

# The fight for Media Freedom needs to be part of the struggle for deeper democratization

*There cannot be a right life in the wrong.*  
Theodor Adorno



# Media Freedom is deteriorating in Thailand



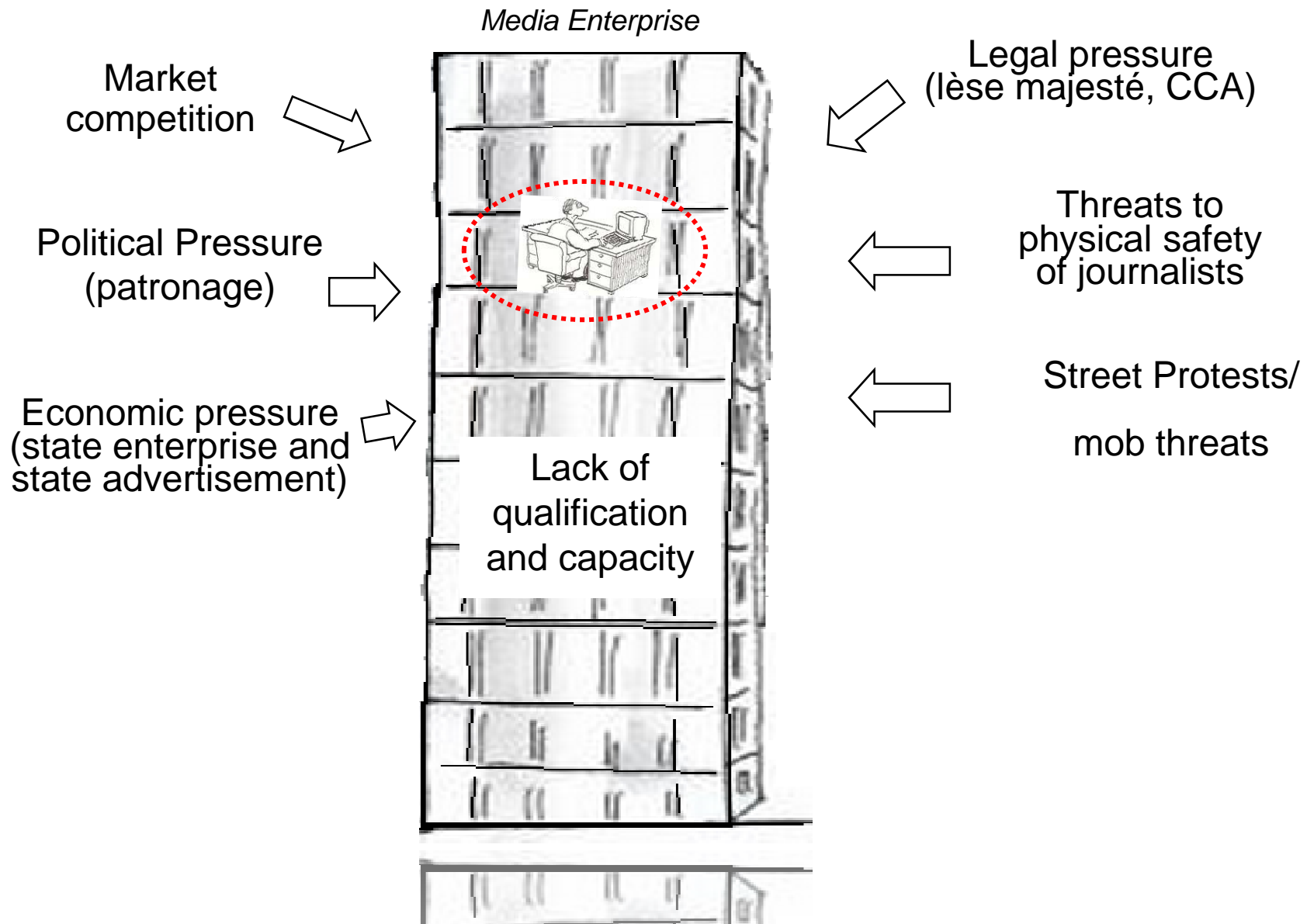
## 2014 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Rank	Country	Note	Differential	Rank	Country	Note	Differential
93	Zambia	30,89	-20 (72 ; 27,93)	139	Chad	40,22	-17 (121 ; 34,87)
94	Bolivia	31,04	+16 (109 ; 32,8)	140	India	40,34	+1 (140 ; 41,22)
95	Ecuador	31,16	+25 (119 ; 34,69)	141	Jordan	40,42	-6 (134 ; 38,47)
96	Israel	31,18	+17 (112 ; 32,87)	142	Burundi	40,5	-9 (132 ; 38,02)
97	Kyrgyzstan	31,24	+10 (106 ; 32,2)	143	Ethiopia	40,58	-5 (137 ; 39,57)
98	Sabonosa Republic	31,32	-8 (89 ; 28,69)	144	Cambodia	40,97	0 (143 ; 41,81)
99	Greece	31,33	-14 (84 ; 28,46)	145	Burma	41,43	+7 (151 ; 44,71)
100	Bulgaria	31,42	-12 (87 ; 28,58)	146	Bangladesh	42,58	-1 (144 ; 42,01)
101	Ivory Coast	31,63	-4 (96 ; 29,77)	147	Malaysia	42,73	-1 (145 ; 42,73)
102	Guinea	31,67	-15 (86 ; 28,48)	148	Russia	42,78	+1 (148 ; 43,42)
103	Seychelles	31,68	-9 (93 ; 29,19)	149	Philippines	43,69	-1 (147 ; 43,11)
104	Peru	31,7	+2 (105 ; 31,87)	150	Singapore	44,29	0 (149 ; 43,43)
105	Paraguay	31,81	-13 (81 ; 28,78)	151	DR Congo	44,64	-8 (142 ; 41,66)
106	Lebanon	31,89	-4 (101 ; 30,45)	152	Mexico	45,04	+2 (153 ; 45,3)
107	Fiji	32,57	+1 (107 ; 32,69)	153	Iraq	45,44	-2 (150 ; 44,67)
108	Maldives	33,11	-4 (103 ; 31,1)	154	Turkey	45,87	+1 (154 ; 46,56)
109	Central African Republic	33,13	-43 (65 ; 26,81)	155	Gambia	46,42	-2 (152 ; 45,09)
110	Uganda	33,29	-5 (104 ; 31,68)	156	Swaziland	46,76	0 (155 ; 46,76)
111	Brazil	34,03	-3 (109 ; 32,75)	157	Bolivia	47,82	+1 (157 ; 48,35)
112	Nigeria	34,24	+4 (115 ; 34,11)	158	Pakistan	51,46	+2 (159 ; 51,31)
113	Qatar	34,32	-2 (116 ; 32,96)	159	Egypt	51,89	0 (158 ; 48,66)
114	Montenegro	34,78	0 (113 ; 32,97)	160	Azerbaijan	52,87	-3 (156 ; 47,73)
115	Tajikistan	34,86	+9 (123 ; 35,71)	161	Kazakhstan	54,94	0 (160 ; 55,08)
116	Venezuela	35,37	+2 (117 ; 34,44)	162	Rwanda	56,57	0 (161 ; 55,46)
117	Brunei	35,45	+6 (122 ; 35,45)	163	Bahrain	58,26	+3 (165 ; 62,75)
118	United Arab Emirates	36,03	-3 (114 ; 33,49)	164	Saudi Arabia	58,3	0 (163 ; 58,86)
119	South Sudan	36,05	+6 (124 ; 36,2)	165	Sri Lanka	59,13	-2 (162 ; 56,59)
120	Nepal	36,16	-1 (118 ; 34,61)	166	Uzbekistan	61,01	-1 (164 ; 60,39)
121	Algeria	36,26	+5 (125 ; 36,54)	167	Yemen	67,26	+3 (169 ; 68,22)
122	Mali	36,29	-22 (99 ; 30,03)	168	Equatorial Guinea	67,95	-1 (166 ; 67,2)
123	Republic of Macedonia	36,43	-6 (116 ; 34,27)	169	Djibouti	70,34	-1 (167 ; 67,4)
124	Angola	36,5	+7 (130 ; 37,8)	170	Cuba	70,82	+2 (171 ; 71,64)
125	Guatemala	36,61	-29 (95 ; 29,39)	171	Laos	71,22	-2 (168 ; 67,98)
126	Colombia	36,68	+4 (129 ; 37,48)	172	Sudan	71,88	-1 (170 ; 70,06)
127	Ukraine	36,93	0 (126 ; 36,79)	173	Iran	72,29	+2 (174 ; 72,4)
128	Afghanistan	37,07	+1 (128 ; 37,36)	174	Vietnam	72,36	-1 (172 ; 71,78)
129	Honduras	37,14	-1 (127 ; 36,92)	175	China	72,91	-1 (173 ; 73,07)
130	Thailand	37,94	+6 (135 ; 38,6)	176	Somalia	73,19	0 (175 ; 73,59)
131	Cameroon	38,13	-10 (120 ; 34,78)	177	Syria	77,04	0 (176 ; 76,53)
132	Indonesia	38,15	+8 (139 ; 41,05)	178	Turkmenistan	80,81	0 (177 ; 79,14)
133	Tunisia	38,69	+6 (138 ; 39,93)	179	North Korea	81,96	0 (178 ; 83,9)
134	Oman	38,83	+8 (141 ; 41,51)	180	Eritrea	84,83	0 (179 ; 84,83)
135	Zimbabwe	39,19	-1 (133 ; 38,12)				
136	Morocco	39,72	+1 (136 ; 39,04)				
137	Libya	39,84	-5 (131 ; 37,86)				
138	Palestine	40,11	+8 (146 ; 43,09)				

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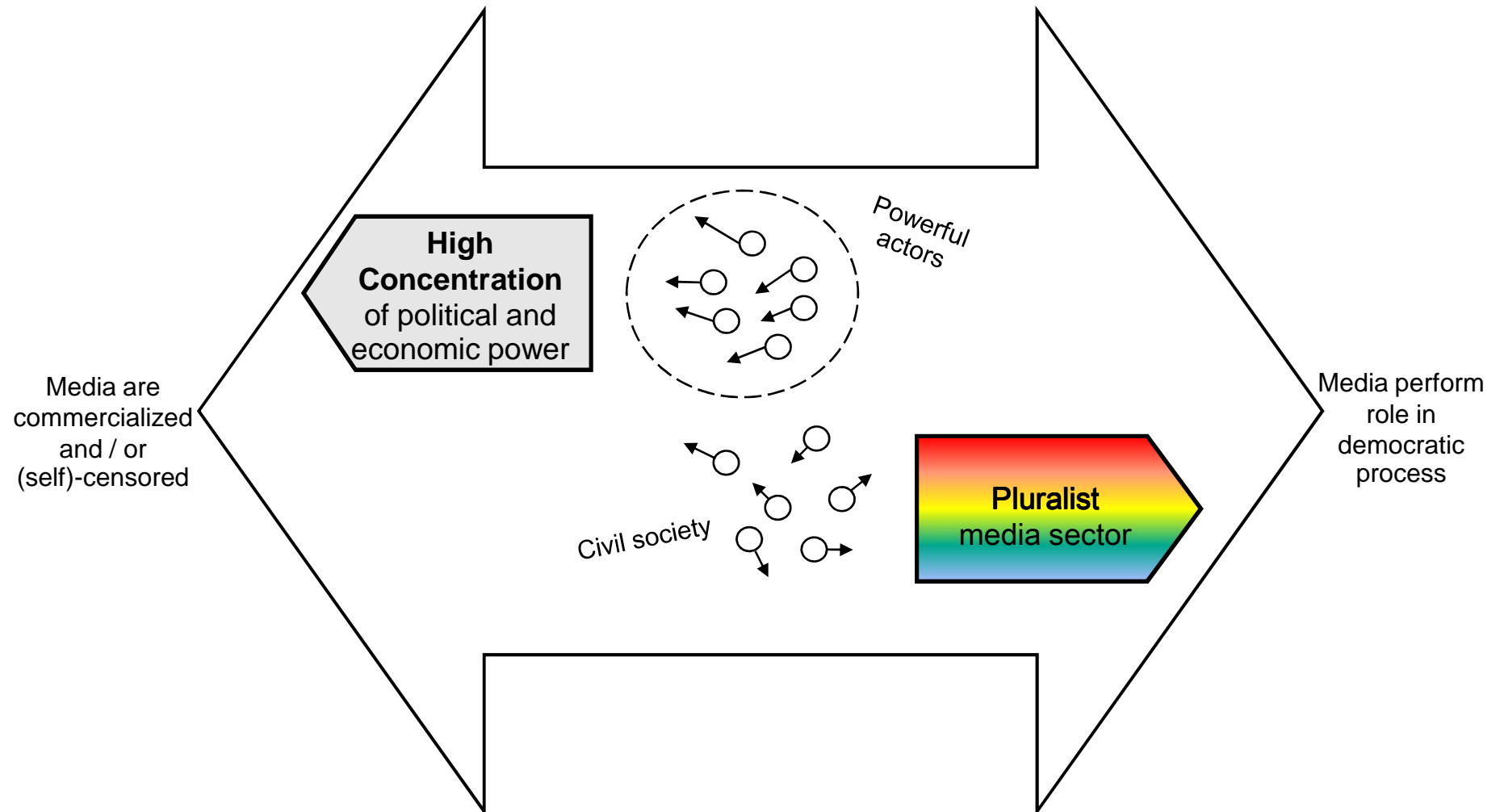


# Media Freedom faces many pressures





# Calls for „better journalism“ are misguided...



... Limited media freedom is in the interest of the powerful and wealthy



Who has an interest to control media...

?

... and why?



## Media as a jumper in the game...



...over the political and economic control of Thailand.



## With “large-scale force” not a strategic plan...

“Abuse of Power”

“Come from elections”

“20 million voters”

“Limits of the Constitution”

“Democracy is more than elections:  
transparency, accountability, rule of law”

Sovereignty of the Great Mass of the People

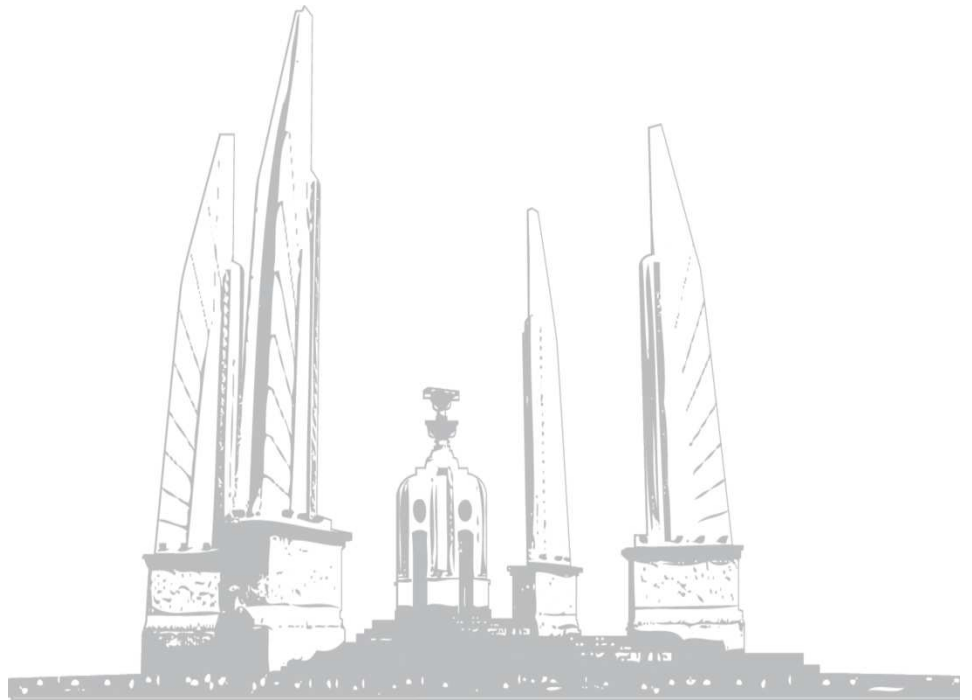


... battle moves to discourse field of competing legitimacy claims.





## Transformation conflict over the future order

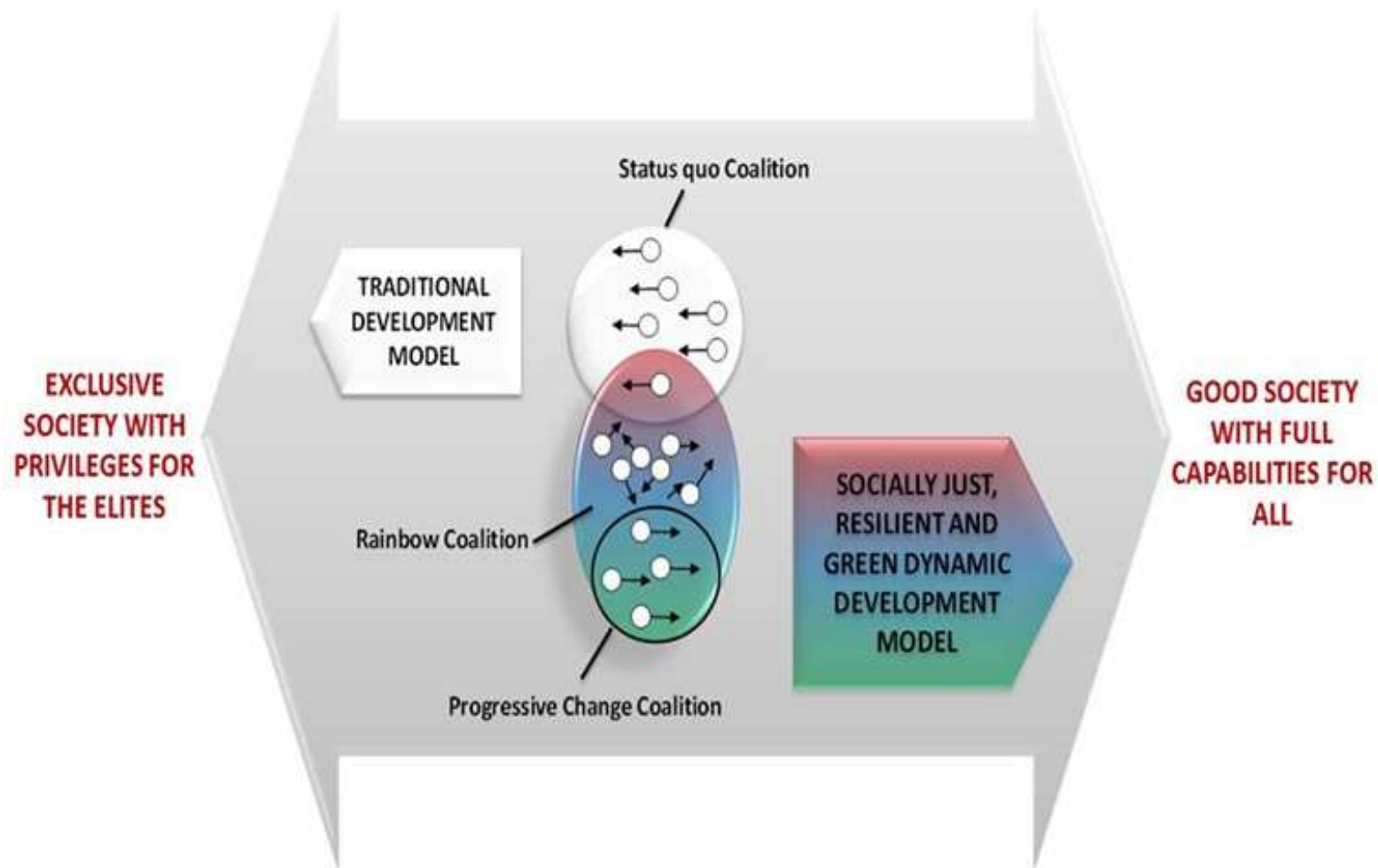


Legitimacy of the “other side” needs to be “discredited”.





Fight for media freedom is part of struggle between those who seek to uphold the status quo...



... and those who want democratic change.



## Thailand “worst of all worlds” for media freedom

- Feudal Patronage System/ Crony capitalism: Culture of interference and anticipatory obedience (kraengjai) ➤ (self-) censorship
- Capitalist market: Competitive pressure ➤ flat, commercialized, non-critical
- Transformation conflict: Battle over legitimacy claims ➤ Ideological polarized / hyperbole / physical threats
- Progressive forces are weak, divided and badly organized.



## If you want media freedom...

### Deeper democratization of

- Political economy : Diversification and de-politization of media ownership
- Autonomy of media sector: Self-regulation, abolish censorship laws
- Political muscle of media freedom activists: media union, alliances
- Culture: accept conflict, embrace pluralism, reject social pressure

... you need deeper democratization.



Puzzle: For deeper democratization to succeed...

## Why is Bangkok middle class (social base of media) angry and fearful?

- Social Angst: Crushed between abusive elites and greedy poor (majority)
- Corruption Narratives: Equate democracy with corruption

... the BKK middle class needs to be brought back  
into the democratic flock.



## How the equation of corruption with democracy constructed the red yellow conflict (and enraged the middle class)

1. Explain "the world"

**"Corruption causes social decay"**

➤ reaffirm morality

**"Decaying society causes corruption"**

➤ change political order

2. Mobilize the middle classes

**"Corrupt Politicians steal our tax money to bribe the greedy poor"**

**"Populism will bankrupt the state"**

**"Elections bring back corruption and nepotism"**

3. Platform for societal coalitions

**"Saving the nation from moral corruption"**

**"Overcoming a corrupt + unjust order"**

4. Format the political playing field

Hero: Kamnan Suthep, Villain: Thaksin Regime, Victim: Good People

Hero: Yingluck Democracy Hero, Villain: Suthep, Victim: 20 million Voters

Empower Actors: PDRC, NACC, CC

Empower Actors: Red Shirts, Respect My Vote

**"reform before elections" vs.**

**"reforms are undemocratic"**

➤ Room for maneuver: Deadlock / Paralysis