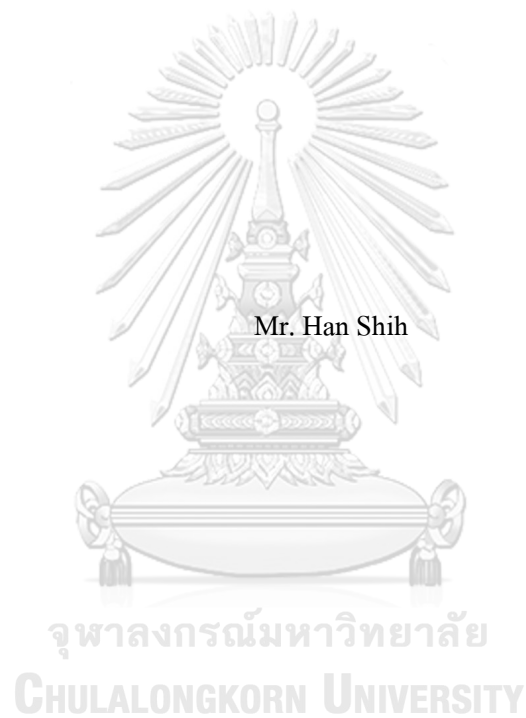


Chinese media's stance on Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état by Prayut Chan-o-Cha



An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies

Inter-Department of Southeast Asian Studies

GRADUATE SCHOOL

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นายหาน ชีห้

สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา สหสาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา  
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By    Mr. Han Shih  
Field of Study                            Southeast Asian Studies  
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Accepted by the GRADUATE SCHOOL, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
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หาน จี๋ : . ( Chinese media's stance on Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état by Prayut Chan-  
o-Cha) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : พิชญ์ พงษ์สวัสดิ์

เนื่องด้วยปัญหาความไม่มั่นคงทางการเมือง ประเทศไทยต้องเผชิญกับการทำรัฐประหารมากกว่า 20 ครั้ง นับตั้งแต่การเปลี่ยนแปลงระบอบการปกครองในปี พ.ศ. 2475 โดยภายหลังที่ประเทศไทยเปลี่ยนแปลงระบอบการปกครองเป็นระบอบประชาธิปไตย โดยมีพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงเป็นประมุขนั้น ประชาชนชาวไทยคาดหวังที่จะอยู่ภายใต้ระบอบการปกครองที่เป็นประชาธิปไตยอย่างแท้จริง อย่างไรก็ตาม สิ่งที่เราจะต้องประสบภายหลังปี พ.ศ. 2475 คือการทำรัฐประหารที่ซ้ำซาก ในงานวิจัยฉบับนี้ จะมุ่งพิจารณาถึงกรณีการเสนอข่าวโดยสื่อเชื้อชาติจีนของรัฐและสื่อที่ได้รับการสนับสนุนจากรัฐในประเทศต่าง ๆ ได้แก่ China's Global Times ของสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน, South China Morning Post ของเขตบริหารพิเศษฮ่องกงแห่งสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน, สำนักข่าวกลางของสาธารณรัฐจีน (ไต้หวัน) และ Straits Times ของสาธารณรัฐสิงคโปร์ ต่อกรณีการทำรัฐประหารครั้งล่าสุดในปี พ.ศ. 2557 โดยพลเอกประยุทธ์ จันทร์โอชา ทั้งนี้ กรณีมุมมองระหว่างความเป็นเจ้าของสื่อโดยรัฐและการนำเสนอข่าวนั้น งานวิจัยฉบับนี้จะพิจารณาถึงความเชื่อมโยงระหว่างสื่อกับรัฐบาล โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง การวิเคราะห์ถึงบทบาทในการเสนอข่าวที่ถูกเขียนขึ้นโดยสื่อของรัฐหรือสื่อที่ได้รับการสนับสนุนโดยรัฐเพื่อพิจารณาว่าสื่อเหล่านี้มีจุดยืนต่อการทำรัฐประหารครั้งดังกล่าวที่เหมือนกันกับจุดยืนของรัฐบาลหรือไม่ ทั้งนี้ ในแต่ละส่วนของงานวิจัยจะอธิบายว่าสื่อของรัฐหรือสื่อที่ได้รับการสนับสนุนโดยรัฐมีจุดยืนที่แตกต่างจากจุดยืนของรัฐบาลอย่างไร เนื่องจาก มีความชัดเจนว่าการนำเสนอข่าวโดยสื่อดังกล่าวต่อการทำรัฐประหารในปี พ.ศ. 2557 นั้น ไม่ได้เป็นไปในทิศทางเดียวกันกับนโยบายทางการทูตของทั้ง 4 ประเทศ ที่มีต่อประเทศไทย โดยเสมอไปในทุกกรณี

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา      ลายมือชื่อนิติศ .....  
ปีการศึกษา 2564      ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก .....

# # 6288517920 : MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORD: 2014 Thailand's coup; Chinese media; Government's policy; News Trajectory

Han Shih : Chinese media's stance on Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état by Prayut Chan-o-Cha. Advisor: Assistant Professor PITCH PONGSAWAT, Ph.D.

Due to political unstableness, Thailand has faced coup d'état for more than 20 times since 1932 Revolution. After the political system has been changed to constitutional monarchy, Thailand's citizens expected to live within democratic system. However, what they have experienced after 1932 is purely repetitive coups. In the scope of the most recent coup in 2014, initiated by General Prayut Chan-o-Cha, this paper explores how Chinese state-owned/pro-state medias, including China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency & Singapore's Straits Times, reported on Thailand's 2014 coup. From the viewpoint of ownership and news reportage, this paper identifies media's connection with its government. In particular, the paper analyses trajectory of articles produced by each state-owned/pro-state media with governments' stances on 2014 Thailand's coup to discover if these media agencies would possess identical stances as governments' standpoints. By scrutinising articles placed in each section, this paper argues that Chinese state-owned/pro-state media would have different stance from government's standpoint since it's obvious that news trajectories created by media in this paper regarding 2014 Thailand's coup are not constantly parallel to the diplomatic relations between Thailand and 4 governments.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Student's Signature .....

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Han Shih



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# **Chinese media's stance on Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état by Prayut Chan-o-Cha**



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## **Abstract**

Due to political unstableness, Thailand has faced coup d'état for more than 20 times since 1932 Revolution. After the political system has been changed to constitutional monarchy, Thailand's citizens expected to live within democratic system. However, what they have experienced after 1932 is purely repetitive coups. In the scope of the most recent coup in 2014, initiated by General Prayut Chan-o-Cha, this paper explores how Chinese state-owned/pro-state medias, including China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency & Singapore's Straits Times, reported on Thailand's 2014 coup. From the viewpoint of ownership and news reportage, this paper identifies media's connection with its government. In particular, the paper analyses trajectory of articles produced by each state-owned/pro-state media with governments' stances on 2014 Thailand's coup to discover if these media agencies would possess identical stances as governments' standpoints. By scrutinising articles placed in each section, this paper argues that Chinese state-owned/pro-state media would have different stance from government's standpoint since it's obvious that news trajectories created by media in this paper regarding 2014 Thailand's coup are not constantly parallel to the diplomatic relations between Thailand and 4 governments.

Keywords: 2014 Thailand's coup, Chinese media, Government's standpoint, News Trajectory

## **Theory**

This research will merge with the concept of Authoritarian Theory in press. Based on the analysis in *Four Theories of Press*, the media, mostly referring to printing journalism, can be interpreted by The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Theories<sup>1</sup>. In case of research on media and politics, Authoritarian Theory suits this research on Chinese media's stance on 2014 Coup in Thailand as each country's government strongly controls the state media/pro-state media to diffuse the idea that citizens should have reacted to the coup in Thailand. This reaction expectedly should not be contradictory to the national policy of each polity to Thailand.

Authoritarian Theory has developed in England since late Renaissance when the printing technology was just invented. All subjects of House of Tudors were exposed to the news by printing papers. However, the truth of incidents was hidden by the office of king as the citizens of this kingdom should only think in the way that the elite guided them to envisage. This restricted policy resulted from the monarchy, who coerced subjects to believe how the world should be shaped, and few elites, who controlled the media with royal's patent and delivered the fact according to the royal policy.

This theory depicts that the publisher and the royal had consensus regarding the monopoly of publishing printing journalism and the power source. During Tudors and Stuarts, the publisher monopolised the market, permitted by the monarchy, and the news source had been given according to the royal policy. Unavoidably, the publisher did not

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<sup>1</sup> SIEBERT, F., PETERSON, T., & SCHRAMM, W. (1984). THE AUTHORITARIAN THEORY OF THE PRESS. In *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (pp. 9-38). Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

possess the rights to pick the topics, but only the monarchy could decide to offer the patent to any publisher and list the news topics depends on the royal policy. Hence, this strategy to control the opinion in England led to top-down policy in the case of press in this kingdom. The press, only the servant to the country rather than the fact examiner for citizens, was the tool to maintain the stability of the government in the period of late Renaissance. This Authoritarian Theory also serves as the origin for the systems of National Press in the world. Nowadays, most of nations in this world establish state-owned media to react any significant incident according to national policies, including China, Hongkong, Singapore and Taiwan. Combining this theory with this theme topic, this research focuses on how these countries' state medias react to 2014 Thailand's coup according to national policies and international relations between Thailand and each state.



## **Research question**

- In comparison of news reportages amongst South China Morning Post, Global Times, Central News Agency, and Straits Times, how did these medias report 2014 Coup d'état initiated by Prayut-Chan-o-Cha due to its ownership?
- According to the authoritarian theory to media press, the authority or the owner of media controls the discussion on the specific topic. Why did these medias report about 2014 Coup d'état in different trajectories?

## **Objective of the study**

Then-Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra proceeded a bold policy to cut of the chain from middle income trap. By executing the policy of investment on infrastructure and water management, Yingluck succeeded primarily in boosting Thailand's economy policy. The politics, however, destroyed Yingluck's reputation. With allegation of corruption and ineptness to govern, General Prayut Chan-o-cha overturned this regime on 20 May 2014. This research focuses on the comparison amongst the reportages on the incident of 2014 Coup d'état operated by incumbent Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha. By analysing the angle of Chinese medias to this military coup, this research explores thoroughly how South China Morning Post, Global Times, Central News Agency, and The Straits Times represent different opinions from their ownerships.

According to the authoritarian theory to press media, owners of media attempted to create the unity or single value that the discussion and opinion in the society is beneficial to the owner and the authority. It is essential to analyse the ownership of Global Times and South China Morning Post, Central News Agency and Straits Times

which would lead to different angles of reportages on this coup. Owing to the fact that the holding of media can mostly control the trajectory of reportages on each story, the direction to report this coup significantly represents the opinion of the owners as supporter or opposer.

Media	Global Times	SCMP	Central News Agency	Straits Times
Ownership	China's State Media	Pro-state Media	Taiwan's State Media	Pro-state Media

This research explores the stance of Chinese medias on 2014 Thailand's Coup by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha. According to Authoritarian Theory in Press, one country owns state media to deliver its opinion aligning the national policy. This research lists 4 Chinese medias, Global Times, South China Morning Post, Central News Agency, and Straits Times to compare the different trajectories of news reportages on a single issue, 2014 Coup in Thailand since these chosen medias serve as the medium between nation and this significant incident. Global Times was founded by Chinese Communist Party in 1993, and initially this state media translated news reportages of foreign media to Chinese content. Chinese government, however, transformed this newspaper to a political tool for conveying China's position on each issue in international society. The reputation of Global Times has been recognised as China's Fox News due to its political propaganda and covert stance on nationalism<sup>2</sup>. To this research, China's state media plays an important role as the reportages and op-eds of Global Times represent how peculiar the international relations between Thailand and

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<sup>2</sup> Hernandez, J. C. (2019). When Trump Tweets, the Editor of "China's Fox News" Hits Back. *The New York Times*.

China is. Chinese leaders also disseminate the neutral stance on 2014 Coup as this coup decision has been involved in great powers in the world.

Producing an overt comparison in this research must include South China Morning Post. This Hong Kong based news media has survived in news industry for more than 110 years. Since British colonial era, this newspaper, established by Australian revolutionist and British journalist, has served as the propaganda tool for governments<sup>3</sup>. From British colony to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, South China Morning Post transformed from a news outlet supporting reform movement in late Qing Dynasty to a tool conveying certain messages approved by pro-Beijing news team with the circulation of at least 100 thousand pieces a day, which could be observed the pro-China stance due to the subsequent appointment of Editor-in-Chief of this newspaper. On the subject of 2014 Coup in Thailand, this research delves into the trajectory of this newspaper on undemocratic movement by Thailand's junta and their analysis on western country's involvement in this political ploy.

Comparing to medias owned by Chinese government and pro-China enterprise, this research also explores the position of Taiwan's Central News Agency on 2014 Coup in Thailand. In 1924, Central News Agency was founded by Kuomintang in Guangzhou for announcing important policies in mainland China. After Civil war between Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party in mainland in 1949, Central News Agency converted into the sole media in Taiwan to deliver Kuomintang's propaganda against the communist<sup>4</sup>. Not until 1987, the influence of Central News Agency deteriorated as the martial law had been lifted by President Chiang Ching-kuo.

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<sup>3</sup> Carless, D. (1995). Politicised expressions in the South China Morning Post. *English Today*, 11(2), 18-22.

<sup>4</sup> Liu, C-H. (1998). The transition of Central News Agency. *Tamkang University Journal*.



In 1995, Taiwan's parliament passed the bill to transform Central News Agency as the national press to represent the opinion of Taiwan's government. On the theme of this research, it would be expected that Central News Agency would disseminate the sense of democracy. Regarding the arbitrary method to unseat elected Prime Minister by Prayut Chan-o-Cha and military juntas, this research probes how Taiwan's government criticised the undemocratic coup by Thailand's military.

In the discussion of Chinese medias in Chinese speaking countries, it is impossible to exclude the stance of Singapore. In the history, Singapore always shows neutrality between crossfires of China and Taiwan. The very first meeting between Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang after Civil War, Wang-Koo Summit, and the very first meeting between political leaders of China and Taiwan took place in Singapore. The flexibility of mediation, however, has not extended to the control of media. Stability is the utmost significance for Singapore's ruling party, People's Action Party<sup>5</sup>. Singapore's government promulgates watertight legal system to control media, such as Internal Security Act and Official Secret Act. Every Singaporean media must obey the governmental regulations, including Straits Times. This pro government media has been controlled by Singapore Press Holding Limited, a government affiliated enterprise, and Chairman of Straits Times is Former Minister for Defence. It is understandable the ruling party robustly maintains the stability of Singapore by controlling media outlets, but how the mouthpiece of Singaporean government reacted to 2014 Thailand's coup is more interesting.

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<sup>5</sup> George, C. (2002). Singapore: Media at the Mainstream and the Margins. In *Media Fortunes, Changing Times: ASEAN States in Transition* (pp. 173-200). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

## **Hypothesis**

Many foreign medias reported 2014 coup in Thailand with their own opinions, including Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, China's Global Times, Taiwan's Central News Agency, and Singapore's Straits Times. All medias represent opinion of owners behind the curtain. The ownership could be public or private sector connected to the authority, so each media has its own trajectory to report this coup, which would be parallel to the national policy of each state towards Thailand. In comparison amongst 4 media companies, this paper assumes that Global Times and South China Morning Post would possess identical positions to align with the national policy of Chinese government. In terms of 2014 Thailand's coup, Chinese government would execute neutral policy to maintain its harmonic relations with Thailand. Hence, its medias, including Global Times, and pro-state medias, including South China Morning Post, would cover this coup with the identical standpoints as China's government did. On the contrary, Taiwan's Central News Agency would criticise this undemocratic action and state the importance of democracy. Taiwan, as one of democratic polities in Asia, would strongly oppose undemocratic tactics to overturn any elected government. Central News Agency, as Taiwan's state media, would denounce 2014 Thailand's coup of an illegitimate strategy. The Straits Times, however, would maintain the neutrality to cover this coup, aligning with Singapore's national policy towards Thailand.

## Methodology



This research is conducted in qualitative and analytical review. Regarding literature review, the researcher would search appropriately for useful resources articles, journals, and newspapers to verify whether four Chinese media, including China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agencies, and Singapore's Straits Times covered Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état in accordance with their government's policies towards this political turmoil in Thailand. In addition, this paper compares differences amongst targeted media agencies in terms of news trajectory, government's policy, and critics towards 2014 coup. Regarding the definition of *Chinese Media* in this paper, the prospect researcher identifies Chinese Media with regard to ethnicity since state-owned/pro-state medias in these four polities would perform in different methods to cover 2014 coup. Due to each government's political system, this paper argues that newspaper's trajectory would be immensely influenced by each government's national policy with Thailand, and newspaper would disseminate messages according to each government's viewpoints. Therefore, China's Global Times and Hong Kong's

South China Morning Post would cover 2014 Thailand's coup with neutral viewpoints since China and Thailand maintains great relations in terms of diplomacy. In addition, Singapore's Straits Times might take the similar stance as Global Times' and South China Morning Post's as Singapore usually takes same stances in respect of regional issues. However, this paper would view Taiwan's Central News Agency criticising this undemocratic coup since Taiwan's government is the only policy representing democratic values and human rights in Chinese nations.



## **Literature Review**

This paper scrutinises news reportages on 2014 Thailand's coup d'état by Chinese medias, including China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency & Singapore's Straits Times and compares news trajectories with the stance of its owners. The resource on this research is scarce as papers on this comparative research amongst Chinese medias are rarely produced. However, similar research on the ramification between Media and Russian Elections in 1999 and 2000 is useful for this paper. By the late summer of 1999, the ruling party, Fatherland-All Russia, had great opportunity to win most of seats in State Duma in December 1999 according to polls<sup>6</sup>. Although this ruling party prepared for the success in State Duma in late 1999 and another bigger victory for Presidential Election in 2000, new party, Unity, stole the spotlight because of mass media. Unity, a political party established in September 1999, finished a close second in State Duma election and Vladimir Putin became the newly appointed Russia's Prime Minister. According to this research, the dramatic change from former ruling party to Unity resulted from frequent broadcast from the state media, Russian Public Television. Even though this state media was under direct control of Kremlin, this most widely available channel in Russia produced disproportionate coverage for Unity and Putin during 1999 election. This is the example that state media's standpoint and government's policy are dissimilar on political incidents.

In terms of case study in this paper, it could be expected that four Chinese medias would cover Thailand's coup in 2014 in equivalent standpoint as their governments'.

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<sup>6</sup> White, S., Oates, S., & McAllister, I. (2005). Media Effects and Russian Elections, 1999-2000. *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(2), 191–208.

Chinese government has founded several medias, including Global Times, to promote the Chinese value to the world. According to *Strange Bedfellow in Xinjiang The CCP, fringe media and US social platforms*<sup>7</sup>, Chinese Communist's Party infringed US social platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to convey the message of Chinese government on Xinjiang Uyghur. This fact reflects the policy of Chinese government, which represents how a communist polity controls state medias, including Global Times, to disseminate the national policy by delivering China's opinions. In the figure of this paper, Chinese government can fully control state medias to deliver government's national policy towards Thailand's interior issues, which could show China's neutrality towards this coup. In addition to Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post is also fully controlled by pro-China team since the China-critics chief has been removed in 2000. Although South China Morning Post was founded for expressing freedom of speech and seeking for critical opinions during British colonial period, critics has been confined since editorial team has been transformed. In terms of this paper, South China Morning Post might hold the same viewpoint as Global Times' stance because this Hong Kong's newspaper could only produce identical news trajectory as its owner's.

On the contrary to China's medias, Singapore government promulgated severe laws to control media. According to *Singapore: Media at the Mainstream and the Margins*<sup>8</sup>, Singapore's long-lasting ruling party, People's Action Party, has established the national press for Singapore's stability. Due to the law of Internal Security Acts and Official Secrets Act, Singaporean medias could not dig out government's

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<sup>7</sup> Zhang, A., Wallis, J., & Meers, Z. (2021). (Rep.). Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Retrieved July 4, 2021

<sup>8</sup> George, C. (2002). Singapore: Media at the Mainstream and the Margins. In *Media Fortunes, Changing Times: ASEAN States in Transition* (pp. 173-200). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

confidentiality and must follow the lead from central government. This legal regulation directly connects to the topic of this research since the position of Straits Times, one of government affiliated medias in Singapore, on 2014 Thailand's Coup aligns the national policy of Singaporean government. Due to these regulations, Straits Times could only produce articles, of which news trajectory is parallel to Singapore government's national policy. Thailand and Singapore are usually on the same stance when it comes to ASEAN affairs, so Singapore might adopt neutral stance to Thailand's internal issues. Lastly, Taiwan's Central News Asia's standpoint might be different than other medias in this paper since the government is the only democratic polity in this paper. To represent Taiwan's government in terms of the only democratic nation in Chinese-speaking country, this Taiwan's state media would criticise Thailand's junta's undemocratic tactics to overturn the elected government in 2014. Despite diverse news trajectories, it would be expected that four medias would firmly adhere to national policies because of ownerships.

## History of Chinese Medias

### South China Morning Post

During British Colonisation period in Hong Kong, Chinese bourgeoisies possessed the freedom of expression by pouring their opinions in South Morning Post after this English newspaper was founded in 1903<sup>9</sup>. South China Morning Post was established for joint tactics as this Hong Kong's English newspaper did not only provide for English readers but for also Chinese. Chinese belonging to higher status in social hierarchy extracted significant information form South China Morning Post, which was not parallel to other British colonial territories in Asia. Singapore's Straits Times, for instance, was initially existed for British readers rather than Singapore's Chinese audiences or non-British readers. On the contrary, Hong Kong English newspapers, including South China Morning Post, had the special status in British colonial territories to express critical sense for local issues if these news reportages were based on substantive facts. Before the establishment of South Morning Post, 3 English newspapers, Hong Kong Daily Press, China Mail and Hong Kong Telegraph, only served for British readers. Editors of these newspapers, if criticising the colonial government continuously, could be arrested by the authority in the name of libel. Therefore, British journalist, Alfred Cunningham, Douglas Story, Thomas Petrie and a Chinese reformer, Tse Tsan Tai, were destined to found South China Morning Post in 1903. Due to great relationship with Hong Kong government, these founding editorials grew the business and audience with ease. With their 'soft' style to report issues in Hong Kong, South China Morning Post developed huge publishment from the initial copies of 400 to 100 thousand copies in approximately 40 years. The success

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<sup>9</sup> Zou, Y. (2015). English Newspaper in British colonial Hong Kong: the case of the South China Morning Post (1903-1941). *Critical Arts*



was not only beneficial to the publication but also to the stoical status of Chinese people and to the freedom of press in Hong Kong during British colonisation. Until the end of British Colonisation, the reputation of South Morning Post remained in the light of great criticism towards every aspect, including China's issues. However, the fundamental trajectories towards China have changed since the ouster of the China-critics chief, Willy Lam, in 2000<sup>10</sup>. After this dramatical change in editorial teams, the reputation of South China Morning Post has been stained due to the vehement intensification of self-censorship towards China's issues. In this research, the analysis of reportages published by South China Morning Post depicts the connection between the trajectory of articles and national policy.

### Global Times

The establishment of Global Times (in pinyin, Huanqiu Shibao) took place in 1993, which was comparatively late to newspapers the researcher analyses in this research. Global Times is supervised by People's Daily, a newspaper group directly invested by Chinese government. The initial title of this newspaper was called Global News Digest Daily, which only published Chinese newspaper. To grow its influence on English readers, Global Times began to publish English version in 2009 and further extended its service to online media in 2012. Fulfilling similar missions as other official papers do, Global Times not only follows the official line executed by Chinese Communist Party but also represents different style to deliver news. Comparing to others, Global Times has sensational content to attract Chinese audience as well as critics from western media. This strategy has obviously gained success as the print

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<sup>10</sup> Wiebrecht, F. (2018). Cultural co-orientation revisited: The case of South China Morning Post. *Global Media and China*. East China Normal University.

figure has increased over 2 million copies in 2017<sup>11</sup>. Due to its sensational content, Global Times is not regarded as a media agency for internal information but for broader audience in Chinese society, so its editorials incline to produce sensational content rather serious analytical news articles. Global Times, therefore, gradually becomes the aggregation between official nationalism defined by Chinese Communist Party and cultural nationalism by presenting foreign policies of China in a popular form. Due to its sensationalism and advocacy for Chinese Communist Party, internal and external critics have been aroused. Chinese scholars criticise that Global Times is a factory to create articles on nationalism whilst this newspaper gained a lot of criticism by western medias due to its stance on nationalism and political agenda. Western medias even categorised Global Times as the “China’s Fox News” as its editorials’ slant on political agenda and nationalism<sup>12</sup>. Owing to Global Times’ political propaganda, US Government officially categorised Global Times and other 4 Chinese medias as foreign missions<sup>13</sup>. In addition, one of the most impressing examples is how the popular editor, Hu Xijing, reacted to US top officials’ statements and cross-strait issues. In this research, it’s covert to see how Chinese government’s attitude towards 2014 Thailand’s coup. The researcher will analyse if the trajectory of Global Times’ articles and China’s national policy are parallel.

### Central News Agency

Before Kuomintang government withdrew to the island of Taiwan, Central News

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<sup>11</sup> Zeng, W., & Sparks, C. (2020). Popular nationalism: Global Times and the US–China trade war. *International Communication Gazette*, 82(1), 26–41.

<sup>12</sup> Hernandez, J. C. (2019). When Trump Tweets, the Editor of “China’s Fox News” Hits Back. *The New York Times*.

<sup>13</sup> Wong, E. (2020). US Designates Four More Chinese News Organisations as Foreign Missions. *The New York Times*.

Agency maintained the similar mission as Chinese Communist Party's medias', such as Xinhua News Agency, to publicise the information from Kuomintang's top officials, to control the radio frequency and to impede the development of communism in China. In 1924, Central News Agency was established by Kuomintang. At this stage, Central News Agency belonged to party's tool to distribute the news regarding the war against Japanese Army<sup>14</sup>. Journalists of Central News Agency frequently reported in battlefields with Kuomintang's Generals as battling with Japanese Army in important cities in China. Defeated by Chinese Communist Party during China's Civil War in 1949, Kuomintang moved Central News Agency's headquarter from Nanjing to Taipei. Central News Agency progressively transformed its trajectory from the reportage on wars to the international relations amongst other countries, including the frozen moment with United States as US President Jimmy Carter recognised the legal status of People's Republic of China in 1979<sup>15</sup>. This party-owned newspaper also reported the economic boom due to 10 Major Infrastructural Projects propelled by ROC's President Chiang Ching-kuo since 1970. In this period, Central News Agency not only focused on international issues but also Taiwan's issues. After the end of martial law in Taiwan in 1987, the democratisation of media had been demanded. In 1995, Legislative Yuan, the national parliament in Taiwan, passed a bill restructure Central News Agency from party-owned press to national news press. In following year, this national news agency commenced its mission to serve the public by providing domestic and global news, transmitting news about the country to foreign countries,

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<sup>14</sup> Wang, Y-T. (2007). The Changing Role of Central News Agency: A Challenge in the Age of Globalisation. *National ChengChi University*.

<sup>15</sup> History of Focus Taiwan (Central News Agency English News). *Website of Focus Taiwan*. <https://focustaiwan.tw/aboutus>

and solidifying the cooperation between Central News Agency and international media organisations. In this research, the analysis of this Taiwan's state-owned media towards 2014 Thailand's coup will be presented in terms of Taiwan's stance on the reversion of democracy and the critics on undemocratic plot to overturn the elected government.

### The Straits Times

As one of the most historical presses in Singapore, Straits Times is the most viewed read newspaper in Singapore with the record of print and digital leadership of 1.34 million in 2014<sup>16</sup>. This press belongs to Singapore Press Holdings, being regulated by the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974. Although the incumbent CEO of Singapore Press Holdings is a businessman, every significant role and shareholder must be approved by Singapore's Ministry of Information, Communications and Arts. Based on this law, Straits Times has been controlled strictly by Singapore's government. Historically, the establishment of Straits Times traced back to 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1845, merchants in Singapore founded this paper for weekly publication to compete against Singapore Journal of Commerce. Due to lack of subscribers, Straits Times found adversities at the beginning of its period. Surviving amid the low revenue, this newspaper changed its coverage and price for increasing its subscribers. In following years, the privatisation of Straits Times attracted more investment from foreign corporates. Although the publication of this paper was halted temporarily during the occupation of Japanese government, Straits Times expanded its service and dominion by purchasing Malaysia's newspapers. After the rapid development and thereon Singapore's independence from Malaysia, Singapore's government planned to control this influential newspaper by merging with Singapore

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<sup>16</sup> Ho, S. (2016). The Straits Times. Infopedia. *Government of Singapore*.

Presses Holdings. In 1984, the merger between Straits Times and Singapore Presses Holdings was completed, but the critics on the independent journalism in Straits Times has been stirred since the merger by the governmental organisation. As Singapore promulgated several laws to control the public opinion, including Internal Security Act and Official Secret Act, medias forcibly execute self-censorship to filter content before publications<sup>17</sup>. In this research, the researcher will analyse the trajectory of news articles published by Straits Times. It is significant to understand how editors of this paper describe 2014 coup in Thailand and to scrutinise how the trajectory of the article directs to national policy of Singapore.



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<sup>17</sup> Aglionby, J. (2010). A tick in one box. *The Guardian*.

## Content Analysis of News Article

In this chapter, the analysis of empirical research on China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency, and Singapore's Straits Times is described. It is significant to understand what the attitude of these media agencies is towards 2014 Thailand's coup by scrutinising quantity of articles, category, and photos in newspapers. By analysing these 3 factors, it is intuitive to discover how these media agencies demonstrated their interest in Thailand's internal issues in 2014. Firstly, the quantity of articles regarding 2014 Thailand's coup published represents the significance of this topic in each media agency's newsroom during the unstable political environment in Thailand. The more articles were produced, the more important this subject was. The composition of newspapers, furthermore, epitomises how editors highlight news topics in frontpage, each category, and op-ed. From this point of view, articles placed at category in newspapers demonstrates apparent significance to newspaper's audience. It also shows the initiative of each media agency to proactively cover 2014 Thailand's coup. In addition, photos in news articles serve as the potent factor to lead audience when readers understand the trajectory of news articles published by these state-owned or pro-state news medias. The researcher will scrutinise articles with quantity, category, and photos published and selected by news medias, representing the attitude of each media agency.

Media/ Subject	Global Times	South Morning Post	Central News Agency	Straits Times
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Quantity of Articles*	18 <sup>18</sup>	20	5	17
Articles in Category	Central & South Asia x5 Asia-Pacific x5 Op-ed x4 America x1 Economyx1 Societyx1 Travel x1	Asia x16 Op-ed x3 Hong Kong x1	Politics x3 Society x2	Asia x 12 Op-ed x4 Singapore x1
Photo	No	Yes	No	Yes

\*Quantity of articles of each media agency is well examined from their official websites, Google News and National Database.

According to the English website of Global Times, 18 articles relevant to Thailand's Coup d'état were published in the year of 2014, including 5 articles placed in Central & South Asia, another 5 articles in Asia-Pacific category, 4 articles contributed by columnists, and 1 article each in the category of America, Economy, Society and Travel. With surprising display, Global Times' English articles were circulated without any photo, which could lead readers to the trajectory set by the news agency. Regarding the average number of words in articles circulated by Global Times, articles with 800 words are fundamental on its English website. Interestingly, the researcher found that most of articles released by Global Times were written by its writers. Only 4 articles in the category of Central & South Asia were purchased from Agence France-Presse and Reuters while the rest of 14 articles were edited by Global Times' reporters and columnists<sup>19</sup>. From this perspective, it is speculated that Global Times was eager to maintain its own views on 2014 Thailand's coup rather than only report this political crisis from the eye of western medias. In addition to the viewpoint

<sup>18</sup> This data is acquired on the English website of Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/>. The researcher searched key word "Thailand" and added another condition with the word "coup", and eventually 18 articles published in 2014 were relevant to this research.

<sup>19</sup> On the English website of Global Times, it is clearly shown that the writer's name or organisation's name, including writer's, columnist's or media agency's.

from this Chinese media, one articles in Op-ed was written by Thai columnist, of which the trajectory targeted at the huge influence on viewpoint from foreign countries, regional organisations, and investors<sup>20</sup>, including US and ASEAN.

On the website of South China Morning Post, it was found that 20 articles are relevant to 2014 Thailand's coup. Amongst these circulation, 16 articles were included in the category of Asia while another 3 articles were categorised in op-ed and another article placed in the category of Hong Kong<sup>21</sup>. Regarding the selection of photo, the editorial team of South China Morning Post chose powerful pictures, including frowning Thailand's Prime Minister, Thailand's King and his relinquished queen, and soldiers with live ammunition during 2014 coup. These photos are extremely potent when audiences read these articles as photo does not describe what a story is but demonstrate the sense of a story. About the number of words on South China Morning Post's articles, averagely 500 words were acceptable in terms of articles regarding 2014 Thailand's coup. In comparison to Global Times, most of articles were written by international agencies, especially those in the category of Asia. Reporters from Reuters, Agence France-Presse, The Associated Press and Bloomberg contributed 16 articles in this category. Only 2 articles, including 1 article in Hong Kong's category and another in Op-ed, were written by South China Morning Post's reporter. In addition, a pro-democracy exile activist also contributed his piece regarding Thailand's Royal Family in op-ed section<sup>22</sup>. After all, it is observed that South China Morning

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<sup>20</sup> Chaoroenvattananukul, P. (2014). Political Turmoil in Thailand Will Harm Foreign Policy Outlook. Opinion. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201401/839686.shtml>

<sup>21</sup> On the website of South China Morning Post, it is clearly shown that the writer's name or organisation's name, including writer's, columnist's or media agency's.

<sup>22</sup> Chachavalpongpun, P. (2014). Eye on The Throne, Thailand's Crown Prince Appears To Be Putting His House In Order. Opinion. *South China Morning Post*.



Post did not put its own efforts to report Thailand's political turmoil in 2014 but to stand in neutral position by publishing articles contributed by international news agencies. Although Thailand's military juntas were criticised in op-ed, South China Morning Post surely didn't provide its own outlook on 2014 Thailand's farrago.

Comparing to Global Times and South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency did not circulate a lot of articles on its English website, Focus Taiwan. Only 5 articles were written, including 3 articles in politics and the rest in the category of society<sup>23</sup>. Concerning the quantity of words averagely, reporters of Focus Taiwan did not put a lot of description in the article as on average 400 words consist of an article depicting the political situation of Thailand's coup in 2014. On the website of Focus Taiwan, articles were released without any photo, so it is hard to understand how Taiwan's state-owned media guided readers to any trajectory by these articles. With the surprise of few circulations reporting on the case of 2014 Thailand's coup, Taiwan's state-owned media should have written, described, and even criticised the undemocratic move by Thailand's military juntas. However, it is comparatively lacking resources to witness only 5 articles regarding this research's topic were circulated in 2014. Focus Taiwan's editorials team did not list either any articles from international news agency on the website while South China Morning Post and Global Times uploaded many articles from other international news agencies to bring in different angles.

It's a different approach in contrast to Taiwan's Focus Taiwan in terms of the reportage of Singapore's The Straits Times. With similar mechanism to other agencies

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<sup>23</sup> The researcher searched articles regarding 2014 Thailand's coup with key word, *Thailand*, on the database of Focus Taiwan, Taiwan's Central News Agency's English website, and eventually only 5 articles were relevant to this topic.

in this research, The Straits Times published 17 articles in total regarding 2014 Thailand's coup, including 12 articles in Asia's category, 4 articles in op-ed and another article in Singapore's segment<sup>24</sup>. Concerning the choice to publish articles with photos, The Straits Times selected pictures catching eyeballs, including singing soldiers on military truck, monks waiting for merits on the street during coup, and graffiti criticising that Thailand political system was controlled by military juntas and politicians. Regarding the quantity of word, reporters of The Straits Times maintained the level of 600 words on average. In comparison to South China Morning Post, half of articles were written by The Straits Times' reporters and another half were contributed by international news agencies, including Agence France-Presse, Reuters and Washington Post as The Straits Times has Bangkok Bureau, which can fairly report what happened in Thailand during coup in 2014. In op-ed segment, half of articles were edited by Thai influential individuals, including famous Thailand's journalist<sup>25</sup>. All in all, it is shown that The Straits Times provided its own description of Thailand's coup in 2014. Even though this Singapore's media agency listed some articles on its website, articles contributed by Bangkok Bureau furnished its own observation into this political turmoil. Based on this factual data, China's Global Times delivered the most of its reflection on the topic of 2014 Thailand's coup as 14 in 18 articles were written by its reporters. The big contrast is, however, the case of Taiwan's Central News Agency. On its English website, Focus Taiwan, this agency only provided 5 relevant articles for this political chaos despite no listing of other articles published by

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<sup>24</sup> On the website of The Straits Times, it is clearly shown that the writer's name or organisation's name, including writer's, columnist's or media agency's.

<sup>25</sup> Rojanaphruk, P. (2014) A Reluctant ruler in the 'other Thailand'. Opinion. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/a-reluctant-ruler-in-the-other-thailand>

other international news agencies.



## Comparison between News Trajectory and Government's Stance

2014 Thailand's Coup d'état by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha drew foreign media's attention since Thailand's politics divided this kingdom's society into two sides, Thaksin's grassroot supporters from countryside and middle class & elites protecting their own benefits in the society. The role of superpowers also played potently in this political turmoil as United States and China's move represented their stance on Prayut's legitimacy and attitude for 2014 Coup. In this chapter, the comparison between four state/pro-state medias will be depicted by category of title, context and trajectory produced by each foreign media. Some emphasise on the stance of Coup's influence on Thailand's tourism, US and China government, Thailand's domestic policies and the role of Thailand's monarchy in coups.

Media/Subject	Photo	Findings
Global Times	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced 14 news articles while publishing 4 articles by international medias</li> <li>Focused on topics of Cambodia's reaction to 2014 Thailand's coup, US reaction, and travel restriction in the section of factual reportage</li> <li>Criticised Thailand's coup by angles of intervening vote system, malfunctioning judiciary system, and disrespecting law, which disrupted foreign policies of other countries in op-ed section</li> </ul>
South Morning Post	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced 4 articles regarding 2014 coup whilst published 16 articles by international medias</li> <li>Concentrated upon US Response, vicious circle in Thailand's politics, economy, and immigrant worker's rights in factual coverage</li> <li>Denounced military juntas of disrupting Thailand's politics and accused Thailand's monarchy of involving in this political calamity due to its connections with military juntas in op-ed section</li> </ul>
Central News Agency	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced 5 articles for 2014 Thailand's coup</li> <li>Focused on travel restriction, the political calamity, and Taiwan's government's response</li> <li>Demanded Thailand's government to restore the stability and &amp; democratic rule for next election and warned nationals travelling in Thailand</li> <li>Did <b>NOT</b> show its stance regarding this issue since Focus Taiwan lacked op-ed section on its page.</li> </ul>
Straits Times	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced 10 news articles while publishing 7 articles by international medias</li> <li>Focused on US reaction, monarchy's role, coup's history, and ASEAN's solution in factual coverage</li> <li>Analysed Thailand's authoritarianism during leaderships by military juntas and elected governments, illustrated monarchy's influence in politics, scrutinised economic impact, and revealed Prayut's masquerade to initiate 2014 coup</li> </ul>

China's state media, Global Times, published 18 articles regarding 2014

Thailand's Coup d'état. Most of these articles were published in the category of World News while 3 pieces were attached to the category of Op-ed. Global Times executed the initiatives to report the political calamity in Thailand with factual news since the editorial team published 4 articles written by international news agency and the rest of

were edited by Global Times' reporters or contributors. In addition to the colossal influence on Thailand's tourism industry<sup>26</sup>, Global Times focused on the chaotic politics in Thailand, the stance of US and China on this coup and Cambodia's official attitude on Thailand's military junta. Cambodia's Acting Prime Minister Sar Kheng expressed official statement to media that '*to continue maintaining peace, order, cooperation and development along Cambodia-Thailand border; the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the National Police must advise all armed forces stationed along the border to continue good cooperation and relations with Thai side*'<sup>27</sup>. This official announcement showed Cambodia did not pursue for confrontations with Thailand during 2014 coup but avoidance with any issue with Thailand at that critical moment given that the tension between Cambodia and Thailand has escalated since the geopolitical dispute on one temple located at border between these neighbouring countries since July 2008.

Global Times, moreover, covered the fact of Thailand's political turmoil in 2014 from Constitutional Court's decision, Yingluck's caretaker government to coup d'état initiated by Prayut Chan-o-Cha. In this political scenario, superpower's stance might not shape the story to the better direction. In Global Times' articles, US former Secretary of State publicly commented "*I urge the restoration of civilian government immediately, a return to democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as press freedoms*"<sup>28</sup>. With his push, US government sanctioned its support to Thailand in terms of military assistance to pressure Thailand for returning to

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<sup>26</sup> Yabin, J. (2014). Interest In Traveling To Thailand Stays Low. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201405/862118.shtml>

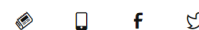
<sup>27</sup> Agencies. (2014). Cambodia Tells Troups, Governors along Borders To Continue Good Ties With Thailand. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201405/861890.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> Agencies. (2014). US Curtails Military Ties with Thailand After Coup. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201405/861981.shtml>

democratic rule. US also cancelled the annual military training with Thailand and rescinded the invitation for Thailand's General to visit US Pacific Command. However, Thailand did not change its policy after coup even though US, its important ally, sanctioned with its military ties with Thailand. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha rather continued to implement curfews and to govern this kingdom until the national wide parliamentary election in 2019.

(This article was published on Global Times' website<sup>29</sup>, depicting that judiciary

 Global Times



OPINION / ASIAN REVIEW

## Judiciary may help steer Thailand through reefs of political chaos

By Zhou Fangye

Published: Apr 01, 2014 07:58 PM Updated: Apr 01, 2014 09:56 PM



Thailand's Constitutional Court has ruled the February general elections invalid, which pushed the heated political squabble between anti-Thaksin Shinawatra, the controversial exiled leader, and pro-Shinawatra groups back to square one. Three months of chaos has caused deaths, casualties and huge economic losses. There is still no sign of compromise between the sides, and the society is seeing even more social division and conflicts.

Both the middle-income "Yellow Shirts" and the grass-roots "Red Shirts" are preparing for stronger street politics campaigns, trying to take the initiative in system may help and guide Thailand through 2014 political turmoil.)

In terms of publication in Global Times' website, the category of op-ed articles epitomises various voices from different academic fields. According to Peera, a Thai researcher in United Kingdom, the instability in Thailand's politics unavoidably affected integration of ASEAN, superpower's stance on supporting this kingdom and potential investment. *"Nine foreign leaders who participated in the regional gathering needed to flee for their safety. The summit had to be postponed indefinitely. That was a*

<sup>29</sup> Zhou, F. (2014). Judiciary May Help Steer Thailand Through Reefs of Political Chaos. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201404/852093.shtml>

*huge embarrassment for Thailand. While Myanmar is undertaking reforms in various dimensions, Laos is improving infrastructure, and Vietnam is following guidelines for regional connectivity in terms of logistics, Thailand is plagued by internal divisions which are stalling its own development*<sup>30</sup>.” Peera compared the rapid development of neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia whilst Thailand’s citizen was fighting against each other. In addition to the comparison with neighbours, gaining benefits in the political game between great powers showed Thailand’s successful foreign policy in terms of key role amongst Japan, US, and China. However, this political chaos disrupted foreign policy outlook in this region. The best scenario is that Thailand cooperates with US and other democratic allies to counterbalance China’s influence in Southeast Asia whilst maintaining good relationship with China in terms of business and investment. The disruption resulting from confrontations amongst red shirt, yellow shirt, and military in 2014 entirely galvanised the grave concern from democratic polity.

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<sup>30</sup> Chaoroenvattananukul, P. (2014). Political Turmoil in Thailand Will Harm Foreign Policy Outlook. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201401/839686.shtml>



OPINION / VIEWPOINT

## Political turmoil in Thailand will harm foreign policy outlook

By Peera Chaoroenvattananukul

Published: Jan 27, 2014 06:53 PM



Since the 2006 coup which ousted the democratically elected Thai government headed by Thaksin Shinawatra, the political landscape of Thailand has been in a state of twists and turns.

The Thais have been divided into two major political cliques: One side deeply believes in the one-man-one-vote principle as a fundamental precept to true democracy, whereas the other holds that "a fair election without vote buying" is indispensable to a democratic mechanism.

(This article was published on Global Times' website<sup>31</sup>, depicting how political turmoil will harm foreign policy outlook.)

In op-ed, another Chinese researcher speculated Thailand's judiciary system might transform the politics if Courts could serve as the middle ground between grass root protesters and royalists<sup>32</sup>. In this article, the lack of middle ground aroused the continuous division in the society given that the political turmoil began due to pursuit for political power. The withered influence of monarchy also galvanised the instability of Thailand's politics, but the judiciary system might take over the middle power to impede the turmoil and to establish compromise for both sides. Nevertheless, a balance between two sides could bring about long-lasting peace in this kingdom on the condition that both sides would respect the judiciary system, seek common grounds, and view the wellbeing of Thailand's citizen as the priority. In addition to this

<sup>31</sup> Chaoroenvattananukul, P. (2014). Political Turmoil in Thailand Will Harm Foreign Policy Outlook. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201401/839686.shtml>

<sup>32</sup> Zhou, F. (2014). Judiciary May Help Steer Thailand Through Reefs of Political Chaos. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201404/852093.shtml>

speculation, disrespecting law system in Thailand might result in a disastrous state. Song explained the reason why this political chaos was formed and how the law was ineffectively used during the chaos. *“Thai’s constitutional court and anti-corruption commission, which are supposed to be neutral, often tower over the democratically elected government and parliament. They snubbed charges against the Democratic Party but prioritized investigations involving the pro-Thaksin group. They have degraded into a tool of political struggle which helps fuel the political confrontation<sup>33</sup> .”* In this article, the constitutional court and anti-corruption commission were criticised since the judiciary system did not act as the neutral organisation in this society but catalysed the political chaos in 2014. During these confrontations between the poor, the rich, and people from different classes in social hierarchy, Court could not execute the hegemonial power to mitigate the tension in this political chaos but magnify the chaos since Thai society from grass roots to political parties does not respect the fundamental structure of democracy and law.

Without photos attached to Global Times’ articles, the stance of China’s state media is crystal clear given the trajectory set by the editor’s team. The editor’s team chose to publish 18 articles regarding Thailand’s coup in 2014, which represents how concentrating Global Times is on this topic. In addition to cover this political chaos in Thailand with domestic issues, this China’s state media depicted how US reacted to Thailand’s undemocratic move. What clearly shows the trajectory of this news is in the category of op-ed, in which the independence of judiciary system was questioned by researchers. Strong stance on the neutrality of judiciary system, the fact on withering

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<sup>33</sup> Song, Q. (2014). Lack of Respect for Law Leaves Thailand on Brink Of Becoming Failed State. *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201405/860906.shtml>

influence of Thailand's monarchy and the mayhem's influence on foreign policy outlook epitomises how Global Times assessed this coup in 2014.



The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on the Global Times website. The header includes the 'GT Global Times' logo and navigation icons. The article is categorized under 'OPINION / ASIAN REVIEW'. The title is 'Lack of respect for law leaves Thailand on brink of becoming failed state'. The author is 'By Song Qingrun' and it was published on 'May 18, 2014 08:13 PM'. There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and Weibo. The main text begins with: 'Thailand has witnessed political unrest and massive casualties on the street over the past eight years. This round of turbulence which started at the end of last year has killed and injured over 800.' A second paragraph states: 'The country has been plunged deeper into political chaos after the supreme court ousted prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra for abuse of power and sacked nine cabinet members who were serving with Yingluck.' A third paragraph starts with: 'Anti-government protesters led by Suthep Thaugsuban launched a "final

(This article was published on Global Times' website<sup>34</sup>, depicting how political turmoil will harm foreign policy outlook.)

Comparing to the publication of Global Times, the editorial team of South China Morning Post published many foreign media's articles regarding 2014 Thailand's coup. On South China Morning Post's website, only 20 percent of articles were written by this newspaper's writers while other foreign medias, including Agence-France Presse and Associated Press contributed most of the coverage to the audience. Amongst these publications, the stark contrast between Global Times and South China Morning Post is photo. Whilst Global Times only published paragraphs, iconic pictures, including Prayut's empty eyes<sup>35</sup>, then-Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn and former Princess

<sup>34</sup> Song, Q. (2014). Lack of respect for law leaves Thailand on brink of becoming failed state. *Global Times*

<sup>35</sup> SCMP Editorials. (2014). Unity In Thailand Rests On Fairness for All Sides. *South China Morning Post*.

[https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual\\_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682](https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682)

Srirasmi<sup>36</sup>, and soldiers in front of Criminal Court during the coup<sup>37</sup>, were attached with these articles, which led audiences to the trajectory of each article.



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<sup>36</sup> Chachavalpongpun, P. (2014). Eye on The Throne, Thailand's Crown Prince Appears To Be Putting His House In Orders. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1655397/eye-throne-thailands-crown-prince-appears-be-putting-his>

<sup>37</sup> (2014). Curfew In Force Across Thailand After Military Seizes Power In Bloodless Coup. *South China*

Comment / Opinion

## Unity in Thailand rests on fairness for all sides



SCMP Editorial

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Published: 4:30am, 29 May, 2014 ▾

[Why you can trust SCMP](#)

(This photo was attached to the South China Morning Post's article<sup>38</sup>, depicting that Thai Army chief General Prayut Chan-o-cha has made political reform a priority.)

In addition to the article regarding tourism in Thailand during 2014 coup, South China Morning Post also listed articles regarding factual news concerning US' reaction on military junta's coup. Due to the political instability resulting from the confrontations between grassroots and elites in cities, US implemented the policy to level down the cooperation on military drills with Thai military, including Gold Cobra.

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<sup>38</sup> SCMP Editorials. (2014). Unity In Thailand Rests On Fairness for All Sides. *South China Morning Post*.

[https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual\\_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682](https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682)

Since 1980, Thailand and US have held this joint military drill, and recently neighbouring allies also join this colossal military activity, in which more than 13 thousand participants attend this drill every year. US embassy's spokesman reacted to this political crisis that "we are proceeding with a refocused and scaled-down Cobra Gold next year exercise ... In light of the current political situation, the US government has increased its focus on non-lethal activities, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief." Covering US' response to this calamity, South China Morning Post published potent articles in the category of op-ed.

It is crystal clear that South China Morning Post criticised the ramifications in Thailand's politics and the involvement of military junta and monarchy. The editorial team of this Hong Kong's newspaper viewed this coup as the end of violence between pro-Thaksin protesters and pro-royal supporters but also the beginning of widened division. Unity and democracy, however, were important factors for prosperity of this kingdom after the coup in 2014, but it seems the military junta could not mitigate the tension between both sides due to decline of late King's power<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, this newspaper analysed the stance of military junta during the protest between pro-monarchy supporters and pro-Thaksin protesters since Thailand's military never stood in the neutral ground during this confrontation in 2014<sup>40</sup>. Prime Minister Prayut has close connections with monarchy and political leaders in military, so it is overt that military junta's stance during the conflicts between yellow shirts and red shirts.

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<sup>39</sup> SCMP Editorials. (2014). Unity In Thailand Rests On Fairness for All Sides. *South China Morning Post*.

[https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual\\_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682](https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1520682/unity-thailand-rests-fairness-all-sides?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=1520682)

<sup>40</sup>Thompson, M. (2014). Thailand's Army Was Just Bidding Its Time Under Pro-Thaksin Rule. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/article/1519646/thailands-army-was-just-bidingits-time-under-pro-thaksin-rule>

Nevertheless, the strong influence of military junta could not shrink the popularity of Shinawatra family in Thailand's politics. Even though military junta attempted to influence election's result in 2011, former Prime Minister Yingluck still got the most powerful seat in this kingdom. In this op-ed article, Egypt's bloody coup is also mentioned as an identical example that pro-Thaksin protesters were repressed by a massive of force. At the end of this article, Thailand's military junta was denounced of producing undemocratic circle and pushing Thailand to isolation by other neighbouring countries because of unstable politics and prone to China's communism.

What drew controversial critics concerning 2014 Coup is the involvement of Thailand's monarchy in politics<sup>41</sup>. Late King Bhumibol maintained great influence in Thailand's politics due to its popularity in the society while the balance in politics might instantly change if the unpopular one grabbed the crown. Then-Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn was questioned in this article if the connection between him and Shinawatra was too intimate since royal elites and insiders speculated there'd be another better option for the crown. Yet, the reconsideration of strategy was assessed in Crown Prince's team, so a series of "cleaning house" polices were implemented after 2014 Thailand's coup. In addition to factual coverage published on the website of South China Morning Post, it is crystal clear that this newspaper's stance is to strongly criticise the ramifications of Thailand's politics as Thailand's military junta has couped Shinawatra's family for 3 times since 2001 when Prime Minister Thaksin won the national election, but the military could not enhance Thailand's prosperity but only wither the fortune of this kingdom. The complex politics also impedes Thailand's

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<sup>41</sup> Chachavalpongpun, P. (2014). Eye On The Throne, Thailand's Crown Prince Appears To Be Putting His House In Orders. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1655397/eye-throne-thailands-crown-prince-appears-be-putting-his>

development since the division between grassroots and bourgeoisie, the involvement of military and monarchy, and the vicious circle of coup and election result in deeper hiatus in the society.

In contrast to South China Morning Post's obvious stance, Taiwan's state media, Central News Agency, did not cover Thailand's 2014 Coup d'état in detail in terms of English reportage. According to its English website, Focus Taiwan, Taiwan's state media only published 5 articles including 3 placed in the category of politics and 2 placed in the category of society. Focus Taiwan reported this political crisis on the façade of tourism. Thailand's is one of Taiwanese favourite Southeast Asian countries in terms of tourism, so Taiwan's Tourism Bureau publicly expressed the disruption to Taiwan's tourists to Thailand<sup>42</sup>. Tourism Bureau's Deputy Director of General told Focus Taiwan that *"while I do not wish to dissuade tourists from travelling to Thailand, he is urging Taiwanese nationals to avoid unsafe regions and stay watchful. The Tourism Bureau will keep a close eye on developments on Thailand."* According to Focus Taiwan's reportages, Taiwan's officials understood what happened politically in Thailand and responded rapidly to this political disaster in terms of nationals travelling in this kingdom and central government's reaction.

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<sup>42</sup> Tsai, H-Y & Feng, J-S. (2014). Taiwanese Tourists Undeterred By Coup In Thailand. *Focus Taiwan*.





(This webpage was published to the Focus Taiwan's article regarding 2014 Thailand's coup<sup>43</sup>, depicting that Taiwan's government was monitoring the situation in Thailand.)

In addition to focus on the topic of tourism, Focus Taiwan's editorial team published articles concerning the travel alert connecting to 2014 political crisis in Thailand since Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the "orange" alert, which is second-highest travel alert in the policy<sup>44</sup>. Other than Taiwan's travel alert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed its efforts to negotiate with Thailand's government to protect Taiwanese nationals during this political calamity. Foreign Affairs's spokeswoman, Anna Kao, said 'the representative office immediately launched an emergency response mechanism shortly after the announcement of martial law was made<sup>45</sup>.' Central government also urged Taiwanese nationals to follow the curfew rules when travelling

<sup>43</sup> Hou, E. (2014). Taiwan Monitoring Situation In Thailand After Martial Law Launched. *Focus Taiwan*.

<sup>44</sup> Hou, E. (2014). Taiwan Raises Travel Alert For Bangkok Amid Protest Tension. *Focus Taiwan*.

<sup>45</sup> Hou, E. (2014). Taiwan Monitoring Situation In Thailand After Martial Law Launched. *Focus Taiwan*.

in Thailand since violating Thailand's martial law might result in severer guilt. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed to implement policies to protect Taiwanese in Thailand while the condemnation of 2014 by Thailand's military junta was not seen in any Focus Taiwan's article. It is surprising that Taiwan, as the only democratic Chinese-speaking country, did not denounce Thailand's junta as the undemocratic regime overthrowing the elected Yingluck's government in 2014.

On the contrary to Focus Taiwan's scarce coverage, Singapore's media, Straits Times, produced abundant articles reporting 2014 Thailand's coup. Publishing 17 related articles with interesting photos, Straits Times generated the factual coverage with deep understandings of Thailand's politics. From US' response to this coup, monarchy's role, to ASEAN's reaction, this Singaporean media scrutinised why this political crisis happened in 2014 and how the international society retorted. With the similar reportage as Focus Taiwan's, Strait Times was also the tool for Singaporean government to warn its nationals. *"Singaporeans who are travelling to Thailand should exercise a high degree of caution and take all necessary precautions for personal safety, including purchasing comprehensive travel and medical insurance<sup>46</sup>."* Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also levelled up the travel alert for Singaporean and suggested to think twice if its nationals wanted to travel in Thailand during the crisis.

Singapore, as one of ASEAN member states, might garner more legitimacy to cover the response of this regional organisation to this political crisis taking place in its neighbour. According to Straits Times' coverage, ASEAN member states called a

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<sup>46</sup> (2014). Thailand coup: Singaporeans should "seriously reconsider" visiting Thailand: MFA. *Straits Times*.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/thailand-coup-singaporeans-should-seriously-reconsider-visiting-thailand-mfa>

meeting in Myanmar's capital during Thailand's political disaster. A peaceful resolution was advised by neighbouring countries since this bloc was closely monitoring the dreadful situation in Bangkok. Foreign ministers of member states suggested “*(we) emphasise their full support for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing challenge in the country through dialogue and in full respect of democratic principles and rule of law*”<sup>47</sup>.” Nevertheless, this forceless message could not mitigate the tension in Thailand since ASEAN does not possess any hegemonic method to intervene state member's interior affairs.



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<sup>47</sup> (2014). Asean Urges “Peaceful Resolution” To Crisis In Thailand. *Straits Times*.  
<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-urges-peaceful-resolution-to-crisis-in-thailand-0>

## Asean urges 'peaceful resolution' to crisis in Thailand



(This photo was attached to Straits Times' article<sup>48</sup>, Thai pro-government Red Shirt protesters stage a rally on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand on May 11, 2014. South-east Asia's regional bloc called on Sunday, May 11, 2014, for a "peaceful resolution" to the political crisis gripping Thailand, days after a controversial court ruling removed prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra from power.)

With the similarity of coverage on US' response to Thailand's political crisis, Straits Times directly pointed out the prompt decision to withdraw partial military support to coup government. In addition, US government urged Thailand's military

<sup>48</sup> (2014). Asean Urges 'Peaceful Resolution' To Crisis In Thailand. *Straits Times*.  
<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-urges-peaceful-resolution-to-crisis-in-thailand-0>

junta to return the political system to civilian and democratic rules. State Department spokesman Marie Harf said ‘‘we have already suspended approximately 3.5 million dollars in funding and training for the Thai military and we are reviewing all programmes to determine other assistance which we may suspend<sup>49</sup>.’’ This strong statement, however, did not halt the military government to shorten its reign after illegitimate method to acquire governance. In addition to US’ response, Straits Times reported concerning the influence of Thailand’s monarchy in this political crisis, especially the well-respected Late King Bhumibol. In the article, Straits Times penned military junta, Prayut Chan-o-Cha, and the interim constitution were approved by the Thailand’s longest monarch since Thaksin and Yingluck, seen as populist politicians, were categorised the opponents to Thailand’s elites. The abrupt coup, therefore, was necessary technique to evaporate Thaksin’s influence in approaching national election and to safeguard monarchy’s presence in 2014.

What makes Straits Times stood out when it compares to these newspapers is articles in op-ed. Straits Times analysed profoundly the difference between 2014 coup and previous coups, Prayut’s statement to coup reluctantly and Thai authoritarianism. Some stated 2014 coup was identified as preceding coups in Thailand’s history since 1932 Siamese Revolution, but the former Straits Times’ Indochina Bureau Chief, Nirmal Ghosh had different opinions. By initiating the coup and aftermath suspending the constitution, military juntas cleared obstacles on the way to possess the political power. The political turbulence, however, was ahead of this military junta as the proxy war between military and protesters instead of monarchy and populist politicians, just

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<sup>49</sup> (2014). Thailand Coup: US suspends \$4.4 million In Military Aid. *Straits Times*.  
<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/thailand-coup-us-suspends-44-million-in-military-aid>

began. According to Dr Panitan Wattanayagorn “*When you abolish the Constitution, it is up to the coup group to define the rules and regulations. They have said the Senate and independent agencies will stay in place, but the question is on what basis*<sup>50</sup>.” Since analysts viewed coup as an illegitimate tactic to acquire political power in this country, Thailand’s military might face severe repercussions from its illegal status and challenges from red shirts protesters. What leads 2014 coup more special than other coups is crackdowns. According to Amnesty International, the military detained more than 500 activist leaders, journalists, and critics just in 1 month, and thousands of migrant workers were forcibly expelled, including Cambodian and Burmese. Asia-Pacific Director, Richard Bennett, stated “*The raft of repressive measures in place in Thailand paints a grim picture of the state of human rights under martial law*<sup>51</sup>.” In addition to the infringement, Thailand’s military junta imposed severe censorship on journalist’s articles and civilian’s social media by section 112, lese-majeste law, which could result in up to 15 years in jail.

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<sup>50</sup> Ghosh, N. (2014). Thailand Coup: Now Comes The Hard Part For Military. *Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/thailand-coup-now-comes-the-hard-part-for-military>

<sup>51</sup> Narasimhan, M. (2014). Why The Latest Coup May No Longer Be “Business-As-Usual” For Thailand. *Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/why-the-latest-coup-may-no-longer-be-business-as-usual-for-thailand>

BY INVITATION

## The two faces of Thai authoritarianism

Thailand has swung from authoritarianism of electoral politics to authoritarianism imposed by the military. It needs to get the balance right.



(This photo was attached to the Straits Times' article<sup>52</sup>, described that Thailand has swung from authoritarianism of electoral politics to authoritarianism imposed by the military. It needs to get the balance right.)

Analysts might not experience surprised when it comes to the censorship, but the reluctance to make 2014 coup was astonishing for journalists. According to Khaosod English journalist, Pravit Rojanaphruk, General Prayut presented himself as a reluctant coup-maker, who was "coerced" to gain the political power. Nevertheless, military

<sup>52</sup> Pongsudhirak, T. (2014). Two Faces of Thai Authoritarianism. *Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-two-faces-of-thai-authoritarianism>

juntas contravened human rights and press freedom by apprehending hundreds of dissidents to military court and monitoring people's opinions. Under this political system, people in Thailand should have freedom of speech to express what the fact is, but the hegemonic power might silence what the authentic opinion is even though Thailand is not a totalitarian state<sup>53</sup>. Although Thailand's military junta implemented authoritarian method to govern this country after 2014 coup, some criticised electoral authoritarianism existed in Thailand since Thaksin's regime in 2001. According to political analyst, what leads to appalling consequences is that Thailand might get besieged by electoral authoritarianism and military authoritarianism. One portrait is the benefits of cronyism and the underlying corruption after gaining immense support in the society while the latter one is growing influence as supported by traditional elites, which contradicts to the revolution happening 100 years ago that young military officers abolished feudal absolutism. With his successful career in business, Thaksin absorbed political parties and penetrated justice system with his thriving policies in terms of health care, debt relief, and microcredit scheme. *"His confidants and loyalists found their way into steering these agencies. His cousin, at one point, became the army's commander-in-chief. His police cohorts naturally were fast-tracked to senior positions, including his brother-in-law, who skipped the queue and lined up to be national police chief<sup>54</sup>."* In terms of illegitimate coup, General Prayut was also categorised as authoritarian. After gaining political power in the coup, Prayut controlled National Council for Peace and Order to roll out interim constitution, National Legislative

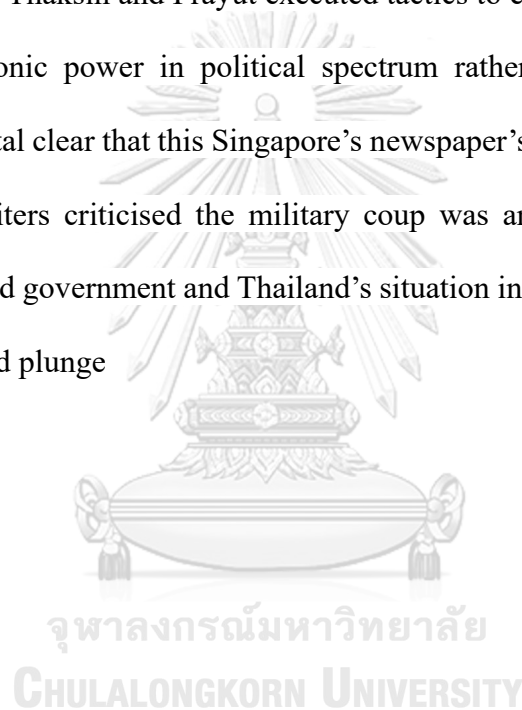
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<sup>53</sup> Rojanaphruk, P. (2014). A Reluctant Ruler In 'Other Thailand'. *Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/a-reluctant-ruler-in-the-other-thailand>

<sup>54</sup> Pongsudhirak, T. (2014). Two Faces of Thai Authoritarianism. *Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-two-faces-of-thai-authoritarianism>



Assembly to appoint him as Prime Minister, and eventually National Reform Council to draft new constitution. *‘Without ballot-box legitimacy, this monopoly of power is reminiscent of the Thaksin juggernaut a decade ago. It was a parliamentary dictatorship then - as it is now. But the fundamental difference is that the current authoritarian structure completely bypasses the electorate<sup>55</sup>.’* This writer saw both businessman and military junta, no matter is being elected or making coup, as authoritarian since Thaksin and Prayut executed tactics to establish absolute power for their own hegemonic power in political spectrum rather than look after citizen’s interests. It is crystal clear that this Singapore’s newspaper’s stance on Thailand’s 2014 coup since its writers criticised the military coup was an illegitimate technique to overturn the elected government and Thailand’s situation in terms of politics, economy and freedom would plunge



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<sup>55</sup>Pongsudhirak, T. (2014). Two Faces of Thai Authoritarianism. *Straits Times*.  
<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-two-faces-of-thai-authoritarianism>

## Why the latest coup may no longer be 'business-as-usual' for Thailand



(This photo was attached to the Straits Times' article<sup>56</sup>, describing those Thai soldiers sing as they stand on an army truck to entertain people at Victory Monument in Bangkok on June 5 2014.)

promptly due to the censorship and instability in Thailand's society. In op-ed, contributors pointed out the political system in Thailand has transformed to authoritarianism since the elected Prime Minister and military coup-maker seemingly implemented similar tactics for growing their influences in politics. In addition, the confrontation between "grass roots" red shirts and "traditional elites" protectors

<sup>56</sup> (2014). Thai army chief shows sensitive side with 'happiness' song. *Straits Times*.

formed as the proxy war for Thaksin power and monarchy on the street. This detailed reportage by Straits Times explained the ramification in political crisis in 2014 and elaborated the complex relationships amongst elites, military juntas, and political leaders.



## Conclusion

After profound analysis on the coverage by China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, Taiwan's Central News Agency and Singapore's Straits Times, the distinction and similarity amongst these state-owned/pro-state medias has been discovered. As state-owned/pro-state media, Taiwan's Central News Agency and Singapore's Straits Times demonstrated their missions to warn nationals travelling in Thailand during 2014 Thailand's coup d'état. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the travel alert of Thailand levelled up to "orange", which represents the danger of political crisis in 2014 whilst Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned its nationals to be extra cautious when travelling in Thailand. In addition, both medias also claimed its governments were monitoring the exacerbating situation in Thailand and demanded Thailand's military to restore the civilian mechanism and society's stability as soon as possible.

In terms of the factual coverage, similarity is perceivable amongst China's Global Times, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post and Singapore's Straits Times. One of the most overt topics is US reaction reported in their articles since US has seen Thailand as Southeast Asia's ally in terms of military cooperation. After General Prayut executed the coup to overturn Yingluck's elected government, US immediately condemned the undemocratic tactic to garner political power. High profile US officers, including former Secretary of State and State Department spokesperson, urged Thailand's military juntas to re-establish the democratic rules by hosting another national election in a short period, but how this military government had seized the political power before 2019 national election disrupted foreign policies given that US suspended millions of military's supports and lowered annual Cobra Gold drill with

Thailand in 2014. Another similarity amongst these medias is the coverage on confrontation between Thailand's monarchy and the populist politician. Three newspapers drew the attention to the withering influence of Thailand's Late King during 2014 coup since firstly Thaksin's power was widespread and the long-lasting monarch could not intervene the political scene as a middleman, which motivated the coup to overturn Yingluck's regime as the antagonist of monarchy. What criticised directly the connection between monarchy and Thailand's politics is the coverage by Hong Kong's South China Morning Post. In the article published by this Hong Kong's media, the complication between Thailand's monarchy and political plots has been precisely reported, in which interests to each side complex the relationships amongst business, monarchy, and future Thailand's leaders.

Along with factual reports, articles in op-ed demonstrate the trajectory of media's stance. In terms of the diplomatic relationship, China and Thailand often display brotherhood for cooperation on every aspect of infrastructure, technology, health et cetera, but China executed the policy of "no intervention" to Thailand's domestic issues, including this 2014 coup<sup>57</sup>. Global Times' reporters contributed 4 articles regarding foreign policy, judiciary system, and Thailand's mechanism for peaceful development, in which the critics overtly pointed out coup's ramification on Thailand's judiciary system and other countries' foreign policies. The core issue, however, in Thailand's politics was not written in Global Times' articles since China's state policy was to stay neutral when the political crisis was categorised as Thailand's domestic issue. In comparison with Global Times' neutral critics, South China

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<sup>57</sup> Yue, H. (2014). China's Policy on Thailand's Military Coup d'état(中国对泰国军人政变应对策略评述). *China-ASEAN Research Institute of Guangxi University*.

Morning Post was bolder to clearly highlight the ramifications in Thailand's politics. In this Hong Kong's media's op-ed, it was thoroughly indicated that military junta attempted to bring calmness back due to the ongoing confrontation between red shirts and yellow shirts, but what lied ahead was deeper division in the society since military overthrew the elected government by an illegitimate tactic. According to SCMP, although Late King approved the military coup and interim constitution, the peace in Thailand would only exist with fairness. What incentivised the startling coverage is the sensitive topic since lese majeste law might topple over this Hong Kong's agency. The controversial link between Crown Prince and the populist politician was explained comprehensively in the article along with the rumour, in which other elites favoured another royal member in 2014. In addition, the infamous "cleaning house" incident happened ahead of royal succession due to monarchy's reputation. Even though the similar ownerships of Global Times and South China Morning Post, the angle to cover this political calamity is far than parallel.

While China's and Hong Kong's medias specified the ramification of Thailand's coup, Singapore's Straits Time analysed deeply regarding the vicious cycle in Thailand's politics, uniqueness of 2014 coup, masquerade of military junta, and Thailand's authoritarian system. According to Straits Times' editorial team, overturning elected government by military coup is illegitimate since military junta were not elected by any citizen, so aftermath the policy executed by military junta did not relate to any legal basis, including martial law and military court. In addition, this Singapore's newspaper also emphasised 2014 coup was not as usual as other coups in the history because activist, critics, and journalists were persecuted. Due to censorship, freedom of speech was also vanished. Given the connection between elites and military,

Thai citizens should reject old-fashioned culture in politics and respect the government elected by every voter. However, this encouragement in Straits Times' op-ed has never been realised since it seems that a good and altruistic politician could govern this kingdom without election. As masquerading himself as a reluctant coup-maker, General Prayut had to "save" Thailand from confrontations between red shirts and yellow shirts by taking over the political power. One analyst, moreover, condemned Thailand's politics as authoritarianism no matter the government was elected by Thailand's voters or controlled by military. Owing to the political culture, in which cronyism and corruption exist prevalently, Thailand's politician has great influence in public institution, including judicial system and public system. According to the article, Thaksin could easily impact the preferment in police's system and penetrate the judicial system due to his political power. In this analyst's eyes, Thaksin leveraged public support to garner the most interest, which was viewed as electoral authoritarianism. Contrarily, overthrowing the elected government by military junta has overtly seen as authoritarian tactics. In comparison with Thaksin's techniques to gain support in public and to surpass traditional elites' popularity, Thailand's military juntas must accomplish the mission to extinguish Thaksin's impact. Despite the stern opinion by Singapore's Straits Times, Singapore has tight relations with Thailand historically. For instance, Singapore and Thailand held on the same stance when it comes to Vietnamese invasion in Cambodia since 1979 because both countries urged Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodian soil<sup>58</sup>. Given the great relations, this Singapore's pro-government newspaper strongly denounced 2014 Thailand's coup of

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<sup>58</sup> Ang, C-G. (2013). *Singapore, ASEAN and the Cambodian Conflict 1978-1991*. NUS Press National University of Singapore.

illegitimate manoeuvre, authoritarianism, and vicious cycle in Thailand's politics. This trajectory shows Singapore's national policy, and the angle of Straits Times' editorial team were completely reverse. In contrast to other newspapers, Taiwan's Central News Agency could not deliver abundance of news in terms of Thailand's coup. As the democratic Chinese policy, Taiwan's state media, Focus Taiwan, would cover this coup with critics in the name of democracy. Nevertheless, this newspaper did not publish any news article with analysis or critics in the sense of democracy but only released news regarding tourism, diplomatic words, and painless opinion.

Each media in this research shows its stance on 2014 coup, but the trajectory created by each media might not coordinate with the national policy established by its government. According to Authoritarian Theory in press media<sup>59</sup>, each country monitors the state media/pro-government media to disseminate ideas that citizens should see 2014 Thailand's coup. Due to violence in the coup, Taiwan's Central News Agency and Singapore's Straits Times warned nationals shall remain vigilant when traveling in Thailand. In terms of critics on 2014 Thailand's coup, China's Global Times denounced this coup of disrespecting judicial system and disrupting foreign policy according to China's neutral policy towards Thailand's domestic issues. This China's state media did not directly underline the core issue of this coup, e.g., the connection between businessmen and elites, corruption, and vicious cycle in Thailand's politics. On the contrary, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post condemned this undemocratic tactic to gain political power in op-ed section. Despite

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<sup>59</sup> SIEBERT, F., PETERSON, T., & SCHRAMM, W. (1984). THE AUTHORITARIAN THEORY OF THE PRESS. In *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (pp. 9-38). Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press.



similar ownership as Global Times', this editorial team agreed with the trajectory of these articles, in which overt condemnation was described that coup leaders brought disruption to calmness, Thailand's military damaged the democratic system, and businessmen colluded with traditional elites. Holding the parallel stance as South China Morning Post, Singapore's Straits Times did not conform with the national policy implemented with Singapore's government, which continuously maintained same point of view as Thailand's view on regional incidents. When it comes to 2014 coup, this Singapore's pro-state media slammed military juntas of initiating illegitimate coup, denounced General Prayut of masquerading as a reluctant ruler, and criticised electoral and military government of authoritarian leaders. On the contrary to other media agencies, Taiwan's Central News Agency solely demanded Thailand's military juntas to restore democracy as soon as possible on its English platform. These evidence, lastly, represents that state media/pro-state media agencies in this research partially fit Authoritarian Theory in press since same ownership can produce different trajectories towards same topic in respect of China's Global Times and Hong Kong's South China Morning Post. Furthermore, the government's national policy and pro-state media's stances on same topic can also remain separate regarding Singapore's Straits Times whilst Taiwan's Central News Agency merely maintained the fundamental function of media to warn its nationals and diffused diplomatic words to restore the democratic system in Thailand.

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February, 2014	Reuters	Thai polling officials try to salvage disrupted election
May, 2014	SCMP Editorial	Unity in Thailand rests on fairness for all sides
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June, 2014	Reuters	Thailand says it as no policy to sweep out illegal migrants
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