

# Reading Abhisit

*Analysis of Abhisit Vejjajiva's Television Remarks during the United  
Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship's 'Final' Mass Rally in  
Bangkok (March-May 2010)*

**Pattara Tundulyasaree**



Master's Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies  
Department of Political Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2013



# **Reading Abhisit**

*Analysis of Abhisit Vejjajiva's Television Remarks during the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship's 'Final' Mass Rally in Bangkok (March-May 2010)*

© Pattara Tundulyasaree

2013

Reading Abhisit

Analysis of Abhisit Vejjajiva's Television Remarks during the United Front for  
Democracy Against Dictatorship's 'Final' Mass Rally in Bangkok (March-May 2010)

Pattara Tundulyasaree

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

## **Abstract**

In this study, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is employed to analyze television remarks of the Prime Minister of Thailand Abhisit Vejjajiva during the political campaign of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), also known as the Red Shirt, in Bangkok from March to May 2010. This study explores the representation of 1)the UDD campaign and its demonstrators, 2)the government's measures in handling the situation and the authorities implementing them, and 3)Abhisit himself in the addresses. Also, degree of negativity towards the UDD campaign and the demonstrators in the addresses in relation to the escalation of the conflict is investigated.

This study shows that lexical and iconological choices used to 'portray' or 'represent' three subjects above in Abhisit's television addresses are not just based on certain values which have traditionally been used by Thai power holders to counter political dissent. Furthermore, Western values including democracy and rule of law are, to a writer's surprise, used.

## Acknowledgement

I cannot imagine how I could have completed this study without support from the following persons.

First of all, I would like say 'khob khun mak' to my supervisor, Dr. Stein Tønnesson, for patiently working with me. His advice, guidance, and encouragement have enabled me to improve this work considerably.

My biggest thanks go to my parents for their unconditional love and support. I would also like to thank my two brothers for always being there for me, and my beloved late grandma whom I always think of whenever I need moral support.

I would also like to thank my Norwegian friends, Kim and Lars, for their friendship and encouragement.

Last but not least, I would like to thank T. for everything.

Pattara Tundulyasaree

Oslo, April 2013

---

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgement.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	xiv
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Short Presentation of the Topic.....	1
1.2 Background Information about Political Conflict in Thailand.....	3
1.3 Abhisit Vejjajiva: Profile.....	5
1.4 The UDD: Are they the 'ban-nok'?.....	6
1.5 Thainess.....	7
1.5.1 Value of Calm.....	9
1.5.2 Value of Unity.....	9
2 Methodological and Theoretical Framework.....	11
2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis.....	11
2.2 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.....	13
2.2.1 Lexical Analysis.....	13
2.2.2 Iconological Analysis.....	14
2.3 Method.....	14
3 Abhisit's Television Remarks.....	16
3.1 Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit.....	16

---

3.1.1 Background Information about the Show.....	16
3.1.2 Format and Structure.....	17
3.1.3 Individual Talk and Interview Session.....	20
3.2 Special Announcement from the Prime Minister.....	22
4 Analysis of the First Period.....	24
4.1 Background Information.....	24
4.2 Data Discussion.....	25
4.3 Analysis of the Data.....	26
Weekly TV Show: February 28.....	27
Weekly TV Show: March 7.....	30
Weekly TV Show: March 14.....	36
Weekly TV Show: March 21.....	39
Special Announcement: March 28.....	44
Special Announcement: April 4.....	45
Weekly TV Show: April 4.....	47
Special Announcement: April 6.....	49
Special Announcement: April 7.....	50
Special Announcement: April 8.....	53
Special Announcement: April 9.....	54
5 Analysis of the Second Period.....	56
5.1 What happened on April 10, 2010?.....	56



---

5.2 Data Discussion.....	58
5.3 Analysis of Data.....	59
Special Announcement: April 10.....	59
Special Announcement: April 12.....	61
Special Announcement: April 16.....	63
Special Announcement: April 19.....	64
Weekly TV Show: April 25.....	67
Weekly TV Show: May 2.....	71
Special Announcement: May 3.....	73
Weekly TV Show: May 9.....	76
6 Analysis of the Third Period.....	79
6.1 The Beginning of 'Operation Ratchaprasong'.....	80
6.2 Data Discussion.....	81
6.3 Analysis of the Data.....	82
Special Announcement: May 15.....	82
Weekly TV Show: May 16.....	85
Special Announcement: May 19.....	87
Special Announcement: May 21.....	89
7 Conclusion.....	93
7.1 Abhisit: A Modern Thai-Style Leader? .....	94
7.2 Degree of Negativity of the Demonstration and Demonstrators.....	96

7.3 'Unfortunately, Some People Died.'.....	99
References.....	105

---

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Screenshot from a title of 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit'.....	18
Figure 3.2: Screenshot from a title of 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit'.....	18
Figure 3.3: Screenshot of the individual talk session.....	20
Figure 3.4: Screenshot of the interview session.....	21
Figure 3.5: Title of 'Special Announcement from PM'.....	22
Figure 3.6: Title of 'Special Announcement from PM'.....	22
Figure 4.1: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', February 28, 2010 .....	27
Figure 4.2: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', February 28, 2010 .....	28
Figure 4.3: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 7, 2010 .....	32
Figure 4.4: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 7, 2010 .....	33
Figure 4.5: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 7, 2010 .....	36
Figure 4.6: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 7, 2010 .....	36
Figure 4.7: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 14, 2010 .....	37
Figure 4.8: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 14, 2010 .....	38
Figure 4.9: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', March 21, 2010 .....	41
Figure 4.10: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', March 28, 2010 .....	44

---

Figure 4.11: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', April 7, 2010 .....	51
Figure 4.12: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', April 7, 2010 .....	51
Figure 5.1: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', April 10, 2010 .....	59
Figure 5.2: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', April 12, 2010 .....	62
Figure 5.3: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	68
April 25, 2010	
Figure 5.4: Anti-monarchy Sticker .....	69
Figure 5.5: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	72
May 2, 2010	
Figure 5.6: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	73
May 2, 2010	
Figure 5.7: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	73
May 2, 2010	
Figure 5.8: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', May 3, 2010 .....	75
Figure 5.9: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	77
May 9, 2010	
Figure 5.10: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	77
May 9, 2010	
Figure 6.1: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', May 15, 2010 .....	83
Figure 6.2: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', May 15, 2010 .....	83
Figure 6.3: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	86
May 16, 2010	
Figure 6.4: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	86
May 16, 2010	
Figure 6.5: Screenshot from 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit', .....	87
May 16, 2010	

---

Figure 6.6: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', May 19, 2010 .....88

Figure 6.7: Screenshot from 'Special Announcement from PM', May 21, 2010 .....90

## List of Tables

Table 3.1: Structure of Abhisit's weekly TV show .....	18
Table 4.1: Abhisit's television remarks analyzed in the first period .....	26
Table 5.1: Abhisit's television remarks analyzed in the second period .....	58
Table 6.1: Abhisit's television remarks analyzed in the third period .....	82

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Short Presentation of the Topic

The demonstrations of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) also known as the Red Shirt in Bangkok from March to May 2010 resulted in one of the most violent political clashes in recent times (International Crisis Group 2010:i) as 94 people died including demonstrators, government officials, and foreign journalists, and at least 1404 wounded by the end of the rally (People's Information Center 2012: 441). The high number of casualties resulted from excessive and unnecessary use of lethal weapons by the security forces, and from deliberate attacks by militant armed elements with links to the UDD (Human Rights Watch 2011:5). Despite the use of repressive measures against the demonstrators, the government of Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva left this crisis relatively free of stigma in middle- and upper-class public opinion, and remained in power until August 2011 (Chambers 2010:844). A question coming to my mind when choosing the topic for this study was 'How could the government in a democratic society be able to hold on to power after having committed a massacre on civilians?' To approach this broad question, I decided to investigate how this demonstration and the demonstrators were 'represented' or 'portrayed' by the government with the assumption that these representations play a role in the government's justification of what it did.

During the demonstrations, Thailand's Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva communicated directly with the Thai people regarding the current situation through television addresses. His remarks were intended to be and were also considered at the time to be highly significant. In addition, as the government tightened its control of the media, these addresses to a large extent influenced media coverage of the demonstrations.

In this study, Abhisit's televised addresses, namely, his weekly TV show 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit and television remarks 'Special Announcement from Prime Minister' ranging from February to May 2010 will be

analyzed. Specifically, the questions which I would like to ask and that will guide my analysis are: 1. How were the UDD campaign during March and May 2010, and government's measures to counter them interpreted in Abhisit's televised addresses? 2. How were the demonstrators and the government particularly Abhisit himself portrayed in his appearances on TV? 3. As the conflict escalated, did the portrayal of the campaign and the demonstrators become more negative?

In the questions above, I use the term UDD campaign instead of UDD demonstrations. This is because the demonstrators also carried out other activities than demonstrations. The term campaign covers both the demonstrations and these other activities.

I am not trying to draw any conclusions concerning the real intentions of Abhisit or how his audiences received his messages. I have no access to Abhisit's mind. Besides, media text can produce many set of meanings to different audiences as they will bring different assumptions and beliefs to the process of making sense of the text (Fiske 1987 in McQuail 2010:386; Cameron 2001:139).

The main purpose here is to offer a systematic 'reading' of Abhisit's television addresses through a set of approaches and tools guided by Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). In short, I first want to show how lexical and iconographical choices were employed in these addresses to give meanings to, and represent important events and related actors during the UDD rallies and demonstrations in Bangkok between March and May 2010. My argument is quite simply that these choices were built upon a concept of Thainess and a few celebrated Thai values which, as argued by scholars in Thai studies, are essential to understanding social and political phenomena in the country, and have historically been used by the Thai state to counter political dissent. Second, I would like to see through an analysis of lexical and visual choices whether the representation of demonstrations, demonstration leaders, and demonstrators became more negative as the crisis escalated.

In Media and Cultural Studies, the analysts tend to rush to the interpretative



stage of the 'what' at the expense of the 'how' (Machin and Mayr 2012:10). That is to say we may be aware of what the speakers are doing but not so much how they are doing it. By paying attention not only to what people say but also to how they say it, we may gain additional insight into the way people make sense of things (Cameron 2001:15).

## **1.2 Background Information about Political Conflict in Thailand**

On September 19, 2006, the Thai military staged a coup ousting the popular government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. A stage for the coup had been set by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) - or Yellow Shirt - who demonstrated against Thaksin repeatedly as from September 2005. In an attempt to eliminate the influence of Thaksin, his party was disbanded and its key members were banned from politics for five years. Thaksin was also charged with corruption, and his family assets were frozen. A coup-appointed committee wrote a new constitution with provisions providing advantages to Thaksin's political opponents (Ockey 2009:317).

Nevertheless, the attempts to weaken Thaksin's influence in Thai politics failed. A national election was held in December 2007 and was won by the new pro-Thaksin Phalang Prachachon or People Power Party (PPP). However, two subsequent prime ministers from PPP were removed by the Constitutional Court rulings. In October 2008, the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions sentenced Thaksin in his absence (he had gone into exile) to a two-year jail term on charges of conflict of interest.

In May 2008, PAD started new demonstration to topple the PPP government whom they saw as Thaksin's nominees. In December 2008, PAD occupied Suvarnabhumi International Airport and the military led by Army Commander Major-General Anupong Paochinda refused to protect the government by removing the demonstrators (Chambers 2010:842). The Constitutional Court put an end to the political deadlock as it ruled to disband the PPP as well as two other parties in the coalition government. After the PPP was dissolved, Anupong invited key politicians to

have a talk with him regarding the political situation, leading to a change in the political alignments in Parliament when a faction of the PPP defected. This paved the way for the Democrat (Prachathipat) party led by Abhisit Vejjajiva to form a new coalition government in December 2008. The Puea Thai (for Thais) party, a new party formed to succeed the banned PPP, was forced into opposition although the pro-Thaksin parties had won all national elections since 2001. It was clear to many Abhisit came to power due to support from the military and also to some extent the PAD (Poovin 2010:243).

In April 2009, the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) held a mass rally in Bangkok to call for Abhisit to resign. On April 10, the demonstrators broke through the lines of the security forces to storm the venue of an ASEAN summit held in the town of Pattaya leading to its postponement. This thoroughly embarrassed the government. Abhisit denounced the UDD as a 'true enemy of Thailand' (Khom Chad Luek, April 13, 2009). In a period called 'Bloody Songkran' in the media, the troops performed operations to disperse the UDD rally in Bangkok from April 12 to 14, 2009. Several groups clashed with the military in the streets. Two people were killed, some 120 people injured, and several public buses were set on fire (International Crisis Group 2010:2).

Even though there were diverging interpretations of 'Bloody Songkran', the government was largely able to control the "meaning" of this event, thanks to mainstream media's bias against the UDD (Askew 2010:50). The demonstrators were seen by many as rioters whereas their demonstration and subsequent violent actions were deliberately staged with the aim to obtain the return of Thaksin and his allies (Ibid:53). Negative representations of the UDD at the time made sense to many. A poll conducted after the government's crackdown showed that almost 75 percent of people across Thailand approved of it (The Nation, April 19, 2009).

However, the UDD bounced quickly back from this event as anti-government campaigns intensified in the rural north and north eastern provinces and eventually staged a 'Final Rally' in Bangkok from March 14 to May 19, 2010, the event this study focuses on.

### 1.3 Abhisit Vejjajiva: Profile

Abhisit was born in 1964 in the United Kingdom in an upper-class family of Thai-Chinese origin. He has two degrees from Oxford University. After a brief academic career, he entered politics in 1992 at the age of 27 as a Bangkok MP from the Democrat Party. His political career was meteoric. In 2005, he became the leader of the Democrat Party a position which he has held until now. In December 2009, at age 44, he became the 27<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Thailand.

A political analyst has observed that Abhisit's rapid rise was due to 'his good looks, quick wit, eloquent speech and most of all, his honesty with a clean record' (Bangkok Post, February 8, 2010). According to Satit Wongnongtaey, one of Abhisit's close collaborators, his strengths are that 'he is determined, honest, easy going, idealistic, independent, capable, bright and grasps things quickly' (The Nation, February 1, 2010). In addition to his strong support from the Democrat's stronghold in southern Thailand, Abhisit mainly draws support from the educated urban middle classes. His clean and incorruptible image makes him a poster child of an ideal leader based on moral politics which has a strong position in the political culture among Thailand's middle classes (Thongchai 2008:24-28).

Abhisit was fully aware that his incorruptible image was his strength. From its start, his government used respect for the rule of law and equitable justice to claim legitimacy (Askew 2010:63). Moreover, Abhisit constructed his image as an ethical leader who governs based on the rule of law for the benefit of all, not for those of his cronies. He set nine golden rules for his cabinet members, three of which directly addressed the issue of honesty and non-corruption (Bangkok Post, February 8, 2010).

However, he has found it difficult to gain support from the working classes and rural Thais, the main supporters of Thaksin and the UDD (BBC News 2010). In contrast to Thaksin, he could not be able to communicate effectively to these groups (Nostitz 2011:3). According to Satit, he was often criticized about 'his elite background, of being born and educated abroad, of being too sophisticated, lacking in experience and having no record of achievements in professional management' (The Nation, February 1, 2010).

## 1.4 The UDD: Are they the 'ban-nok'?

The UDD was formed as a counter movement to the Yellow Shirt or PAD (Naruemon & McCargo 2011; Uchane 2011:122-154). It was formed in February 2006 in response to PAD's rallies against Thaksin. After the 2006 coup, the movement grew as pro-Thaksin groups and anti-coup groups formed an umbrella organization called 'Democratic Alliance Against Dictatorship' (DAAD). After the constitutional referendum in 2007, DAAD transformed to the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD). Red became the colour of the movement in October 2008 (Uchane 2011:144). After Bloody Songkran, UDD added the phrase *daeng-tang-pan-din* (Red in the Land) in its Thai name.

As a movement, the UDD was normally called *nor-por-chor* (the abbreviation of its name in Thai) or *sua-daeng* (Red Shirt). Leaders and supporters of the movement were called *khon-sua-daeng* (Red Shirts) or just *sua-daeng*. In this study, the term *the UDD* will be used to refer to the movement. The term *Red Shirts* covers both the demonstrators and supporters who did not join the demonstrations. Therefore, its leaders and demonstrators will be termed as *UDD leaders* and *UDD demonstrators* respectively. As for how the movement, and its leaders and supporters were described by Abhisit, this is a part of the study below.

Based on a study made at Chiang Mai University (Yukti et al. 2010), the majority of the Red Shirts are (new) lower-middle class people whose economic well-being depend heavily on the market economy. Furthermore, there were two factors which lay behind the movement: Thaksin's populist policies and decentralization of local administration. Thaksin's populist policies gave hope to those who had previously seen themselves as disenfranchised and overlooked. Moreover, the decentralization of local administration, including local elections that began in the 1990s accelerated the democratization process at the grass roots. People became aware of their political rights and the importance of political participation. Likewise, Naruemon and McCargo (2011:999) propose that UDD demonstrators mainly comprise of 'loosely organized networks drawn from an emerging class of 'urbanized villagers' that straddled both urban and rural society, and who had been mobilized by

pro-Thaksin politicians and other actors.' In other words, UDD was a loose network of many groups sharing common interests but with diverse origins and ideologies.

Despite the diverse nature of the movement, the UDD demonstrators were often portrayed by the Bangkok media as poor peasants, supporters of Thaksin who had been hired by him or his consorts to join the rallies (Naruemon & McCargo 2011:666). Even though it was undeniable that Thaksin and his network funded the rallies, it is too simplistic to conclude that the UDD demonstrators were hired protesters (Forsyth 2010:464).

The image of the UDD as demonstrators from *rural areas* (ban-nok) discredited the legitimacy of the group as a democratic movement in the view of urban middle classes. A widespread idea among the urban middle classes was that poor and less educated voters in the countryside were responsible for the problem of vote-buying, believed to be the most serious threat to Thailand's democracy, because the former believed that the latter sold their votes for short-term and petty material benefit (Thongchai 2008:25).

Ban-nok has two opposite meanings (Thongchai 2010). On the one hand, it connotes 'the state of being innocent, uncontaminated, near natural, a contrast to the modern' (Ibid). On the other hand, ban-nok can also mean backwardness, lack of education, naivety, and uncivilized rawness. All in all, ban-nok are supposed to be different, distant, and separate from the urban (Ibid). Based on this conception, the UDD demonstrators rallying in the central business district of Bangkok were out of their place. They were others, causing inconvenience to the urban population who just wanted to live their normal lives. Furthermore, their political cause or dedication to democracy was not genuine as they were too uneducated to understand what real democracy is about. Therefore, the demonstrations had to be put to an end in order to bring back normalcy.

## **1.5 Thainess**

In analysing socio-political phenomena in Thailand, Thainess (*kwam-phen-thai*) or Thai nationhood cannot be overlooked as both a norm of exclusion and a political

weapon used by the power holders (Poovin 2010:242). Even though the definition of Thainess has never been clearly identified, it has been widely assumed that Thainess has existed forever, and Thai people have supposedly been aware of their traditional virtues (Thongchai 1994:11).

As the domain of Thainess is ambiguous and flexible, it has been given meanings through negative and positive markers that are used to identify external and internal enemies (Thongchai 1994:3-5,169). As for negative identification, Thainess has been made apparent by identifying what is not-Thai or un-Thai. Thainess has also been given meanings through positive identification. Some norms have been selected by power holders to give meanings to Thainess or as constitutive parts of Thainess (Pavin 2005:13).

Like in other nations the meaning of Thainess is broad, flexible, and malleable. Political leaders have adjusted the concepts and significances of Thainess in response to their interests and changing political contexts. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted among Thai scholars that the monarchical institutions and Buddhism are the most important elements of the Thai nationhood (Thongchai 1994:4). Saichol (8) argues that the holy trinity of nation, religion and kingship has been the central idea of Thainess. Similarly, Pavin (2011:1025) proposes that the icons of Thai nationhood are Buddhism and the Monarchy (both the person of the King and the institution). Nation, Buddhism and Monarchy integrate with each other ideologically in a way that makes opposition to just one of them a rejection of Thainess in general (Tambiah 1976 in Dovey 2001: 268)

Nation, Buddhism and Monarchy have been preserved as the central elements of Thainess because they have served the interests of the power holders. Therefore, the idea of Thainess has been cultivated in the education system and the media, and has become a 'system of truth' which greatly influences the ways many Thais think (Saichol:2).

The Thai state has linked national security to the holy trinity of Thainess (Pavin 2011:1025). Protecting the trinity has been presented by political leaders as a part of national security. They have proclaimed themselves guardians of the trinity of

Thainess against all those attempting to undermine it. The latter have frequently been branded as 'others' or 'enemies' of Thailand.

As mentioned earlier, some Thai norms have been selected by the Thai state as constitutive to Thainess. Session 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 discuss values of calm (*sa-ngop*) and unity (*samakki*). Both are celebrated Thai norms that have been used by Thai state to counter political dissent (Askew 2010; Pavin 2010).

### **1.5.1 Value of Calm**

The Thai state has traditionally employed the value of calm (*sa-ngop*) or calmness (*kwam-sa-ngop*) and its opposite condition (*kwam-mai-sa-ngop* or disturbance) to counter political dissent and depoliticize the nature of political demonstrations (Askew 2010:18). They have been able to do so thanks to Thailand's hierarchical social structure. In such a structure, a stable social order has been highly valued. A political demonstration causes *kwam-mai-sa-ngop* to the social stability. Therefore, forces can be used to restore *kwam-sa-ngop* in the name of public interest (Likhit 1992 in Dovey 2001:269).

In addition to *kwam-sa-ngop* and *kwam-mai-sa-ngop*, there are other terms which connote value of calm, namely, *kwam-sa-ngop-suk* (peacefulness) and *kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi* (peace and order or public order). In some contexts, both terms can be used interchangeably. *Sa-ngop-suk* is binomial which is formed by linking the word *sa-ngop* (calm) with *suk* (happy). The meaning of *sa-ngop-suk* ties with Buddhism suggests that either calmness leads to happiness or both conditions coexist. *Sa-ngop-reab-roi* is binomial as well, formed by linking the word *sa-ngop* (calm) with *reab-roi* (orderly). *Kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi* shows the relation between calmness and rule of law. It suggests that state of calm is a result of rule of law and/or public order. A group of military who staged a coup in 1991 included *kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi* in their Thai name in order to demonstrate their dedication to protecting national public order.

### **1.5.2 Value of Unity**

Unity (*kwam-sa-mak-ki*) is one of the most celebrated values in Thai society. The

discourse of unity has been used historically to create a society of members obedient to rules (Pavin 2010:334-5). Unity is a preferable condition, and those who cause disunity can be considered enemies. Like Thainess, the notion of unity in Thai consciousness is malleable and manipulative (Ibid). Apart from being translated as *kwam-sa-mak-ki*, unity is sometimes called *kwam-pen-an-nung-an-diew-kan* (oneness), and can be interchangeable with *ek-ka-chan* (consensus) (Ibid).

The value of unity and the trinity of Thainess are closely related. Nation, Buddhism, and Monarchy unite the Thai people. As mentioned earlier, the trinity of Thainess has been bound up with national security. Therefore, national security and national unity became transferable concepts connected by the trinity of Thainess. If one element of the trinity is threatened, both national security and national unity will be in danger.

The values of calm and unity have acquired a special position in Thai society partly because they have been distributed through the media and education system as alleged national traits of all Thais. Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, a great historian and administrator, anchored the values of unity and calm in three characteristics of the Thai race: fealty to the nation's independence, tolerance or absence of spite, and wisdom in seeking compromise or reconciliation of interests (Saichol:6). Furthermore, both values are present in the Thai national anthem which was adopted in 1939.

Calmness and unity are interrelated. Both are preferable social conditions in Thai society as they contribute to 'normalcy' (*kwam-pok-ka-ti*). A society having calmness and unity is *pok-ka-ti* (normal). On the contrary, a society whose calmness and unity are disturbed will become 'abnormal' (*mai-pok-ka-ti*), and actions are then needed to take society back to normalcy. This is because a state of abnormality threatens national unity and security.

Part of the purpose of this study is to find out to what extent these traditional ideas of Thainess characterized Abhisit's television addresses during the political crisis in Bangkok from March to May 2010. The next chapter deals with methodological and theoretical frameworks employed in the study. How the data will be studied and analysed will also be explained.



## 2 Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). Before presenting this method, I shall discuss the concept of 'text' and its application.

The term 'text' is used here in a broad sense (Fairclough 2003:3). In this usage, printed documents, film, television programs and music are all considered to be texts. Therefore, Abhisit's television addresses are texts. The language component of the addresses is referred to as language text, verbal text or written text. Visual components of the addresses will be referred to as images, image texts or live images.

Session 2.1 briefly discusses important concepts of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA forms the basis of MCDA which will be discussed in session 2.2. Finally, session 2.3 discusses the method used in this study.

### 2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The meaning of “discourse” varies significantly according to academic discipline and theoretical preferences (Cameron 2001:10). In social sciences, discourse is widely understood as 'a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge' (Fairclough 1995:18 in Hesmondhalgh 2006:122). Reality is produced and reproduced as people talk about things using the discourses they have access to.

Discourse analysis is often called critical discourse analysis (CDA) as it pays attention to the role of power (Smith & Bell 2007 in McQuail 2010:349). The term critical means 'denaturalizing the language to reveal the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in texts' (Machin & Mayr 2012:5). Van Dijk (2001:104 in Mayr & Machin 2012:30) defines CDA as the study of 'implicit or indirect meaning in texts.' Wodak and Meyer (2001 in McQuail 2010:349-50) term CDA as being 'fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language'.

Even though there is no single, homogenous version of CDA, most Critical Discourse analysts share the view of language as being 'a means of social construction:

language both *shapes* and *is shaped* by society' (Mayr & Machin 2012:4). Besides, the claim which is central to CDA is that the choices speakers and writers make to talk about reality are not random but ideologically patterned (Cameron 2001:124). CDA aimed at looking for the ideological significance of the choices speakers and writers make, and for significant patterns in the distribution of their choices (Ibid:51). In contrast to descriptive goals of linguistics and discourse analysis, CDA points to 'why and how linguistic features are produced and what possible ideological goals they might serve' (Mayr & Machin 2012:5).

Ideology refers to 'belief systems held by individual and collective', and has been used in CDA to describe the way ideas and values that comprise an ideology reflect particular interests of powerful groups (Ibid:25). In this sense, ideology 'obscures the nature of our unequal societies and prevents us from seeing alternatives and limits to what can be seen and what we think we can do' (Ibid). Ideological works function most effectively when they are least visible (Fairclough 1989:85 in Deacon et al 2007:157).

The ideological works of texts have naturalized the unequal power relations (Fairclough 1989:92 in Deacon et al 2007:158). Simply speaking, representation of particular events and persons may appear normal on the surface but are in fact shaped to serve particular ends. CDA offers a set of tools to expose these ideological works. It enables us to reveal how authors and speakers use language and grammatical features to convince people to think about events in particular ways, sometimes even manipulate them while concealing their communicative intentions (Mayr & Machin 2012:1). Moreover, CDA pays attention not only to overt linguistic features of the texts but also to what is not being said, but indirectly hinted at or presupposed as obvious in the texts (Cameron 2001:128).

However, we should note that ideology is neither monolithic in content nor practice (Deacon et al 2007:158). A dominant ideology is commonly accepted across a society but is not universally shared. When social groups struggle over institutional power, they generate or call on alternative ideologies to oppose the dominant ones. When this takes place, there will be strong attempts to contain, marginalize, suppress

or eliminate those oppositional ideologies (Ibid.)

Discourse analysis is fundamentally language-oriented, and has been largely insensitive to certain properties of visual codings and representations (Deacon et al 2007:313). The data analysed in this study are television addresses with both spoken and visual texts. To effectively analyze the data, other methods and analytical approaches are needed in combination with CDA.

## **2.2 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis**

David Machin and Andrea Mayr (2012) propose a method to systematically analyze media text both as language and image. They call this ‘Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis’ (MCDA). Drawing mainly on the work of Gunter Kress, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Theo van Leeuwen, this approach ‘thinks of all communication whether through language, images, or sounds as accomplished through a set of semiotic resources, options, and choices’ (Machin & Mayr 2012:10,29). Such choices suggest sets of ideas, values and sequences of activity that may not be overtly specified in text (Kress 1985; Machin & Mayr 2012:77). The tasks of MCDA are to expose lexical and visual choices through a careful description guided by a set of tools provided, and to denaturalize ideology/power interest buried in texts.

### **2.2.1 Lexical Analysis**

To perform lexical analysis, analysts look at what kinds of vocabularies are used. Different lexical choices can signify different discourses or lexical fields which will suggest particular kinds of identities, values and sequences of activity, not necessarily present in the text (Machin & Mayr 2012:30). Broadly speaking, lexical analysis can be performed by using these strategies (Ibid:32-49):

1 Word Connotations – Analysts look at the vocabularies used in a text and see whether there is a predominance of certain vocabularies.

2 Overlexicalisation – Analysts look for places where there is a heavy use of particular words and/or their synonyms.

3 Suppression or Lexical Absence – Analysts look for certain terms they expect

should be there and see if they are absent.

4 Structural Opposition – Analysts look for places where particular words bring with them their opposing concepts, values, or ideas although these are not in themselves present in the text. If such opposite concepts are clearly built up around participants, analysts can talk of 'ideological squaring' (Van Dijk, 1998).

### **2.2.2 Iconological Analysis**

The basic method in analysing visual choices is 'iconographical or iconological analysis' (Machin & Mayr 2012:31). Analysts look at each feature in the images such as settings and objects and explore the way they can signify particular discourses which are not necessarily overt or clear in the first viewing. In most modern media including the data analysed in this study, images don't appear alone or signify their meanings on their own but are accompanied by language text. In analysing data of this kind, we have to pay attention not only to how text and image create meanings on their own but also how the meanings are created from the interplay between them, and such interplay can either reinforce a meaning or play against each other (Deacon et al 2007:193,204).

## **2.3 Method**

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) will be used to analyse the data by concentrating on lexical and visual choices. Abhisit's weekly TV show (from February 28 to May 16, 2010) and Special Announcements from the Prime Minister (from March 28 to May 21, 2010) will be analysed. As one of the aims is to analyse degree of negativity towards the UDD demonstrations and demonstrators, the material will be grouped into three periods: February 26 to April 9, April 10 to May 12, and May 13 to 21.

The first phase begins on February 26 when the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions read its ruling on Thaksin's asset seizure case and ends on April 9 when the UDD demonstrators took over the base station of THAICOM to bring PTV, the UDD television channel, back on air. Political clashes on April 10 marked the start of the second phase. Even though some might argue that the

second phase started on April 7 after the government declared a State of Emergency (Askew 2010), I opt for April 10 as it was the date of the first fatal incident. On May 3, Abhisit offered a reconciliation plan and an early election date if the UDD ended the demonstrations. Due to division among the UDD leadership, they could not agree whether to accept Abhisit's proposal and end their campaign. On May 12, Abhisit officially withdrew his offer.

The third phase starts on May 13 when the government started the operation to 'cordon off' the demonstration site to put pressure on the demonstrators to leave. The military eventually launched a crackdown leading the UDD leaders to announce the end of their campaign on May 19. The final phase ends on May 21 when Abhisit addressed the nation asking all Thais to join the 'rehabilitation' and 'healing' process.

The next chapter describes and discusses the data used in the study. Furthermore, the background information of Abhisit's televised addresses will be presented.

### **3 Abhisit's Television Remarks**

Abhisit's weekly TV show 'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit' and Abhisit's special addresses to the nation 'Special Announcement from the Prime Minister' will now be described and discussed. Video clips of all these TV programs were retrieved from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and transcripts of the addresses have been obtained from the Democrat Party and Government House websites. (This may all be found on enclosed CD-ROMs.)

The data consist of 9 episodes of Abhisit's weekly TV show (7 hours, 21 minutes, and 19 seconds ) and 14 pieces of televised announcements (3 hours, 2 minutes, and 28 seconds) lasting 10 hours, 23 minutes, and 47 seconds altogether. The data in the first period consist of 5 episodes of TV show and 6 announcements lasting 5 hours, 44 minutes, and 1 second in total. The second period consists of 3 episodes of TV show and 5 announcements lasting 3 hours, 34 minutes, and 1 second in total. Finally, the third period contains 1 episode of TV show and 3 announcements lasting 1 hour, 5 minutes, and 45 seconds in total.

#### **3.1 Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit**

The aim of this section is to present background information and data regarding Abhisit's weekly TV show. Abhisit saw the show as an important means of communicating with the Thai people. He expressed this opinion in the show on January 3, 2010, when he and some key persons behind the production evaluated its first year.

##### **3.1.1 Background Information about the Show**

'Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit' (chue-man-pratet-tai-kab-na-yok-abhisit) was broadcast every Sunday from 9 to 10am on the government television and radio network, National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT). Some episodes were live and some pre-recorded. The first episode was broadcast on January 18, 2009 while the last was on May 1, 2011. During his tenure (2 years and 231 days), 118 episodes were

broadcast.

Abhisit was not the first Thai PM to have his own talk show. He followed in the footsteps of Thaksin, whose ability to communicate effectively with mass audiences contributed strongly to his political success (McCargo 2011:300,304). While he was PM, Thaksin had weekly talk shows on radio. Thaksin's talk show proved a success as three out of four prime ministers after him, Abhisit included, took up the same habit.

According to Abhisit, "...at the period when we first started the program, the nation was in a state of confusion. The government wanted a channel where we could communicate with the people. When I gave a daily interview, it took around 10 to 15 minutes. However, only a few seconds of the interview were broadcast on TV... (Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit, January 3, 2010)"<sup>1</sup> So "...the government think we can report our weekly activities in detail to the people through the show. Besides, the show brings an opportunity for the government to communicate with the people directly on certain issues needed to be expressed and explained..."(Ibid)<sup>2</sup>

Satit Wongnongtaey, minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office and often referred to as Abhisit's 'image maker', said "...the prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva speaks to the camera to more than 60 millions of Thai people who are monitoring his work..."(Ibid)<sup>3</sup> With the amount and diversity of audiences targeted by the show, it was a challenging for Abhisit to win the favour of TV viewers. Different audiences have different priorities or tastes as to what are the most desirable of a political leader (Atkinson 1984:179).

### **3.1.2 Format and Structure**

Every episode of the weekly TV show starts with a short title which is a graphic collection of Abhisit's photograph connoting determination and hope - similar to Obama's famous 'hope' poster (see Figure 3.1). The title ends with a graphic picture of the Government House with the logo of the show (Figure 3.2). The logo is also interesting for its use of the Thai tricolour national flag on the right side, and Abhisit's autograph below it.



Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2

Invented in the era of absolute monarchy by King Rama IV, the Thai national flag has been a powerful symbolism of Thai nationhood (Thongchai 1994:166-9). The trinity of Thainess is represented through the colours: red (nation), white (Buddhism), and blue (King). The order of priority is indicated by the domination of blue over white and red (Dovey 2001:268). The blue stripe is at the centre with smaller white and red stripes above and underneath. The use of the national flag in Abhisit's show will be analysed below.

Each episode of the show consists of one to three sessions including individual talk, interview, and advertisement. The order of the sessions was not fixed. Table one presents the structure of each episode of the show.

No	Date (mm/dd/yy)	Duration of Sessions (minute: second)			Total Duration (minute: second)
		1	2	3	
1	02/28/10	23:16	41:04	-	64:20
2	03/07/10	24:13	38:26	01:57	64:36
3	03/14/10	23:03	24:26	00:26	47:55
4	03/21/10	09:29	40:16	03:48	53:33
5	04/04/10	13:09	24:36	02:29	40:14
6	04/25/10	14:14	45:26	-	59:40



No	Date (mm/dd/yy)	Duration of Sessions (minute: second)			Total Duration (minute: second)
		1	2	3	
7	05/02/10	30:04	-	00:40	30:44
8	05/09/10	49:09	-	00:57	50:06
9	05/16/10	23:51	-	06:20	30:11
Total (hour: minute: second)		03:30:28	03:34:14	00:16:37	07:21:19

Table 3.1: Structure of Abhisit's weekly TV show (1 = Individual Talk, 2 = Interview, 3 = Advertisement)

The short description of sessions constituting the show is as follows.

1. Individual Talk – Abhisit speaks directly to the viewers. The topics addressed relate to the current situation and the policies Abhisit would like to promote or explain. Every episode analyzed has this session.
2. Interview - Abhisit is interviewed by a guest host. The number of the hosts varies ranging from one host to a group of hosts.
3. Advertisement – This is not commercial but promotes a certain government campaign. All in all, 10 pieces of advertisement lasting 16 minutes and 37 seconds in total were broadcast in Abhisit's weekly TV shows during the period of study.

In summary, 9 episodes of Abhisit's TV show lasted a total of 7 hours, 21 minutes, and 19 seconds. The interview session takes up the biggest share of the recordings at 3 hours, 34 minutes, and 14 seconds. The individual talk comes second at 3 hours, 30 minutes, and 28 seconds. Together, they last 7 hours 4 minutes and 42 seconds or around 96.23 percent of the total. Therefore, these two sessions will be the focus of this study.

### 3.1.3 Individual Talk and Interview Session

The individual talk session in each episode of the show shares a common format, with Abhisit sitting in a studio room speaking to the camera as if he is talking to an audience. As for his preparation before each show, Abhisit said that he listed topics and thought of what he was going to say. But he did not read from a script. This, he says, is because if he read from a script “the audience will be annoyed.” (Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit, January 3, 2010)<sup>4</sup> Abhisit used a semi-formal style of talk with a soft tone of voice. Satit comments on Abhisit's language style that “the way he spoke showed that we (the government) care about the feeling of the audiences.” (Ibid)<sup>5</sup> Abhisit spoke fluently, did not often pause or look at notes. Abhisit did not move his hands but held them constantly together as in Figure 3.3.



Figure 3.3

His good looks, quick wit, and eloquent speech gave Abhisit good assets to be used for appeal. However, his stiffness in talking to the camera and his composed and polite manners might lead some audiences to question his sincerity. Abhisit said “...in terms of conveying and communicating emotion to the audiences, I must admit that I am not excelling in talking to the camera. It is still very difficult for me to speak to the camera...” (Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit, January 3, 2010)<sup>6</sup> However, he said he believed that audiences pay attention to the content not to gestures. Abhisit might be wrong since he spoke on a television show. Television viewers all over the world not only listen to the content but also watch how people look, are dressed and gesticulate. Viewers most likely noticed his unnatural gestures because, when seen

close-up, small details in a speaker's verbal and non-verbal behaviour are noticeable and may easily be exaggerated in the viewer's mind (Atkinson 1984:186-7).

Abhisit almost always dressed conservatively in a suit and tie. Satit commented that “...at first we talked to Mr Prime Minister that audiences did not want to see a man wearing suit and tie talking formally on Sunday. But Mr Prime Minister told me that we had to respect the audiences...(Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit, January 3, 2010)”<sup>7</sup> Abhisit said that there are many different views regarding what he should wear in the show and that there is no final solution on this yet. He said “...some wonder why I wear suit and necktie, why I dress formally on Sunday which is a holiday. Some insist that it is inappropriate to wear a T-shirt as I am the head of the government...” (Ibid)<sup>8</sup>

As for the interview session, Abhisit talks to guest host(s) in a studio or outdoor location such as in Figure 3.4. In this session, Abhisit was more natural in his gestures, and his style of talk is less formal. That maybe because the presence of the host(s) made Abhisit feel like he was in a real conversation. Abhisit always kept cool even when asked difficult or sensitive questions.



Figure 3.4

All in all, it seems that Abhisit realized the importance of the show as a tool to convey a favourable image of himself and his policy to the Thai people. Due to the wide range of audiences the program targeted, this task was difficult. Besides, his academic and formal language style and his unnatural gestures, along with his sophisticated and serious look may have made it difficult for him to win the sympathy of mass audiences. He mainly reasoned or lectured and did not really try to appeal to

their feelings.

### 3.2 Special Announcement from the Prime Minister

'Special Announcement from the Prime Minister' (ta-lang-karn-pi-set-jak-na-yok-rat-ta-mon-tri) was broadcast for the first time on March 28, 2010, two weeks after the UDD demonstration began. The last announcement was made on May 21, two days after the UDD leaders announced the end of their demonstrations. The addresses were broadcast on the Television Pool of Thailand (TPT). In other words, these addresses were broadcast on all six national television channels at the same time. Therefore, it was highly possible that most television viewers watched these announcements at the time they were sent. The show time and duration of the addresses varied.

As for the location, Abhisit spoke either from undisclosed locations or from the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the headquarters of an agency set up to handle the UDD demonstrations. Abhisit either sat alone or along with other high rank officials in the cabinet and the army but he was the only person who spoke. Before the session starts, the title picture (either Figure 3.5 or 3.6) was presented.



Figure 3.5



Figure 3.6

Figure 3.5 is a graphic picture of Abhisit and the Government House building with the term 'Special Announcement from PM Abhisit' in Thai letters. Abhisit looks up and has a determined facial expression which is similar to a picture used in the title of his TV show (Figure 3.1). Figure 3.6 is a graphic picture of the Thai national flag, the emblem of the PM Office, and the Government House building with the same term

as in picture 5. The flag interacts with the emblem and the building to connote Abhisit's authority and legitimacy as the prime minister of Thailand. Clearly, both pictures inform the viewers that what they are going to hear is important, and they must do as the announcement tells.

## 4 Analysis of the First Period

This chapter covers a period lasting from February 26 to April 9, 2010. There were two major events that concerned the UDD campaigns: the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions reading of its ruling on Thaksin's asset seizure case on February 26, and the UDD beginning its demonstrations and setting up permanent camps in central Bangkok on March 14.

### 4.1 Background Information

From the start of 2010, it was speculated that the situation around the period leading to the day the Court gave its ruling on Thaksin's case would be chaotic. In January, the UDD held a few mass rallies in Bangkok and in some provinces. UDD leaders made clear that they would stage a 'final' rally to oust the government (Bangkok Post, January 30, 2010). It was also expected that the UDD 'final' rally would be staged to coincide with the period the Court pronounced its ruling. Furthermore, Major-General Khattiya Sawasdipol (Seh Daeng), a high-profile UDD supporter, warned in the end of January that, the judges responsible for the asset case might be assassinated by supporters of the UDD (Bangkok Post, January 29, 2010). Besides, he said Major-General Panlop Pinmanee and himself after a meeting with Thaksin in Dubai had been assigned to set up a 'people's army' to provide security for the upcoming UDD rally (Bangkok Post, February 5, 2010). However, UDD leaders said Khattiya was expressing his own ideas not the movement's.

On February 1, Abhisit's house was attacked by projectiles of human excrement and fermented fish. He said in an interview that the attack could be linked to Thaksin's assets case (Bangkok Post, February 2, 2010), and later said that political tension would intensify as there were many attempts to step up actions ahead of the judgement day (The Nation, February 4, 2010). On February 4, Abhisit together with key persons in the government and military attended a meeting of the National Security Council. The Deputy Prime Minister responsible for national security, Suthep Thaugsuban, said he worried that an earlier meeting between Thaksin and his UDD supporters including Khattiya might suggest a mushrooming of demonstrations both in Bangkok and

elsewhere. He said the authorities were now monitoring the UDD to determine if it would escalate its campaign to armed struggle (The Nation, February 6, 2010).

In the second week of February, it was clear that the UDD would not hold a mass rally to coincide with Thaksin's judgement day. One of the UDD leaders, Veera Musigapong, said they would not fall into the government's trap and provide it with a chance to misinform the public that the UDD was planning to cause civil chaos similar to that of Bloody Songkran (The Nation, February 16, 2010). On February 26, the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions ruled that Thaksin had abused his powers when he was in office to benefit his family business. The Court ordered the seizure of 46.37 billion of the 76.6 billion baht in frozen assets belonging to his family (Bangkok Post, February 27, 2010).

## **4.2 Data Discussion**

The data analysed in this period are presented chronologically in table 4.1. In 'Name of Televised Address' column, Abhisit's television show is termed as 'Weekly TV Show' whereas 'Special Announcement from the PM' is termed as 'Special Announcement'.

No	Date (mm/dd/yy) and Time (hrs.)	Name of Televised Address	Duration (minute: second)
1	02/28/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	64:20
2	03/07/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	64:36
3	03/14/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	47:55
4	03/21/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	53:33
5	03/28/10, 8.00	Special Announcement	19:40
6	04/04/10, 9.00	Special Announcement	15:20
7	04/04/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	40:14
8	04/06/10, 16.20	Special Announcement	09:23
9	04/07/10, 18.05	Special Announcement	06:30
10	04/08/10, 21.15	Special Announcement	15:27
11	04/09/10, 22.10	Special Announcement	07:03
Total duration of period 1 (hour: minute: second)		05:44:01	

*Table 4.1: Abhisit's television remarks analysed in the first period*

On March 28, Abhisit's TV show was cancelled and was replaced by the first-ever 'Special Announcement from PM'. After their first appearance, the special announcements were broadcast five times during April 1 to 9. This suggests that the situation escalated quickly leading Abhisit to address the Thai people more frequently.

### **4.3 Analysis of the Data**

In this session, Abhisit's television remarks will be analysed chronologically in order to see the potential meanings of Thaksin's asset seizure case and the UDD demonstration, and representations of actors involved in both events. Furthermore, how the meanings and representations were given through the data will be analysed as



well.

### **Weekly TV Show: February 28**



*Figure 4.1*

In this episode, central elements of Thainess, namely Buddhism and the Monarchy were explicitly used to emphasize Abhisit's image as an ideal Thai leader who was ethical and loyal to the King. Broadcast live, the individual talk session began with 30-second footage of His Majesty the King in his wheel chair as he returned from Siriraj Hospital to Chitralada Palace in the evening of February 27 after residing in the hospital since September 2009. Figure 4.1 is a screenshot of this occasion taken from the show. Surrounded by doctors, nurses, and royal guards, the King wearing a pink jacket was together with his favourite pet dog, Khun Tong Daeng. After the footage ended, Abhisit said that he believed Thai people would feel happy to see the King in good health.

This short footage, along with the fact that the event occurred a day after Thaksin was found guilty of corruption, conveys at least three key messages. The first two messages have the same function, portraying Thaksin as negatively as possible. First, displaying the King's vulnerable condition could be viewed as a part of attempts to strengthen the institution (Pavin 2011:1038). It implied that Thaksin's deeds and the King's health condition were related. After Thaksin had been sentenced, however, the King was healthy enough to leave the hospital (for a short time as he returned the same night). Second, the footage reinforced the image of the righteous King who has worked tirelessly for the Thai people for decades as opposed to the corrupted Thaksin.

Therefore, Thai people have always trusted the King rather than politicians who just come and go.

Last but not least, it could be argued that Abhisit was the PM endorsed by the Palace. Presenting the footage of the King's improving health and homecoming as a part of Abhisit's show could be viewed in the same light as when photographs of audiences between the King and the 2006 coup leaders were publicized. A few hours after the coup, the King gave a number of audiences to the leaders of the coup. Securing the King's endorsement was critical to the success of the coup because it then became difficult for any opposition to emerge (Hewison 2008:205).

Buddhism was used to confirm Abhisit's image as a moral leader. He said this day was Magha Puja Day. So, he asked Thai people especially those who are Buddhists to perform good merits on this day. As he spoke, the footage of Abhisit as he kneeled before a Buddhist monk appeared on the screen (Figure 4.2). Being a Buddhist himself, Abhisit reinforced his image of a moral leader by showing that he supported other religions as well. He said: "I believe that holding on to the teachings of Buddhism and *other religions* will contribute to a peaceful society."<sup>1</sup> The reason why he said this might also be because his Democrat Party has its stronghold in Thailand's deep south, where in addition to the Democrat Party's Buddhist constituency there are many Muslims.



Figure 4.2

In the next six and a half minutes, Abhisit talks about current situation including the upcoming UDD demonstration. He mentions bomb attacks against branches of

Bangkok Bank on the late evening of February 27, and links them to Thaksin's case. He says the explosions were not beyond the expectation of many including the government because in this period “there was an important political event...*a law suit* (ka-dee-kwam). Some groups might use these events to create chaos in the society”<sup>2</sup>. In fact, Thaksin's asset seizure case was a criminal case. The term *ka-dee-kwam* is a neutral term that did not suggest either participants or degree of seriousness. The choice of this term shows Abhisit's caution in talking about Thaksin.

Throughout this portion of the session, Abhisit employs value of calm (*sa-ngop*) to show the nation will overcome the current troubles gracefully. He employed the term *sa-ngop* (calm or peaceful) six times. He said the current situation was challenging for Thai society but believed that the majority wanted the society to become *peaceful* (*sa-ngop*). The idea behind his calm is related to a hierarchical social order. In this hierarchy, everyone must perform his duty and know his place in order to maintain *kwam-sa-ngop* (calmness). He also said “if everyone does his duty, join forces (with each other) to monitor (the situation) and be good citizens, we will get through this situation.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, he said he was confident “in the majority of Thai people, who are *calmness-loving* (*rak-sa-ngop*) and peace-loving, want to protect the system, and respect the nation's main institutions, judicial process and procedures under a democracy with the King as head of state.”<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the upcoming demonstration, Abhisit maintained the same stance which he had held a few times already in previous episodes of his show in January and February. That is to say that the government respects people's rights to public assembly as long as it is within the boundaries set by the law. At the same time, he said it was likely that violent incidents would happen during the demonstration. He said the majority of those who would join the rally did not want violence. However, it was highly possible that a small group, whose aims were opposite to those of the majority of the demonstrators, would incite violence. Therefore, he asked Thai people regardless of their political colour not to fall victim to this small group. He stressed that the government was bound to maintain *public order* (*kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi*) and was willing to work with the demonstrators to ensure that the rally remained lawful.

In the second part of the show, Abhisit was interviewed by a panel of newspapers journalists one day after the Court gave its ruling on Thaksin. Thaksin's case and the upcoming demonstration were the topics the journalists asked most about. Abhisit was careful in his lexical choices when he talked about Thaksin and the UDD and tried not to mention their names.

Abhisit relied on the principle of the rule of law as he answered questions about Thaksin's case. He stressed that everyone must respect the verdict whether they like it or not, and everyone must read the verdict before making any comment. In his view, the verdict gave justice to all concerned parties. Abhisit said that he could not see there was any political motivation behind the verdict as alleged by many. The judges had precisely listed the facts and applied legal provisions leading to the verdict.

Even though Abhisit tried not to mention Thaksin's name, his attitude to him was negative when he did. A journalist asked “Mr Prime Minister, Mr Thaksin just sent us a text message saying he did not accept the verdict on his asset case as he did not receive justice. Some people believe the same. What will the government do?”<sup>5</sup> Abhisit could not then avoid saying Thaksin's name: “...*Thaksin* has won many legal cases. In some cases, he won against people's doubt. But people still accepted the verdict.”<sup>6</sup> Later, the journalist asked what he thought about Thaksin's remark that he would make an appeal to the International Court of Justice. Abhisit replied, with a voice that was probably meant to make audiences feel that Thaksin's remarks were just a bluff, that “...if *he* (Thaksin) thinks it's possible, it's his right to do so...”<sup>7</sup> Earlier, the government spokesman told the media that it was unlikely the ICJ would accept Thaksin's appeal as it was not a question under its jurisdiction (TIME.com 2010).

When he answered questions regarding the upcoming UDD mass rally, Abhisit did not mention the UDD's name when talking about them. He reiterated his standpoint that holding a mass rally was a constitutional right. The government had the duty to ensure that the rally was within given rights and maintain *kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi* (public order).

### **Weekly TV Show: March 7**

The first part of the show was the individual talk session with Abhisit speaking live.

The last 5 minutes and 44 seconds were dedicated to the upcoming UDD demonstration. In the same way as in the previous episode, Abhisit referred to principles of law and the value of calm as he spoke about the upcoming demonstration. When he talked, there was a predominance of terms such as *sa-ngop* (calm or peaceful) which was used 4 times, *sa-ngop-reab-roi* (public order), *ra-biab* (order), and *pok-ka-ti* (normal) once each. In addition, there was a predominance of terms connoting the opposite condition of calmness namely *kwam-roon-raeng* (violence) 6 times, *dued-ron* (disturbance) and *voon-vai* (chaos) once each.

He said that holding a mass rally was a constitutional right as long as the rally was peaceful, free of weapon and did not cause disturbance to the public at large. However, it was clear that particular groups aimed to incite violence during the upcoming demonstration for their own benefits. Therefore, it was necessary for the government to apply strict measures in searching for weapons and ensure the rallies would not impact the traffic flow and the way people in Bangkok and nearby areas lived their normal lives.

Abhisit was consistently careful in his lexical choices as he talked about the UDD and individuals related to it. To be more specific, he did not say which group was going to convene a rally. The upcoming UDD demonstration was simply referred to as *karn-chum-num* (demonstration). Besides, he tried not to call those who would join the demonstrators as Red Shirts (*khon-sue-daeng*). In fact, he used the term *khon-sue-dang* only once as he tried to show his sincerity towards the UDD supporters. He asked them to join the government in fighting with the violent groups because it was now “not a fight between the government and *khon sue dang*.”<sup>8</sup> He believed that they joined the rally because of their ideological causes and did not want violence. Therefore, he asked for their cooperation in preventing a group aiming to incite violence during the demonstration.

During the intermission between the first and second part of the show, a short advertisement was broadcast. The video started with a map floating without any global reference in the background but Thais can surely tell that this is the map of Thailand (Figure 4.3). The boundary of the map is surrounded by fences. There is a home

situated at the centre of the map. Then, many bombs are thrown into the map and cause fire. At the same time the voice-overs said “If Thailand is *sa-ngop-suk* (*peaceful*), our houses are *sa-ngop-suk*. If Thailand is damaged, our houses are damaged.”<sup>9</sup>



Figure 4.3

By the end of the video, a footage of violent incidents during Bloody Songkran were presented with a voice over telling the audiences to call 1555 if they heard of any plans or intentions to cause damages to the country. Figure 4.4 is a screenshot from that portion of the video. At the background, there is a picture of a bus which was set on fire during Bloody Songkran. The golden logo is the emblem of the Prime Minister's Office and the green and white logo is the emblem of Bangkok Metropolis whose mayor came from the Democrat Party. The red lettering at the centre conveyed the same message as the voice over. It can be argued that this video emphasized what Abhisit just said in the individual talk session, the upcoming demonstration was violent-prone as some groups intended to incite violence. In addition, the footage of violent incidents during Bloody Songkran reinforced the negative image of UDD demonstrators as rioters. The government was now closely monitoring the situation, and cooperation from Thai people was needed.



Figure 4.4

Obviously, this video employed the home metaphor for Thailand. Our home is a precious place and, if threatened, must be protected at all cost. This metaphor interacted with a Thai map, one that powerfully symbolises Thai nationhood which has played an important part in the production of Thainess and the creations of its enemies (Thongchai 1994:166-9), to foreground values of calm and unity. The video showed Thailand as a home where all Thais lived peacefully. 'Our home' was under violent threat. Therefore, all Thais must unite and cooperate with the government to fight with this group of people.

The video created a state of fear among Thai people that the UDD mass rally would turn violent, and gave negative images of the demonstrators before the rally began. The video was used a few times during the period of study. Later, it will be referred to as the 'home' advertisement.

In the second part of the show, Abhisit was interviewed by four news anchors from satellite television channels. In continuation from previous episodes, Abhisit again refrained from naming the UDD or Thaksin when talking about them. As for questions regarding the upcoming demonstration, he consistently based his answers on principle of rule of law and value of calm.

Abhisit continued to portray himself as impartial to political conflict. He was asked if the government would invoke the Internal Security Act (ISA) ahead of the start of the rally. He said no one should believe that the mass rally represented an emergency situation. What is noticeable in his answer was the prominence use of the

term *pok-ka -ti* (normal) which he said four times in his short answer. He said "...I consider that as long as the situation is *pok-ka ti...pok-ka-ti* means that political mass rallies are *pok-ka-ti*. I don't think we can suddenly say just because the rally takes place that the situation is not *pok-ka-ti...*"<sup>10</sup> However, the fact he had to say it so many times rather indicates that he thought the opposite might be the case. Two days afterwards, his government invoked the ISA.

Abhisit portrayed himself as an ethical leader fighting to protect the sanctity of the law. By contrast, Thaksin was portrayed as a person destabilizing the judicial institutions. Recent violent attacks and the possibility that violent incidents might occur during the upcoming UDD mass rally were connected with Thaksin's case. Abhisit hinted that Thaksin was behind such incidents as he could benefit from them.

Asked whether the government would negotiate with Thaksin if the demonstrations turned violent, Abhisit insisted that violence would never bring the government to the negotiation table. Asked if it was possible to talk with Thaksin, Abhisit said that "...if (he) wants a negotiation, there must not be violence. (he) back to be a Thai who pleads guilty when making mistakes..."<sup>11</sup> By implication he said that someone who goes into exile in order to avoid a sentence is un-Thai. In Abhisit's view, Thaksin should come back to Thailand to serve his sentence in order to prove that he was a Thai first.

This was the first time Abhisit talked about and offer he intended to make in response to UDD's demand for his resignation. The UDD had announced that the objectives of its upcoming rally was to demand Abhisit to resign and call new elections. He said if certain conditions, economic recovery, constitutional amendments, and the end to political hostilities, were met, he would call for an early election. Once again, Abhisit reinforced his image as an ethical leader by emphasizing that he did not cling to power for power's sake but just in order to fulfil his obligations to the nation. Therefore, he would dissolve the parliament so there could be fresh elections if his three conditions were fulfilled.

At the same time, he implied that UDD's demand for his resignation was made in the interest of particular individuals, not of concern for the public good or for



democracy. This was a way of attacking the pro-Thaksin Puea Thai party without mentioning its name. He claimed that in the previous year his proposal for constitutional amendment, which could then have opened for elections, had been rejected (by Puea Thai). He did not mention that his Democrat Party had also been accused of delaying the constitutional amendment for tactical reasons (Askew 2010:60-63).

Abhisit also used a claim made by the UDD that a new military coup was possible to attack Thaksin and the UDD. He said the government would not benefit from a coup. Those who want a coup are “a group claiming that they are fighting for democracy.”<sup>12</sup> They hope that the coup will *turn over a board* (lom-kra-darn) so their *past* problems will then be solved. *Past* here refers to the Coup in 2006 which had ousted Thaksin and led to the dissolution of Thaksin's party, and the ban against 111 members of the party's executive committee from politics for five years. In other words Thaksin wanted, with the help of the UDD, to create chaos leading to a new coup so he could be cleared of his problems with the law. This is the same allegation that the government made against him during Bloody Songkran.

At the end of the show, a 60-second video of the song *Rak Kan Wai Toed* (love each other) was aired. It called for unity. Only one verse from the song was used in the video: “...love each other as we were born in the land of Thais. No matter which part of the country we were born, we are all Thais. Everyone who was born under the Thai flag, regardless of tradition and race, is Thai...”<sup>13</sup> The value of unity was also emphasized through interaction between the song and colourful images as the video showed a footage of Thai people, including Abhisit and his ministers (Figure 4.5), waving the national flag, and the royal flag around the country. The footage was taken from activities under government's campaign *Thai Samakki Thai Khemkhaeng* (United Thailand, Strong Thailand). Then, the video showed footage of violence during April 2009 in black and white (Figure 4.6). Finally, the video ended with the footage of people waving flags.



*Figure 4.5*



*Figure 4.6*

A Thai national flag and the royal flag interacted with the song to portray Abhisit as a leader protecting national unity. On the contrary, the UDD appeared as un-Thai since it created riots disturbing the rest of the Thai people seeking unity under Thai flag and the monarchy. The footage of violence during Bloody Songkran reminded television viewers of the negative image of the UDD demonstrators in April 2009. The purpose must have been to warn the viewers against the possibility that the upcoming demonstration might become violent as well.

Together with the advertisement aired during the intermission and Abhisit's oral remarks the video aimed to create a state of public fear and hostilities towards the UDD rally. The public should be concerned with the threat of violence from the side of the demonstrators rather than fear of the measures the government might adopt in order to control the situation.

### **Weekly TV Show: March 14**

On March 9, the government approved the use of the Internal Security Act (ISA) in Bangkok and seven neighbouring provinces from March 11 to 23, and the establishment of a Centre for the Administration of Peace and Order (CAPO). On March 12, UDD began its 'Million Man March' to Bangkok as its supporters gathered at five mobilization points around the country while UDD supporters in Bangkok prepared for a mass rally to take place on March 14 at noon (The Nation, March 13, 2010).

The show began with the individual talk session. Abhisit spoke live from the headquarters of CAPO in the building of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, which now also served as his temporary residence. Abhisit's image as a leader loyal to the monarchy

was presented through the settings. Abhisit was dressed in a suit with a pink necktie (Figure 4.7). The royal astrologers had determined that pink was a good colour for the King's health (BBC News 2007). In October 2007, the King had left hospital wearing a pink shirt and pink blazer, and since then pink had become popular among Thais. They wear pink to wish the King good health.



Figure 4.7

In the individual talk session, Abhisit talked about the 'million man march' activity of the UDD. With a soft voice and calm manner, he talked about good coordination between the government and UDD leaders since March 12. At the time of the show, neither instances of violence nor any conflict between the demonstrators and security personnel had yet occurred. As he spoke, footage of troops inspecting the vehicles carrying the UDD into Bangkok was aired (Figure 4.8). This may have been intended to show that soldiers at the checkpoints did not harm the demonstrators. Yet the footage did reinforce the image that UDD had hired protestors from the *ban-nok* (rural area). At the right side of Figure 4.8, there are two supporters of the UDD sitting on top of trucks. This may be dangerous. Only *ban-nok* would do such a thing. Urban TV viewers would get a negative impression of simple-minded *ban-nok* invading the city, and be scared.



Figure 4.8

Abhisit continued to imply that the mass rally was prone to become violent. He talked about the necessity of setting up security checkpoints to 'search for weapons, aliens infiltrated in the protesters, and drugs'<sup>14</sup> but not to prevent people from joining the rally. In other words, Abhisit implied that the majority of the UDD demonstrators were ok but that the rally might be infiltrated by negative and dangerous elements.

In the second part of the show, Abhisit was interviewed by a guest host from TV5, a military-owned television channel. The UDD demonstration was the only topic. There was a huge difference between the way Abhisit and the host spoke about the UDD. Abhisit did not mention the UDD by name whereas the interviewer did.

Abhisit made clear that he would not accept a demand made by the UDD that he should dissolve parliament within a deadline of three days, and call for a fresh election. Abhisit referred to some terms used by UDD leaders on the rally stages to play down the UDD's demand, and show his doubts concerning their real goals. He said some UDD leaders demanded either his resignation or the dissolution of parliament while others demanded both. Some UDD leaders had also said these demands were just a *first milestone (lak-ki-lo-met-raek)*. He added that some UDD leaders had not just talked about dissolving the parliament but about *other institutions (sa-ta-ban-uen)* as well.

Even though Abhisit did not specify which institutions he was talking about, it was generally assumed that he meant the King's Privy Council which the UDD accused of having engineered the 2006 coup. Some viewers may also have thought

that the institution Abhisit was talking about was the Monarchy itself, in which case the UDD leaders would be guilty of *lèse-majesté*. In Thailand, moreover, the term *sata-ban* (institution), is used when one refers to the monarchy. These terms would turn up again in later Abhisit shows, and what he really meant became clearer as the conflict escalated.

Just as on March 7, Abhisit employed the term *lom-kra-darn* (turn over the board) as when denying rumours of a forthcoming coup. He said that a coup was not a solution to any problem and would benefit no one. His government worked closely with the army and no one would like to see a coup. On the contrary, those who needed a coup wanted to see more chaos in the society in order to *turn over the board*. In other words, he claimed that Thaksin would benefit most from a coup as he might in its aftermath be cleared of legal charges.

Abhisit was also asked about Thaksin's involvement in the mass rallies. In their discussion of this matter, neither Abhisit nor the interviewer mentioned Thaksin's name. Abhisit implied that Thaksin was among those wanting to incite violence in order to serve their personal agenda. He linked the violent faction of the UDD with Thaksin. He said “some persons” had gone to Dubai to meet Thaksin earlier. When they were back, they said something threatening to the public. It can be concluded that the “some persons” Abhisit talked about included Khattiya. As mentioned in session 4.1, Khattiya had met Thaksin in Dubai at the beginning of February. When he came back, he talked about setting up a 'people army'.

At the end of the interview, Abhisit reinforced his image of a moral leader. The host asked him if he was worried about his own safety. He answered “...I volunteered to do this job. I'm bound by duty. The country is far more important than me...”<sup>15</sup> He also portrayed himself as an ethical leader who did not want to hold on to power for its own sake, but would resign if this could benefit his country.

### **Weekly TV Show: March 21**

The show began with the live interview session. Abhisit was interviewed at CAPO headquarters by two news anchors from Channel 7, which also broadcast the

interview as part of its news program. This could mean that the government wanted Abhisit's message to reach a wider audience. Channel 7 is the most popular TV station especially in the rural areas, where Thaksin and the UDD had their strongholds. In this interview, Abhisit's negativity towards the UDD leaders and Thaksin was more strongly accentuated than before. He employed well-known UDD rhetoric to question if UDD leaders were fighting for democracy or for Thaksin.

Earlier that week the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) had met with UDD leaders and the government in an attempt to mediate a settlement. Abhisit said in a press conference with NHRC that he had no objections to holding talk if the UDD respected the laws and kept their rally peaceful. He would send representatives to talk with the UDD leaders on 22 March to set a framework for further talks between the government and the UDD (The Nation, March 19, 2010). However in an address via video-link to the demonstrators, Thaksin rejected NHRC as a mediator since it was not an independent body (Bangkok Post, March 19, 2010). Later, UDD leaders claimed that they would negotiate only with Abhisit and only after he had dissolved the Parliament (Bangkok Post, March 21, 2010).

The interviewer asked Abhisit if immediate dissolution of the Parliament could be talked about. This was the first time that Abhisit explicitly addressed the issue of Thaksin's influence over the UDD leaders, and spoke negatively of them all. Even though he still looked calm, his tone changed noticeably as he answered this question. He uttered Thaksin's name five times and referred to the UDD leaders fourteen times as *nor-por-chor* (a Thai acronym of the UDD) in a reply lasting just five minutes and 48 seconds. He voiced his suspicion that Thaksin was trying to block all negotiations in order to prevent the UDD from ending its rally gracefully. The fact that the UDD leaders insisted that they would talk only to Abhisit and only after he had dissolved the Parliament raised a question about who in the movement had the authority to decide if the negotiation should be cut off or proceed. Besides, Abhisit said that if the *nor-por-chor* would not turn up for talks on March 22, then it could only be concluded that the *nor-por-chor* did not fight for democracy as they always claimed but only for the interests of Thaksin.

It is interesting that Abhisit used the term *nor-por-chor* instead of *sue-daeng* (Red Shirts) to call the UDD leaders. It may be because *sue-dang* is a broader term including all of the demonstrators. In other words, he tried not to be too negative towards the common demonstrators but single out the leaders closest to Thaksin.

The interviewer mentioned the UDD's controversial 'blood curse campaign' with blood being collected from the demonstrators, in order to be poured out at the entrances to Government House, the Democrat Party headquarters, and Abhisit's residence (Bangkok Post, March 17, 2010). The image of the ethical Abhisit facing unruly UDD demonstrators was reinforced. Abhisit was asked how he felt about the blood incident. He said with a soft voice and calm manners that the campaign might be considered an offence as his house was a private property. Many of his supporters had told him not to let the demonstrators pour blood at his house. He said he had to admit that as a human being he was angry. However, as prime minister, he must avoid getting influenced by personal feelings whenever he made decisions for the benefit of the public. Therefore, he had decided not to dispatch any security officers to block the demonstrators from marching to his house. This could, he said, have led to clashes.



Figure 4.9

As he answered, footage of demonstrators shouting and pouring blood in front of his house was presented on the right side of the screen (Figure 4.9). As a stark contrast to the quiet emotion of Abhisit, one sees the rude action of the UDD demonstrators. This may have been calculated to make audiences more sympathetic to Abhisit and his family, and hostile to the demonstrators. The blood incident was so

spectacular that everyone could relate to it. A private home is a precious place. The viewers would think what if a similar incident happened to them, they would feel bad and angry. Thus the negative image of the UDD demonstrators as rioters and *ban-nok* was further reinforced. This symbolic campaign was even criticized by some UDD supporters. For instance, Major-General Khattiya saw the campaign as 'silly move' (Bangkok Post, March 17, 2010). He had more faith in outright violence.

As in previous episodes, Abhisit used some of UDD's famous rhetoric to question if parliament dissolution was the UDD's true and final demand. He said the UDD leaders talked in the rally about 'class war' (*song-kram-chon-chan*), overthrowing the 'elites' (*amataya*), and establishment of a 'new Thai state' (*rud-tai-mai*). Not only they incited hatred in Thai society, he wondered if these three things related to the movement's demand for House dissolution. In other words, Abhisit tried to imply that the UDD leaders had a hidden agenda which was 'beyond' the demand they made in public. *Rud-tai-mai* connotes one of the most serious allegations made against the UDD. Even though the term may have many meanings, it was likely that most audiences would interpret it as an ambition to overthrow the monarchy, and turn Thailand into a republic.

Abhisit used the UDD's claim to be fighting for democracy to attack Thaksin. This time he used Thaksin's name: "...If *Thaksin* is truly democratic, why is *Thaksin* only in Dubai and Montenegro?"<sup>16</sup> This gave two messages to the audience. First, Thaksin did not respect the rule of law a foundation of a democratic society because Thaksin had fled in 2008 to escape his two-year prison sentence. Second, Thaksin deceived the demonstrators by asking them to fight in the streets while he spoke to them via video link from his safety abroad.

Abhisit was asked what he would say if he met Thaksin in order to improve the situation. He replied in his soft voice, as if he was trying to persuade Thaksin face to face that (a word in parenthesis suggests the word was omitted) "...I don't have anything personal with *Thaksin*. I want to tell (him) that first please think about the public interest, about Thailand moving forward. Second, I want (him) to accept the rule of law and the court ruling as other Thai citizens do. (He) cannot have any



privileged right to reject the judicial process. And third, if he accepts these two points, I'm sure there will be a way to forgive (him) as Thai society is merciful. Then, Thailand could be able to move forward. That is my belief..."<sup>17</sup> By saying this, Abhisit emphasized his view that Thaksin was the main obstacle for Thailand's quest to get back to normalcy.

After the interview ended, two videos were shown. First, the 'home' advertisement was aired again. Second, a new version of the video with the song 'Love Each Other', this time lasting two minutes and 51 seconds was aired. Again, footage of Thai people waving the national and royal flags from Thai Samakki project was used.

After the videos, Abhisit spoke live in a short individual talk session. He thanked the *officials* (chao-na-tee) for their dedication and patience, and the people of Bangkok for their cooperation and understanding, and the demonstrators for their peaceful intent. It was interesting that Abhisit used rather civilian term *officials* when he referred to the police and soldiers. *Chao-na-tee* is a broad term referring to all kinds of government employees. This might be because Abhisit did not want to remind the viewers that his government had been set up with the tacit support of the military, and that the army would be needed for dispersing the rally. During the demonstrations, he preferred to use *chao-na-tee* over more military or dangerous-sounding terms when referring to the soldiers. Later in this study, the term 'official' (เจ้าหน้าที่) will be italicized if Abhisit uses it to mean soldier.

Abhisit said that this week the government would try to talk with the demonstrators about the need to respect the constitutional limits regarding peaceful demonstrations. If this did not work, the government would *enforce the law* (bung-kab-chai-kod-mai). However, measures would be taken carefully. *Bung-kab-chai-kod-mai* is a vague term. The term foregrounds the fact that measures would be taken to uphold the law, but does not specify what measures the government would take. The term led the viewers to be warned of future measure to enforce the law without emphasizing how they would be done.

## Special Announcement: March 28

Abhisit spoke live on television at 8 am from an undisclosed location. The setting reflects the hastiness of the production and the seriousness of the situation. Dressed formally, Abhisit sits in front of the white background as in Figure 4.10. He is calm and speaks with the same soft voice. Mainly, this announcement was his response to UDD's announcement a day earlier that the demonstrators would rally in front of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on March 28 to press him to come out for talks with them. Earlier that week, UDD leaders had refused to talk with government representatives about a framework for talks with Abhisit.



Figure 4.10

The value of calm dominated Abhisit's rhetoric as he described the situation. Throughout 19 minutes and 40 seconds, he used terms connoting value of calm 11 times; namely, *kwam-sa-ngop* (calmness) once, *kwam-sa-ngop-suk* (peacefulness) 6 times, *kwam-sa-ngop-reab-roi* (public order) 3 times, and *pok-ka-ti* (normalcy) once. At this moment, the situation was not normal mainly because of violent attacks and unlawful demonstrations.

Furthermore, Abhisit discredited UDD's demand for the dissolution of Parliament as a political ploy which would not benefit the public at large. He said it was now clear that the opposition party (Puea Thai) participated in the demonstrations for House dissolution and this weakened the chance of using parliamentary mechanisms to solve the problem. At the same time, he claimed that it was in the public interest to counter UDD's demand. He said that a large part of the population

had different views from that of the demonstrators. Therefore in finding a solution to the current situation, the government must listen to all groups, not just one. He stressed that the government's decision would be based on the public interest.

A negative image of the demonstrators as an aggressive mob using violence to achieve their goals was reinforced. Abhisit talked about the UDD's plan to rally at the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment to put pressure on him. He said if the demonstrators marched to the Regiment, he would not be there to talk with them. He used negative terms connoting the opposite of calmness to refer to this plan as an act of 'threatening (khom-koo), intimidating (kuk-kam), and pressuring (kod-dan),' and said it would not create a climate conducive for talks that could bring back *peacefulness* (kwam-sa-ngop-suk) to society. In other words, what the demonstrators were doing was to destroy *peacefulness* of the society.

At the end of his talk, Abhisit implicitly rejected the demonstrators' demand. In doing so, he reinforced his image as an ethical and democratic leader. Abhisit underlined that as Prime Minister, he was accountable to all Thai people, the whole Thai nation, and to national institutions. He was determined to lead the country through this *vi-krit* (crisis). He would not abandon his people and would continue to show responsibility. This was because he had been elected by the people and had never come to political positions by any other means. The last sentence was an indirect attack against Thaksin, who entered politics in 1994 when accepting a post in the cabinet. At the same time, it countered the UDD's claim that he himself was an illegitimate prime minister who had come to power without a real majority. He now highlighted the fact that he was an elected MP who had come to power in accordance with constitutional rules.

### **Special Announcement: April 4**

On April 4, Abhisit spoke live on television in response to the occupation the day before of the Ratchaprasong intersection, a business district in Bangkok. He remained calm as he explained that this was illegal and asked the demonstrators to withdraw from the area. For the first time in his television remarks, he uttered the term *sue-dang*

(Red Shirt). He used it twice as he referred to the demonstrators in a neutral way.

In this remark, Abhisit was persuasive in his tone as he insisted to the demonstrators that the occupation of Ratchaprasong was illegal. He said he believed many demonstrators might not realize that this. Therefore, the authorities would continue to talk and ensure a correct understanding. By saying this, he implicitly reinforced images of the demonstrators as *ban-nok* who needed guidance before they could understand what was right or wrong.

On March 28 and 29, Abhisit engaged in talks with UDD leaders. The talks lasted five hours and were televised live. Then, they ended in a deadlock as both sides stuck to their positions. Abhisit put forward the possibility of calling early elections in 9 months time. However, the UDD leaders insisted that he dissolve the Parliament within 15 days.

Abhisit said the talks showed that he listened to the views of the demonstrators, and now his government understood their demands. He employed the value of unity when trying to explain why he could not do as the UDD demanded and why his proposals were preferable. He said differences in political views remained tense as shown in recent polls. To dissolve the Parliament in just 15 days would not put an end to conflict in society. Before new elections could be held, the rules and regulations involving politics had to be acceptable to all sides and all parties had to be free to pursue their activities without any hindrance or threat of violence. Abhisit invited all sectors in society to work with the government on these points.

Finally, Abhisit asked the demonstrators to vacate Ratchaprasong and return to their main rally site at Phan Fa Bridge. He said if the rally at Ratchaprasong was prolonged, it would affect the country's economy and lead to unemployment and stagnation. Those who would be affected the most by these problems would be the less well-off or the poor. In other words, he warned the demonstrators that they were causing damage to their own class. At the same time, he asked the public to remain patient.

## **Weekly TV Show: April 4**

After the special announcement ended, Abhisit's weekly TV show followed. The first part was the individual talk session which went live. Abhisit claimed legitimacy by referring to recognition from foreign governments. He talked about his recent visits to Brunei and Bahrain. He said the visits showed that foreign countries recognized his government's legitimate right to govern till the end of its term. Besides, leaders of both countries supported his actions to resolve the situation by using non-violent means and by calling for cooperation from all groups in society.

In the interview session, Abhisit was interviewed by a guest host regarding the current situation. He used the value of unity to show that the government must not only listen to the UDD but also to other parties. Otherwise, the conflict would be endless. He believed that cooperation from all sides would end the current conflict. He referred to what one of the UDD leaders had said during the televised talks that "...the (UDD) leader said if the government has five kids and one kid is crying, the government should listen to that kid ... the government should do as that kid wants. Since the other four kids are not crying, the government would not have to care about (them)."<sup>18</sup> He said that if government always pampered only the crying kids, finally all five kids would be crying. In other words, Abhisit could not surrender to the crying UDD because he was an ethical leader thinking of the whole nation's wellbeing.

Abhisit stressed the necessity to have the political rules accepted by all sides before he could call a fresh election. Again, he referred to Puea Thai and UDD's rejection of his earlier proposal to amend the constitution. He said if they had accepted his proposal, the constitutional amendment would now have been completed. Thus, he implied that UDD and Puea Thai did not really want democracy or reconciliation. Instead of accepting the accusation that the government was delaying the process of constitutional amendment, he put the blame on the UDD and Puea Thai.

Abhisit made clear that issues concerning Thaksin including his legal charges would not be included as subjects in the talks to end political conflict. In talking about this he again used Thaksin's name. He said Thaksin could voice his opinion but it was impossible to include his legal problems in the talks because only issues concerning

the public interest could be discussed. Besides, some of the legal charges against Thaksin had already been prosecuted. Thaksin must accept the judicial process just like everyone else.

Abhisit used what the most extreme UDD leaders had said on the rally stage to imply that UDD had other more radical aims than just to see Parliament dissolved. Particularly, Abhisit talked about the term *lak-ki-lo-met-rak* (the first milestone) which he had mentioned in the show on March 21. Now he linked this term to mysterious violent attacks. He said some groups would not stop at the dissolving Parliament as they said this was just *lak-ki-lo-met-rak*. Violent attacks, occurring in parallel with the demonstrations, showed that some groups wanting to create situations to bring *karn-plian-plang* (*changes*) or to *lom-kra-darn* (turn over the board) because they hoped *changes* could clear away legal problems from the past. Besides, some groups even went further to talk about *sa-ta-ban-lak-khong-chat* (main national institution).

Using the terms *the first milestone*, *changes*, *turn over the board* and *main national institution*, Abhisit made serious accusations against the UDD. As past power holders have done, Abhisit employed the Monarchy, one of the central elements of Thainess to discredit the opposition. *Changes* can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, *changes* may relate to a coup. That is to say the demonstrations along with recent violent attacks was aimed to provoke another coup. Second, *changes* could mean regime change. For most Thais, regime change means to change Thailand from a monarchy to a republic. As for *main national institution*, if we look back at what he said in the show on March 21 when he alluded to some UDD leaders' call for the creation of a *new Thai state* (*rud-thai-mai*), it is not difficult to gauge that Abhisit referred to the monarchy. To say the least, it can be implied that some among the UDD must have defamed the monarchy as they spoke on the rally stage. Some viewers may have thought that the UDD wanted to dethrone the King just as the Yellow Shirt had been asserting. All in all, such terms could lead the UDD demonstrators to be brandished as un-Thai. For some Thais, just a hint of disloyalty to the King is enough to support any measure used to dispel or repress such wrongdoers.

At the end of the interview, Abhisit recalled the destructive actions of the UDD

demonstrators during Bloody Songkran. The host asked Abhisit if the situation in April 2009 or that of April 2010 was more difficult. He said: "...April has just begun. So, I could not answer this. However, I do not want to see violence as last April. I do not want to see riots, (buses) burnt down, people being beaten by a mob, the use of security forces to control the situation, tension, and gas trucks..."<sup>19</sup> This was a list of acts undertaken by some demonstrators during Bloody Songkran. The PM now reminded his audiences that similar things could happen again.

### **Special Announcement: April 6**

On 5 April, the government submitted a petition to the Civil Court to conduct an emergency hearing and issue an order to the demonstrators to vacate Ratchaprasong intersection. However, the Court dismissed the case because the ISA and the announcements issued by CAPO could be enforced without any hearing. In the morning of April 6, the security forces were deployed to Ratchaprasong to prevent the UDD from march through eleven routes declared off-limits by government order. There were just minor clashes between two sides.

In the late afternoon, Abhisit spoke live on television about the same day's incident. He said UDD leaders had misinformed the demonstrators regarding the nature of their rally and the intent of the *officials*. Once again, he used the term *chao-na-tee* (p.43) for the military forces. He referred to the UDD leaders as *gan-nam* (core leaders). First, he said the UDD leaders merely told the demonstrators that the Civil Court had dismissed the government's petition and that the rally was therefore lawful. And after the incident, they misinformed the demonstrators that the operation in the morning had showed that the *officials* were preparing to use force to harm the people. Their television network disseminated these messages which helped enabling the protest leaders to mobilize a large number of people to join the demonstration at Ratchaprasong.

Abhisit used the value of unity as he asked Thai people to remain patient, and at the same time backgrounded the failure of the government to manage the situations which might upset his supporters. Furthermore, he employed terms connoting value of

calm to show that the current situation was *not normal* (mai-pok-ka-ti) and that the government was trying to bring back *normalcy* (kwam-pok-ka-ti) and *peacefulness* (kwam-sa-ngop suk). In this statement, *sa-ngop-suk* was used three times while *pok-ka-ti* was used six times.

Abhisit said he recognized the wish of many people who wanted to see *righteousness* (kwam-took-tong) and *enforcement of the law* (karn-bang-kab-chai kod-mai). He said the government was not satisfied with the current situation either. However, because of the possibility that facts would be distorted, the government must be extremely cautious in taking measures to enforce the law. He called measures to handle current situation and persuade the demonstrators to vacate Ratchaprasong as *karn-bang-kab-chai-kod-mai*, an interesting term used three times. This term sounds neutral and conveys the impression that the government was not hostile to the demonstrators. It also hid the fact that forces and weapons might be used.

Furthermore, his usage of the term *kwam-took-tong*, four times during the last three minutes and 30 seconds, was interesting. On the surface, it could mean that what the UDD did was not right as the term can be translated literally as correctness. However, the term means *righteousness* in this context. Abhisit was implying that the UDD demonstration was not only illegal but also immoral. Therefore, it was also a threat to *kwam sa-ngop* (calmness) and *kwam-pok-ka-ti* (normalcy), highly-valued conditions in Thai society.

At the end of his remarks, Abhisit said the government was working on a plan to counter attempts at disseminate misinformation about the events. He did not say what the government would be doing. However, the public would not have to wait for long to see what he had in mind.

### **Special Announcement: April 7**

The drama reached a new level on 7 April when Arisman Pongruangrong a hard-core UDD leader, led about 2,000 demonstrators to seal off the Parliament and 80 of them smashed their way into the compound, supposedly to meet Abhisit to press him to dissolve the Parliament and search for Deputy PM Suthep Thaugsuban (Bangkok Post,



April 8, 2010).

In the evening, Abhisit made another live televised address. At first, the screen showed full shots of Abhisit sitting among members of his cabinet and army chiefs (Figure 4.11). All of them were formally dressed. It can be assumed that they were in a press conference as beams of camera flash lights continued throughout the announcement. At the centre against a brown backdrop, was the Thai acronym of CAPO in blue letters. Above the officials on Abhisit's left and right, were big pictures of the King and the Queen in official costumes. At the top right corner of the screen, was a 'live' symbol in Thai. The setting gave a sense of the authority and legitimacy of Abhisit and his cabinet showing that they were acting in the name of the Monarchy. The presences of cabinet members and army commanders indicated the importance of the message Abhisit was going to announce. Then, the screen changed to medium shots showing only Abhisit. As he spoke, the screen displayed each minister in medium shots from left to right, and then Abhisit again (Figure 4.12).



*Figure 4.11*



*Figure 4.12*

'Grim-faced' (The Nation, April 8, 2010), Abhisit declared a 'severe emergency situation' in Bangkok, its vicinities and nearby provinces and with a full right for the government to use its authority under the emergency decree. He also announced the establishment of a Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation (CRES) to replace CAPO, and appointed Deputy PM Suthep as its director.

Abhisit explained why an emergency decree was needed citing the demonstrators' incursion into the Parliament as the last straw. In doing so, he was

careful not to use any terms referring directly to the UDD. Instead of calling the demonstrators *sue-daeng* (Red Shirts) or *nor-por-chor* (UDD), Abhisit referred to them with a term that did not specify to what group they belonged. He said the demonstration by *a group of persons* (*kon-klum-nueng*) had escalated to include unlawful actions causing serious disruptions in the daily life of the general public causing severe economic and social impact as well as affecting the image and confidence of the country in the view of the international community. It took only 1 minute and 45 seconds to say this. Clearly, there was a predominance of terms with negative connotations: *pit-kod-mai* (illegal), *kwam-dued-ron* (disturbance), *kra-top kra-toen* (affect), *phon-kra-top* (effect), *koen-loey* (exceed), *kad-kuen* (resist), *buk-ruk* (intrude), and *khad-khuen* (resist order).

Abhisit listed four objectives of the emergency decree, and summarized them as “...to bring back normalcy and to restore the sanctity of law in the country...”<sup>20</sup> He stressed that the government did not intend to use the Decree to suppress or harm people, especially innocent ones. All actions would be in accordance with the law and international standards.

At the end of this remark, he appealed to the value of unity as he told the public he looked forward to their cooperation in helping the government to resolve the situation. He stressed that actions violating the law, harming public peace or causing economic and social loss would eventually affect all Thais, the demonstrators included. Therefore, he asked people to refrain from joining any unlawful demonstrations.

The situation was now called 'sa-ta-na-karn-chuk-chuen-thee-mee-kwam-rai-rang' (สถานการณ์ฉุกเฉินที่มีความร้ายแรง) which can be translated as 'severe emergency situation'. *Rai-rang* (severe) is a negative word. It means a situation is extremely dangerous and that drastic measures are needed to resolve it. Likewise with the change of the agency's name to CRES, the UDD mass rally had now transformed from an event disturbing *kwam sa-ngop* (calmness) to a severe emergency situation. The degree of negativity towards the demonstration had escalated through the choice of terms used to name it.

## Special Announcement: April 8

On April 8 at noon, the People's Channel (PTV), which had been broadcasting the rally at Ratchaprasong, went off the air. Likewise, the community radio stations transmitting voice signals from the rally site were either cut off or jammed and a number of pro-Red Shirt websites were blocked (The Nation, April 9, 2010). The UDD leaders gave an ultimatum to the government to get PTV back on air but this was rejected (The Nation, April 9, 2010a).

Abhisit spoke on television at 21.15 hrs. mainly about the blocking of PTV. He said that after the emergency decree was declared, the government was expected to *sa-lai-karn-chum-num* (disperse the demonstration). Instead, he said the first step the government had decided upon was to put an end to distortion of information and infliction of hatred among the people, and to take legal action against those UDD leaders who incited hatred and violence. It was obvious that he was concerned about this rumours of a looming crackdown as he said the term *sa-lai-karn-chum-num* four times and denied that it would happen throughout this announcement.

Abhisit justified the blocking the PTV by claiming it was used to incite hatred among people through misinformation. He employed several negative terms to support this argument. He said he watched PTV after the emergency had been declared. The demonstration leaders said on the rally stage that the government intended to *wage war* (tham-song-kram) on the people, and that the government was preparing to *seal off* (lom-prab) and *kill* (khen-kar) the demonstrators with dangerous weapons. Certainly when the demonstrators and supporters of the demonstration heard this distorted information, their *hostility* (kwam-kliad-chag) towards the government would grow. They would join the demonstration as they perceived the government as their *enemy* (sat-troo). At the same time, people who did not support the demonstrations, having heard this distorted information and continuous threats from demonstration leaders to intensify their protests, would become more *hostile* (kliad-chang) towards the demonstrators and might in turn put pressure on the government to take decisive action to disperse the demonstrations. He did not wish to see Thai society fall in to this *trap* (kab-dak).

Abhisit stressed the objective of the government was to “*return the area* (khuen-puen-thi) to the public by *persuading* (nom-nao) the demonstrators to leave the rally site.”<sup>21</sup> *Khuen-puen-thi* conveys a sense that the government operations were for public benefit and would not be violent. The term draws attention away from the likelihood that force would be used in the operations.

In this remark, there was an intense use of terms relating to the value of calm. In fact, he employed *kwam-pok-ka-ti-suk* (normalcy and happiness) five times, *kwam-suk* (happiness) twice, and *kwam-sa-ngop-suk* (peacefulness) twice in a remark that lasted 15 minutes and 27 seconds as he showed that the demonstration affected the *peacefulness* and *happiness* of the public. The government was now trying to bring that *normalcy and happiness* back.

### **Special Announcement: April 9**

On April 9, the demonstrators marched to the THAICOM earth station to force the resumption of transmission of PTV signals, and finally stormed into the station compound. Thousands of soldiers deployed to protect the station failed to hold the assailants back, and were forced to withdraw (Bangkok Post, April 10, 2010). In the evening, the PTV resumed its service. Late in the evening, Abhisit gave a televised address in response to the incident.

This time Abhisit employed a different vocabulary as he sought to draw a wedge between the UDD demonstrators on one side and the government along with most people on the other side. This strategy is called 'ideological squaring' (Van Dijk, 1998). He used both overtly and implicitly negative terms as he described the actions of the demonstrators, and similarly positive terms for the government side. In short, the demonstrators were villains whereas the government and the rest of the people were rational and moral human beings.

This was the first time which Abhisit portrayed all demonstrators in such a negative way. With a forceful voice, he pronounced a set of overtly negative words when referring to the incidents at THAICOM. He said “...once again the *demonstrators* (poo-chum-num), who had been violating the law, showed their

*impertinence* (kwam-herm-germ) and *defiance of the law* (mai kao-rop kod-mai)...<sup>22</sup> *Herm-germ* connotes a ruthless character. Abhisit had always been careful with his choice of words. Therefore, calling the demonstrators' action *herm germ* signalled that he now was angry. It was reported that in a meeting with security agencies, Abhisit said that people were disappointed with the authorities for their inability to enforce the law (The Nation, April 10, 2010).

This announcement was unique in this period as it revealed Abhisit's feelings. He used some strongly emotional words: "I recognized that many Thais may have felt *disappointed* (pid-wang), *discouraged* (tor-tae) and *hurt* (jeb-puad) by the incident..."<sup>23</sup> Such feelings, he said, were not due to support for him. Rather, they came out of a wish to see *righteousness* (kwam-took-tong) prevail and the sanctity of law be upheld.

He showed his authority and determination as he made clear that the government would not surrender to the UDD's demands, and would continue its attempts to defend the rule of law, and resolve the current situation. He employed the modal verb *must* (tong) as he said "the only immediate mission the government *must* do right now is to uphold the rule of law. Other questions, political ones included, must be solved later."<sup>24</sup>

At the end of his remarks, Abhisit said to the public: "Today, we were *disappointed* (pid-wang) but it is not over. I believe if we adhere to *righteousness* (kwam-took-tong), and try to protect the rule of law and the system, we will eventually gain *victory* (chai-cha-na)."<sup>25</sup> This last remark made it likely that measures in dealing with the demonstrations would be drastically stepped up, and this was indeed the case as April 10 would show.

## 5 Analysis of the Second Period

As mentioned earlier, the conflict entered the second period on April 10, when there were deadly clashes between soldiers and demonstrators. After the clashes, Abhisit's interpretations changed noticeably. Before analyzing Abhisit's television addresses in this period, we will summarize the clashes on April 10.

### 5.1 What happened on April 10, 2010?

The operations to disperse the demonstration at UDD's main rally sites at Phan Fa Bridge and Ratchaprasong Intersection began in the afternoon of April 10. At 2.10 pm, around 1,000 soldiers marched to the rally site at Phan Fa Bridge after demonstrators had tried to break into the compound of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army headquarters (Bangkok Post, April 11, 2010). As the troops marched on, they faced strong resistance from the demonstrators. The troops fired tear-gas and rubber bullets and the demonstrators responded by throwing objects into a group of soldiers. At 5 pm, a CRES spokesperson appeared on TV to inform the public that the operations to *return the areas* (kuen-puen-thi) to the public were being carried out, and measures taken would be incremental from light to hard, in accordance with the law (Ibid).

As for the Ratchaprasong rally site, hundreds of riot police in full gear mobilized at Ploenchit Intersection nearby (The Nation April 11, 2010). However, the police began to withdraw from the area at 5.30 pm after they had failed to break through barricades set up by the demonstrators with the use of cars and trucks (Human Rights Watch 2011:56).

The operation at Phan Fa rally site continued as troops approached demonstration area from several routes. As the soldiers closed in on the rally site, confrontation and tension between troops and demonstrators escalated. Around 8 pm, the troops were attacked at Kok Wua intersection with grenades. Some unidentified well-armed men force them to retreat. These men, some of them in black clothing, worked with a high degree of coordination and military skills (Human Rights Watch 2011:57). The first grenade killed the commanding officer Colonel Romklao Thuwatham. Shocked by the loss of their commander and the attacks from the armed

men and demonstrators, the soldiers retreated from the area, while sometimes firing directly against the demonstrators massed before them (Human Rights Watch 2011:10).

At 9.15 pm, CRES informed the public through a televised statement that the military had stopped its operations and moved away from the demonstrators, and that it was calling for a truce (The Nation, April 11, 2010). Twenty-seven people, including five soldiers, had been killed and 432 civilians and 356 security forces injured (People's Information Center 2012:53,432). On April 14, the UDD abandoned the rally site at Phan Fa Bridge and relocated all demonstrators to Ratchaprasong.

What happened during the clashes in the night of April 10 was not clear because no detailed report of this incident was produced (Askew 2010:309). It was found that high velocity bullets were fired by both the soldiers and the armed group, while some demonstrators used pistols during the clashes (Human Rights Watch 2011:62). Noticeably, 236 injured soldiers were from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry division or the 'Queen's Guard' and its deputy chief Colonel Romklao was killed. It was speculated that the division had been targeted by the armed men because it had been responsible for the crackdown on the UDD demonstrators during Bloody Songkran (Bangkok Post, April 21, 2010). Later, Colonel Romklao had spoken in Parliament to defend the operation and blamed the UDD for the violence during Bloody Songkran (Human Rights Watch 2011:58).

As will be shown below, the presence of these 'men in black' or 'black shirts' was employed by the government to claim there were 'terrorists' among the demonstrators, and to accuse the UDD leaders and Thaksin of supporting 'terrorists' (International Crisis Group 2010:3). On their side, many demonstrators viewed the 'men in black' as their defenders and rescuers but did not know who they were. According to Human Rights Watch (2011:44-46), the 'men in black' were a secretive armed element within the UDD, and with responsibility for attacking soldiers. However, their roles and chain of command were unclear.

## 5.2 Data Discussion

From the period April 10 to May 12, eight television remarks will be analysed, namely three episodes of his weekly TV shows (lasting 2 hours, 20 minutes, and 30 seconds in total) and five special announcements (lasting 1 hour, 13 minutes, and 31 seconds in total). Table 5.1 lists them chronologically.

No	Date(mm/dd/yy) and Time (hrs.)	Name of televised address	Duration (minute: second)
1	04/10/10, 23.25	Special Announcement	10:24
2	04/12/10, 14.00	Special Announcement	04:20
3	04/16/10, 21.15	Special Announcement	08:12
4	04/19/10, 21.00	Special Announcement	29:18
5	04/25/10, 09.00	Weekly TV Show	59:40
6	05/02/10, 09.00	Weekly TV Show	30:44
7	05/03/10, 21.15	Special Announcement	21:17
8	05/09/10, 9.00	Weekly TV Show	50:06
Total duration of period 2 (hour: minute: second)		03:34:01	

Table 5.1: Abhisit's television remarks analysed in the second period

The special announcement on April 19 was different from the rest in that he was interviewed by a host. As for Abhisit's weekly TV show, it was cancelled on April 11 and 18. The show was back again on April 25 but then turned out to be an embarrassment. After 5 minutes and 30 seconds of airtime, the show was disrupted by a strong signal. Then, the message 'we apologize for the disruption of the signal' was run. It took around 1 minute and 29 seconds to solve the problem. The show was then replayed from the beginning. Later, it was reported that the broadcast had been



jammed from the outside (Bangkok Post, April 26, 2010). The show lasted no less than 66 minutes and 49 seconds.

The show on April 25 consisted of both the individual talk and interview sessions, while the shows on May 2 and 9 featured only the individual talk session. At the interview session on April 25, Abhisit was interviewed along with army chief Major-General Anupong Paochinda. The duration which Abhisit and Anupong spoke was 31 minutes and 34 seconds and 13 minutes and 52 seconds respectively.

### 5.3 Analysis of Data

#### Special Announcement: April 10

About two and a half hours after the firing stopped on April 10, Abhisit spoke live on national television from CRES headquarters. Figure 5.1 is a screenshot from the remark. While properly dressed in suit and tie, his facial expression looked stressed and he spoke in a slower pace than usual in an apparent attempt to as control his emotions. He started his speech by expressing his condolences for the loss of life in the clashes between soldiers and demonstrators. However, he did not refer to the events of 10 April as clashes. Instead, he used the term *the incident* (hed-karn), a neutral term that does not say anything about who the perpetrators had been. Likewise, Abhisit referred to the soldiers as *chao-na-tee* (officials).



Figure 5.1

In this remark, the term 'kod-mai' (law) had prominence of place. Abhisit referred to it 12 times in presenting the military operation as a necessary act of enforcing the law against unlawful action. He said the demonstrations had developed

to include unlawful actions and thus went beyond the right to public assembly. The government had exercised utmost restraint. However, events over the last two or three days especially the occupation of THAIKOM station had left the government with no other choice than to enforce the law. These events shook public confidence in the sanctity of law and in the institution which was responsible for protecting the nation's sovereignty and its main institutions. If the government simply stood by, it would have reflected the *weakness* not of the government but of the country as a whole. It was alleged afterwards that senior military officers were uncomfortable with the latter sentence as they viewed it as an attack on them (Wassana 2010:116).

Abhisit said the government had decided to enforce the law by performing a *kor-khuen-puen-thi* operation aimed to return *some* of the demonstration areas to the public. In doing so, clear instructions had been given that public safety must be protected as much as possible, with clear rules of engagement. He stressed that *officials* were allowed to use live rounds only in two cases, namely, to shoot warning shots into the sky and to defend themselves if their lives were threatened. What he said contradicted earlier announcements by CRES. Earlier that day, a CRES spokesperson had confirmed that Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban had ordered a general crackdown on the demonstrations, not just to reclaim some of the rally area (The Nation, April 11, 2010).

*Kor-khuen-puen-thi* was mostly translated as 'reclaim or take back the area'. Nevertheless, a term *kor* in *kor-khuen-puen-thi* connotes a sense of begging. In other words, the government begged the demonstrators to leave the demonstration area. The government did not 'disperse' or 'dissolve' the demonstration. Furthermore, it connotes a sense that the operation would be performed in as harmless a way as possible and that loss of life would not be caused by the government side. Unfortunately, how Abhisit described the operation was different from the reality. Autopsy reports would show that most of the wounds on those who died were caused by high-velocity bullets. Only in one case was a death caused by a bullet from a normal gun (The Nation, April 27, 2010). Furthermore, there was footage of soldiers pointing their guns directly at the demonstrators (International Crisis Group 2010:3).

Abhisit reminded his viewers of his warning that an attempt to end the protests might meet resistance because the attacks during the past few weeks made it apparent that some groups were ready to use violence. In fact, he had said in the show on March 7 that a group of people would incite violence during the demonstrations. He said the operations met with many obstacles, undeniably including the use of weapons by demonstrators. He pointed out that most casualties both on the side of the *officials* and the demonstrators were caused by M79-launched grenades. Clearly, he blamed the loss of life in the clashes on April 10 on violent UDD elements, especially Major-General Khattiya, and sought to prove that he was right. In his previous television remarks, he had consistently implied that these elements were responsible for the violence. Furthermore, the government's allegation that Khattiya was behind the recent M79 attacks was widely publicized.

At the end of his remarks, Abhisit returned to portraying himself as an ethical leader. He stressed that all loss of life must be investigated. Currently, neither side should accuse the other of being the perpetrator. There must be an independent investigation by experts to determine the causes of the deaths. He reaffirmed that the government still had a duty to resolve the situation. He stressed that he would bear in mind the interests of the nation and the people were above those of his own. Indirectly, he refused the UDD's demand for him to step down and leave the country to show responsibility for the loss of life in the clashes.

### **Special Announcement: April 12**

On April 12, Abhisit again spoke live from the studio. Figure 5.2 shows the setting at the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment building, which would be used also on April 16 and 19, and May 3. On the right side in the background, is a graphic image of the Democracy Monument. On the left side is a close up photography of the centrepiece of the same monument, showing the constitution in the form of a folded document on top of a golden bowl. At the lower part of the background, there are shadows of human figures. The Democracy Monument is on Ratchadamnoen Klang Avenue, a major venue for mass demonstrations through much of Thailand's history. Due to a lack of truly democratic national institutions, the popular meaning of democracy has become

---

anchored in certain places having played a role in democratic struggles, among them the Democracy Monument (Kasian 1996 in Dovey 2001:277).



Figure 5.2

This setting must have been chosen in order to allow Abhisit to move into the symbolic terrain of the UDD, for whom the Democracy Monument was an important rallying point. It claimed that it was fighting for democracy and demanded that Abhisit step down because he had come to power in an undemocratic way. By choosing the Democracy Monument setting, Abhisit now portrayed himself as a democratic leader who was acting in accordance with the constitution. The shadows of people in the imagery were probably meant to show his support from the people, not just from the army as the UDD was claiming. The setting also indirectly signalled that the UDD was not democratic since its demonstrations had not been held within the confines of what the constitution allowed. Yet Abhisit may well have taken a symbolic step too far when trying to appropriate for himself the Democracy Monument so shortly after many demonstrators had been killed at the Kok Wua intersection, just some 200 meters away. Many people would also remember earlier historical events when democratic mass movements had been suppressed in this area, as in May 1992.

This short address was mainly about the measures the government was going to take in response to the current situation. For the first time, Abhisit now used the term *terrorists* (poo-kor-karn-rai). He said it was clear that certain individuals acting as *terrorists* infiltrated the demonstrations and exploited *innocent people* to instigate unrest in the hope of bringing about a *great change* (karn-plian-plang-klang-yai). The government would therefore devise specific measures to separate the *terrorists* from

*innocent people*. So, he pleaded with *innocent people* among the demonstrators to refuse to follow the terrorists.

His lexical choices were interesting especially the use of the adjective *innocent* (bo-ri-sud). Instead of calling them 'people' or 'demonstrators', Abhisit called them innocent people. He used this term three times in his remarks. It was apparent that he was trying to absolve the ordinary demonstrators of guilt even as he needed justification for dispersing them. He continued to portray himself as an ethical leader who was working for everyone. Furthermore, in addition to denoting the opposite of 'guilty', the term *innocent* could also reinforce the image of ordinary UDD demonstrators as the naive *ban-nok* who do not quite understand the workings of democracy or rule of law and had been deceived into joining the demonstrations.

Regarding *great change*, Abhisit continued to claim that the aim of some UDD demonstrators went far beyond than unseating the current government. This claim was consistent with his remarks on April 4 that some groups used violence as they attempted to bring about 'changes' (karn-plian-plang).

At the end of this remarks, Abhisit reaffirmed the government's determination to resolve the situation. He thus implicitly reaffirmed that he would not surrender to the demonstrators' demand for him to step down.

### **Special Announcement: April 16**

In the morning of April 16 the UDD leaders managed to escape from their hotel when hundreds of police arrived to arrest them. At 9.15 pm, Abhisit spoke live on television again. He briefly mentioned the failed attempt to arrest the demonstration leaders, and was steadfast that the government would continue its attempts to enforce the law.

There were two dominant terms his remarks that day: terrorism (karn-kor-karn-rai) and *enforcement of the law* (karn-bang-kab chai-kod-mai) appearing seven and four times respectively. Abhisit maintained his assertion from April 12 that terrorists had infiltrated and exploited innocent demonstrators. He stressed that the government would take decisive measures, which he generally called *enforcement of the law*, to tackle *terrorism*. The terrorism issue was coupled with the need to the preserve the rule

of law, national security and protection of the country's principal institutions.

Abhisit said he decided to make certain adjustments to the organizational structure of CRES in order to make its operations more unified and integrated, especially in dealing with problems of terrorism. Therefore, he appointed Major-General Anupong Paochinda as Chief Official in charge of operations. Some observers viewed this move as an attempt to force Anupong, who was reluctant to use force to disperse the demonstration, to take tougher action. This, it was thought, could widen the rift between the government and the army (Bangkok Post, April 17, 2010).

At the end of this remark, Abhisit reassured the public of the government's determination to resolve the situations, and to address grievances. He said that certain attempts to resolve situations involving terrorism failed because mass mobilization complicated the operation. Therefore, he said to the public that "sometimes (we) have to be patient and accept certain effects that may arise due to the *officials* operation."<sup>1</sup> Again, he referred to military operations as *official* operations. This could be understood as an implicit plea for public understanding on the mishandling of the situation on April 10, and of similar events in future operations.

### **Special Announcement: April 19**

On April 19, thousands of troops and police were deployed to protect Silom, a major financial district near Ratchaprasong, after UDD leaders had announced a plan to expand their rally from Ratchaprasong to Silom. CRES informed the public that the soldiers sent to protect Silom were allowed to use live bullets in self-defence. This led the UDD to cancel the plan (Bangkok Post, April 20, 2010). In the evening, a pre-recorded special interview with Abhisit was broadcast. He was interviewed by a TV host who later became the candidate for the Democrat Party in parliamentary election. The viewers could tell that he fully supported Abhisit. When Abhisit answered his questions, the host often nodded or said *ah* to signal his agreement and awe.

Abhisit assert that Thaksin was exploiting the UDD demonstrations. He said the demonstration consisted of broad two groups. One had joined the rally because of real grievances regarding poverty and social injustice. The other had joined because they

had politically-motivated ulterior motives, and links with *the former PM* (ar-dit-na-yok) who himself had political motives, related to the 2006 coup against him and his various court cases. Even though Abhisit did not say Thaksin's name, everyone could tell from the context that *the former PM* was him. Abhisit also now claimed that the incident on April 10 showed how the movement had widened its activities to include the use of force, and implied that extreme factions of the UDD were behind the attacks that day. He mentioned some previous activities of the UDD including a (Red Shirts) school and a (Red Shirts Guard) training camp without explicitly naming the group to support his claim.

Furthermore, Abhisit interpreted the incident on April 10 as a deliberate attempt to turn him into a murderer, and put pressure on him to step down to take responsibility for the loss of life. He observed that before the incidents, there had been attempts to incite public hatred and misunderstanding towards him. These included production of doctored audio clips featuring his voice as he orders the dispersal of the crowd during Bloody Songkran, and accusations of having cruel intentions towards the UDD demonstrators. The distribution of the clip (in August 2009) was followed by the current UDD campaign. Since its beginning, the demonstration leaders constantly incited violence and confrontation. Finally, when the government decided to enforce the law on April 10, the black shirts entered the scene and provoked the loss of life. In that night, the black shirts were seen among the demonstrators. He said that the sequence of events was not coincidental. It was clear that the acts of certain groups could be called acts of terrorist. In other words, Abhisit implied that the UDD leaders had coordinated with the men in black in a well-planned process to make him guilty of murder. The incident on April 10 was the final step of this process. Even further, he implied that the UDD campaign had been staged with the hope that he would lose patience and stage a crackdown. The UDD leaders had planned to use loss of life (from the crackdown) to accuse him of being a murderer and force him to step down.

In harmony with CRES's narrative of the April 10 incident, Abhisit alleged that the black shirts were responsible for the death both of civilians and *officials*. He said that during the operation on April 10, the *officials* strictly followed the international

standard. If they had not done so, the losses on their side might not have been that high. However, what he did not mention was the fact that the security forces, while withdrawing from the site, had fired live rounds directly against the demonstrators. He also did not explain why the losses on the demonstrators' side were far greater than on the government side.

Abhisit was asked about the legitimacy of his government. The UDD claimed that his government had come to power with the assistance of the *elites* (*amataya*) who was also behind the 2006 coup. Abhisit answered this question with an attack on the Puea Thai. He distanced himself from the military by reminding the audience that he had not supported the 2006 coup. And his government came to power following normal practice in democracies with a parliamentary system. He said two premiers who took office before him had been disqualified for legal reasons. Therefore, parliament had to decide who would form the next government. He said a majority of MPs shifted their support to him because “...the previous two governments could not move the country forward...”<sup>22</sup>

Abhisit pointed out how the current situation was characterized by political and security problems, which must be solved simultaneously. While the government was working on a political solution, matters of security must also be resolved. In other words, the government would continue its operation to reclaim areas occupied by the protestors. Abhisit then further reinforced the image of demonstrators as *ban-nok* who were deceived to join the demonstration. He said the demonstrators join the rally because of grievances but they sadly became human shields for demonstration leaders, and were used to fight in the streets for the political aims of the demonstration leaders who enjoyed much better living conditions. (It was reported that the demonstration leaders stayed in hotel during the rally.) He stressed that the government needed to *return* (*khuen*) the area at Ratchaprasong to the public, restore *normalcy* (*kwam-pok-ka-ti*) and enforce the law. After these goals were completed, the demonstrators' problems would be addressed. When asked if how the terrorists could be distinguished from the demonstrators, Abhisit did not answer. Instead, he asked the public to help inform on the demonstrators so the government could first deal with those who had



weapons and then address the people's grievances.

Abhisit implicitly reinforced the claim that some factions in the UDD had anti-monarchy objectives. He represented himself as a protector of the monarchy. The host asked Abhisit about the possibility of seeking royal intervention to resolve the conflict. Abhisit said there were attempts to offend the *main institution* (sa-ta-ban-lak) and that the demand of some demonstration leaders went beyond the democratic ones. He said no one should accept or support such attempts.

All in all, Abhisit exaggerated his terrorist claim. In fact, he could not clearly explain who they were, and he thus could not point out ways to distinguish terrorists from ordinary demonstrators. Instead, Abhisit used such vague terms as 'reclaim the area', 'restore normalcy', and 'enforce the law' when he talked about measures to resolve the situation and deal with the terrorists.

### **Weekly TV Show: April 25**

The show that day started with the interview session, recorded the day before. Abhisit was interviewed together with Major-General Anupong by a guest host. According to an army source, they appeared in the show together to show the public that the government and army were united in resolving the situation (Bangkok Post, April 25, 2010). It was reported that the two men did not see eye to eye. Anupong said in a press conference on April 12 that political crises should be solved by political means, which some thought implied that he thought Abhisit should step down and call for elections (Ibid). Figure 5.3 is a screenshot of the interview session with Abhisit at the centre and Anupong in a military uniform on the right. As observed by the army source, they seemed uncomfortable in each other's company and did not look straight into each other's faces. They appeared to always keep a distance (Bangkok Post, April 29, 2010).



*Figure 5.3*

On April 22, an anti-UDD rally at Sala Daeng intersection, opposite UDD's rally camp, was attacked with five grenades killing one and injuring 80 people. Asked how he assessed the current situation, Abhisit made clear that there were terrorists among the demonstrators. He said it was clear from the incidents on April 10 and 22 that “those using weapons of war are present in the rally area, and have shown acts of violence”<sup>3</sup>

Abhisit implied that the terrorists were responsible for all loss of life both on the government's and demonstrators' side on April 10 and that the attacks at Silom on April 22 were proof of their cruelty. Asked to comment on both incidents, he said he had underestimated the situations on April 10 and had not expected that there would be an armed group present, ready to use weapons to cause loss of life among security forces and demonstrators. As for the incident at Silom, he did not expect that there would be a group of people capable of firing against the people. Talking about the terrorists in this way means that the terrorists did not have any conscience. They were killing innocent people, and were very dangerous. Therefore, the demonstration must be dissolved as soon as possible.

Anupong supported Abhisit by saying that on 10 April, the security officers had been attacked by armed group. They had not been able to use weapons because the terrorists had been among ordinary demonstrators. They had feared that if they had used weapons, the demonstrators would have been harmed. What Anupong said was in line with what CRES had told the public. On April 14, a CRES spokesperson admitted that some soldiers had fired live rounds to the demonstrators but only to provide cover for injured comrades as they were retreating from the area during the clashes on April

10 (Bangkok Post, April 15, 2010).

However, Abhisit's answer regarding terrorism was ambiguous. The host asked him who the terrorists were. Abhisit said that the investigation and questioning of persons recently arrested in connection with the April incident for possessing arms would clarify things. He added that *somebody* had already worked openly and had announced already late last year that he was training people to act in connection with political gatherings. What Abhisit said here referred no doubt to Khattiya, who had said in February 2010 that he recruited security guards for the upcoming rally (Human Rights Watch 2011:43).

Abhisit continued to insist that the UDD's demands went beyond the dissolution of parliament. He said the UDD leaders also talked about taking state power, helping resolve problems of certain individuals or referred to such term as *rud-thai-mai* (new Thai state). *Rud-thai-mai* had been mentioned by Abhisit in his TV shows on March 21 and April 4. This term made headlines on April 20 as hundreds of stickers with white letters on red background were found on Silom Road next to the rally site (Bangkok Post, April 21, 2010a). As in Figure 5.4<sup>1</sup>, the sticker read 'President Thaksin Shinawatra, leader of *the new Thai state*.' The UDD denied any knowledge of the sticker and claimed that it must be a provocation by authorities to draw on public criticisms towards the movement. Thaksin also issued a statement condemning this act which he termed as a campaign to slander him (The Nation, April 21, 2010).



Figure 5.4

<sup>1</sup> taken from Bangkokbiznews (2010) 'Thaksin Pra Nam Sticker Por Tor Nor Thaksin Rud Thai Mai' [Thaksin Denounced 'Thaksin, President of the New Thai State'], 20 April. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/home/detail/politics/politics/20100420/110858/ทักษิณประมุขรัฐไทยใหม่.html> (Accessed 7 March 2013)

At the end of the interview, Abhisit emphasized that the government's objective was broader than returning Ratchaprasong to the public. It would maintain the rule of law and protect the country's principal institution from being drawn into political conflict. He assured that all agencies were working in unison and shared a common understanding of how to resolve political and security problems. He ended his interview by saying "...As I said that if I could not solve the problem, I would not stay. I said so not because I was discouraged but I mean it. I know my duties. If I can not fulfil them, I should not stay. Therefore, as long as I am PM, I will perform my duties. I confirm that my goal is about the future of the country and all Thai people not myself."<sup>4</sup>

One journalist interpreted this interview as a venue for Abhisit to press Anupong to make commitments on the operation to dissolve the Ratchaprasong demonstration (Bangkok Post, April 29, 2010). However, Anupong successfully maintained his uncommitted position which eventually led Abhisit to propose a reconciliation plan on May 3.

The second part of the show was the individual talk session where Abhisit spoke live. He spoke negatively of the UDD when explaining why he could not accept its latest demand that he dissolved Parliament within 30 days. He said the government could not concede to "*a group which used threats and violence to intimidate the government and the people.*"<sup>5</sup> In other words, he emphasized the role of the violent factions of the UDD in order to reject a proposal from the movement as a whole. Furthermore, he appealed to the public when saying that the government and the demonstrators were not the only ones who could attempt to find a political solution. He must listen to all parties not just allow things to be settled between his government and the UDD.

At the end of the session, he appealed to a value of unity when asking for cooperation from the public. He assured it that the government was working continuously to resolve the situation. He was aware of the unhappiness and worries of the majority of people. The government would not ignore these feelings. He would like to stress that the most important power to solve problems is the power of harmony and

unity. Even though he knew that people sharing the same aim might not have to use the same means to pursue it, if we do not cooperate with each other, he said, it will be more difficult to solve the problem. In this portion of his talk, which lasted 1 minute and 10 seconds, there were many terms connoting value of unity: *an-nueng-an-deaw* (oneness), *sa-mak-sa-man* (harmony), *sa-mak-ki* (unity), *aek-ka-pap* (unity), *ruam-pa-lang* (joining force), and *ruam-mue* (cooperation).

## **Weekly TV Show: May 2**

On 29 April, more than 200 Red Shirts guards raided Chulalongkorn Hospital, located next to the rally site, claiming they had to search the building because soldiers were hiding inside. However, the search turned up nothing (The Nation, April 30, 2010). The first portion of Abhisit's show on May 2 dealt mainly with this raid. This portion lasted 9 minutes and 5 seconds. Word choices and video footage were employed to portray the demonstrators in a negative way. Despite speaking in his normal soft voice, Abhisit used emotionally laden terms to describe the incident as *distressing public sentiment* (*kra-tob- kra-toen jit-jai*) 5 times, and *being distressing* (*sa-toen jai*) once.

Abhisit said that during the past week there were a few incidents regarding the demonstration at Ratchaprasong which *distressed public sentiment* (*kra-tob-kra-toen jit-jai*). The incident at Chulalongkorn Hospital was 'the most *distressing* (*sa-toen-jai*) incident of the past week.'<sup>6</sup> Abhisit implicitly denounced the demonstrators with negative lexical choices, and at the same time denied the UDD's claim that security forces were hiding in the hospital. He said "*I must tell you frankly that neither the hospital director nor the government anticipated that this kind of incident could occur.*"<sup>7</sup> In other words, raiding a hospital was beyond the imagination of people with good conscience. As he spoke, footage of this incident appeared on the screen as in Figure 5.5. The footage showed the chaotic situation when the demonstrators stormed into the building.



Figure 5.5

The raid of Chulalongkorn Hospital drew such heavy public criticism that the UDD leaders made an apology the following day (Bangkok Post, May 1, 2010). A day after the raid, the Hospital decided to evacuate all of its patients. The evacuation was widely reported, with live images of terminally ill patients being transported out (Human Rights Watch 2011:73). The report of this incident and the evacuation operation through the media could lead the public to assume that the demonstrators 'stormed into the hospital fully armed, threatening doctors and patients with weapons causing horrific chaos as people tried to escape the armed invasion' (Thongchai 2010). The use of footage and negative lexical choices in the show would arouse public animosity towards the demonstrators the same way the media did.

During the intermission, a 40-second advertisement was aired. This was footage of scenes from Ratchaprasong mass rally site with a voice-over telling the demonstrators to leave the rally at Ratchaprasong area as it was illegal, and those who joined would be charged with criminal offence. Figure 5.6 and 5.7 are screenshots taken from the video. Figure 5.6 shows an old man, topless, sitting and eating. The red letters on the screen read 'those joining the rally are committing an offence of criminal law.' Figure 5.7, presented shortly after Figure 5.6, shows demonstrators in their temporary residence at the rally site. They are not well dressed. Some sit while others sleep on the street. The red letters are a part of a full sentence which read (italicized terms are letters in Figure 5.7) 'those joining the rally will be *charged with criminal offence*.'



Figure 5.6



Figure 5.7

Both pictures add to the image of *ban-nok* as dirty, ugly and uneducated. Even though the direct message of this video was to persuade the demonstrators to leave Ratchaprasong, it implicitly reinforced the stereotype of the UDD as hired protesters from the rural area. In other words, this video portrays the demonstrators in a negative way. They were not only breaking the law but were also *ban-nok* paid to join the rally, disrupting the lives of urbanites. It can be argued that the video implicitly called for public support to the future dispersal operation.

Even though Abhisit said he had a clear approach to deal with demonstration at Ratchaprasong, and he had already made the decision to take action, it might be a bluff. It was reported that the Defence Minister and Army Chief Anupong maintained their opposition to the use of force to reclaim the Ratchaprasong area (Bangkok Post, May 1, 2010a).

### Special Announcement: May 3

Abhisit gave a televised remark at 9.15 pm to propose, in his own words, a *political answer* (kam-torb-tang-karn-muang) to the crisis which was a *reconciliation plan* (kra-buan-karn-prong-dong). He said the plan was written after comprehensive discussions with many groups of people. This plan had five points. First, the monarchy must be protected from being dragged into political conflicts. Second, an equitable and fair welfare system will be built. Third, mechanisms to enable the media to operate freely and constructively will be set up. Fourth, an independent fact-finding commission on

incidents related to the demonstrations will be established. Fifth, all perceived injustices in the previous constitutions and relevant laws will be reviewed. Abhisit said that if this plan was accepted and peace was restored, the election would be held on November 14.

At the end of his address, he addressed himself directly to two groups, the demonstrators whom he called *sue-daeng* (Red Shirts), and those who opposed the demonstrations - together with those who supported the government. He said the nature of reconciliation was that it gives no one complete satisfaction. It demanded a degree of retreat and sacrifice from all sides. However, he sincerely believed that the reconciliation plan was the best solution for the country. He implicitly told the UDD that his proposal was not up for negotiation by insisting that the plan would be implemented no matter whether the demonstrators accepted it or not. The November 14 election date would be postponed, however, if they did not accept the proposal. Finally, Abhisit asked all sides to consider his plan by implicitly citing loyalty to the King as a reason. With a firm yet pleading tone of voice, he said he hoped his plan would be accepted by all sides so that the whole nation could happily celebrate Coronation Day (on May 5) together. The Coronation Day in 2010 was special as it marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King's coronation. In saying this, he implied that if the UDD did not accept his plan, they were disloyal to the King. However, Abhisit may be said to have offered a graceful exit for the UDD after they were so severely condemned for the raid of Chulalongkorn Hospital. Besides, dissolving the demonstration on the Coronation Day would show the movement's loyalty to the monarchy.

In this remark, there were many terms connoting value of unity and its opposite condition as when he explained the details of the reconciliation plan and asked the public for their cooperation. *Prong-dong* (reconcile) is obviously a term connoting the value of unity. In his address, Abhisit used the word 21 times. Moreover, he employed other terms that communicated value of unity when he described and asked Thai people to accept the plan so that normalcy and peacefulness would be restored. He employed three terms which mean *all* or *all sides* namely *took-fai* (10 times), *puak-rao*



(3 times), and *took-kon* (3 times). Furthermore, he used three terms which meant (to) *cooperate*: *ruam-mue* (3 times), *chuay-kan* (7 times), and *ruam-kan* (2 times). On the contrary, Abhisit employed three terms connoting a sense of disunity, namely, *kad-yang* (conflict) 16 times, *tak-yak* (division) 4 times, and *run-raeng* (violent) 4 times.



Figure 5.8

Figure 5.8 shows Abhisit during his TV appearance. As observed by a journalist, he was 'almost back to his brimming-with-confidence self' (The Nation, May 4, 2010). Dressed formally with his pink tie, he sat in a studio in front of the picture of the Democracy Monument and the national flag. As he spoke, iconological elements interacted with the lexical elements (content of the plan) to convey the idea that the reconciliation plan was the best solution to the conflict. This is because the proposal was offered by an ethical and democratic leader. The pink tie signified that he was loyal to the King. As the first point of the reconciliation plan was to protect the Monarchy from being dragged into political problems, the pink tie also interacted with the content to portray him as the protector of the Monarchy. When Abhisit said that this plan was made based on the benefit of the public at large and not himself, the Democracy Monument, the shadows of people, and the national flag in the background supported his claim. As mentioned earlier, the Red Shirts did not accept Abhisit as their PM. Besides, Thailand had been deeply politically divided since the 2006 coup. Therefore in many of his remarks, Abhisit had to emphasize that he made every decision based on the benefit of the public at large. This was to show that he was an impartial leader, standing above the fray. Plus, he relied on the public in order to tackle or outweigh the demands made by the UDD.

Based on a government source, before Abhisit proposed the reconciliation plan, the representatives of the government and the UDD leaders had been in talks regarding the timing of the dissolution of the parliament. The deal had been sealed by the talk between Korbsak Sabhavas, the PM's secretary-general and Veera Musikhapong, one of the core leaders of the UDD (Bangkok Post, May 8, 2010).

### **Weekly TV Show: May 9**

The UDD leaders, accepted the reconciliation plan in principle and the proposed election date on November 14 but would continue the rally until Abhisit announced a firm date for a dissolution of parliament (Bangkok Post, May 6 2010). Later they agreed to end the rally by May 15 but did not specify the date. During the week, Abhisit met with representatives of the PAD (Yellow Shirt) and pro-government multicolour shirts. PAD rejected this plan because it claimed this plan was proposed after the government and representatives of Thaksin had made a deal to share political benefits (Bangkok Post, May 7, 2010). In his phone call broadcast at a meeting of the Puea Thai Party, Thaksin said that he favoured the proposal but added that it was up to the UDD whether or not to accept it (The Nation, May 5, 2010). In contrast to Thaksin, Khattiya disagreed with the reconciliation plan and said that the demonstration could not end unless ordered to do so by Thaksin (Human Rights Watch 2011:78).

The show began with the individual talk session where Abhisit spoke live. He appeared to be more confident, and spoke fluently with a commanding yet pleasant voice. He began by talking about the Coronation Day celebration, and the events which the government held to celebrate this occasion. As he spoke, footage showed the King, along with members of the royal family, going from Siriraj Hospital where the King resided to the Grand Palace where the ceremony would be held (Figure 5.9). Along the route, they were greeted by thousands of people waving the royal and national flags. Furthermore, there was footage of ceremonies that the government had held to celebrate the occasion (Figure 5.10).



Figure 5.9



Figure 5.10

Figure 5.9 shows the King in an official attire. He was accompanied by the Queen and the Crown Prince (next to the Queen on her right). It can be argued that the footage of the King in this episode served the same function as that of the show on February 28, showing the palace's support for Abhisit. In other words, showing this footage in the show implied to the viewers that the reconciliation plan had been endorsed by the palace. Therefore, all sides should accept the plan so that Thailand would return to the old days when everyone was united under the Monarchy and celebrated the royal events together.

Then, Abhisit reiterated five points of the reconciliation plan. As he explained the first point, he presented himself as the guardian of the monarchic institution. At the same time, he attacked Thaksin and the UDD leaders of having anti-monarchy intentions. He said the *network* (kruea-kai) which the government had recently discovered made those behind a movement to violate the monarchy become clearer, and those who know individuals in the *network* should cooperate with the authorities. The *network* he was talking about was the *anti-monarchy network* (*pang-lom-chao*) which was made known to the media by CRES on April 26. It was a chart mapping 45 individuals and groups, including key leaders of UDD, members of the Puea Thai party and Thaksin (Bangkok Post, April 27, 2010).

The monarchy, one of the central elements of Thainess, has been employed by Thai state to suppress political opposition, make them become un-Thai. Monarchy has been a sensitive issue in Thailand. Anti-monarchy accusation can stimulate extreme

emotions among the public and lead to bloodshed for instance during the student massacre of 1976, which a massive number of university students were killed because of an accusation that they were communists and wanted to overthrow the monarchy (Bangkok Post, April 30, 2010). In the same way as previous power holders, Abhisit used the monarchy to attack Thaksin and the UDD. However, the idea of the anti-monarchy network appeared to be just wishful thinking. The case was dropped for lack of evidence two years later (Bangkok Post, March 31, 2012).

In the second half of the individual talk session started, Abhisit talked about a grenade attack on May 7. The attack, which occurred near Ratchaprasong rally site, killed two policemen and injured 13 people. CRES suspected that Gen Khattiya and hard-core members of the UDD were behind but Khattiya denied any involvement (Bangkok Post, May 9, 2010).

Abhisit said the attack was the attempt to derail his reconciliation process. He said the only ones who did not want the plan to succeed were the *terrorists*. They did not want the rally to end. This is because they would be alienated and would not be able to continue to use demonstrators as human shields if the rally dispersed. Then, he said that Khattiya and Thaksin were among those who did not want the rally to end. This was almost like saying that they were terrorists. Abhisit mentioned their names when he said “...*Seh Daeng* (Khattiya) is the one who is clearly against the reconciliation process. *Seh Daeng* has clearly said so and (he) has sought coordination from regional (UDD) leaders to oppose the key leaders in Bangkok. The important thing is that *Seh Daeng* said he would listen to *Thaksin* so I can say that *Thaksin* is not satisfied with the reconciliation plan because it is not the answer to *Thaksin's* personal interests at all...”<sup>8</sup> Later, one of the UDD leaders commented that Abhisit should not have made this comment as it could spoil the atmosphere when both sides was working on how to end the conflict (Bangkok Post, May 10, 2010).

He gave an ultimatum to the UDD to end the demonstration. He said for the government to be able to hold elections on November 14 “a definitive answer should be given by today or tomorrow”<sup>9</sup> He said the movement's proposal to dissolve the demonstration by May 15 was too late based on threats posed by terrorism. Any

further delays would lead to further damages to the economy and risks for demonstrators' and civilians' safety, and the government might not be able to hold the election on 14 November. In other words, the demonstration must end on May 10 unless the demonstrators wanted a crackdown.

At the end of his TV talk, Abhisit rejected an allegation made by some groups that he had hidden agendas or vested interests in the plan. He said these groups called him a coward and told him to resign because they thought that he tried to get himself out of trouble and leave the problems to the people. He maintained his refusal to resign. He said his resignation or a change of government was what those hostile to the country wanted the most. This group hoped that a new leader would make decisions leading to violence since this could provoke a *people's war* (song-kram-pa-cha-chon). This term had been used by some UDD leaders on stage. In other words, he implied that some UDD leaders did not want to dissolve the demonstrations because they wanted to have *people's war*.

Furthermore, he said he did not run away from the problem. By proposing the reconciliation plan, he confronted it by making a decision based on the benefit of the public but not of himself or his party. He reaffirmed that he would continue to implement the plan. Once again he made negative comments about Thaksin as he said those who wanted to derail the reconciliation were the *terrorists* and a *person now living overseas*. On his final note, he said it was clear to everyone that this crisis was difficult but “*I am determined to bring the country out of the present crisis and I stand ready to be accountable for every decision I make.*”<sup>10</sup> The true nature of his decision was disclosed on May 12.

## 6 Analysis of the Third Period

After almost two months of continuous demonstrations and rallies, the UDD campaign came to a tragic end. Before analysing Abhisit's television addresses in the third phase, development related to 'Operation Ratchaprasong' will be presented.

### 6.1 The Beginning of 'Operation Ratchaprasong'

In response to Abhisit's demand for the demonstrators to disperse on May 10, the UDD leaders announced that they would end their protests if Deputy Prime Minister Suthep, the head of CRES turned himself in to the authorities to take responsibility for the deaths in the clashes on April 10. On May 11, Suthep reported to the Department of Special Investigation (DSI). Claiming that DSI might be lenient towards Suthep, UDD leaders demanded him to turn himself in to the Crime Suppression Bureau (The Nation, May 11, 2010). The UDD leaders were divided over whether or not to end the demonstrations. This disagreement led the demonstrations to continue (The Nation, May 13, 2010). Those leaders, who thought Suthep's action had satisfied their demands, and supported the dissolution of the demonstrations, quitted their leadership role and left the rally site. These leaders included Veera Musikaphong (Bangkok Post, May 14, 2010). In fact, in addition to hard-line UDD leaders, the deal to end the demonstration was blocked by three hard-core elements of the UDD: members of Thaksin's family, alleged anti-Monarchy group Red Siam, and a faction loyal to Major-General Khattiya (Naruemon & McCargo 2011:997).

On May 12, the government withdrew its offer to call a fresh election on November 14, and would step up measures, including cutting power and water supply, to press the demonstrators to leave the demonstration site at Ratchaprasong. Even though Abhisit confirmed that the demonstrators would be removed from Ratchaprasong, he did not confirmed if the military forces would be used in this operation (The Nation, May 14, 2010). According to the army source, Anupong approved 'Operation Ratchaprasong' involving 32,000 troops and 120 armoured personnel carriers to seal off the rally site (Bangkok Post, May 13, 2010) and had been planned on a model of urban warfare (Bangkok Post, May 27, 2010). The clashes on

April 10 had raised the army's alertness on the UDD's fighting capacity. They thought that the UDD possessed armed forces fully equipped with war weapons.

On May 13, a state of emergency was declared in 15 more provinces to block additional UDD supporters from joining the rally in Bangkok (The Nation, May 14, 2010a). From 6 pm, CRES started its operation to 'cordon off' (kra-chab-vong-lom) the Ratchaprasong area. Its measures included cutting off water and power supply, and setting up more security checkpoints around the demonstration area. Just an hour after this operation had begun, Khattiya was shot in the forehead by a sniper while he was giving an interview to foreign media just outside the rally area (The Nation, May 14, 2010b). Earlier that day, Khattiya had said that if the key UDD leaders decided to end the campaign, he would take over together with other hard-line UDD leaders and lead the demonstrations (Bangkok Post, May 14, 2010a). One political analyst speculated that the shooting of Khattiya would end the rally since the UDD would no longer have a military leadership (Bangkok Post, May 14, 2010b). However when the news of the assassination of Khattiya reached the main rally site, the UDD leaders vowed to fight on. Khattiya died on May 17. On May 14, CRES had announced that the soldiers were allowed to fire live rounds under certain circumstances including when they had a clear visual sight of 'terrorists'. In practice, the army began deploying snipers to fire at anyone trying to enter the zone prohibited by the army (Human Rights Watch 2011:16).

Operation Ratchaprasong lasted until May 19. Developments from May 15 to 19 will be discussed now.

## **6.2 Data Discussion**

In this period, there are four television appearances including one episode of his TV show and three special announcements (Table 6.1). In the second period, Abhisit made his last appearance on May 9. It took a week before the next occurred on May 15, two days after the Operation Ratchaprasong had started. During the operation (May 13 to 19), he spoke on television only three times.

No	Date (mm/dd/yy) and Time (hrs.)	Name of televised address	Duration (minute: second)
1	05/15/10, 20.30	Special Announcement	18:42
2	05/16/10, 09.00	Weekly TV Show	30:11
3	05/19/10, 22.10	Special Announcement	08:12
4	05/21/10, 14.00	Special Announcement	08:40
Total duration of period 3 (hour: minute: second)		01:05:45	

Table 6.1: Abhisit's television remarks analysed in the third period

Abhisit's statement on May 21 lasted 10 minutes and 10 seconds. However, the last one and a half minute were in English and are not included in this study. His TV show on May 16 included a video of the song *Ruam-Pen-Thai* (united as Thai) lasting 6 minutes and 20 seconds.

## 6.3 Analysis of the Data

### Special Announcement: May 15

At 8.30 pm, Abhisit gave his first remark since the operation started. It had been reported by the media just before that the political clashes between the soldiers and the demonstrators since the evening of May 13 had resulted in 22 deaths and 172 injured (The Nation, May 16, 2010). Dressed formally as usual, Abhisit stood behind a podium, with the seal of the Office of the Prime Minister attached (Figure 6.1). This was the first time he stood up when making his address. Even though the setting was the same as before, the shift from sitting to standing conveyed an increased sense of urgency. Viewers could see both the pictures of the Democracy Monument and the national flag (in the upper right corner of Figure 6.1). For comparison, see Figure 6.2, a screenshot from his remarks on April 16, when the flag was barely visible.





Figure 6.1



Figure 6.2

As argued in chapter 5, the Democracy Monument signified democratic leadership. However, in this period, the military operation was underway against a movement claiming to be democratic, and Abhisit was responsible. Therefore, in communicating to Thai people, the visual elements of Abhisit's remarks must signify not only just democratic legitimacy or even ethical qualities but also authority. The Monument and the flag interacted with the seal to signify Abhisit's authority and legitimacy as the prime minister of Thailand. The seal along with his official gesture implied to the audiences that what Abhisit was going to say was important. Note also how the PM's official seal, a sign of authority (Figure 6.1) has replaced the folded hands (on Figure 6.2), a sign of calm.

In his statement, Abhisit used the presence of 'armed groups and terrorists' among the demonstrators to justify the operations by CRES, and at the same time delegitimised the demonstration. Abhisit mentioned the term *armed group* (kong-kam-lang-tid-ar-wut) six times and *terrorist* (poo-kor-karn-rai) twice. Such terms could heighten audiences' attention to the dangers and threats from the demonstrators. A shift had occurred from the invasion of *ban-nok* to the infiltration of *terrorists*. In response, more aggressive measures were therefore needed.

Even though the causes of most deaths were unknown, the armed groups and terrorist elements were blamed for the losses. Abhisit said that what the *officials* were doing was to *cordon off* (kra-chab-vong-lom) the demonstration area. The authorities

have not entered the demonstration area, they only set up the security checkpoints around it. They were attacked at the checkpoints by armed groups, terrorist elements, and protesters using war weapons. Therefore, it was necessary for the security forces to protect themselves in accordance with the announced rule of engagement. In other words, losses caused by the government side were due to self-defence. Earlier that day, CRES announced on television that the demonstrators died from four causes, namely, infighting among UDD guards, attacks launched by armed groups or terrorists using war weapons, demonstrators being attacked by dissatisfied citizens, and finally troops defending themselves (The Nation, May 16, 2010). However, such justifications are normal when governments repress armed or unarmed assailants.

Abhisit said that as the UDD continued its demonstration, it rejected his reconciliation plan. Therefore the government had to implement the operation. He said the UDD leaders' rejection of the plan was regrettable because "...it was decided for the benefit of a small group of people who wanted to go on creating violence, even more losses, and a situation approaching a civil war. This group hoped that it could put pressure on the government. What is unacceptable is the fact that lives of civilians are being used as a tool to pressure the government..."<sup>1</sup>

Abhisit continued to delegitimize the demonstration. He said that the 'operation to cordon-off the area' was the best way to bring peace and normalcy back to the society for the benefit of all, with as little loss as possible. It would continue as it was necessary. Abhisit appeared determined as he emphatically stated: "We cannot allow residents of Bangkok to be held hostage by people who do not respect the law. We cannot allow armed groups to overthrow a government that they do not like."<sup>2</sup>

Abhisit asked the public to be cautious about rumours and untrue stories. He claimed that the UDD leaders used distorted information to inflame hatred among people against the authorities. He said the government verified the fact of the situation before making public statements because the government was responsible for conveying accurate and verified information to the public. However, "*The protest leaders do not have to assume any responsibility, and may say or accuse anyone of anything without any factual evidence.*"<sup>3</sup> He said the UDD leaders accused the

government of suppressing and killing unarmed people. Referring to soldiers as *officials*, he said that what the *officials* were doing was to *retaliate* (torb-toe) the armed groups not unarmed people. He stressed that the government had nothing to gain from loss of life, and did not want to see any such loss. But he said “it was now clear that people (present at the demonstration site) were used as human shields, and as tools to put pressure on the government by the armed group.”<sup>4</sup>

There was a predominance of the term '(to) end the (current) demonstration' (yu-ti-karn-chum-num). Abhisit used this term ten times. What the government was doing was aimed at achieving this goal and thus had to be continued. The armed group was to blame for most of the casualties. This final point would be emphasized again in his next remarks.

### **Weekly TV Show: May 16**

Abhisit talked about the current situation in the first 10 minutes and 15 seconds of his May 16 show. In continuation of his remarks from the day before, he maintained that the operation to *cordon off* (kra-chab-vong-lom) the rally site would be continued because of the presence of armed groups and terrorists among the demonstrators. These groups caused both civilian's and military's loss of life. Therefore, ending the demonstration was the best way to resolve the current situation. In his statement the terms *armed group* (kong-kam-lang-tid-ar-wut) and *terrorist* (poo-kor-karn-rai) dominated. They were used seven times each.

Abhisit stressed that the terrorists and armed elements were responsible for most losses on both sides. He said that now the *armed groups and terrorists* had greater roles in the demonstration. During the past few days, their use of war weapons led to most of the losses. These groups did not care who the victims might be. If they were innocent people, they could use civilian casualties as tools to pressure the government. On its side, the government had no reason to inflict loss of human life or damages. Besides, he asked the demonstrators to understand that their demonstration had become a tool of armed groups and terrorists. If allowed to continue, this would lead Thai society to state of violence and lawlessness. Therefore, the best alternative in

the current situation was for the demonstration to end.

The video footage displayed during this remarks is interesting. It featured certain areas around Ratchaprasong demonstration site, where clashes took place between the demonstrators and the military. The purpose was to back up Abhisit's claim concerning the violent acts of the demonstrators. In these video clips, it is almost as if there were no soldiers present. Whenever they appear, they are in a submissive or defensive position (Figures 6.3 and 6.4).



Figure 6.3



Figure 6.4

Figure 6.3 shows troops holding shields as they move forward. On figure 6.4, a soldier lies on the ground unconscious. This ended a one-and-a-half minute footage of an incident where angry demonstrators assaulted soldiers who did not fight back. Even though Abhisit made no direct mention of these video clips, it was no coincidence that they appeared when Abhisit said that the security forces were defending the rule of law and had no intention to harm anyone. Both pictures showed a stark contrast between the aggressive actions of the demonstrators and the defensive posture of the troops, who acted professionally.

At the end of the show, a music video of the song Ruam-Pen-Thai (united as Thai) was shown. Lasting 6 minutes and 20 seconds, its iconological and textual elements called for unity among Thai people around the monarchy. The song said that everyone was Thai and was under the love and care of the King. Therefore, everyone should love each other and be united. In the same way as the earlier music video of Love Each Other, this video showed pictures of people waving national and royal flags, and some carrying pictures of the King and the Queen.



Figure 6.5

Perhaps, the most interesting part of the video is one where the artist sings 'the sky would turn dark if (we) become divided.'<sup>15</sup> This verse accompanied black-and-white pictures of violent acts carried out by UDD demonstrators such as in Figure 6.5. It shows the clashes on April 10 at Khok Wua Intersection (see the street sign at the centre). It should be noted that only this part of the video was in black-and-white whereas the rest of the video was in colour. The pictures thus interacted with the lyrics (*the sky will turn dark*) to demonstrate how the demonstrators were causing disunity among Thai people. It was now urgent for the demonstrations to end so the Thai society could once again be unified.

### **Special Announcement: May 19**

An attempt of the senators to mediate talks between the government and the UDD failed. The government maintained that it would enter the talks after the UDD leaders had called an end to the demonstrations. On May 18, the PM's Office Minister Satit said on television that the government had tried to engage in talks with the UDD leaders to end the violence. However, the attempt had been rejected by the UDD due to interference from 'a mastermind overseas' (Bangkok Post, May 19, 2010). This referred to Thaksin.

On May 19 at 3.30am, the soldiers started the final operation as they moved from Lumpini Park adjacent to Ratchaprasong rally site. They faced with resistance from armed men with bombs and M-79 launched grenades. As the soldiers moved closer to the rally site, the remaining UDD leaders called off the rally through an

announcement on the stage at 1.45 pm. Shortly afterwards, some buildings in the area were set on fire whereas some governor's offices were torched by UDD supporters. A few hours after the end of the demonstration, a curfew was announced, lasting from 8 pm to 6 am. Thirty-six buildings in Bangkok including the Stock Exchange of Thailand and four governor's offices were attacked by arsonists (Bangkok Post, May 21, 2010). Although UDD leaders later claimed that the arson attacks were spontaneous reactions by angry protesters, many UDD leaders had publicly called for such attacks a few months prior to the crackdown and many attacks were well-planned and organized (Human Rights Watch 2011:91-92). However, it was unclear if all had been made by the UDD (International Crisis Group 2010:6).

At 10.10 pm, Abhisit spoke live on television regarding the final operation. Figure 6.6 is a screenshot from this remarks. Abhisit was presented in full shots in contrast to previous addresses where he had been presented in medium shots. When viewed on TV, he looked smaller than before. He stands behind a podium with the seal of the Office of the Prime Minister attached to it. On either side there a Thai national flag. Behind him, almost as a halo around the Buddha or a Christian saint, there is yet another much larger yellow seal against a blue background. His personal authority has been replaced or overshadowed, so to speak, by the authority of the nation and his office. When seen at a distance, the white paintings in the two upper corners look like small white clouds. They interact with the blue colour in the background to convey a sense that he was endowed with a mandate from heaven.



*Figure 6.6*

The situation was now so critical that the authoritative aspect of the prime

minister's office (the seal) had to be communicated effectively. What had been underlined before, the characteristics of a particularly ethical or democratic leader, was now left aside. The visual elements of Abhisit's May 19 television appearance elevated his role as Prime Minister of Thailand. Sceptical viewers might almost gain the impression that he was now acting in spite of himself.

Yet speaking with confidence, Abhisit began his statement by talking about the military operation that had ended the demonstration. He said the government decided to *cordon off* (*kra-chab-vong-lom*) the demonstration area with a view to having the protests end as soon as possible. Although he did not say so, the meaning of the term *cordon off* shifted to become synonymous with *crackdown*. The term *cordon off*, which had been an accurate description of the early phase of the operation, now continued to be used although it no longer reflected what the security forces were actually doing. In his remarks on May 15 and 16, Abhisit had actually described how the demonstration site was sealed off. At that time, the military did not enter the rally site itself. Now the term *cordon off* received a new meaning as *crackdown*.

Abhisit portrayed the soldiers as heroes doing their job while he saw the armed group and demonstrators as villains. Abhisit said after the demonstrations ended and their leaders had turned themselves in, the *officials* cleared various areas and found a large quantity of weapons. Armed elements and some angry demonstrators then continued to instigate disturbances including arson attacks. The armed groups used weapons to prevent the fire fighters from getting close enough to put the fires out. Yet the fire fighters managed to do so, and were determined to mitigate the incidents, and help affected people.

### **Special Announcement: May 21**

Two days after the UDD had been defeated, Abhisit spoke on television again. Figure 6.7 is a screenshot from his first post-conflict remarks. The setting was the same on May 15 (Figure 6.1). After the government had resumed control, Abhisit returned to his role as an ethical and democratic leader as signified by symbols of Thainess and democracy. This setting fit with what he was now going to address,

healing wounds and being back to normal.



Figure 6.7

As one foreign journalist observed, by contrast to his solemn, official address on May 19, this statement was now more emotional and personal, indeed far more so than his normal style (guardian.co.uk 2010). Abhisit began by talking about the current situation. Now that the government had restored order and normalcy in Bangkok and the provinces after incidents had put the lives of people at risk, he would like to express on behalf of the government, *officials*, and the people the sorrow he felt after *'one of the worst incidents (Thailand) ever faced'*.

At that time, the most shocking news was the incident at Wat Pathum Wanaram, the Buddhist temple near the rally area which had earlier been declared a safe zone. After the end of the rally on May 19, demonstrators sought refuge in the compound of the temple. During the night, there were six deaths including one nurse in or near the compound (Bangkok Post, May 23, 2010). Even though the army claimed that the six fatalities had been due to an internal dispute in the UDD, this incident raised doubts regarding the army's responsible behaviour. According to Human Rights Watch (2011:20), at least two of the dead had been shot by soldiers, standing on the elevated skytrain tracks.

Abhisit implied that even though 'Operation Ratchaprasong' had caused loss, it had been necessary. Besides, those who had died were terrorists. He said many people had communicated to him that they understood the necessity for the government and CRES to take action to restore normalcy, and to reaffirm that Thailand was a law abiding state. He emphasized that the operations had been performed in accordance



with the law and international standards. In performing its operations, the army had been strongly concerned to protect the lives of civilians, especially innocent ones. In other words, loss of civilian life had not been caused by the authorities. This portion of his address showed how controversial 'Operation Ratchaprasong' was, and the necessity for the government to 'fix' the understanding of the general public concerning the operation.

Then, Abhisit talked about rehabilitation (*fuen-foo*) and healing (*yeao-ya*) process. These formed the main topic of this remark. He referred to the value of unity when asking for cooperation from Thai people to join the process of rehabilitation. He reiterated that he was concerned for the well-being of all Thais regardless of their political views. He said “we can rebuild (damaged) houses and buildings but now the government's priority is to heal the minds and restore oneness (*kwam-pen-an-nueng-an-deow*) (among Thai people).”<sup>7</sup>

Abhisit stressed that the immediate mission was to rehabilitate those people who were directly affected by acts of terrorisms, arson attacks, and riots. The government would continue to implement the reconciliation plan he had proposed in order to address divisions in Thailand. Besides, the objective of rehabilitating the country and healing the minds of the people affected by the incident would be added to the reconciliation plan. However, he made no mention of when elections would be held although this had been a key element of the plan at the time when it was offered to the UDD.

Abhisit now made a strong return to his preferred imaginary role as an ethical leader and stressed that the operation undertaken had enabled the government to deal with those who violated the law and those who had ill will. As for people having different political views and grievances, the government would address their problems. Abhisit used the home metaphor as he invited people to join the reconciliation and healing process. In this short statement about reconciliation (53 seconds), he employed the terms *baan* (home) eight times:

“I want to tell all Thais that we live in the same *home*. Our *home* has been damaged. We now pinpoint those who wanted to burn our *home*, who will be

penalized. However, residents of the same *home* may have different views on what the *home should look like*. We are all neighbours. We must listen to each other's views. We will be united in action and spirit to rebuild our *home* to become liveable for all of us Thais.’<sup>8</sup>

In the first and second periods, the home metaphor had been employed only in the 'home' advertisement (Figure 4.3) which used a few times in both periods. In the advertisement, there was a graphic picture of a house situated at the centre of a map of Thailand under attack by bombs and fire. The advertisement called for cooperation from Thai people to inform the authorities of suspicious activities that might cause damage to the country. The incidents during May 13-19, as represented by Abhisit, turned the graphic image in the home advertisement to a depiction of a living reality.

As mentioned earlier, 'home' connotes a sense of something precious, which must be protected at all cost. The home metaphor justified 'Operation Ratchaprasong' as a measure to prevent the burning down of Thailand. And now, after the struggle, the home metaphor was employed to ask everyone especially the UDD supporters to leave the past behind, and cooperate with the government in restoring the Thai home.

During May 13 to 19, *Operation Ratchaprasong* resulted in 63 deaths while 530 people were injured (People's Information Center 2012:418,436). Among those killed, there were 2 military officers, 54 civilians, 6 paramedics, and 1 foreign journalist. In the final operation on May 19 the soldiers faced less armed resistance than expected, and the men in black who had attacked the soldiers on April 10 did not turn up again (Bangkok Post, May 23, 2010). This might be because the army had overestimated the combat capacity of the UDD. According to an army source, the UDD had only 50 armed men (Bangkok Post, May 22, 2010). During the Operation, the army had sent special agents to monitor the leaders of the armed groups so the armed militants could not get into the demonstration area. There are at least three questions which Abhisit may have found it inconvenient to take up at the time. First, why was the number of civilian casualties so much higher than the military if the main attackers had been armed groups among the demonstrators and the army had mainly defended itself? Second, who had killed six paramedics and one foreign journalist? And last but not

least, had the terrorist threat been exaggerated in the PM's earlier statements?

## 7 Conclusion

The main findings of the study shall now be discussed in relation to the questions posed in the Introduction: 1. How were the UDD campaign during March and May 2010, and government's measures to counter them interpreted in Abhisit's televised addresses? 2. How were the demonstrators and the government particularly Abhisit himself portrayed in his appearances on TV? 3 As the conflict escalated, did the portrayal of the campaign and the demonstrators become more negative?

The main focus of the analysis above has been the representations of a) the UDD campaign, especially the demonstrations, b) the government's operations, and c) Abhisit himself as a leader. The period under study has been divided into three phases: February 26-April 9, April 10-May 12, and May 13-21.

### 7.1 Abhisit: A Modern Thai-Style Leader?

As mentioned earlier, moral politics has dominated Thailand's middle classes' perception of a good political system. In this conception, a good polity is ruled by the 'Thai-style leader', a generous leader who sacrifices his happiness to work for the nation, under the supervision of the righteous king (Saichol:26). Thus, the Monarchy has been a more important source of legitimacy than electoral democracy (Thongchai 2008:29). It was clear to many including the Red Shirts that Abhisit became Prime Minister with support from the military who had influenced the shift in the political allegiance of some members of parliament. Unlike Thaksin or other leaders in the democratic world who gain legitimacy from an electoral mandate, Abhisit could not use popular support to claim legitimacy. Instead, he claimed to be a law-abiding and democratic Thai-style leader.

During the UDD campaign, Abhisit did not just portray himself as a Thai-style leader to claim legitimacy but also used such image to delegitimize the UDD's demand for dissolving parliament. He constantly presented himself as the guardian of the law, the monarchy and other central elements of Thainess. A few symbols of Thainess such as the national flag, the royal flag, and a pink necktie were used to emphasize Abhisit's Thainess.

As mentioned earlier, Thai power holders have traditionally seen themselves as guardians of the trinity of Nation-Buddhism-King, central elements of Thainess. In order to make Abhisit's image as a Thai-style leader clearer, a threat or an enemy to the trinity was needed. In his remarks, Abhisit talked about some terms that the UDD leaders used on the rally stage especially the 'new Thai state' (pp.42,48,69) to imply that the UDD's demand went far beyond the dissolution of the parliament.

An idea of Thainess with the trinity of Nation-Buddhism-King as its central tenets was defined to support a hierarchical structure that did not allow structural change. It is so narrow that it could not cope with the emergence of new social classes and social values (Saichol:31). As many Red Shirts belong to the emerging social class, they find themselves not fit to the existing social structure. Pavin (2011:340) argues that democratic and liberal society has been emerging as the 'fourth pillar' of the central elements of Thainess. Unlike the trinity of Thainess, which has always been represented by the power holders, Thaksin and the UDD, by claiming that they were democratic, implicitly proclaimed that they represented a fourth pillar (Ibid).

Abhisit might recognize this change. This study has shown that Abhisit not only claimed to represent a fourth pillar but also portrayed the UDD and Thaksin as un-democratic. Especially from the second phase, the textual and visual elements of his statements connoted Abhisit's image as a democratic leader. The background featuring the graphic picture of human shadow and the Democracy Monument was used in 6 out of 12 remarks for instance on April 12. Regarding textual elements, Abhisit appealed to the benefit of the public as he rejected the demand for him to resign and call an election immediately. One of his remarks that such image was strongly represented in textual elements is that of May 3 when he proposed to begin a process of reconciliation, and offered an early election.

In the past, the demonstrations were viewed as a display of the use of freedom but had crossed the permissible limit resulting in chaos in society, deterioration of the national image, and made Thailand less attractive for investment or tourism (Saichol:28). Therefore, forces could be used to disperse the demonstration in order to restore *peace and order*. This view was based on a traditional value of calm viewing

stable social values as divine. However, Abhisit's notion of *peace and order* is different from that used by past leaders because it is anchored so strongly in the rule of law. From the start, Abhisit adhered to rule of law when talking about the UDD campaign. The UDD could hold and maintain its campaign as long as it was lawful. As the campaign carried on, it became illegal and an exercise of freedom exceeding rights to public assembly given by the constitution. Therefore, the government had to *enforce the law* to restore *peace and order* in the society.

As mentioned in chapter one, my assumption is that lexical and visual choices used in Abhisit's remarks to characterize the UDD campaign were built upon Thainess and related values such as calmness and unity. However, this study has made an interesting finding. The rule of law and democracy were included as key element in Abhisit's remarks. Abhisit redefined the notion of a Thai-style leader by adding 'pro-democracy' and 'law-abiding' characteristics to the key elements of Thainess. In Abhisit's view, a modern Thai-style leader has to be law abiding and democratic, and this is where he felt that he was most different from Thaksin.

As Abhisit did not win the elections, being democratic did not for him mean to have a strong electoral mandate. Instead, it meant 'impartial in relation to current political conflict'. Abhisit tried to isolate himself from the military. He tried to show that his government and he himself did not depend on army support. When the clashes led to loss of life, he did not blame all of it on the terrorists. Instead, he reaffirmed that all losses would be investigated.

Furthermore, the characteristic of being impartial to current political conflict is reflected in his careful choice of words when he talked about the UDD (both as a movement and individuals), especially in the first phase of the campaign. That is to say Abhisit avoided to mention the UDD' and Thaksin's name when he talked about them. As the conflicts escalated, he became more openly negative to Thaksin and UDD leaders. Still, Abhisit tried not to portray the ordinary demonstrators in absolute negative terms even though he felt a need to disperse them.

Due to social change, it is necessary for a Thai-style leader to adjust. If Abhisit had been negative to the ordinary demonstrators and blamed the terrorists and violent

demonstrators for all loss of life, he might provoked counter-movements and perhaps not have been able to ask all Thais to participate in the rehabilitation and healing process as he did on May 21.

## **7.2 Degree of Negativity of the Demonstration and Demonstrators**

Negativity is more or less subjective and its degree is difficult to measure. In order to make solid arguments, I will focus more on the textual and visual elements which explicitly portrayed the demonstrations and demonstrators in a negative way. One of the ways to do this is to check if Thaksin's and UDD were explicitly mentioned. This is because, as argued earlier, Abhisit was careful not to mention the name of the UDD or Thaksin when he talked about them. If the UDD and Thaksin were explicitly portrayed in his remarks, we need to ask why.

In the first period, Abhisit portrayed the UDD leaders and Thaksin in a negative way in his remark on March 21. He mentioned UDD and Thaksin by name as he voiced his doubt that the UDD leaders were working for Thaksin's benefit. The demonstrators were partly portrayed as rioters. However, their aggressive actions were understandable because they were manipulated by the campaign leaders to join the demonstrations in order to achieve the latter's goal. Representing the demonstrators this way fitted with the government's strategy of restraint and conflict avoidance. At the first stage of the demonstrations, this strategy was pursued in the hope that the demonstration would be faded away in Bangkok's summer heat.

Things did not go as the government had hoped as the demonstrations were prolonged and expanded to Ratchaprasong. The government had to step up measures to control the situation. However, the demonstrators were not portrayed more negatively until the incident at THAICOM station on April 9. Abhisit's remarks about the demonstrations that day were the most negative in the whole first phase under study.

In the second phase, the term 'terrorists' was introduced after the clashes on April 10. The campaign had been infiltrated by cruel and dangerous terrorists. They

caused loss of life both on the military' and the demonstrators' side. Because of the threat posed by terrorists, the image of the demonstration became more negative than in the first phase.

The image of the UDD leaders became more negative in Abhisit's remarks when he implied that they supported the terrorists. However, the representation of the ordinary demonstrators did not become more negative. They were portrayed as human shields used by the terrorists, and this made the government careful in its choice of measures to fight the terrorists. Before his remarks on May 9, Abhisit asked the public, especially those who wished to see an end to the rally at Ratchaprasong, to be patient as the government was trying to resolve the situation. By portraying the demonstrators as human shields, Abhisit concealed the government's inability to deal with the situation. As mentioned earlier, it was reported that the military was reluctant to use force to disperse the demonstrations at Ratchaprasong despite the government's wish for it to do so.

The demonstrators were portrayed in a highly negative way on Abhisit's TV show on May 2. He used emotive terms to talk about the raid of Chulalongkorn Hospital on April 29. As he spoke, the footage of the incident was shown. Furthermore, the advertisement showing pictures of demonstrators at the rally site reinforced the stereotypical image of ban-nok. The advertisement connoted the idea that the demonstrators were vulgar outsiders in the business district.

The negative portrayal of the demonstration in Abhisit's remarks on May 9 was linked to his ultimatum to the UDD leaders to end the demonstrations by May 10. Abhisit talked about the grenade attacks on May 7. He said they must have been carried out by terrorists, and explicitly linked Thaksin to them. In this remarks, Abhisit made clear that the threats posed by the terrorists were too great to allow the demonstration to continue .

In addition to the term 'terrorists', the term 'armed group' was used in Abhisit's remarks in the third phase. Just as in the second phase, threats posed by terrorists were employed in the remarks to portray the demonstrations in a negative way. Abhisit emphasized that the security officers were now fighting with the terrorists and armed groups not with unarmed civilians. As for the demonstrators, they continued to be



portrayed as human shields. At the same time, they were now shown as rioters. For instance, Abhisit's TV Show on May 16 showed footage of soldiers being beaten by demonstrators.

To answer the question if the representation of the campaign and demonstrators became more negative as the conflict escalated, I have found that the representations of the *demonstrations* in the second and third phases were more negative than in the first. However, it cannot be said that the representation of the demonstrations became even more negative in the third than the second phase. They were similar. Therefore, the reason why it took more than a month after Abhisit had first claimed that the demonstration was infiltrated by terrorists before the rally was dispersed cannot be that the image of the demonstrators turned more negative. The reason for the delay was probably mainly disagreements between the government and the army.

I have found that the representation of the demonstration leaders was the most negative in the second and third period. Abhisit said that the reason why the UDD leaders did not end the demonstrations was that they hoped to use the loss of life to put pressure on the government. He therefore asked the public not to believe what the UDD leaders were saying.

As mentioned earlier, Abhisit tried to present himself as the leader of all Thais. Plus, he's a politician. It is not surprising that Abhisit refrained from denouncing all the demonstrators, while recognizing that most of them had genuine grievances. In the first phase the representation of the demonstrators was the most negative in Abhisit's remark on April 9. He used negative terms to condemn the demonstrators regarding the incident at THAICOM station and made clear that the only mission the government must do was to uphold the rule of law. This remark was the major turning point of the situation as it led to the clashes on April 10, and Abhisit's loss of moral high ground. After the remarks on April 9, Abhisit never explicitly portrayed the demonstrators in a negative way, even when the government needed to step up measures to control the situation. Instead, they were portrayed as victims of the terrorists. Therefore, the government's operation to disperse the demonstrators was to rescue them from the terrorists.

### 7.3 'Unfortunately, Some People Died.'

Even though Abhisit announced in May that normalcy had been restored, the government did not lift the emergency decree until December. Under the emergency law, basic rights of expression and peaceful assembly were strictly controlled whereas freedom of the media was suppressed. The International Crisis Group (2010:7) observed that the government's application of emergency law went beyond the need to restore order, thus hardening the Red Shirts' negative view of the government.

Political division in the country became deeper. To the Red Shirts, the crackdown confirmed their view that they were excluded and treated with 'double standards' by the Thai state. The government did not respond to their causes but brutally defeated them. To others, the arson attacks which followed immediately after the crackdown, tended to confirm the government's claim that Thaksin and UDD leaders were terrorists.

The poll, conducted by surveying 1689 people in 17 provinces covering all regions in the country, showed that 66.3 percent of respondents did not believe that Abhisit's reconciliation would be successful. This was unsurprising. However, only 4.5 percent wanted Abhisit to resign, and 11.2% demanded the dissolution of parliament (Bangkok Post, June 14, 2010). In other words, Abhisit did not have to step down to show his responsibility for the loss of life during the military crackdown on the UDD campaign. To say this with his TV show's name, most Thai people seemed to still be 'confident in Thailand with PM Abhisit'. This information brings me back to the question that led me to the topic for this study: 'how could the government in a democratic society be able to hold on to power after having committed a massacre on civilians?'

After the invocation of the Emergency Decree on April 7, the government was able to control the meanings (at least in the mainstream media) of the events and representation of actors involved in the UDD campaign. It tightened its control on media freedom. The media affiliated with or with close ties to the UDD were censored, banned and forcibly closed down, or involved in legal proceedings (Reporters without

Borders 2011). Therefore, how the UDD campaign was portrayed or represented through lexical and iconological choices in Abhisit's televised remarks and CRES' television announcement shaped the public's negative understanding of the UDD campaign and the demonstrators.

In contrast to previous democratic mass rallies, the crackdown was not seen by a majority of Bangkok's residents whose views dominated the mainstream media as 'soldiers killing innocent demonstrators', but rather as 'rabble burning bangkok' (Nelson 2011:18). In the media coverage of the situation after the crackdown, the high number of killings was overshadowed by reports of the arson attacks and their likely consequences for the economy (Askew 2010:315). Likewise, the deceased and injured UDD demonstrators were not remembered as political martyrs but seen as uneducated and naive 'ban-nok' led by terrorists to topple the monarchy.

On May 23, thousands of Bangkok residents and social groups participated in the campaign called 'Bangkok Big Cleaning Day' to clean up Ratchaprasong area. Some critics viewed this activity as a means to destroy forensic evidence that could be used to convict those who caused loss of life during Operation Ratchaprasong. At the same time, television and radio channels kept on playing the song 'May Happiness Come Back' (khor-kwam-suk-khuen-klub-ma) featuring voices of 301 entertainers (The Nation, May 26, 2010). Even though the song was not initiated by the government campaign, it employed *kwam-suk* (happiness), *kwam-sa-ngop* (calmness), and *sa-mak-ki* (unity) the values Abhisit had used in his television addresses during the UDD campaign. After two-month occupation of central Bangkok, the ban-nok invasion was over. The 'ban-nok' were gone but not before they had caused damage to the capital city. Bangkok residents joined forces to clean up the stained left by the ban-nok. Afterwards, Bangkok residents could enjoy their normal lives again.

Even though the voices of those supporting Abhisit and denouncing the UDD campaign were louder in the mainstream media, the voice of the Red Shirts got, as always, louder when expressed through the ballot box. Elections were eventually held in July 2011, and were once again won by the pro-Thaksin Puea Thai party. It won 265 of 500 seats, gaining 32 more seats than in the previous 2007 elections, while

Democrat Party got only 159 seats. Yingluck Shinawatra, the youngest sister of Thaksin, became the first female prime minister of Thailand while Abhisit became the leader of the opposition. Both remain in their positions today (April 2013). Yingluck's landslide victory showed the public's rejection of the intervention of the military and the establishment against the Red Shirt movement (Hewison 2012:29).

On September 17, 2012, the Truth for Reconciliation Commission of Thailand (TRCT) issued its final 276-page report regarding violence during the UDD campaign in 2010. The TRCT's status as an 'independent' body was problematic. It had been set up by the Abhisit government on June 8, 2010 and its chairman Kanit na Nakorn had been personally picked by Abhisit. One of its members, Somchai Hom-laor, was sympathetic to the Yellow Shirt (The Nation, September 14, 2012).

In a press conference to present its report, Somchai concluded that the UDD leaders were partly to blame for the violence during the UDD campaign (Bangkok Post, September 18, 2010). Particularly during the clashes on April 10, they provoked demonstrators with their speeches and made inadequate efforts to prevent the violence. At the end of the conference, commission chairman Kanit commented that Thaksin should stay out of Thai politics (The Nation, September 18, 2012).

One of the report's highlights was its finding about the role of the 'men in black' during the UDD campaign. It stated that they were responsible for the attacks on the military during the clashes on April 10 and other incidents leading to the crackdown on May 19. The report also linked some of them to the late Major-General Khattiya, and the UDD security guards. The report pointed out that the violent incident on April 10 was crucial in forging hostility between the military and the UDD, and "the operation by the men in black was instrumental in creating and escalating violence with the aim of provoking the army to use weapons against the demonstrators, and wanting to cause loss of life" (TRCT 2012:111).

According to criticisms made by pro-Red Shirt academics and activists, the report seemed to indicate that the UDD campaign was not peaceful and the use of force was thus necessary (Bangkok Post, September 24, 2012). It misled the public

into thinking that the use of military force by the government against the demonstrators was in retaliation against the men in black. It thus downplayed violence caused by the government and gave the impression that the state was not the main perpetrator. Even though the report paid much attention to the men in black, it failed to clarify who they were or reveal who they killed.

To be fair with TRCT, its report also blamed the army and the government for loss of life during the incidents. It stated that the government had failed to control the military's use of war weapons and live ammunition. It also criticized CRES for lacking a system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the operations by security officers.

All in all, it can be said that the report confirmed the narrative made by Abhisit and CRES during the UDD campaign in 2010 that the 'terrorists' had infiltrated the demonstrators and caused much loss of life both among the demonstrators and the soldiers, making it necessary for the government to put an end to the campaign. In other words, TRCT defended Abhisit's decision to order the crackdown on the UDD campaign. Natthawut Saikua, one of the core leaders of the UDD campaign, commented that TRCT did not provide in-depth findings on the violent incidents in 2010. Instead, it made general observations that fitted information previously supplied by a certain political party (The Nation, September 19, 2012).

Two years after he had claimed that there were attempts to provoke him so he would become guilty of murder (p.65), he was actually accused of exactly that. On December 6, 2012, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) charged Abhisit and former Deputy PM Suthep with murder over the death of taxi driver Phan Kamkong during Operation Ratchaprasong (The Nation, December 7, 2012). The charges were based on a Criminal Court ruling that the taxi driver had been shot dead by a military officer. It alleged that Abhisit and Suthep had authorized the army to use lethal weapons against the UDD demonstrators. If found guilty, they may face the death penalty or a lengthy jail term.

The murder charges against Abhisit are unprecedented in the political history of

Thailand because this is the first time a prime minister has been accused of being accountable for extrajudicial killings (The Nation, December 10, 2012). It would be possible that Abhisit and Suthep may also face over 700 attempted-murder cases, as about 700 people were severely injured from military operations during the UDD campaign in 2010 (The Nation, December 19, 2012). However, the charges have been met with the argument that they are politically motivated to force the Democrat Party to support Puea Thai's proposal to pass a bill giving blanket amnesty to all those involved in the political crisis since the 2006 coup. The point is, it is claimed, to put Abhisit in the same position as Thaksin, so both will need an amnesty to avoid facing a court of law.

In an interview with BBC World News in London on December 10, 2012, Abhisit accepted that his government authorized the use of live ammunition in the military operation against the UDD demonstrators with clear instructions as to how and under what circumstances the military could use it. He said he regretted the loss of lives. However, he claimed that the murder charges against him were far-fetched. The host asked why he thought so despite the fact that he had ordered the crackdown on the demonstrators. He answered using the same narrative as on Thai television two years earlier:

*“But if you recall we had a situation basically of a group of people occupying the middle of the city and also had armed people infused within the protest. They were actually firing grenades...firing at people. We didn't even go in to disperse the protest. What we did was to cordon off... set up check points. These check points were attacked. And there were fightings on the street and unfortunately some people died (BBC 2012).”*

Abhisit tried to protect his image as a law-abiding Thai-style leader and continued to attack Thaksin for not respecting the law. He said he would fight the charges in court. He would accept the verdict no matter how it turned out, and asked Thaksin to do the same. He said

*“I will accept whatever verdict, even if it's a death penalty, I will accept that. And I'm asking the former prime minister and members of this...the current government that they should do the same, because they are always looking to pass a bill to grant themselves amnesty. That's not something I've ever done. I'm willing to face the charges. I will fight to prove my innocence in the court, and if the court for whatever reason passed the guilty verdict, I would accept it (BBC 2012).”*

No matter what Abhisit says, he will be remembered as the first civilian Thai Prime Minister ordering a crackdown on civilian demonstrations leading to the death of almost a hundred people. The UDD campaign and its sad fate will remain one of the first things that comes to the mind of Thais when they think of Abhisit Vejjajiva's time as prime minister.

## References

### Books and Journal's Articles

Apichat Sathitniramay, et al. (2010) "Rai-ngan Buang Ton Krong kan Wi Jai Kan Plian Plaeng Dan Set Tha Kit Lae Sang Kom Khong Chon Chan Mai" [Inception report: Research project on economic and social change of new social classes], presented to the Institute for Public Policy, Chiang Mai University, June 15.

Askew, Mark (Ed.) (2010). *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books.

Atkinson, Max (1984). *Our Master's Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics*. London and New York: Methuen.

Cameron, Deborah (2001). *Working with Spoken Discourses*. London: Sage.

Chambers, Paul (2010) "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy", *Asian Survey* 50 (5): 835-858.

Deacon, David. et al. (2010). *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. 2nd edn. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Dovey, Kim (2001) "Memory, Democracy and Urban Space: Bangkok's 'Path to Democracy'", *Journal of Urban Design* 6 (3): 265-282.

Fairclough, Norman (1989). *Language and Power*. London and New York: Longman.

Fairclough, Norman (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Edward Arnold.

Fairclough, Norman (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London and New York: Routledge.

Fiske, John (2010). *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Forsyth, Tim (2010) "Thailand's Red Shirt Protests: Popular Movement or Dangerous Street Theatre?" *Social Movement Studies* 9 (4): 461-467.

Hesmondhalgh, David (2006). "Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis", page.119-156 in Marie Gillespie and Jason Toynbee (Eds.): *Analysing Media Texts*. Berkshire:



Open University Press.

Hewison, Kevin (2008) "A Book, the King and the 2006 Coup", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38 (1): 190-211.

Hewison, Kevin (2012) "Avoiding Conflict: Thailand after the Red Shirt Uprising", *Political Insight* 3 (3): 28-31.

Human Rights Watch (2011). *Descent into Chaos: Thailand's 2010 Red Shirt Protests and the Government Crackdown*. [Online] Available at:

[http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/thailand0511webwcover\\_0.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/thailand0511webwcover_0.pdf)  
(Accessed: 28 January 2013).

International Crisis Group (2010). *Bridging Thailand's Deep Divide*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/192\\_Bridging%20Thailands%20Deep%20Divide.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/192_Bridging%20Thailands%20Deep%20Divide.pdf) (Accessed 20 October 2012)

Kasian Tejapira (1996) "Signification of Democracy", *Thammasat Review* 1 (1): 5-13.

Kress, Gunther (1985) "Ideological Structures in Discourse", page.27-42 in T. van Dijk (Ed.): *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Academic Press.

Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Likhit Dhiravegin (1992). *Demi Democracy*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Machin, David and Andrea Mayr (2012). *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*. London: Sage.

McCargo, Duncan (2011) "Toxic Thaksin? Thailand's Troublesome Ex-Premiere" *Representation* 47 (3):295-306.

McQuail, Denis (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6th edn. London: Sage.

Naruemon Thabchumpon and Duncan McCargo (2011) "Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests: Not Just Poor Farmer?" *Asian Survey* 51 (6): 993-1018.

Nelson, Michael H. (2011) "Thailand's Legitimacy Conflict between the Red Shirt

Protesters and the Abhisit Government: Aspects of a Complex Political Struggle”  
*Security and Peace* 7 (1): 14-18.

Nostitz, Nick (2011). *Red Vs Yellow Volume 2: Thailand's Political Awakening*.  
Bangkok: White Lotus.

Ockey, James (2009) “Thailand in 2008: Democracy and Street Politics”, in D. Singh  
(Ed.) *Southeast Asian Affairs 2009*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Pavin Chachavalpongpan (2005). *A Plastic Nation: The Curse of Thainess in Thai-  
Burmese Relations*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America.

Pavin Chachavalpongpan (2010). “‘Unity’ as a Discourse in Thailand's Polarized  
Politics,” in D. Singh (Ed.): *Southeast Asian Affairs 2010*. Singapore: Institute of  
Southeast Asian Studies.

Pavin Chachavalpongpan (2011) “The Necessity of Enemies in Thailand's Troubled  
Politics”, *Asian Survey* 51 (6): 1019-1041.

People's Information Center (PIC) (2012). *Kwam Jing Puea Kwam Yu Ti Tam Hed  
Karn La Pon Kra Tob Jak Karn Sa Lai Karn Chum Num Mae Sa Pruet Sa Pa 53*  
[Truth for Justice: The April – May 2010 Crackdowns], Bangkok: PIC.

Poowin Bunyavejchewin (2010) “Constructing the 'Red' Otherness: The Role and  
Implications of Thainess on Polarised Politics”, *ASEAS-Austrian Journal of South-  
East-Asian Studies* 3 (2): 241-248.

Reporters Without Borders (2011) *Internet Enemies 2011: Countries under  
surveillance - Thailand*, 11 March. [Online] Available at:  
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4d8226858.html> (Accessed 17 March 2013)

Saichol Sattayanurak (n.d.) “The Construction of Mainstream Thought on 'Thainess'  
and the 'Truth' Constructed by 'Thainess’”, no publication details. [Online] Available  
at: <http://www.fringer.org/wp-content/writings/thainess-eng.pdf> (Accessed: 3  
November 2012)

Smith, P. And A. Bell (2007). “Unravelling the Web of Discourse Analysis,” in E.  
Devereux (Ed.): *Media Studies*. London: Sage.

Tambiah, Stanley (1976). *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thongchai Winichakul (1994). *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Thongchai Winichakul (2008) "Toppling Democracy", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38 (1): 11-37.

Thongchai Winichakul (2010) "Thongchai Winichakul on the Red 'Germs', "New Mandala, 3 May. [Online] Available at <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2010/05/03/thongchai-winichakul-on-the-red-germs/> (Accessed 5 December 2012)

Truth for Reconciliation Commission of Thailand (TRCT) (2012). *'Rai-ngan Cha Bab Som Boon Ka Na Kam Ma Karn Is Sa Ra Truad Sob Lae Khon Ha Kwan Jing Puea Karn Prong Dong Haeng Chat Ka Ra Ka Da Kom 2553 – Ka Ra Ka Da Kom 2555'* [TRCT's Final Report July 2010 – July 2012]. [Online] Available at: <http://www.innnews.co.th/images/assets/report.pdf> (Accessed: 10 April 2013)

Uchane Cheangsan (2011) "Kamnued 'Sue Daeng' Nai Ta Na Ka Buan Karn Toh Klab" [The emergence of Red Shirt Movements as Counter-Movements] *Fah Diao Kan* 9 (3): 122-154.

Van Dijk, T. (1998). *Ideology*. London: Routledge.

Van Dijk, T. (2001). "Multidisciplinary CDA: A Pleas for Diversity," in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.): *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

Van Leeuwen, Theo (1995) "Representing Social Action", *Discourse & Society* 6 (1): 81-106.

Van Leeuwen, Theo (1996). "The Representations of Social Actors," in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard (Eds.): *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). *Lub Luang Lued* [Secret, Deceit, Blood], Bangkok: Matichon.

## Newspaper Articles

Achara Ashayagachat (2012) 'TRCT 'downplays' state violence' Bangkok Post, September 24th.

Achara Ashayagachat, Aekarach Sattaburuth, and Wassana Nanuam (2012). 'TRCT report blames reds, army', Bangkok Post, September 18th.

Anucha Charoenpo and Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'PM rejects dissolution offer', Bangkok Post April 25th.

Bangkok Post (2010) 'Asset panel judges can feel safe, assures PM'. January 29th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'PM links faeces attack to assets'. February 2nd.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Chavalit rejects calls for a 'people's army". February 5th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Thaksin rejects peace effort'. March 19th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Bomb blasts in city, ISA likely to stay'. March 21st.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Abhisit vows to defy reds'. April 10th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Troops ordered to withdraw'. April 11th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Suthep loses security job'. April 17th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Troops allowed live rounds'. April 20th.

Bangkok Post (2010a). 'UDD denies calling for a 'new state". April 21st.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Hackers force PM's show off airwaves'. April 26th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Govt Claims plot targets King'. April 27th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Hospital in panic after red raid'. May 1st.

Bangkok Post (2010a). 'Pravit lashes out at inaction claims'. May 1st.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Abhisit eyes September dissolution'. May 6th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'PAD Rejects Road Map'. May 7th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'PM's road map offer was to 'aid' UDD exit'. May 8th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Attacks upset road map hopes'. May 9th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'PM gives ultimatum to reds'. May 10th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Govt revokes election offer'. May 13th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Seh Daeng shot'. May 14th.

Bangkok Post (2010a). 'UDD leadership in disarray as Veera is said to have quit'. May 14th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Peace talks offer put on the table'. May 19th.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'A nation mourns'. May 21st.

Bangkok Post (2010). 'Poll finds little faith in PM's reform plan'. June 14th.

BBC News 'Profile: Abhisit Vejjajiva' [Online] Available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13298394> (Accessed: 20 January 2013)

BBC News (2007) 'Thai King Sparks Pink Shirt Craze,' 30 November. [Online]

Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7120561.stm> Available at: (Accessed: 6 October 2012.)

Horn, Robert (2010) 'Thailand's Ousted Leader: A Billionaire No More,' Time, 26 February. [Online] Available at:

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1968337,00.html> (Accessed: 1 April 2013).

King-oua Laohong (2012). 'DSI Likely drops anti-monarchy chart case for lack of proof', Bangkok Post March 31st.

Kitchana Lersakvanitchakul (2010), Bringing back the smiles The Nation, May 26th.

Kom Chad Luek (2009) "Na Yok Tra Na Daeng Sat Troo Chat" [PM Denounced Reds as National Enemy], 13th April.

Mongkol Bangprapa and Aekarach Sattaburuth (2010). 'Protesters storm parliament'. Bangkok Post, April 8th.

Panya Thiewsangsan and Samatcha Hunsara (2010). 'Government stands ready to negotiate, says Abhisit'. The Nation, March 19th.

Piyanut Tumnuksetchai (2012), Abhisit, Suthep could face 700 attempted murder

charges The Nation, December 19th.

Pongphong Sarnsamak (2010). 'Reds Storm Hospital', The Nation April 30th.

Pravit Rojanaphruk (2010a). 'Decree shuts down red media and those deemed sympathetic'. The Nation April 9th.

Pravit Rojanaphruk (2012). 'Both sides blamed for violence'. The Nation, September 14th.

Songpol Kaopatuntip (2010). 'Unholy night in the temple compound', Bangkok Post May 23rd.

Supoj Wancharoen and Lamphai Intathep (2010). 'Government 'cursed' as UDD protest turns bloody'. Bangkok Post March 17th.

Suranand Vejjajiva (2010). 'Let it Be: PM Abhisit is monopolising the moral high ground', Bangkok Post February 8th.

Suranand Vejjajiva (2010). 'Let it Be: The danger of politicising our sacred institution', Bangkok Post April 30th.

Surasak Glahan (2010). 'Court finds Thaksin used office to enrich family'. Bangkok Post February 27th.

The Guardian (2010) 'Thailand Protests: Abhisit Vejjajiva Pledges Reconciliation as Clear-Up Starts,' 21 May.[Online] Available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/21/thailand-clear-up-reconciliation-inquiry> (Accessed: 24 March 2013).

The Nation (2009). 'Poll backs govt response'. April 19th.

The Nation (2010). 'I'm not PM' image-maker, says Satit'. February 1st.

The Nation (2010). 'Govt campaign to answer critics of court case'. February 4th.

The Nation (2010). 'Zero Tolerance for Disruptions in City'. February 6th.

The Nation (2010). 'Reds won't gather at court for verdict: Veera'. February 16th.

The Nation (2010). 'Cursing rituals kick off protests'. March 13th.

The Nation (2010). 'Govt cracks down on red media'. April 9th.

The Nation (2010). 'Govt Hangs by a Thread'. April 10th.

The Nation (2010). 'A day of raging battles'. April 11th.

The Nation (2010). 'Thaksin denounces 'president' stickers', April 21st.

The Nation (2010). 'Victims on both sides hit by high velocity bullets doctors say'. April 27th.

The Nation (2010). 'Thaksin in favour of DAAD accepting premier's offer'. May 5th.

The Nation (2010). 'Ball backs in reds' court'. May 11th.

The Nation (2010). 'Nov 14 poll scrapped'. May 13th.

The Nation (2010). 'No elections on Nov 14, Abhisit confirms'. May 14th.

The Nation (2010a). 'Emergency in 15 more provinces'. May 14th.

The Nation (2010b). 'Seh Daeng in Coma, Reds Under Siege'. May 14th.

The Nation (2010). 'Battle Rages on'. May 16th.

The Nation (2012), Govt will act on any 'useful' TRCT ideas, PM says, September 19th.

The Nation (2012). Abhisit, Suthep to be charged with murder. December 7th.

The Nation (2012). 'Contentious case against Abhisit marks a new era'. December 10th.

Tulsathit Taptim (2010). 'Last Chance for Peace', The Nation May 4th.

Tulsathit Taptim (2010). 'Emergency'. The Nation April 8th.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'UDD rally at army HQ ends peacefully', Bangkok Post January 30th.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'Military admits firing at reds'. Bangkok Post April 15th.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'Queen's Guard shocked over April 10 attacks'. Bangkok Post, April 21st.

Wassana Nanuam. 'Commander seen stalling as PM turns up the pressure', Bangkok Post, April 29th.

Wassana Nanuam (2010b). 'Seh Daeng shrugged off dangers before shooting', Bangkok Post May 14th.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'Thwarted for now, the red tide still runs deep', Bangkok Post May 22nd.

Wassana Nanuam (2010). 'Operation Ratchaprasong planned as urban warfare', Bangkok Post May 27th.

## **TV Programmes**

BBC World News. (2012) BBC, December 10th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT), January 3rd.

*Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit.* (2010) NBT, February 28th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, March 7th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, March 14th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, March 21st.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, April 4th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, April 25th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, May 2nd.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, May 9th.

Confidence in Thailand with PM Abhisit. (2010) NBT, May 16th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, March 28th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 4th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 6th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 7th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 8th.



Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 9th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 10th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 12th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 16th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, April 19th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, May 3rd.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, May 15th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, May 16th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, May 19th.

Special Announcement from PM. (2010) Television Pool of Thailand, May 21st.

## **Attachment**

Four CD-ROMs are attached with this study. Each CD contains the followings.

CD 1: Chapter 4 (part 1 of 2)

- 1) List of Endnotes
- 2) Video clips and transcripts of Abhisit's TV show on February 28, March 7, and March 14

CD 2: Chapter 4 (part 2 of 2)

- 1) Video clips and transcripts of Abhisit's TV show on March 21 and April 4
- 2) Video clips and transcripts of Special Announcements from PM analyzed in the chapter

CD 3: Chapter 5

- 1) Video clips and transcripts of Abhisit's television remarks analyzed in the chapter

CD4: Chapter 6

- 1) Video clips and transcripts of Abhisit's television remarks analyzed in the chapter



