

World Governance Survey

Thailand

Although Thailand experienced significant institutional changes over the past five years, the impact on the quality of governance is still minimal. The new constitution has only recently started being implemented and the reform process is slow.

Intended to improve the quality of governance, the new constitution aims at balancing the power between the legislature, the administrative and the judicial, as well as at assigning rights, duties and fair political participation to the Thai citizens. The following new institutions have already been established:

- The Election Commission
- The Ombudsmen
- The National Human Right Commission
- The Constitutional Court
- The Administrative Court
- The National Counter Corruption Commission

New regulations also require politicians and government officials to make public their accounts, showing assets and liabilities. However, as governance issues are process-oriented, it will take time until the new rules will be effectively implemented and the quality of governance will improve.

The data collection exercise

The governance survey questionnaires were distributed to almost 50 experts of different groups, all high profile persons playing active role in the Thai society. Of these, 42 have responded:

GROUP	respondents
Government	5
Parliament	5
Civil Service	4
Business	5
Legal	5
Academia	4
NGO	5
IOs	5
Other	5

The 42 respondents, belonging to 9 different groups, generally evaluated the quality of governance in Thailand at a moderate level. There are no major differences among the ratings of different groups, except that the average ratings of group 7 (NGO) and group 9 (other) are among the lowest, while the ratings of group 5 (legal) are the highest.

Overall Findings

The survey results point to an improvement over time in the quality of governance. The overall rating increases from an average of 2.98 five years ago to a current rating of 3.34. An increase in ratings is noticed for all six dimensions. Of the 30 indicators, only one declined over the last five years.

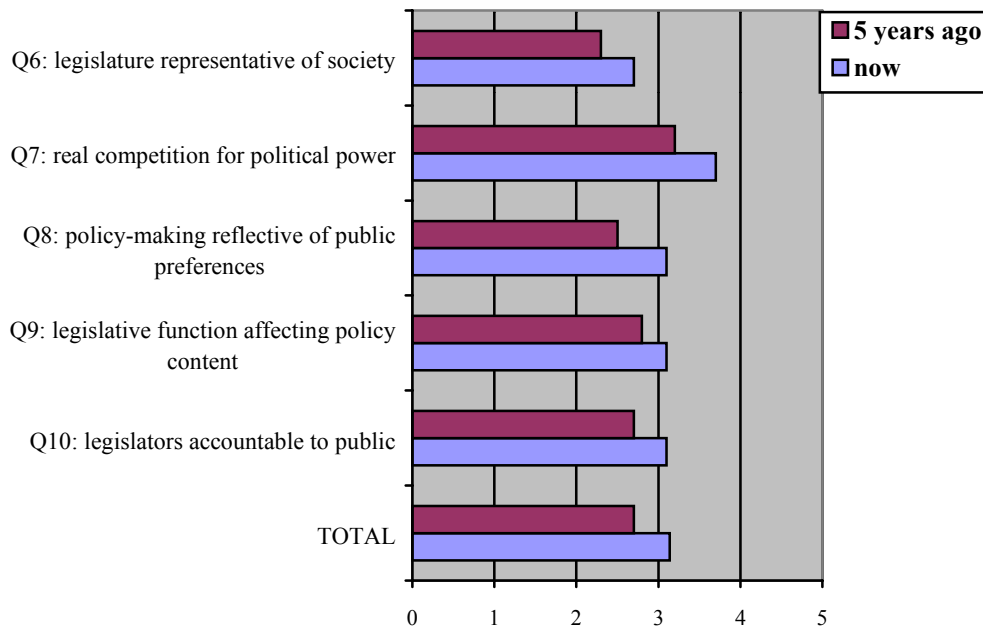
Dimension	Institution	5 years ago	Now	Change
Socializing	Civil Society	3.10	3.70	.60
Aggregating	Political Society	2.70	3.14	.44
Executive	Government	3.08	3.34	.26
Managerial	Bureaucracy	3.00	3.20	.20
Regulatory	Economic Society	2.90	3.26	.36
Adjudicatory	Judicial System	3.12	3.40	.28
TOTAL		2.98	3.34	.36

It should be noted that most scores range from lower moderate to upper moderate. However, about 12 indicators have received scores within a very wide range, from very low to very high, showing that respondents have completely different views on certain issues.

Result of the survey and expert comments shows that the key indicators that affect the governance process are in the political and social dimensions.

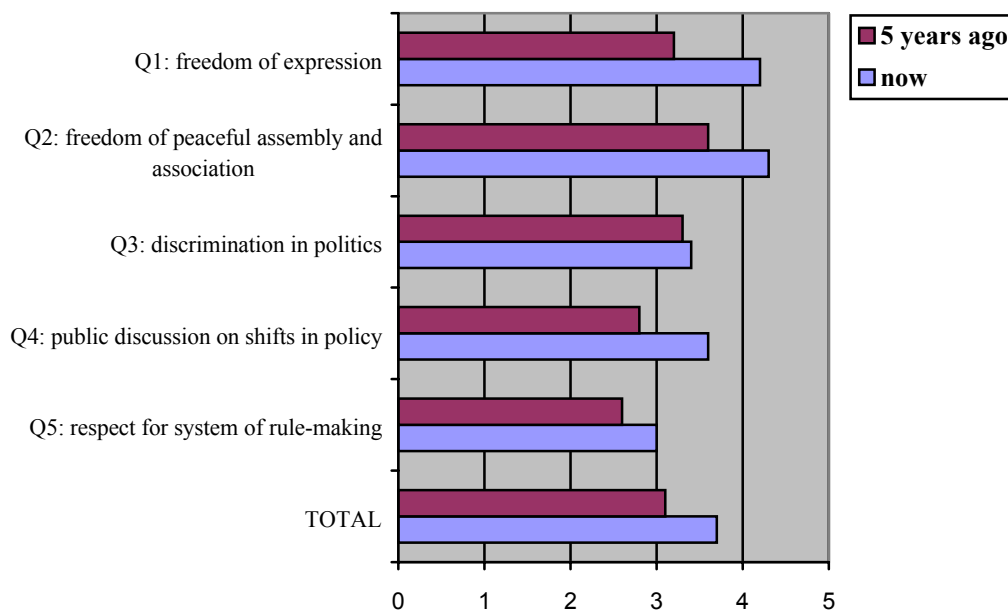
The aggregating dimension received the lowest average score (3.14). The respondents share the same perception regarding the low performance of the political society. The Thai society witnesses a high degree of unaccountability in politics, especially of the electoral system. This leads to unaccountable legislature and inefficient policymaking process that don't reflect the public interests or preferences. This dimension is directly related to the managerial (3.2) and regulatory (3.26) dimensions, which also received lower average scores.

Figure 1: Aggregating Dimension



The socializing dimension has undergone a considerable increase over the last five years. However, as expert comments point out, when the education system fails to embed positive attitudes and values towards the respect of human and property rights, rules of laws, as well as the enthusiasm for active participation to protect the public, the quality of governance stays on a moderate level.

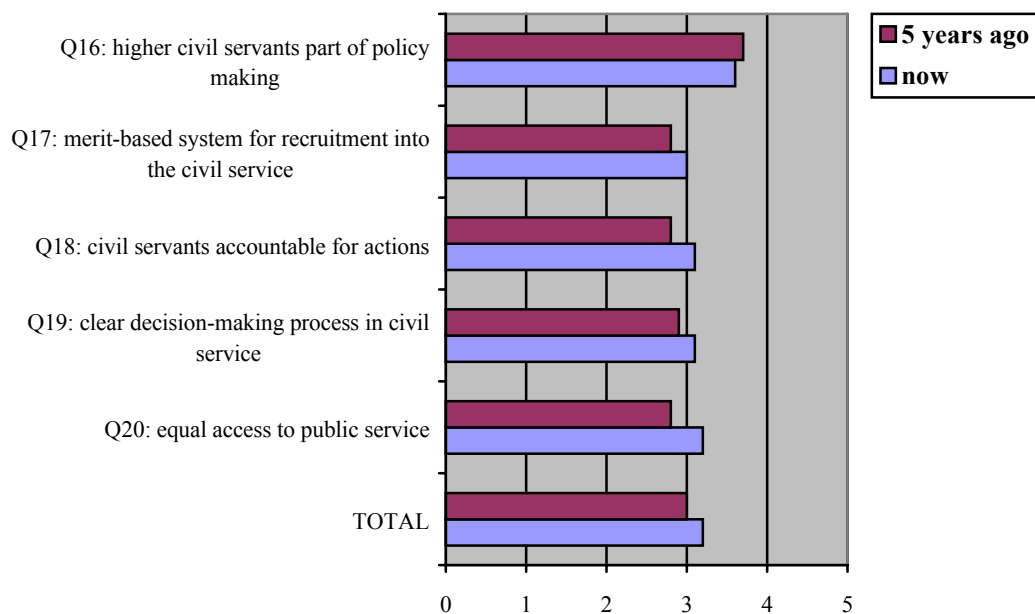
Figure 2: Socializing Dimension



This results on a high degree of corruption, negative public behavior and less public participation as a means to protect public interests. In the case of Thailand, expert comment, the moderate quality of governance is a direct reflection of the unsatisfactory political rights, protective security, economic entitlement, and social opportunities.

The specifics of the Thai bureaucracy point to some inconsistencies between the level of ratings and the real situation on the ground. It should be noticed that high rating does not necessarily reflect a high quality of governance; for example, the respondents gave a high rating to higher civil servants being part of policy-making, but, at the same time, they also regard the civil servants as less accountable and responsible. Moreover, expert comments point out that high civil servants are being appointed based on political affiliation. That is why the ratings for Questions 17, 18, 19, and 20 are lower than Q.16 (see figure 2).

Figure 3: Managerial Dimension



Other important country-related issues

The world governance survey is a highly appreciated exercise that provides opportunity to identify key indicators that need attention to effectively change the quality of governance. However, some questions can be misinterpreted, while some are controversial and subject to further analysis. The following are examples in the Thai case:

Q.16 as mentioned earlier, high participation of civil servants in the policy making process should not be regarded as favorable to the overall quality of governance, especially when there is such a negative public image on the civil servants' unaccountability.

Regarding Q.21, which measures the respect for property rights, some respondents extended their understanding to intellectual property rights. This interpretation of the question determined them to give relatively low ratings.

Answers to Q.25, on global trade, finance and technological flows taken into account in policy, show an increase in ratings. Many of the respondents considered only the positive aspects of this issue, but the risk factor (not included as indicator in the questionnaire) has not been taken into account.