



The Asia Foundation

***Press Release
(Post Launch Report)
For Immediate Release***

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As Thailand's parliament undergoes a two-day debate on amending the Constitution, a timely survey provides a channel for ordinary citizens to articulate their opinions about their country's political direction.

BANGKOK — SEPTEMBER 17, 2009 — The Asia Foundation on Wednesday held a press conference at Dusit Thani Hotel to release the results of its latest survey that gauges the national mood toward amending the Constitution, electoral reform, and other pertinent political issues. The event was attended by politicians, civil servants, diplomats, academics, and journalists who are awaiting the outcome of the ongoing joint parliamentary debate on the contentious charter amendment.

The survey “Constitutional Reform and Democracy in Thailand: A National Survey on the Thai Electorate” represents the latest in a series of democracy assessments produced by The Asia Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of governance, law, and civil society across Asia. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews with a random, representative sample of 1,500 voters from 26 provinces nationwide.

“Over the past few years, the Thai government, political parties, and civil society have been discussing possible reforms to the Constitution that might help resolve the ongoing political conflict in the country. The Asia Foundation conducted this national survey to provide a channel for ordinary citizens to express their opinions on the country’s political direction,” said Dr. James Klein, The Asia Foundation’s Country Representative in Thailand.

According to the survey, the Thai public is evenly split between those who believe Constitutional amendment could reduce conflict (45 percent) and those who think it might exacerbate the already fragile political situation (45 percent). When asked how the Constitution should be amended, 67 percent said amendment should be drafted through a participatory process that involves citizens, and 10 percent want the amendment to be carried out by Parliament alone. Regardless of the method of amendment, an overwhelming majority (84 percent) want a new or revised Constitution to be ratified through a referendum.

A clear majority (63 percent) of those interviewed said they prefer the senate election system described in the 1997 Constitution, while only a quarter (25 percent) support the current partially-appointed senate arrangement. “It is clear from the results of the survey that Thai voters prefer elected representatives to appointed ones,” said Associate Professor Surichai Wun’Gaeo, Director of the Social Research Institute at Chulalongkorn University and a guest speaker at the press conference. “This refutes the argument put forth by certain groups that a partially-appointed representative system is more suitable for the country on the pretext that Thais are not ready for full-fledged democracy.”

The survey results also highlighted a lack of trust among Thai people. A majority (62 percent) of the people surveyed said that most people cannot be trusted. “We have witnessed a marked decline in societal trust among Thais in recent years, and this worrying trend is a spinoff of the ongoing political unrest,” said Dr. Thawilwadee Bureekul, Director of the Research and Development Department of King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI). “We need to act fast to restore political normalcy before the country suffers a complete breakdown of social cohesion.”

The full survey is available for viewing and download in [English](#) and [Thai](#)

Note to Editors:

Photo Caption – (left) Dr. Thawilwadee Bureekul, Director of the Research and Development Department, King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI), (center) Dr. James Klein, The Asia Foundation’s Country Representative in Thailand, (right) Associate Professor Surichai Wun’Gaeo, Director of the Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University.

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