

Overview Freedom of Expression in Thailand*

Ubonrat Siriyuvasak

*** Anura Goonasekera and Lee Chun Wah (eds)
Asian Communication Handbook 2003, Singapore,
Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC)
and School of Communication Studies,
Nanyang Technological University, 2003.**

Communication Scene

The Thai society has undergone critical transformative years during the 1980s - 1990s. Prior to this period, the political turmoil and student up-rising in the 1970s brought down the military regime of Thanom-Prapas and ushered in freedom of speech that signified the beginning of an open society. However, the conservative forces retaliated brutally. The military and the right-wing para-military murdered student demonstrators on the campus of Thammasat University in October 1976 and staged a coup that ended the brief period of open politics between 1973-1976. As a result, student activists and intellectuals joined the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in their guerrilla warfare in the jungle. But the armed confrontation was defused in 1980 when the military campaigned to offer an amnesty to these political dissidents. It was a process which saw a gradual realignment of political and economic forces during the following decades.

On the economic scene, the Thai economy was in recession in the mid-1980s. But it recovered and spurred ahead with double-digit growth in the late 1980s (1987-1990). The middle-classes in Bangkok and other urban cities expanded into various sectors of business such as trade and services, manufacturing, and gained a large share of the accumulated wealth during this period. The industrialization of the economy, on the other hand, had a devastating impact on the environment and the livelihood of the rural peasantry. They were up-rooted from their land and became cheap labour in factories and construction sites. Hence, the economic growth has made them poorer than they once were.

The media and communication scene during this transformative period is a good reflection of the changing political economic situation. The mass media boomed with the economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s and went down with it in 1997 when it crashed. The new media such as the Internet and multi-media as well as the telecommunications sector expanded rapidly. On the contrary, local film production has been on the verge of extinction as imported films from Hollywood expanded its market share through the new multiplex cinemas in the cities. This was based on the demand of the middle and business classes who need information for their economic decision-making and also to connect themselves with the globalized economy and culture. The information gap between the rich and the poor has widen along the emerging economic division.

Since 1997, when the new Constitution was promulgated, the dominant political and economic forces have been pushing for an overall reform and liberalization. But what happened in reality was a trend towards privatization in all sectors of the economy. The media and communications sectors are no exception. Furthermore, there are signs that the landscape will be one in which concentration of ownership and cross-ownership between and within each of these sectors are being formulated among large corporations.

Freedom of expression

Although the Constitution and UNESCO recognised that Thailand is a country with a 'free press' freedom of expression of the Thai press variegated under the Democrat, Chat Thai and New Aspiration and coalition governments during 1995-2000.

¹ The Democrat coalition government (1992-1995) that came into power after the 1992 political crisis complied largely to the public demand for more freedom of expression. But there was a general change of mood when Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa of Chat Thai Party closed down Mong Tang Moom (Different Perspectives), a well-known current affairs tv talk programme on Channel 11 in 1996 because the programme was too critical of the government. It also removed certain reporters from their positions or barred them from having access to government news sources.

The relationship between the press and the government of Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh of the New Aspiration Party was no less antagonistic than the Chat Thai government (1996-1997). It set up a Media Monitoring Centre to trace news reports and commentaries that deemed adversary to the government. However, the currency devaluation and the economic crisis that pursued quickly brought down the government in November 1997.

The 2nd term of the Democrat government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai (1997-2000) stepped in with the support of the urban middle-classes and the financial sector hoping that they could solve the economic problems of the day. Obviously, the press was in agreement with the underlying mood of the dominant political forces due to its shifting ideology and interests towards the new industrialized economy. Hence, critical comments have been relaxed during the first two years of the Democrat Coalition Administration. But by mid-1999, the government and the media were in open conflict in many areas ranging from censoring entertainment programme to open intimidation of the press.

The Constitution of 1997 enshrined that freedom of expression of all forms is a basic right for individual and for the mass media in Article 39 and also guaranteed the right of the press and broadcasting stations to publish without pre-censorship, interference nor closure by the state. Nonetheless, the government used subtle measures to censor news sources with critical or oppositional views from appearing on radio and television current affairs and talk programmes. The honeymoon relationship was worsened when the press began to question the public policies of the government in solving the economic crisis, especially on the condition of the IMF, the World Bank and ADB loans and the cheap sale of banking institutions and financial properties to foreign debtors and bidders by the Ministry of Finance. The press also investigated charges of huge corruption in the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Education among others.

As a result government control on the press became more and more restrictive in 2000. In an open facade of freedom, the government manipulated the media by providing large amount of funds for official public relations campaign. This was an

¹ Freedom House made a ranking of freedom of the press around the world based on its survey of media law and state control of the press for UNESCO. Thailand ranked 30 on its chart.

excellent replacement for the much needed advertising revenue in the media industry during the economic slump. The patronage relationship opened the way for partisan and pro-government position on the controversial issues such as the Yadana Gas Pipeline project of the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) on the Thai-Burmese border and the conflict over the Pak Mool Dam between villagers and the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). The broadcast media, in particular, have been unable to report objectively on the Yadana and Pak Mool controversies due the structure of state ownership which allow ministers to have direct control of the news agenda.

Apart from news and information on current affairs the Democrat government was highly concerned about film and fictional stories. The Film Board decided against 20th Century Fox's proposal to film "Anna and the King" in Thailand and also banned its screening in 1999.² There was a lot of debate on why the Film Board should or should not allow the filming and showing of "Anna and the King". The Film Board, especially the police (who is in charge of the film censorship department), stated that the facts were mis-represented and too much emphasis given to the governess, Anna. Subsequently, the government banned both cinema showing and the sale of video cassette of "Anna and the King" on the ground that it is a distorted depiction of King Rama IV and that the narrative is biased against the Thai Kingdom looking purely from a Western perspective.

In 2001, Thaksin Shinawatra and the Thai Rak Thai Party won a landslide victory in the general election in January. The new government is extremely skillful in manipulating the press and utilise the state media for its political propaganda. At present, the government could strategically control both state and private television. Two of the three private commercial channels, Channel 3 and ITV, are politically related to the government. Pracha Malinond of the Malinond family who owned Channel 3 is the Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications. On the other hand, ITV is closely connected to the Prime Minister via Shin Corp which the Prime Minister founded in the 1980s. Prior to the election Shin Corporation, the Shinawatra's holding company, bought up 39% of ITV's shares. There were several rounds of reshuffle of news editors and during the election campaign ITV news policy was revamped. After the election, 23 journalists from ITV were fired because they protested against 'editorial interference' by the station administrator and external political influences. In addition, the leader of their newly organized union was among those who were fired.

Despite Thai Rak Thai's popularity the press was critical of the Prime Minister on the question of conflict of interests between his business and his public position. Prachachart Thurakit, a business newspaper, led the way in investigating on how the Prime Minister dispersed his assets to his employees in order to hide his wealth. Pressured by these press exposé the Anti-Corruption Commission took the case to the Constitutional Court charging the Prime Minister of evading to report on his asset which was required by law when taking a public office. The Prime Minister defended

² The original version, "The King and I", produced in 1956 was never shown in Thailand. The filming of the 1999 version was moved to Malaysia because the film board rejected the shooting scripts.

his case by saying that it was a mis-understanding and an honest mistake, not a crime. He won the case by 8 to 7 in August 2001.

Similar to its predecessors, the government attempted to set up a press office to counter press criticism. But due to strong protests from press organizations and the academics the press office was never materialized. In 2002, there were two series of incidents demonstrating the government's effort to control press freedom. The first was on the ban of two foreign journalists from the Far Eastern Economic Review who are based in Bangkok. They were charged with criticizing the government and the Prime Minister without factual substantiation. This was followed by a series of press exposé on the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) investigation into the bank transfer and financial account of the press, members of the business community, non-governmental organizations and civil servants in March. The owner and editor of three newspapers, the Nation, Naew Na and Thai Post, were among these victims. There were public outcry on the government action which violated press freedom, private right and the public right to know. The Nation brought the case to the Administrative Court on ground that the AMLO abused its power and investigated without any sound basis. The law stipulated that the AMLO could check the financial account of those who are suspected on committing serious crimes such as drug and arms trafficking. But in the case of the newspapers the AMLO claimed that they took the lead from an anonymous letter. The AMLO was criticized for acting under the directive of the government instead of carrying out its mission independently. In early July, the AMLO withdrew their order to investigate the newspapers only hours before the Administrative Court would deliver the ruling. Hence, the Court had to drop the case without any pronouncement.

Freedom of information and the public 'right to know'

In recent years, the public and the press sought to access public information via the passage of the Official Information Act with varying results. The entrance examination of Kasetsart University demonstration school, for example, was the successful test case during 1998-1999. Although it took the applicant, the mother of a girl-student who sat for the first grade entrance exam, one full year to access the score of the exam papers the information showed that the school did not apply equal opportunity to the students. Consequently, demonstration schools around the country came out to declare more clearly the rules and the quota system entrenched in their admission operation.

The corruption on the acquisition of medicine and medical equipment of the Ministry of Public Health was another significant case which the public was able to access information on the corruption of health officials, both local and higher-up. As a result, the pro-active secretary of the Office of the Information Act was demoted from the post. The subsequent access to public information was more limited. For instance, information on the financial and economic crisis held responsible by the Bank of Thailand and the Ministry of Finance were not disclosed. Financial and economic information such as the side-letter submitted to the IMF in 1998 became inaccessible to the public since their disclosure was considered harmful to the country's economic security.

On the contrary, the government and the Ministry of Defense yielded, albeit partially, to the press and the public demand on the disclosure of the account on the May 1992 killing. In 1999, journalists from the Bangkok Post and Thai Post and relatives of those killed in the May 1992 and representative from the Palang Dharma Party applied for the release of the report on the inquiry into the May uprising. In May 2000, the Information Committee of the Defense Ministry released the eight-page summary but deleted the names and information that deemed legally risky and sensitive by the military. The Committee of the Relatives of May 1992 continued its public pressure and petitioned the Defense Ministry. Finally, a minimally censored version of the 600-page report and the eight-page summary was disclosed in June 2000. But the 121-page appendix which contained the names of military officers who opened fire and drove vehicles was censored for the most part. The press said the report yielded a more brutal picture of the military during the crackdown of demonstrators.

Media reform

Along the same line with the existing move towards political, administrative and education reform the broadcast media is undergoing a similar process of reform. At present, Article 39 of Section 3 of the Constitution guaranteed the basic and minimum rights and freedom of expression of the Thai people. However, the constitutionalists reasoned that the media space and the rights and freedom guaranteed in Article 39 would not be secured unless there is some guarantee on public and private access of the broadcast media and telecommunications networks. To guarantee that the liberalization of the media would be placed on the national Article 40 enshrined the concept of broadcast media reform and the reallocation of state ownership right of the radio frequencies.

Article 40 read as follows ;

“The radio frequencies for radio and television transmission, and in radio communications are national resources to be used for public interests

An independent state regulatory agency must be set up to supervise the assignment and licensing of frequencies for radio and television broadcasting and for telecommunications stipulated in clause one of this article

The objectives of clause two must take into consideration the highest public interests at the national and local levels, in the area of education, culture, security and public safety and other public benefits, including free and fair competition.”

Under the existing power structure and the Radio and Television Act of 1955 the broadcast media are entirely owned by the state. Private concessions were given to a limited number of private operators on a patronage relationship. In effect, the rights and freedom of information and communication, for which creative ideas and culture were distributed, have been monopolized by the state and a handful of media corporations. But as mandated by Article 40 the Parliament passed a new bill on the Radio

Frequencies Allocation and Regulatory Body in March 2000. This would legalize two new independent regulatory bodies, the National Broadcasting Commission or NBC and the National Telecommunications Commission or NTC, to reallocate the radio frequencies under state monopoly for private and public access.

There are 3 categories of ownership right for the broadcast media in this new act. The public or presently state service which uses the broadcast media for national interest and on a non-profit basis. The private or commercial service which uses the broadcast media for profit seeking. The third category is for community service which uses the broadcast media for the community on a non-profit basis. The military, who owned the largest share of the frequencies, constantly show their resentment against the reform. Other state agencies in charge of the broadcast media, i.e., the Public Relations Department and the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT), are also reluctant to reform their services.

The previous as well as the present government have demonstrated their resistance towards the democratization of the broadcast media. For the large part, they were in favour of deregulating radio and television for the private sector on economic terms but they are unwilling to deregulate their political control over the state broadcast media. In the draft proposal of the new broadcasting bill there was no stipulation on cross-media ownership and only a light control measure allowing foreign media to own no more than 25% share in a Thai media company. So far, the Thai Rak Thai government has not announced any policy on media reform. Therefore, it is not clear which direction the new broadcasting bill will take.

Regarding the selection of the regulatory bodies, the National Broadcasting Commission or NBC and the National Telecommunications Commission or NTC, the process has come to a standstill. In 2000, the Selection Committee for the NTC selected 14 applicants and sent the list to the Senate for the final selection of 7 commissioners. The 14-finalists were rejected by the Senate.³ In addition, one of the applicants filed the case with the Administrative Court that the selection process was unfair.

In October 2001, the Selection Committee for the NBC began its selection process. The Selection Committee took 8 months to select 14 applicants. However, one of the applicants sued the Selection Committee before the list of finalists were sent to the Senate. In March 2002, the Administrative Court ruled that the selection process was variegated and that there were conflict of interest between members of the Selection Committee and certain applicants. The selection process was, therefore, invalid. After the ruling, the Selection Committee appealed to the High Administrative Court that there was no stipulation, by law, on the question of conflict of interest in the selection process. Both cases now await the ruling of the High Administrative Court.

But on the ground, the academics and the non-governmental organizations have been active on the media reform agenda since 1999. After the Radio Frequencies Allocation and Regulatory Body Act was proclaimed in March 2000 they organized several seminars and workshops on community radio, throughout the country, in order

³ The selection process set forth in the law requires that the Selection Committee must select 14 applicants and send the names and qualifications to the Senate for the final selection of 7 commissioners.

to prepare the public and the people sector for the 20% frequency allocation stipulated in the law. In December 2001 the Karnjanaburi community radio was on air. This was followed by Innburi station in Singburi province. However, the Public Relations Department which regulates the broadcast media sent a letter to inform the stations that they were broadcasting illegally and that they could face legal charges.⁴

At present, the Senate and the Human Rights Commission have taken up the petition of the community radio groups around the country and are attempting to resolve the conflict with the Public Relations Department and the Post and Telegraph Department. There are now approximately 40 groups of community radio ready to set up their low-power operations.

On the other hand, the broadcast media entrepreneurs have organized themselves in order to take part in the Selection Committee for the National Broadcasting Commissioners as well as lobbying the government for their share of interests in the new broadcasting law.

Media ethics and professional organizations

The National Press Council made some head way on the issue of press ethics when 68 journalists petition the Council to investigate into the conduct of an alleged reporter from the Bangkok Post and other journalists on bribery. It found that some kind of ethical mis-conduct took place and asked the newspapers to make inquiries into these charges. The Bangkok Post investigation committee concluded that although evidence was not found on bribery as such the reporter was using political influence for his personal interests which is unethical for journalist.

In two other cases, a second Bangkok Post reporter resigned over allegations that he took bribe to help an influential German businessman in Pattaya area. Another journalist, a senior editor, from Krungthep Thurakit was suspended from his position and had his salary cut for having involved in the law firm that represented this German businessman. As a result, both Bangkok Post and the Nation Multi-Media Group (which Krungthep Thurakit is part of the group) drew up their Code of Conduct as guidelines for journalists on how to manage relationship with news sources properly.

While the National Press Council has been taking a pro-active role in the ethical conduct of journalists the Reporters' Association of Thailand has been active in organizing training programmes and seminars for its members. In 1998, they called for the abolishment of the 1941 Press Act but the government wanted to replace it with a new law. They also supported the House of Representatives in passing legislation to abolish the 1952 Anti-Communist Activities Act. In February 2000, the Reporters' Association of Thailand and the Newspapers' Association of Thailand resolved to combine into a single association and became the Reporters and Newspapers' Association of Thailand. As a new step ahead the organization will admit broadcast journalists from radio and television organizations as its regular members in order to

⁴ The outgoing 1955 Broadcasting Act stipulated in Article 6 that the penalty for illegal operation is a maximum of 5-year imprisonment or bht 100,000 fine or both and a daily fine of bht 2,000 throughout the duration of the charge.

strengthen media professionals in the broadcast media. The Reporters' Association of Thailand has around 1,300 members.

The broadcast entrepreneurs, in the move to gain a major foothold on the media reform agenda, have organized themselves and their employees into several associations. Some of these are, the Radio and Television Entrepreneur Association, the Radio Entrepreneur Association, the Television Entrepreneur Association, the Ror Dor Radio Professional Association, the Television Drama Producer Association, the Television Producer Association, the Education Radio and Television Administrator Association, the Thai Television Performer Association, the Radio Programme Host Association. They were, thus, able to achieve their primary objective in sending their representatives to sit in the Selection Committee and to control the selection process of the National Broadcasting Commissioner in 2000.

In May 2001, the group of former broadcast journalists from ITV channel formed the National Broadcast Journalist Association (NBJ) as a move to strengthen the profession and to participate in the media reform process. It has 300 members while the Television News Photo Journalist Association has around 400 members.

On the regional basis, 25 representatives from 5 independent journalists' organizations in 3 countries - the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia - launched a campaign on behalf of a free press in Southeast Asia through the establishment of the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) in 1998. The Reporters' Association of Thailand in conjunction with the World Press Freedom Committee and the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) were the catalysts of this regional press alliance. The steering committee members were drawn from the Reporters' Association of Thailand (RAT), the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) of the Philippines, the Jakarta-based Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the Institute for Studies in the Free Flow of Information (ISAI) based in Indonesia. The steering committee elected Kavi Chongkittavorn, executive editor of *The Nation*, as its first chairperson. The Bangkok based secretariat office will monitor attacks on journalists and threats to the press in Southeast Asia. At present, Chaowarong Limpatamapani, the secretary general of the Thai Journalists Association, is the Acting Director of SEAPA. The alliance will also encourage governments in Southeast Asia to reform repressive media laws and to relax restrictions on the press.

In 1998, Amnesty International Thailand initiated the Outstanding Mass Media on Human Rights Project in order to encourage the mass media to help promote, support and protect human rights. Kavi Chongkittavorn - executive editor of *The Nation*, and Boonlert Changyai - senior editor of *Mathichon*, received the Outstanding Human Rights Press Award. And both papers, *The Nation*, *Mathichon* and *Athit* weekly magazine, received award for their reporting on human rights issues. In 1999, Chutima Suncharoen of *Krungthep Thurakit* received the award for her in-depth reports on the rights of minority groups and the disadvantaged.

In 2000, Thepachai Yong and Korket Chantalertlak of ITV received the Human Rights Press Award from their feature programmes on October 9, 1976 and Black May (1992). In 2001, Supra Chanchidfa from the *Bangkok Post* received the Award from

her column in the Perspective section. She wrote about the rights of minority people and the violation of these rights by various state agencies.

Liberalizations and privatization of telecommunications

Since the government of Chatichai Choonhavan formulated the policy of turning the Indochina war zone into a market place in the late 1980s Thailand has launched on a grand scheme to become the regional telecommunications centers. The Thai government was convinced also that the global liberalization of the telecommunications sector is inevitable in the future. Hence, Thailand joined WTO's Negotiating Group on Basic Telecommunications (NGBT) in 1996 even before an agreement to open the basic telecommunications market was reached in February 1998. Domestically, the plan laid out by the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MOTC) was to liberalize telecommunications services by 1999. For external liberalization the date was set for 2006 (Telecommunications Master Plan, 1997).

But the economic downturn of 1997 has severely affected this ambition. Instead of a rapid move towards telecommunications liberalization and expansion, in the country and within the region, this sector is faced with corporate restructuring and must now seek strategic alliances at home in order to counter the imminent invasion of global telecommunications firms. Two key state agencies, the Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT) and the Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT), have been resisting the government's privatization plan. They formed the core group of the anti-reform coalition while the MOTC and the Post and Telegraph Department (PTD), on the contrary, are pushing for liberalization in their role as policy planner and decision-maker. In November 2001, the Parliament passed the Telecommunications Act of 2001. However, the 7-member regulatory agency, the National Telecommunications Commission or NTC, has not been set up due to the legal complications in the selection process (see previous section on media reform).

During the economic boom years telecommunications services and information technology expanded at an exponential rate. Over 3 million fixed telephone lines were laid and 6 million more lines are expected by the end of the millennium. This would provide Thailand with a ratio of 9 lines per 100. But most of the lines are concentrated in Bangkok Metropolitan area. The ratio for Bangkok is 15 per 100 compared with 2 per 100 in the rural areas. In addition, there are over 5 million mobile phones around the country. The ratio for computer is 5 per 100. However, the ratio for internet user is 2 per 100 although the number of users jumped from 600,000 in mid-1999 to 3.5 million in 2001.

School net and Uni Net initiated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs are popular among students in major cities around the country. Commercial websites which are popular among the young generation are <http://www.sanook.com>, <http://www.patip.com> and <http://www.samyan.com>, for instance. The chat rooms in these websites are alive with news and commentaries that generate issues that become 'the talk of the town'. A lot of discussions on the web are off-limits on the mainstream media. There are also questions on censorship and freedom of expression when the discussions delve into graphic detail of sexual relationship and experience. There are many pornographic websites and those that advertise the sex

industry. The police and some non-governmental organizations working on women and children are concerned that these websites might have negative impact on children and youth.

19 July 2002

Appendix : The political economy and the media scape of the Thai society

Political economy		Media scape	
>1932	Absolute monarchy	>1932 1930	Royal press, foreign press, private press State radio inaugurated
1932	Constitutional monarchy	1932- 1940	Political press (pro-monarchy vs pro- constitutional government)
1941- 1945	WW II and Japanese occupation The Free Thai underground Movement mobilized against Japanese occupation	1941	State propoganda via the broadcast media Change of the Thai alphabets
1949	Beginning of military influence on national politics (civilian faction lost to the military faction)	1951	Suppression of political dissidents and suppression of press freedom
		1955	First state television, Channel 4, began its broadcast
1957	Military dictatorship 16 years of military rule	1957	Suppression of press freedom Press censorship & Internal Security Act Expansion of state broadcast media Privilege private concession of TV and radio
1973	Popular up-rising and end of military dictatorship, civilian government in power, worker union & peasant organisations emerged	1973	Radio Thailand burned down Booming press freedom Popular demand for state media reform
1976	Massacre of students and military coup International pressure on the Thai state on human rights violation	1976	Total suppression of press freedom Journalists, artists & intellectuals took up armed struggle with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) Underground radio broadcast of the Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT)
1980	Armed struggle with the CPT defused by the Thai state 15 years of political transition period Elections and economic growth	1980	Further commercialisation of the broadcast media by the Thai state Private press growing in number Television news format changed
1991	Military coup installing an interim government with a civilian as its Prime Minister	1991	Press uncertain of political change
1992	Popular up-rising (2) against un- constitutional military Prime Minister Rapid economic growth	1992	Radio Thailand burned down (2 nd time) Popular demand for state media reform Commercialisation of state media & an independent television station set up
1996	Economic collapse along with other ASEAN countries	1996	Economic collapse of the media
1997	Constitutional reform (parliamentary reform, electoral reform)	1997	State media reform in progress New law on the independent broadcast media regulator and the telecom regulator enacted
2001	General election with Thai Rak Thai Party winning a landslide victory, telecom tycoon becomes the Prime Minister	2001	Trend on telecom and broadcast industries convergence

Chronology of the broadcast media reform (1997-2002)

February 1998	The Government (Democrat Party coalition) set up a joint committee to draft the bill on the broadcast media reform
9 March 1999	The Cabinet passed the draft bill on establishing a national communication regulatory body
5 April 1999	The Non-governmental organisations and media academics proposed a parallel draft bill to the Government The essence of this alternative draft was to set up 2 independent regulators, one for broadcasting and one for telecommunication, rather than a single regulator The Government rejected the alternative draft but asked the Democrat Party to send the draft to the House of Parliament along with the Government's draft
7 April - Oct 1999	Legislative procedure on the draft bill in the House of Parliament Debate on one regulator vs two separate regulatory body
Oct 1999 - February 2000	Legislative procedure on the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) bill in the Senate
8 March 2000	The enactment of the law on the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC)
August 2000	The entertainment corporations launched a campaign to seek control of the NBC selection committee
September 2000	The military and the entertainment corporations took control of the NBC Selection Committee
October 2000	The NBC Selection Committee, made up of 17 members, was set up
January-February 2001	103 applications were screened and 60 applicants selected for interview by the NBC Selection Committee
February 2001	The bribery scandal of the Senate's advisor on the selection process of the NTC broke out
May 2001	The NBC Selection Committee shortlisted 14 applicants Controversy arose on the question of 'conflict of interests' of these applicants
June 2001	One applicant filed a law suit against the unfair selection process The NBC Selection Committee was unable to send the list of 14 applicants to the Senate for final selection
July 2001	The case awaits the ruling of the High Administrative Court

Ruling government during 1980-2000

Government	Period in office	
Prem Tinsulanondha I	March 1980	January 1981
Prem Tinsulanondha II	January 1981	December 1981
Prem Tinsulanondha III	December 1981	April 1983
Prem Tinsulanondha IV	May 1983	August 1986
Prem Tinsulanondha V	August 1986	April 1988
Chatichai Choonhavan	April 1988	February 1991
Anand Panyarachun I	February 1991	April 1992
Suchinda Kraprayoon	April 1992	May 1992
Anand Panyarachun II	June 1992	September 1992
Chuan Leekpai I	September 1992	July 1995
Banharn Silpa-Archa	July 1995	November 1996
Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	November 1996	November 1997
Chuan Leekpai II	November 1997	November 2000
Thaksin Shinawatra	February 2001	Present (end of term 2004)