

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Atlas Homepage](#)
- [Atlas Toolkit](#)
- [The Freedom Network](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

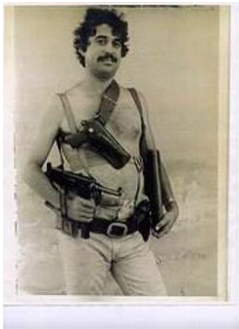
## [Network News](#)

Advancing freedom around the world

# You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice

by [Joseph.Humire](#) on July 2, 2009

in [Latin America](#)



Former President  
Mel Zelaya in his  
younger years

**UPDATE:** One of our readers made a great point, about whether or not people are actually familiar with the Honduran constitution. A few moments before I read this comment, I had received an article by our friend - Eneas Biglione from HACER - which not only sources the Honduran constitution, but actually highlights the articles that are brought into question. Check it out [here](#).

As you have heard, there has been a "coup" in Honduras, or so they say. I remember as a freshman in college we had a class on Democracy 101, in which they introduced a basic principle called checks and balances. In Honduras, what I see is a country restoring it's system of checks  
[atlasnetwork.org/.../you-call-it-a-c...](http://atlasnetwork.org/.../you-call-it-a-c...)

7/6/2009

You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice

and balances against a President that sought to supersede his authority.

From my understanding, a coup generally implies that the federal government was dissolved and no longer able to function at capacity, however, within twelve hours the Honduran Congress named a successor - Roberto Micheletti (who is from Zelaya's own political party) - to finish out his term, all the while, the constitution and the other branches of the Honduran government remained untouched. In fact, by the time I finished watching the soccer games on Sunday afternoon, the Honduran government was already in tact.

Read more opinions after the jump:

Thankfully, I am not the only one who holds this opinion, as Mary O'Grady reminded us in this [WSJ piece](#) that institutions are supposed to act as jealous guardians of the principles that uphold the rule of law over the rule by men.

The struggle against *chavismo* has never been about left-right politics. It is about defending the independence of institutions that keep presidents from becoming dictators.

Our close friend, Ambassador (ret) Roger Noriega of the [American Enterprise Institute](#), seconds this notion in a [Forbes article](#) and calls attention to Zelaya's blatant abuse of the constitution's separation of powers, and criticizes the US State Department and OAS for seeing otherwise.

Zelaya's self-serving lawlessness was ignored completely by OAS leadership and, as far as one can tell, by every government in the region that now dares to pass judgment on Honduras' constitutional order. The feckless regional diplomats who have failed to confront undemocratic *caudillos*...are complicit in their abuses. Today they have neither the credibility nor moral authority to pass judgment on those desperate patriots who act to defend their freedom, in Honduras or anywhere else.

Yet, Alvaro Vargas Llosa of the [Independent Institute](#), offers an interesting conundrum in this [NYT OpEd](#) - Did the Honduran military Fall for One of Chavez's traps?

In the weeks leading up to Honduras' coup, president Manuel Zelaya, an ally of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, knew what he was doing. In pushing the limits of democracy by trying to force a constitutional change that would permit his re-election, he set a trap for the military. The military fell for it, turning an unpopular president who was nearing the end of his term into an international *cause celebre*.

Regardless of whether the military took the bait, there are still critics everywhere who insist that what took place in Honduras was undemocratic. However, we only have to turn to our partners in Honduras to see what is taking place on-the-ground, as I received this email the other day from a [atlasnetwork.org/.../you-call-it-a-c...](#)

7/6/2009

You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice

friend at [Instituto Veritas](#), who said "Our borders have been closed down for commerce and thousands have started hitting the [streets for peaceful marches](#) in protest of Zelaya's rule." This only adds to our argument that what is happening in Honduras is not a "coup" but rather democracy in action, even if it is not the typical democratic practice that we are accustomed to seeing in the US.

A point that another ally in Central America - Margarita Montes (graduate of Francisco Marroquin University in Guatemala, and current lecturer at Unitec) - is making by calling this "coup" a breaking of a paradigm in one of her [blog's at Honduras Possible](#):

The removal of President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales by the Armed Forces in the early hours of yesterday, broke the paradigms of contemporary political history of Latin America. For the first time in the era of post Cold War (1989 to date), an army deposed a democratically elected constitutional president, to restore the rule of law, not to break the rule of law in a country, as was characteristic of the military in the past.

To close, our own Priscilla Tacujan, who holds a PhD in Political Philosophy from Claremont University, describes this unconventional democratic practice at work in Honduras by distinguishing between a democracy that is a mere procedure and a democracy grounded on principles:

A democracy that is grounded on mere procedures and processes is only a procedural kind of democracy, one that is devoid of political and moral principles. It does not acknowledge that there are certain standards of government and politics that focus not only on processes and methods but on standards of what is right and just. The nature of a democratic regime is such that it weilds power in the interes of its people, and a ruler that promotes his own interests goes against the moral purpose of that regime.... To students of politics, fascinated at the unconventional ways the democratic institutions of Honduras are defending their democracy. Honduras is a case in constitutional democratic experiment that may just prove to be successful in a region that needs a model to emulate.

[+ Share / Save](#) ▾

Tagged as: [Alvara Vargas Llosa](#), [American Enterprise Institute](#), [coup](#), [Honduras](#), [Independent Institute](#), [Mary O'Grady](#), [New York Times](#), [Roger Noriega](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)

{ 4 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

7/6/2009

You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice



Reny M. Bake [07.01.09 at 6:27 pm](#)

How many members of the OAS or UN read the Hondurean constitution BEFORE open the mouth to say something and/or take a decision? This is the question!.. How many of them talked with the Honduras people and learned about the hondurean laws? I think your article is less emotional, more rational, analytical and trying to find the true in all this.



[Alejandro Chafuen](#) [07.02.09 at 8:36 am](#)

“the much more important fact is that only capitalism makes democracy possible. And if a democratic people comes under the sway of an anti-capitalistic creed, this means that democracy will inevitably destroy itself.” F. A. Hayek



Vevian Ghobar [07.02.09 at 9:48 am](#)

What is happening in Honduras is something less than democratic; President Zelaya’s actions are much the same as the latest political leaders the world have seen. ” Dictators”. Why is it so difficult to follow the law? So far we haven’t seen any good actions from his behalf towards the Honduran Citizens. Many Hondurans claim that ever since he came to power things have been worst. I believe that Honduras deserves a better leader.



Joseph Humire [07.02.09 at 12:47 pm](#)

Reny- Thanks for your comment, that was a great point. I actually added a great article by HACER which references the Honduran constitution so that others can become more informed.

Vivian- I couldn’t agree more, that is why it’s important to respect the will of the Honduran people.

Alex - We can always look to Hayek to add some clarity :) Thanks for the quote.

Leave a Comment

Name \*

7/6/2009

You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice

E-mail \*

Website

You can use these HTML tags and attributes: <a href="" title=""> <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite=""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <strike> <strong>

Submit

Previous post: [MIA: Teacher Absence in Developing Countries](#)

Next post: [Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiin Inaugurated President of Mongolia](#)

•



•  To search, type and hit en

• **Topics**

Select Category ▼

• [Across the Atlas Network](#)

- [Grassroots Fundraising and the "21st Maine"](#) July 2, 2009  
Grassroots Fundraising and the "21st Maine"
- [You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice](#) July 2, 2009  
You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice
- [Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiin Inaugurated President of Mongolia](#) July 2, 2009  
Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiin Inaugurated President of Mongolia
- [MIA: Teacher Absence in Developing Countries](#) July 2, 2009  
MIA: Teacher Absence in Developing Countries
- [Read blog posts from CFE in Korea and MedLib in Switzerland on Atlas's Freedom](#)

7/6/2009

You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice

[Network and ad...](#) July 2, 2009

Read blog posts from CFE in Korea and MedLib in Switzerland on Atlas's Freedom Network and ad...

- [Freedom To Create](#) July 1, 2009  
Freedom To Create
- [You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice](#) July 1, 2009  
You Call it a "Coup," I Call it Justice
- [Learn about a new prize for artists advocating for freedom and human rights.](#)  
<http://su.pr/2X9QpE> July 1, 2009  
Learn about a new prize for artists advocating for freedom and human rights.  
<http://su.pr/2X9QpE>
- [Measuring the Success of your Social Network](#) June 30, 2009  
Measuring the Success of your Social Network
- [Is it a "Military Coup"?](#) June 30, 2009  
Is it a "Military Coup"?

Get smart with the [Thesis WordPress Theme](#) from DIY Themes.

[WordPress Admin](#)

**Warning:** fopen(/wp-includes/class-cache.php): failed to open stream: No such file or directory in /www/atlasftp/atlasnetwork.org/htdocs/networknews/wp-blog-header.php(1) : eval()'d code on line 1

**Warning:** fwrite(): supplied argument is not a valid stream resource in /www/atlasftp/atlasnetwork.org/htdocs/networknews/wp-blog-header.php(1) : eval()'d code on line 1

**Warning:** fclose(): supplied argument is not a valid stream resource in /www/atlasftp/atlasnetwork.org/htdocs/networknews/wp-blog-header.php(1) : eval()'d code on line 1