

Press Control and Socioeconomic Development: What can Laos learn from the world?

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Abstract

Statistical evidence strongly indicates that Press Control Index (PCI) and per capita Gross National Income (GNI) are inversely related, with high-income countries having lower PCI and low-income countries tending towards higher PCI. That is, countries in which governments exercise strong control of the press tend to have lower per capita income than those with more moderate government interference. High PCI reflects government's desire to attain high level of control over its citizens by controlling and restricting the press through economic, legal, and political means. Continued government strict control of the MIA industries, which comprised of media industry, intellectual industry, and art and entertainment industry, can hamper the economy directly by preventing or hindering private investment in the industry, thereby retarding income and job growth. It also penalizes citizens with special talents and abilities in art and intellect, costing society in the forms of lost talents and human potentials. The indirect effects, which are more significant in strength and scope than the direct effects, have various aspects, some are revealing and, others, hidden. Strong government control of the press does not limit to the MIA industries, it depresses other industries through backward and forward linkage effects, human capital effects, and cross-industry escalation effects. It also causes institutional rigidity, which prolongs inefficiencies. Strong government control also exacerbates inequality in favor of the better-off individuals at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged citizens.