17.2%)	2		1	3 (13%)	5 (29.4%)	1 (16.7%)	
Neutral	60	11	1	72 (77.4%)	12	4		16 (69.6%)	8 (47.1%)	5 (83.3%)	1 (33.3%)
Negative	5			5 (5.4%)	4			4 (17.4%)	4 (23.5%)		2 (66.7%)
Total				93 (100%)				23 (100%)	17 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)

Table 5.10 *The Nation* February 6-13, 2005.**b. Inference**

• News: *The Nation* published significantly much more news on Thaksin (93) than *Bangkok Post* did (53). The neutral images accounted for more percentage of news in *The Nation* (77.4%) than in *Bangkok Post* (67.9%). *Bangkok Post* reflected more positive images (26.4%) than *The Nation* (17.2%). At the same time, the number of negative images was found not much different in *The Nation* (5.4%) and in *Bangkok Post* (5.7%).

• Comment: Again, *The Nation* offered more comment items (23) than *Bangkok Post* (17). While *Bangkok Post* had no positive comments on Thaksin at all, *The Nation* spared 13% for that. The two newspapers offered nearly the same proportion of negative comments (*Bangkok Post*: 17.6%; *The Nation*: 17.4%).

- Letter to the Editors: The number of letters was not much different. *Bangkok Post* had much more neutral letters (56.3%) than *The Nation* (47.1%). *The Nation* issued much more positive letters (29.4%) than *Bangkok Post* (12.5%). But *Bangkok Post* had much more negative letters (31.2%) than *The Nation* (23.5%).

- Photo: *Bangkok Post* had more photos (9) than *The Nation* (6). Most of the photos in both newspapers were neutral. But *Bangkok Post* had double number of positive photos (33.3%) than *The Nation* (16.7%). There was no negative photo at all in both newspapers.

- Cartoon: The number of cartoons was not much different. *Bangkok Post* had 100% of cartoons neutral while *The Nation* had 66.7% for negative and the rest for neutral cartoons.

- Conclusion: *The Nation* tended to draw a more diversified portrait of Thaksin than *Bangkok Post*.

### **c. Analysis**

This week witnessed the second landslide victory of Thai Rak Thai in the general election. Thaksin was elected as the PM for the second term with a historic number of seats in parliament (377 seats). He was chosen again because of his determination, decisiveness, strong leadership and effective government-initiated projects. His victory, however, brought in the worry that the checks-and-balances system might be weakened and the PM be more and more autocratic.

#### **• Positive**

+ Thaksin is very successful in the election due to his political prominence, practical solutions to grassroots problems and timely alternation of election campaign strategies. [Single Party Rule; Democrats Lose Out In The Capital; Democrats Wiped Out By Thai Rak Thai Sweep In Northeast; Thai Rak Thai Becomes The “Party of the North”; Photo (*BP* 7/2/2005); Photo (*BP* 8/2/2005); Thaksin Gets Total Control (*BP* 9/2/2005); Challenges Line Up To Test Thaksin (*BP* 9/2/2005); Dawning Of New Kind Of Politics (*BP* 13/2/2005); Photo (*TN* 7/2/2005); One-Party Rule Looms; Thaksin As “Super Brand”; The Responsibility Of A Popular Mandate; Nothing But Admiration (*TN*

7/2/1005); Sudarat Says Poll Victory Shows Trusts In Party; A Mandate For Reform, Growth (*TN* 8/2/2005); The Historic Achievement Of Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai Is to Be Commended (letter) (*TN* 8/2/2005); Thai Rak Thai Learns from Amway; Secret Of The Thai Rak Thai Landslide; Can Youth Save The Party? (*TN* 9/2/2005); Thaksin Won Because He Can Deliver Solutions (letter) (*TN* 9/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin is believed to be a good leader: determined, decisive, with strong leadership and can bring wealth to the country. [Victory Ends Fears Of Government Instability (*BP* 7/2/2005); Investors Cheer Thai Rak Thai's Clean Sweep (*BP* 8/2/2005); Thaksin Gets Down To Work On SPV Scheme For Farmers; Photo (*BP* 9/2/2005); Victory Places Thaksin At Cross Roads (*BP* 9/2/2005); PM Has Many Qualities Worth Admiring (letter) (*BP* 9/2/2005); Election Result Will Usher In Many Changes (*BP* 11/2/2005); More Rights Abuses, Less Religious Tolerance Seen (*BP* 12/2/2005); Big Manhunt After Bomb Blast (*BP* 13/2/2005); First-Time Voters Turn Out In Force To "Do Duty"; Economic Reform To Get Priority; Voting For A Continuity (*TN* 7/2/2005); Thailand Is Lucky To Have A Man Of The PM's Skills In The Driver's Seat (letter) (*TN* 7/2/2005); Cross-Border Cooperation Is Necessary (*TN* 9/2/2005); The Country Is Less Divided (letter) (*TN* 9/2/2005); PM Kicks Off New Season Of Giving; Unprecedented Victory And Obligation (*TN* 10/2/2005); Thaksin Should Listen To Thailand's Wise Men (*TN* 11/2/2005); Educated Politico Has More To Learn About The Voters (letter) (*TN* 12/5/2005); PM Pinning Hopes On Big Projects; Many New Faces And Diverse Political Visions (*TN* 13/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin listens to people. [Single Party Rule (*BP* 7/2/2005); Pokin Tipped As Thaksin's Top Choice For House Speaker (*BP* 8/2/2005); One-Party Rule Looms (*TN* 7/2/2005); Listen To South, Local Leaders Tell Government; PM Back On Air (*TN* 9/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin is determined to form a single-party government. [Banyart, Sana Call It Quits (*BP* 8/2/2005); Cartoon (*BP* 13/2/2005)]. Many people support Thai Rak Thai to form a one-party government. [One Party Government Preferred: Poll (*TN* 9/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin receives huge public support for Thai Rak Thai's grassroots populist policies. [Victory Ends Fears Of Government Instability (*BP* 7/2/2005); "Caravan of Thanks" Hits The Road (*BP* 8/2/2005); PM Ducks Kiss From Taxi Motorcyclist (*TN* 7/2/2005); PM Thanks Working Class For Big Support (*TN* 9/2/2005); Electorate Thanked For Landslide (*TN* 13/2/2005); The End Of Politics As Usual In Thailand (letter) (*TN* 13/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin's victory results in a prosperous economy. [Fed Hike Hits Most Asian Currencies But Baht Gains On Expected Thai Rak Thai Victory (*BP* 7/2/2005); Fitch Says Political Stability To Help Spur Investment In Region (*BP* 9/2/2005); Market Rises On Thaksin Landslide (*TN* 8/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin frankly admits his faults and looks straight to challenges. [PM: No Change In Handling Of South (*BP* 10/2/2005); Southern Result A Wake Up Call (*TN* 8/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin is confident. [PM: No Change In Handling Of South (*BP* 10/2/2005); PM Promises To Squelch Violence (*TN* 10/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin has a happy family. [PM And Family Up With The Lark (*TN* 7/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin has good ability to select right people for the right positions. [The Next Step For One-Party Rule: Ideology? (*TN* 9/2/2005); Picking A Political Successor (*TN* 11/2/2005)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is aggressive and single-minded. [Victory Ends Fears Of Government Instability (*BP* 7/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin is arrogant. [Having Doubts About The PM (letter) (*BP* 12/2/2005); Cartoon (*TN* 13/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin's landslide victory will significantly weaken the principle of checks and balances within parliament. [Victory Ends Fears Of Government Instability (*BP* 7/2/2005)]; Cartoon (*TN* 7/2/2005)] People are worried Thaksin may become more autocratic [People Worried Thaksin May Become More Autocratic (*BP* 8/2/2005);

Opposition Has Its Work Cut Out (*BP* 9/2/2005); Thaksin Must Allay The Fears (*BP* 10/2/2005); More Rights Abuses, Less Religious Tolerance Seen (*BP* 12/2/2005); Fears Of Dark Days Ahead (*TN* 9/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin acts quickly but carelessly. [Vanquished Chuwit Now Eyes Senate (*BP* 7/2/2005); Having Doubts About The PM; PM Must Change Spots Vis-à-Vis The South (letter) (*BP* 12/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin was once a dictator with the worst record on human rights. [Our Future Lies Before Thaksin; Voters Make Clear Their Preferences (*BP* 7/2/2005); Concern Over Civil Liberties; More Rights Abuses, Less Religious Tolerance Seen (*BP* 12/2/2005); Test For Thai Democracy (*TN* 8/2/2005); Democrats To Plan Ways To End Fighting (*TN* 12/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin lost people's trust in the South. [Clear Signal Of Dislike For Thaksin's Policies (*BP* 8/2/2005); PM: No Change In Handling The South; Southern Vote, Southern Voice (*BP* 10/2/2005); Thai Rak Thai's Deep South Fraction Say Defeat Was All Thaksin's Fault (*BP* 11/2/2005); Thaksin Must Not Give Up On The South (letter) (*BP* 11/2/2005); Thai Rak Thai Is Losing The South (*BP* 13/2/2005); A Country Divided; No Thai Rak Thai Fever In The Troubled South; Southern Result A Wake Up Call; Strong Message From The South (*TN* 8/2/2005); The PM Should Seek More Inclusive Solutions In The South (letter) (*TN* 10/2/2005); Former Yala MP Blames PM For Southern Defeat; Time To Think Outside The Box In The South (*TN* 11/2/2005); Tak Bai Victims Get No Cash (*TN* 12/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin uses money to solve problems. [No Thai Rak Thai Fever In The Troubled South (*TN* 8/2/2005); There Are A Few Bright Spots Worth Noting (letter) (*TN* 9/2/2005); In Search Of The PM's "Mr Clean" (*TN* 13/2/2005)]

+ Thaksin doesn't get along well with the press, especially foreign one. [People Worried Thaksin May Become More Autocratic (*BP* 8/2/2005); PM's challenges Here and Abroad (*TN* 7/2/2005)]

### **5.1.6 Period 6: January 23-30, 2006**



**a. Statistics**

***Bangkok Post***

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	1		2	3 (6.1%)					1 (8.3%)	1 (25%)	
Neutral	17	14	1	32 (65.3%)	9	2		11 (64.7%)	4 (33.3%)	3 (75%)	1 (20%)
Negative	5	9		14 (28.6%)	3	3		6 (35.3%)	7 (58.4%)		4 (80%)
Total				49 (100%)				17 (100%)	12 (100%)	4 (100%)	5 (100%)

Table 5.11 *Bangkok Post* January 23-30, 2006.

***The Nation***

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	2		1	3 (3.6%)					2 (5.6%)	2 (40%)	
Neutral	24	24		48 (57.1%)	3			3 (15%)	11 (30.6%)	3 (60%)	



Negative	16	17		33 (39.3%)	10	7		17 (85%)	23 (63.8%)		6 (100%)
Total				84 (100%)				20 (100%)	36 (100%)	5 (100%)	6 (100%)

Table 5.12 *The Nation* January 23-30, 2006.

**b. Inference:**

- News: The total number of news items in *The Nation* much far exceeded that in *Bangkok Post* (84 and 49). Images of Thaksin in *Bangkok Post* seemed to be more neutral and even more positive than in *The Nation*. The positive proportion in *Bangkok Post* (6.1%) was much higher than in *The Nation* (3.6%). And the negative proportion in *Bangkok Post* (28.6%) was much lower than in *The Nation* (39.3%).

- Comment: Again, *The Nation* presented more comment (20) than *Bangkok Post* did (17). *The Nation* aimed to describe a surely more negative image of Thaksin with the majority of comment was for negative features (85%) while *Bangkok Post* offered the majority of comment neutrally (64.7%). There was completely no good pictures of Thaksin in comment in both newspapers.

- Letter to the Editors: *The Nation* introduced more voice from public about Thaksin with more than double number of letters than *Bangkok Post* did. Through *The Nation*'s public opinions, Thaksin appeared to be a bad rather than good PM with 63.8% for negative, 5.6% for positive, the rest was for neutral. Slightly different, the public viewed Thaksin better in *Bangkok Post* with 58.4% negative, 8.3% positive, the rest was neutral.

- Photo: The number of photos was not much different. The majority of photos in both newspapers were neutral (*Bangkok Post*: 75%; *The Nation*: 60%) and minority were positive (*Bangkok Post*: 25%; *The Nation*: 40%).

- Cartoon: The number of cartoons was not much different. While *The Nation*'s cartoons were all negative on Thaksin, *Bangkok Post* saved 80% for negative and 20% for neutral image.

• **Conclusion:** *Bangkok Post* tended to be more neutral in covering Thaksin. One could apprehend a more positive image of Thaksin in *Bangkok Post* rather than the critical *The Nation*.

### c. Analysis

This week recorded the sell out of Shin Corp to Temasek of Singapore. The stock exchange transaction reached Bt 73 billion without paying any single baht tax. Thaksin's children and relatives paid only Bt 25 million in the form of value-added tax on stock brokerage commission fees. The deal has raised a serious public concern over the threat to national security, economic development and media independence as well as the ethics of the PM.

#### • Positive

+ Thaksin is bold. [Premier Could Set Canada Straight If Given Half A Chance (letter) (*TN* 24/1/2006); PM Hits Out At "Bullies" (*TN* 28/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is a good father. ["He Was Charming In Those Days" (*TN* 23/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is eager to learn. ["He Was Charming In Those Days" (*TN* 23/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin found his own way to reach out to listen to rural people. [NGOs Slam Reality Show, Public Loves It (*BP* 23/1/2006); Board Rejects EIA Report On Potash Mine; Critics Slam Thaksin's TV Stunt (*BP* 24/1/2006); PM Vows To End Poverty In 3 Years (*TN* 24/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin wants to sell Shin Corp to avoid conflicts-of-interest. [Thaksin's Political Insurance Policy (*BP* 26/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin has a vision on technology. [Local Content Is King (*BP* 25/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is creative in initiating mega projects, privatising Egat. [B 100bn To Upgrade National Health Services, Facilities (*BP* 29/1/2006); Privatisation Might Help Egat Catch Up With The Times (letter) (*TN* 27/1/2006)]

#### • Negative

+ Thaksin is impulsive in action. [Trouble For PM In The Stars (*TN* 23/1/2006); The At Samat Model Is The Feudal Solution To Poverty (*TN* 23/1/2006); A Classic Display Of Double-Talk (*TN* 25/1/2006); PM Hits Out At “Bullies” (*TN* 28/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin has destroyed the checks-and-balances mechanism in society. [Bickering, Graft Will Scupper Government (*BP* 23/1/2006); PM Won’t Be Around For Third Term (*TN* 23/1/2006); Follow The Leader’ Politics A Threat To Democracy (*TN* 27/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is insincere in solving poverty. [NGOs Slam Reality Show, Public Loves It (*BP* 23/1/2006); Thaksin Puts On Cynical Show (letter) (*BP* 23/1/2006); Critics Slam Thaksin’s TV Stunt (*BP* 24/1/2006); Being Economical With The Truth (*BP* 25/1/2006); One Way The PM Can Help Eradicate Poverty (*BP* 27/1/2006); Premier Fails To Craft Plan To Fight Poverty (*BP* 29/1/2006); Put Money Where His Mouth Is (letter) (*BP* 30/1/2006); Public Sees Gains From At Samat (*TN* 23/1/2006); Crass Publicity Stunt Targets The Gullible And The Weak (letter) (*TN* 23/1/2006); Lesser Officials Cannot Match PM’s At Samat Largesse (*TN* 24/1/2006); Reality Of Show Was Thaksin Giving Foes The Raspberry (letter) (*TN* 24/1/2006); Was The Roi Et Show “Reality TV” Or A Greek Tragedy? (letter) (*TN* 25/1/2006); Thaksin Should Share His Windfall With Charities (letter) (*TN* 26/1/2006); Aesop’s Fables Revisited For 2006 (*TN* 28/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin tries to get as much profit as possible from his power, even through avoiding tax. He prefers to serve his own interests to that of the whole nation. [Bickering, Graft Will Scupper Govt (*BP* 23/1/2006); PM: Shin Sale My Kids’ Idea (*BP* 24/1/2006); Being Economical With The Truth (*BP* 25/1/2006); Grand-Standing (letter) (*BP* 25/1/2006); Shin Sale Draws More Flak (*BP* 26/1/2006); Let’s Not Pay Tax (letter) (*BP* 26/1/2006); Regulators Defend Transparency (*BP* 26/1/2006); A Bad Example (letter) (*BP* 27/1/2006); Tax Officials Admit Shin Care Has Upset Public (*BP* 27/1/2006); Sale Of The Century; What Will They Do With All That Money (*BP* 29/1/2006); Tax Him, Not Us (letter) (*BP* 30/1/2006); Singaporean Interests Seem To Be Governing The Agenda Of Thailand’s Powers That Be (letter) (*TN* 23/1/2006); Timing Of Family Deal

“Suspicious”; Cartoon (*TN 24/1/2006*); PM Confuses Gain With Public Good (*TN 24/1/2006*); Who Does He Serve?; A Classic Display Of Double-Talk; Explanation Required; Revenue Dept Should Do Tax Audits On Yingluck and Bhanapote, Chirmsak Says; Cartoon; Don’t Begrudge Shin Corp, Just Be Proud; DTAC Wants Level Field For Telecoms (*TN 25/1/2006*); Cartoon (*TN 26/1/2006*); Slow Action By SEC, SET Questioned (*TN 26/1/2006*); Complex Transaction A Model For Avoiding Tax, Ownership Law (*TN 27/1/2006*); Cartoon; Is It Lucky 23 For Thaksin? (*TN 27/1/2006*); Concealing Shares: Is This Part II? (*TN 28/1/2006*); PM “Condoned Dodgy Deal”; Bangkokians Suspect A Conspiracy; Cartoon (*TN 28/1/2006*); PM’s Patriotism Flies Out Of The Window As Soon As He Sees His Chance To Make A Buck; Dummies Guide To Exploiting The Masses For Personal Gain (letters) (*TN 28/1/2006*); Thaksin Too Clever By Half?; Cartoon; Joint Statement (*TN 29/1/2006*); Heavily Sued Supinya In A Bind Over Case; PM’s Claims To Patriotism Now Look As Flimsy As A Negligee (*TN 29/1/2006*); In The Real World, People Dodge Taxes Anyway They Can (letter) (*TN 29/1/2006*); Thaksin “Has Lost His Mandate To Rule” (*TN 30/1/2006*)]

+ Thaksin’s family’s sale of Shin Corp involves the transfer of public services to foreign investors, which is a dangerous signal of economic colonisation. [PM: Shin Sale My Kids’ Idea (*BP 24/1/2006*); Shin Deal “A Threat To Security” (*BP 25/1/2006*); Shin Sale Draws More Flak (*BP 26/1/2006*); Shin Sale Queries Need Answering (*BP 27/1/2006*); “PM Should Apologise” (*TN 27/1/2006*); Joint Statement (*TN 29/1/2006*); Groups Plan To Fight Sale In Court; Thaksin “Has Lost His Mandate To Rule” (*TN 30/1/2006*)]

+ Thaksin ignores criticisms. [PM Ignores Academic’s Harsh Words (*BP 24/1/2006*); Wang Nam Yen Backs Call For Charter Reform (*TN 24/1/2006*)]

+ Thaksin is not good at competition, only at monopoly. [PM defends Family’s Sell-Off Of Shin Corp (*BP 25/1/2006*)]

+ Thaksin applies wrong policy to the South situation. [Government Closes Door To Talks With Separatists (*BP 26/1/2006*); Thaksin Rules Out Pulo Talks (*TN 26/1/2006*); New Southern Committees Represent Bangkok Interests (letter) (*TN*

26/1/2006); Restrictions On Alcohol Sales Another Knock To Tourism (letter) (TN 29/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is a liar. [An Outright Lie, No Matter How You Put In (BP 26/1/2006); One Goal, Very Different Visions; PM Confuses Gain With Public Good; Dad, It's Temasek On The Line (TN 24/1/2006); A Classic Display Of Double-Talk (TN 25/1/2006); Two-In-One Thaksin: PM and Shin Corp Man (TN 26/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin's prestige declines after the sale. [PM's Approval Ratings Sink (BP 28/1/2006); Public Loses Faith In Both Govt, Opposition (BP 30/1/2006); Trouble For PM In The Stars (TN 23/1/2006); Faith In PM Plunges: Poll (TN 26/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin is a dictator. He disregards human rights and democracy. ["Thaksinisation" Strains Thai-US Relations (TN 23/1/2006); Free Press in Singapore? What Utter Humburg (letter) (TN 23/1/2006); Ironic That Five Days Of Live TV Were Devoted To PM After His Government Closed Down Stations (letter) (TN 24/1/2006); Administration Is Closing Its Grip On Personal Freedoms (letter) (TN 26/1/2006); Forgiveness Unending For PM (TN 27/1/2006)]

+ Thaksin favours cronyism. [One Goal, Very Different Visions (TN 24/1/2006); Administration Is Closing Its Grip On Personal Freedoms (letter) (TN 26/1/2006)]

### 5.1.7 Period 7: September 20-27, 2006

#### a. Statistics

##### *Bangkok Post*

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive										1 (25%)	



Neutral	58	11		69 (83.1%)	11			11 (50%)	4 (16.7%)	1 (25%)	
Negative	13	1		14 (16.9%)	11			11 (50%)	20 (83.3%)	2 (50%)	5 (100%)
Total				83 (100%)				22 (100%)	24 (100%)	4 (100%)	5 (100%)

Table 5.13 *Bangkok Post* September 20-27, 2006.***The Nation***

Level	News				Comment				Letter	Photo	Cartoon
	Politics	Business	Society	Total	Politics	Business	Society	Total			
Positive	2			2 (1.9%)					1 (2.7%)	2 (18.2%)	
Neutral	79	5	2	86 (81.9%)	10			10 (37%)	8 (21.6%)	6 (54.5%)	
Negative	15	2		17 (16.2%)	17			17 (63%)	28 (75.7%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (100%)
Total				105 (100%)				27 (100%)	37 (100%)	11 (100%)	5 (100%)

Table 5.14 *The Nation* September 20-27, 2006.**b. Inference**

• News: The number of news items in *The Nation* was still bigger than in *Bangkok Post*. The proportions of neutral and negative images of Thaksin were not much different in the two newspapers. But the positive image appeared 1.9% in *The Nation* while none was in *Bangkok Post*.



- **Comment:** The total number of comment items in *The Nation* was more than in *Bangkok Post*. *The Nation* gave the majority content for negative images, and minority for neutral ones while *Bangkok Post* gave equal percentages to the two categories. There were no positive images of Thaksin in both newspapers' comment.

- **Letter to the Editors:** Again, the number of letters in *The Nation* was bigger than in *Bangkok Post*. Most of the letters expressed negative views on Thaksin. However, *The Nation* still introduced 2.7% positive opinions on Thaksin while *Bangkok Post* did not introduce a single good opinion from the readers.

- **Photo:** *The Nation* publicised almost triple number of photos as *Bangkok Post* did. While the majority of *Bangkok Post* photos presented Thaksin negatively, the majority of *The Nation* photos on Thaksin were neutral. *Bangkok Post* had more percentage of positive photos (25%) than *The Nation* (18.2%).

- **Cartoon:** The number and messages that cartoons implied in both newspapers are exactly the same: 5 negative cartoons.

- **Conclusion:** *The Nation* introduced more diverse images of Thaksin through more number of content and illustration items.

### **c. Analysis**

Anti-Thaksin wave reached its climax with a coup d'état ousting him on the night of September 19, 2006 by army chief Gen Sonthi Boonyaratkalin. The coup aimed to take out the root of Thaksin power to stop the political crisis after he dissolved the House on February 24 and called elections for April 2, when once again, Thaksin won a majority. His victory, however, was undermined by a strong protest vote. Thaksin did not accept the premiership to ease mounting political tension. He then returned to work as a caretaker PM waiting for the next election at the end of the year. The coup took place when the caretaker PM Thaksin Shinawatra was in New York and due to address the United Nations General Assembly.

#### **• Positive**

- + Thaksin is determined in his political career and is a good leader of Thai Rak Thai. [Political Implications of Election Delay (*BP* 20/9/2006); PM Believed He Still

Held “Upper Hand” (*BP* 20/9/2006); Thai Rak Thai Without Thaksin “Will Shatter” (*BP* 22/9/2006); Perfect Plot Ousts Great Manipulator (*TN* 21/9/2006); A World Away From The Tanks; Sonthi Outsmarted Thaksin At The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour (*TN* 22/9/2006); Thai Rak Thai Faction Now Backs Probe Into Corruption (*TN* 24/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin has been undisputed winner in two succeeding general elections 2001 and 2005. [Thaksinomy Fantasia (*BP* 20/9/2006); A Step Back So As To Move Forward (*BP* 21/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin is still supported by the majority of poor people due to his focus on rural grassroots and urban poor. [Most Agree With Coup But Have Reservations (*BP* 21/9/2006); Stepping In To Heal The Breach (*BP* 22/9/2006); Even Many In Thaksin Territory Welcome Coup (*TN* 24/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin has a happy family. [Thaksin Holidaying In London; Photo (*BP* 22/9/2006); Ousted PM’s Wife Joins Him In London (*BP* 26/9/2006); Photo (*TN* 22/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin made strong efforts to promote Thailand’s tourism. [“Amazing Thailand” Living Up To Expectations (*BP* 25/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin shows willingness for national reconciliation. [Thaksin’s Statement (*TN* 22/9/2006); Family Life For Sudarat (*TN* 25/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin acted properly in Shin Corp sale because according to Thai law, he didn’t have to pay capital gains tax for stock market sales. [CDRM Must Follow Letter Of The Law In Asset Freezes (letter) (*TN* 27/9/2006)]

• **Negative**

+ Thaksin is arrogant and snobbish. [Chuan Says He Feels Sorry For Thaksin (*BP* 21/9/2006); Lesson Worth Learning (*BP* 22/9/2006); A Coup With A Human Face (*BP* 24/9/2006); Cartoon (*TN* 20/9/2006); “Yellow Ribbon Coup” Was A Very High Price To Pay (*TN* 21/9/2006); Corruption Of Former PM Unparalleled In Thai History (letter) (*TN* 22/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin lacks basic criteria for legitimacy needed by a good leader: integrity, morality, honesty and self-sacrifice. [A Coup With A Human Face (*BP*

24/9/2006); Ethics, Honesty In New PM Vital (*BP* 26/9/2006); Foot In Mouth (letter) (*BP* 26/9/2006); Democratic Hopes Must Remain Strong (*TN* 21/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin lost the belief of Thai people both in and outside the country. He is no longer wanted to lead the country. [Photo (*BP* 20/9/2006); NHRC Wants Charges Pressed (*BP* 20/9/2006); Thai Rally Against PM's New York Speech (*BP* 20/9/2006); Political Implications Of Election Delay (*BP* 20/9/2006); Southerners Welcome Coup (*BP* 21/9/2006); Academics In Quandary After Putsch; Most Peaceful Military Coup In Thai History; Cartoon (*BP* 21/9/2006); Chamlong Hails Putsch As Justified; Cartoon (*BP* 22/9/2006); Thaksin Overstepped His Mandate (letter) (*BP* 22/9/2006); Civic Groups Want End To Political Assembly Ban (*BP* 24/9/2006); A Coup With A Human Face (*BP* 24/9/2006); Cartoon (*BP* 25/9/2006); Protesters Hound PM All Across New York (*TN* 20/9/2006); Ouster Only Option Given Former PM's Massive Wealth (letter) (*TN* 21/9/2006); Photo (*TN* 21/9/2006); Photo; Cartoon (*TN* 22/9/2006); Ideals And Realities (*TN* 22/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's control of government limited the checks-and-balances system. [Thaksinomy Fantasia (*BP* 20/9/2006); West Shouldn't Be Too Quick To Condemn (letter) (*BP* 22/9/2006); Who Will Be Interim PM? (*BP* 24/9/2006); Thaksin Is Out, But Not Yet Defeated (*BP* 25/9/2006); Coup Should Restore Unity To Country (*BP* 25/9/2006); People Need Reforming, Not The Constitution (letter) (*BP* 25/9/2006); Corruption Of Former PM Unparalleled In Thai History (letter) (*TN* 22/9/2006); The Unfulfilled Wishes Of The September 19 Coup (*TN* 24/9/2006); Let The Clean Up Of Government Commence (*TN* 24/9/2006); Up Country Poor Will Bear The Brunt Of The Results (*TN* 25/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's key policies proved drawbacks: His rush to implement the healthcare scheme caused financial problems for hospitals and working problems for doctors, nurses and other medical staff. Money did reach the poor quickly. Instead of using it to improve their productivity, the villagers ended up with new motorcycles, pick-up trucks, mobile phones and electronic gadgets...The result was that country faced rising household debt. His campaign for a better society by getting rid of drug dealers

resulted in the death of thousands of innocent people. [Thaksinomy Fantasia (*BP* 20/9/2006); CDRM Calls For Revision Of Budget (*BP* 26/9/2006); Thaksin's Control Of Media Blinded Upcountry Voters (letter) (*TN* 27/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin ran the country with corrupt intent and favoured cronies. [King Endorses CDR (*BP* 21/9/2006); OAG's Jaruvan Told To Keep Working (*BP* 21/9/2006); Most Peaceful Military Coup In Thai History (*BP* 21/9/2006); A Step Back So As To Move Forward (*BP* 21/9/2006); Stepping In To Heal The Breach (*BP* 22/9/2006); Thaksin's Cronies Get Shown Door (*BP* 24/9/2006); A Coup With A Human Face (*BP* 24/9/2006); Time For The Vision Thing (*BP* 25/9/2006); CDRM Backing For Surakiart (*BP* 26/9/2006); Voters Are To Blame (letter) (*BP* 27/9/2006); Democratic Hopes Must Remain Strong (*TN* 21/9/2006); Let's Hope That The Tools Of Democracy, Once They Are Returned, Are Put To Good Use (letter) (*TN* 21/9/2006); Ray Of Hope Might Finally Be Invisible For Strife-Torn South (letter) (*TN* 21/9/2006); The End Of A Corruption-Plagued Era In Thai Politics (letter) (*TN* 21/9/2006)); US Still Keen On FTA Talks (*TN* 21/9/2006); US Condemnation Quite Simply "Economic Black Mail"; Corruption Of Former PM Unparalleled In Thai History (letter) (*TN* 22/9/2006); His Majesty Endorses Sonthi (*TN* 23/9/2006); Police Overhaul Long Overdue (*TN* 23/9/2006); Was Ousting Thaksin Really A Strong Enough Measure To End Systematic Corruption? (letter) (*TN* 23/9/2006); There Were Democratic Alternatives To The Staging Of A Military Takeover (*TN* 26/9/2006); Corruption Must Be Cut Off At Its Roots (*TN* 26/9/2006); Coup Enables Thailand To Take A Giant Leap Forward (letter) (*TN* 26/9/2006); A Compromise Is Needed More Than Ever (*TN* 27/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's hawkish policies toward the deep South has polarised the country. [Thaksin's Out, So Will Peace Come To South? (*BP* 21/9/2006); Good Bye, Good Riddance (letter) (*BP* 22/9/2006); Ray Of Hope Might Finally Be Invisible For Strife-Torn South (letter) (*TN* 21/9/2006); Deposed PM Spent Five Years Squandering Public's Goodwill (letter) (*TN* 23/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai is not a political institution with clear ideology. [Thai Rak Thai Without Thaksin "Will Shatter" (*BP* 22/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin tried to destroy democratic system in Thailand. [Good Bye, Good Riddance (letter) (*BP* 22/9/2006); Ignorant White House (letter) (*BP* 23/9/2006); A Coup With A Human Face (*BP* 24/9/2006); The Moral Enigma Of A Popular Coup; Thaksin Is Out, But Not Yet Defeated (*BP* 25/9/2006); The Lessons Of Money Politics (*BP* 27/9/2006); On The receiving End (letter) (*BP* 27/9/2006); Sonthi: Civilian Government In Two Weeks (*TN* 21/9/2006); Corruption Of Former PM Unparalleled In Thai History (letter) (*TN* 22/9/2006); Litmus Test For Thailand's Ruling Military Council: Leave The Press Alone (*TN* 23/9/2006); How To Salvage The Coup And Move On To The Reform; A Leap Backwards (*TN* 25/9/2006); CDRM Must Not Mistake Support For Licence To Control Media (*TN* 26/9/2006); Former FEER Journalist Urges UK To Remember How Thaksin Dealt With Outsiders (letter) (*TN* 26/9/2006); Coup Enables Thailand To Take A Giant Leap Forward (letter) (*TN* 26/9/2006); Thaksin's Control Of Media Blinded Upcountry Voters; Greed, Not Intimidation, Skewed Reporting On Thai Rak Thai (letters) (*TN* 27/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's CEO style leads to conflicts. [What Comes Next: A New Chapter (*BP* 24/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin violated human rights. [Thai Rak Thai Has Picked A Convenient Time To Get Serious About Human Rights Violations (letter) (*TN* 20/9/2006); Kraisak Set For Foreign Portfolio (*TN* 21/9/2006); Democratic Hopes Must Remain Strong (*TN* 21/9/2006); Police Overhaul Long Overdue (*TN* 23/9/2006); Coup May Be Unwelcome, But It Prevented Chaos (*TN* 24/9/2006); There Were Democratic Alternatives To The Staging Of A Military Takeover (*TN* 26/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin's over self-confidence made him fail to calculate the coup. [Perfect Plot Ousts Great Manipulator (*TN* 21/9/2006); Coup May Be Unwelcome, But It Prevented Chaos (*TN* 24/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin is deceitful, insincere, greedy and selfish. [Deceit Led To Downfall of The PM (*TN* 22/9/2006); The End Of Getting Rid Of The Thai Rak Thai Party Justified The Means Used By The Army (*TN* 22/9/2006); Corruption Of Former PM Unparalleled In Thai History (letters) (*TN* 22/9/2006); Litmus Test For Thailand's



Ruling Military Council: Leave The Press Alone (TN 23/9/2006); No Thanks To Our Critics In The International Community (letter) (TN 24/9/2006); How To Salvage The Coup And Move On To The Reform (TN 25/9/2006)]

+ Thaksin disrespects the King. [Deposed PM Spent Five Years Squandering Public's Goodwill (letter) (TN 23/9/2006)]

## 5.2 Interview Findings

The following are some interesting features that have been found out through in-depth interviews with a journalist, an editor, a researcher and a cartoonist working for *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*.

There was a trend in covering Thaksin throughout his five-and-a-half-year ruling time in both newspapers but that was not a dramatic trend. At the beginning of his first term, when Thaksin emerged as a modern politician with fresh ideas on improving lives of grassroots people, journalists tended to give him a chance. Journalists covered him mostly neutrally and even positively highlighting his capabilities but at the same time expressing doubts over the feasibilities of his projects and his ethics. In the middle of his first term, many of his drawbacks were obvious. Thaksin appeared to care little for human rights, which caused the deaths of more than 2,000 people in the war-against-drugs. Media started to echo criticisms on him and keep him checked all the time. *Bangkok Post* early on held some skepticism but not outright critical while *The Nation* has criticised since the very beginning and became crusade at the end of Thaksin's reign.<sup>1</sup>

Journalists and contributors of the two newspapers can freely express their ideas. There have been no rule or policy in covering Thaksin in the newspapers over the time. While *The Nation* ("like CNN") has been more "consistent": "hard-hitting", criticising Thaksin from the beginning on every issue, *Bangkok Post* ("more like BBC") has also been critical but focusing on certain issues. *Bangkok Post* was rather "more temperate", "measured" and tended to keep softer, neutral voice since early 2004. Because one of the

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<sup>1</sup> interview with Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak, director of Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University. He used to be a reporter for *The Nation* and now contributes to *Bangkok Post*, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

owners of *Bangkok Post* Suthikiati Chirathivat, who had majority shares from Central department store group, had problems with the concession of Central Latprao, which was built on the land of Railway Authority of Thailand not following to the contract: it was too high, the parking space was too large... That's why Thaksin government used the case as a tool to control *Bangkok Post*.<sup>2</sup>

Though *Bangkok Post*'s news department has been always independent, most of the journalists in *Bangkok Post* had to more strictly self censure and also endured more strict censorship from the editors. *The Nation* in the meantime has been quite independent, quite free to criticise though they have been affected by the limited source of advertisements controlled largely by Thaksin and his cronies.

Portrait of Thaksin in English-language newspapers is different to that in Thai press. While *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* focus more on Thaksin's policy, Thai-language press seem to be more interested in his personal activities and political style. There have been different levels of criticism on Thaksin among outstanding newspapers in Thailand:

1. Most critical: *The Nation*, *Puchakan*, and *Thai Post*.
2. Less critical: *Bangkok Post*, *Matichon*, and *Krungthep Turakij*.
3. Least critical: *Daily News*, *Thai Rath*.<sup>3</sup>

As regards Thaksin's pressure towards media, most of the interviewees shared the idea that in the first and second years of his first term they felt no pressure. But at the end of his second and early third year in power, Thaksin became tight with media. In 2003, he turned to be a dictator through the war-on-drug campaign. As a businessman, Thaksin knew what methods should be used to control media most effectively. He utilised variable methods for that purpose, including controlling advertisements, dividing journalists by incentives, using libel suits against journalists and media companies, and using unconstitutional laws to control the freedom of expression.

The first was using advertisements to punish or reward newspapers, which oppose or favour Thaksin. After the economic crisis in 1997, a lot of companies went bankrupt.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> interview with Kavi Chongkittavorn, assistant editor of *The Nation*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

The government turned to be the main source of advertisement revenues. Thaksin centralised all money and gave out to newspapers that support him. Besides, 60 per cent of private advertisement sources were from telecom companies, of which about 65 per cent belonged to AIS operated by Thaksin. So Thaksin was the major advertisement revenue provider.

Another method Thaksin used to control media was dividing journalists. Normally, journalists are very well organised. Thaksin used tactics to let them envy one another about incentives by giving someone more and some other less.

However, the most important method and also the unique one that had never been used by any one else before was using libel suits against many journalists and media companies. There have been around 30 cases of this kind, each dealt with lots of money. Yet so far no journalists have lost the cases.

Thaksin also used improper laws to control media. There were 27 laws that limit press freedom in Thailand. The government should have abolished them because they were non-Constitutional. But he did not do so. From time to time, Thaksin used the 1946 Press Printing Act as an instrument to control media.

By the end of the third year Thaksin in power, most of the newspapers were under his influence. Television channels were already very supportive to Thaksin. *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* were actually the last frontier that Thaksin could not control. That's why Thaksin wanted his friend, tycoon Paiboon Damrongchaitham, from GMM Grammy Group to buy up to 23.6% of the Post Publishing Plc's stakes in September 2005.

In the third year, journalists in *The Nation* felt the pressure obviously because they had criticised a lot about Thaksin's policy toward Burma. The Special Branch Police even sent a letter to the editorials to ask for the source of information that *The Nation* based on. But *The Nation* journalists not only remained unaffected but also criticised more.<sup>4</sup>

When dealing with Letters to The Editors, sometimes both newspapers choose the same letters to publish. All interviewees agreed that Letters to The Editors is an effective

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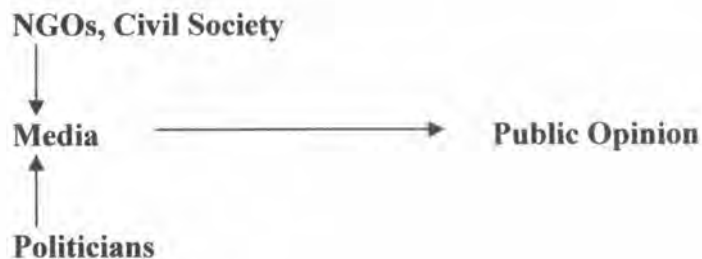
<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

interactive channel between the newspapers and readers and also a forum for the readers to express their opinions. However, sometimes, many positive opinions on Thaksin were written by people hired by Thaksin. Such “professional letter-writers” sent feedbacks to all columns immediately after the columns were posted on the website. *The Nation* editors got used to their style of writing feedbacks so much that they could tell who wrote sincerely and who did not. That’s why they had to be more careful when choosing letters to publish.

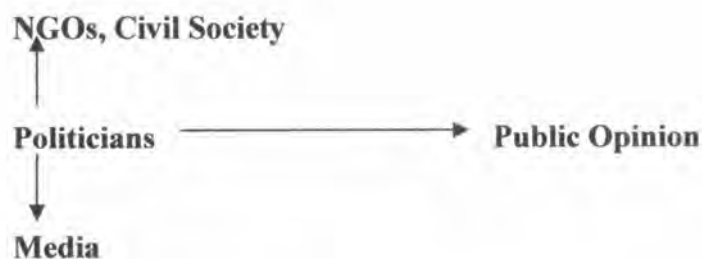
To cartoonists, it is easy to depict a vivid portrait of Thaksin because he is rather emotional. Like other journalists, cartoonists are free to draw whatever they want to describe Thaksin in their own ways following up the news and comments.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the news agenda before and under Thaksin, it is noted that before Thaksin, the media stood in the middle of NGOs, civil society and politicians. The media received information from these two sources to form public opinion. But under Thaksin, politicians replaced media to stand in the middle of NGOs and media and affected these two circles, at the same time forming public opinion.

**Before Thaksin:**



**Under Thaksin:**



<sup>5</sup> interview with Stephane Peray, a French cartoonist working for *Bangkok Post*, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

The timetable and levels of Thaksin's control media can be described below:

- 2001-2003: Thaksin's control was at the highest level.
- 2004-2005: Thaksin's control was tight but weaker than before.
- December 4, 2005-September 19, 2006: After the royal speech of His Majesty the King on his birthday, in which the King criticised Thaksin and implied that media should have freedom, newspapers except TV and radio channels enjoyed freedom.<sup>6</sup>

Because of their differences in voices, *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* play different roles in different times. When Thaksin's power was in its full swing, the role of *The Nation* was more important in offering close watch on him. *The Nation's* critical view would keep Thaksin under checks all the times. But when Thaksin was ousted, a more neutral, fair and measured media was needed. The role of *Bangkok Post* turned to be more crucial as it gave him a fair chance and offered the society a fair assessment.<sup>7</sup>

When being asked about their personal ideas on Thaksin, one of the interviewees admitted that he was a capable man but not a good leader. He could have done best for the country if he held the position for a short not long time. He was fairly shrewd and active.<sup>8</sup> The rest of the interviewees shared the opinion that he was a dangerous man, who always thought of his interest first because he started first as a businessman. He destroyed the rule of law, nurtured corruption and cronyism.

Concerning the coup, most of the interviewees said it was undemocratic but helped get rid of Thaksin. However, the coup makers ignored the poor when ousting Thaksin because the poor benefited much from Thaksin policies.<sup>9</sup>

### 5.3 General Conclusion

In conclusion, there has been a trend in covering Thaksin. He appeared better at the beginning of his ruling time and worse at the end. But this is not a dramatic trend. In each of the seven periods analysed, image of Thaksin was depicted with both positive and

<sup>6</sup> interview with Chongkittavorn.

<sup>7</sup> interview with Dr Pongsudhirak.

<sup>8</sup> interview with a senior reporter of *Bangkok Post*, who asked to be anonymous, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> interview with Dr Pongsudhirak.



negative features at the same time. This shows the fact that the two newspapers have been free forums for both favourable and critical ideas at the same time.

Regardless of the themes, the proportions of the image levels in each period in the two newspapers can be figured out in the following tables:

***Bangkok Post***

Periods	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Period 1	16 (16.3%)	61 (62.3%)	21 (21.4%)	98 (100%)
Period 2	17 (16.5%)	70 (68%)	16 (15.5%)	103 (100%)
Period 3	20 (21.7%)	68 (74%)	4 (4.3%)	92 (100%)
Period 4	6 (8.8%)	45 (66.2%)	17 (25%)	68 (100%)
Period 5	19 (19.6%)	67 (69.1%)	11 (11.3%)	97 (100%)
Period 6	5 (5.7%)	51 (58.7%)	31 (35.6%)	87 (100%)
Period 7	1 (0.3%)	85 (61.8%)	52 (37.9%)	138 (100%)

Table 5.15 The Image Levels in Seven Periods of *Bangkok Post*.

***The Nation***

Periods	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Period 1	23 (20.4%)	77 (68.1%)	13 (11.5%)	113 (100%)
Period 2	28 (25%)	71 (63.4%)	13 (11.6%)	112 (100%)
Period 3	12 (14.1%)	63 (74.1%)	10 (11.8%)	85 (100%)
Period 4	5 (6.1%)	39 (47.6%)	38 (46.3%)	82 (100%)
Period 5	25 (17.6%)	102 (71.8%)	15 (10.6%)	142 (100%)
Period 6	7 (4.6%)	65 (43%)	79 (52.4%)	151 (100%)
Period 7	5 (2.7%)	110 (59.5%)	70 (37.8%)	185 (100%)

Table 5.16 The Image Levels in Seven Periods of *The Nation*.

The fluctuation of positive and negative images of Thaksin can be further understood through the followings diagrams.

Table 5.17 The Fluctuation of Positive and Negative Images of Thaksin in *Bangkok Post*.

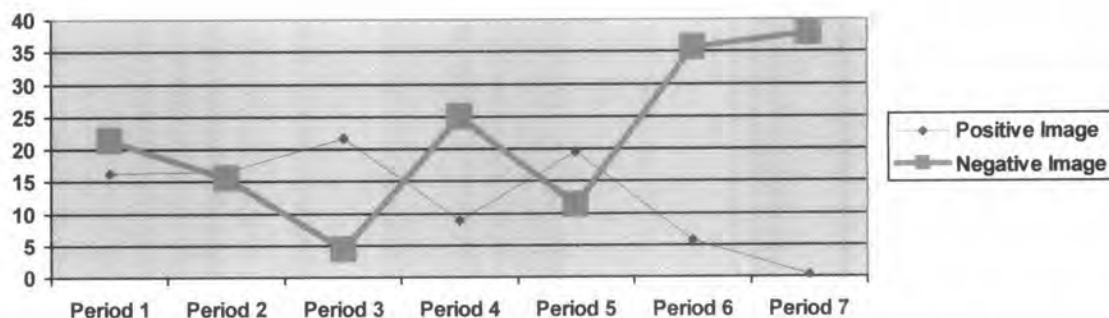
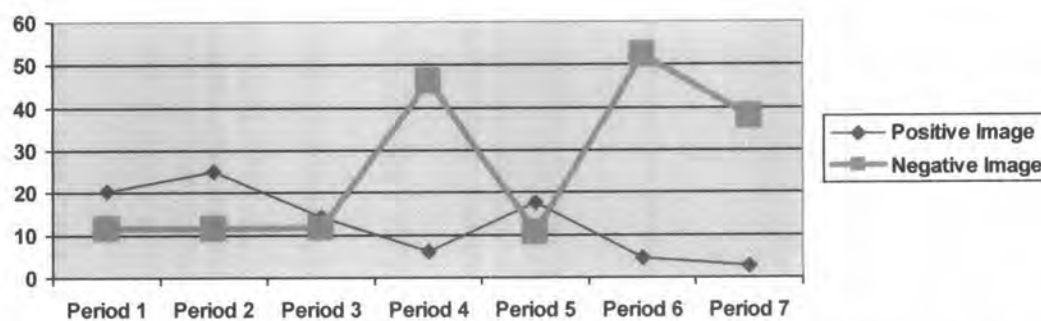


Table 5.18 The Fluctuation of Positive and Negative Images of Thaksin in *The Nation*.



At different critical levels, the two newspapers have provided the most vivid image of Thaksin to English-speaking readers. In general, Thaksin can be understood as a person with basic good and bad characters as follows.

• **Positive**

- + Thaksin is a capable leader: decisive, creative, self-confident, able to delegate, able to choose suitable people for certain jobs.
- + Thaksin has a vision in new technology.
- + Thaksin is a good husband, good father and has a happy personal life.
- + Thaksin is outspoken and self-criticised.
- + Thaksin cares much for the poor.

• **Negative**

- + Thaksin lacks basic criteria for legitimacy needed for a good leader: integrity, morality, honesty and self-sacrifice.

+ Thaksin is impatient, incautious, arrogant, immodest, stubborn and impulsive.

+ Thaksin only tries to serve his own interest as opposed to the nation's.

+ Thaksin tends to think that money can solve problems.

+ Thaksin nurtures corruption and cronyism.

+ Thaksin disregards human rights, democracy and independent institutions.