



Divide *and* conquer

There's no doubt this tycoon turned politician has redrawn the political scene, but **Tulsathit Taptim** asks is it for the better or for the worse

Deciding the "35 Most Influential Thais" was never going to be an easy process – the arguments became louder and the disagreements stronger.

Questions were raised: Should it be Paradorn Srichaphan or Khaosai Galaxy who takes the prize in the sporting category? Was Jarunee Suksawad a bigger celluloid phenomenon than Sombat Methanee? How would we explain the absence of *luk thung* queen, Pumpuang Duangjan?

However when it came to naming the "most influential politician", it was easy. Thaksin Shinawatra was the undisputed choice. Everyone agreed, his biggest admirers and his staunchest critics. Can you name any other Thai politician whose thought and ideology has affected your life more over the past three decades? Love him or hate him, you can't ignore him.

He seems to be everywhere – the cell phone you use, the hospital you visit, the budget airline you fly, the satellite that beams you entertainment and information, the Web boards you participate in, the dinner conversations, the countless political discussion forums and the media you use.

He nearly wiped out methamphetamines, albeit in a highly controversial manner, and single-handedly redrew the

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