

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION¹

Thai democracy was suspended on 19 September 2006, when Army units led by Army Commander-in-Chief (CC), Gen Sonthi Boonyaratklin, apparently with the consent of Navy and Air Force, backed by powerful forces within the Privy Council and with ex-post approval by HM King Bumiphol, successfully staged a coup d'état against the caretaker government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thailand is effectively governed by a military junta, styling itself the Council for Democratic Reform (CDR). Following the bloodless coup, the military revoked the constitution and dissolved the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Constitutional Court and the Election Commission (later, the junta re-installed the current EC). The new rulers issued a statement on 21 September setting out their reasons for taking power and giving a commitment to restore democratic government within one year. However, instead of a civilian interim Prime Minister, as promised by the junta after the coup, General Surayud Chulanont, a retired Army CC, and advisor to Thailand's king, was appointed Thailand's 24th prime minister on 1 October 2006. In addition the CDR announced that after the elections (promised for October 2007), the council would be transformed into a permanent "Council of National Security", whose future role in Thai politics has not yet been explained.

Immediately after the coup, the junta ruled with a series of announcements which introduced various restrictions on freedoms of association, of assembly, of travel, of expression and on broadcasting and the press.

A widely criticized draft interim charter was released on 27 September 2006. Structurally, the draft interim charter is similar to the post-coup constitutions of 1991 and 1976, in that it allows an extremely powerful executive branch dominated by the military to control the political process by providing that:

- the junta appoints the Prime Minister and sits in Cabinet meetings;
- the junta appoints the entire legislature;
- the junta appoints a 2,000 member National Assembly, which will prepare a shortlist from which the junta will select a 100-member Constitutional Drafting Council (CDC). The junta will select 10 persons from within or outside the CDC to join a 35-member Constitutional Drafting Committee.

ASSESSMENT

Thailand was a participant in Warsaw, Seoul and Santiago. However, with basic constitutional rights and democratic institutions suspended, a military prepared and willing to intervene, and the political decision-making process controlled by a junta, the political system of Thailand is clearly not democratic. Thailand is governed by a military regime. Some of its initial steps with regard to the draft interim charter signal a willingness to remain permanently in positions of power and influence which are not democratically legitimized. At the same time, however, the junta has pledged a swift return to civilian rule. Currently, it is difficult to predict which of the two trends will be more influential.

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THAILAND - WATCHLIST

STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

World Bank Institute Governance Indicators 2005	Score	Key
Voice and Accountability	49.3	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak voice and accountability; higher value indicates strong voice and account)
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	29.2	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak political stability and high violence; higher value indicates opposite)
Government Effectiveness	66.0	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak government effectiveness; higher value indicates strong govt. effectiveness)
Regulatory Quality	63.9	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak regulatory quality; higher value indicates strong regulatory quality)
Rule of Law	56.5	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak rule of law; higher value indicates strong rule of law)
Control of Corruption	51.2	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak control of corruption; higher value indicates strong control of corruption)

Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2007	Score	Key
Political Rights	7	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of political rights; higher value indicates bad system political rights)
Civil Liberties	4	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of civil liberties; higher value indicates bad system civil liberties)
Status	NF	3 Categories: F (Free); PF (Partly Free); NF (Not Free)

Corruption Perceptions Index 2006	Score	Key
Total Score	3.6	Range 0-10 (lower value indicates high corruption; higher value indicates lower values of corruption)
Rank	63	163 countries

Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006	Score	Key
Stateness	7.0	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development)
Political Participation	7.3	
Rule of Law	6.5	
Stability of Democratic Institutions	7.0	
Political and Social Integration	6.3	
Total Score Political Transformation	6.9	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development) / Arrow shows trend in democratic development (↑Improved; ↓Worsened)
Total Score Political Management	5.24	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates lower quality of political management; higher value indicates higher quality of political management)