

# **Thailand Coup & Martial Law : “The military ‘non-coup’ is part of the process of decreasing the democratic space”**

Wednesday 21 May 2014, by [UNGPAKORN Giles Ji](#) (Date first published: 20 May 2014).

## **SMELLS LIKE A COUP, TASTES LIKE A COUP, LOOKS LIKE A COUP**

Today Thai army general Prayut Chanocha declared martial law without consulting the caretaker government or any other elected representatives. Troops took over all radio and TV stations and are positioned along major road intersections in Bangkok.

Despite the fact that he claimed that “this is not a coup”, Prayut’s actions smell, taste and look like a coup. This is from a man who has blood on his hands. Four years ago to the day Prayut oversaw the shooting down in the streets of almost ninety Red Shirt pro-democracy demonstrators. Before the elections in the following year he made public statements against the Pua Thai Party. He had previously been a key figure in manoeuvring Abhisit’s anti-Democrat Party into an unelected government in 2008. He has never been brought to court for his crimes and was on the list of those who would be given total amnesty in Yingluck’s abortive amnesty bill.

The military say that the declaration of martial law is just to maintain peace and security; if so, it is too little too late. If the military were really concerned with keeping the peace they would have acted against Sutep’s anti-Democrat mobs when they invaded government ministries in order to overthrow the elected government at the end of last year. They would have arrested Sutep and his armed thugs who used violence on the streets to wreck the February election.

But the military are just team players on the side of those who want to destroy Thailand’s democratic space. They have sat on their hands and watched with glee as the Yingluck government was gradually destroyed and the elections wrecked. Now they estimate that their allies among Sutep’s mob and the kangaroo courts have created enough chaos to legitimise military intervention.

Make no mistake, this military “non-coup” will not ensure that free and fair elections take place and it certainly won’t protect freedom of expression. The “non-coup” will instead smooth the way for an unelected “temporary” Prime Minister. It will smooth the way to fixing the democratic process so that unelected powers can control any future elected government. It is part of the process of decreasing the democratic space.

Democracy can only be built if significant numbers of Red Shirts realise that Pua Thai and the UDD leadership are unwilling and unable to lead a fight. The building of an independent pro-democracy movement based upon the Red Shirts with clear links to the progressive working class and peasantry is long over-due. Such a movement cannot be built over night but it can and must be built.

For those who say this is not a coup or it’s only a half coup because the military have not suspended the constitution and overthrown the government, let us just remember that the military actually wrote this constitution and ensured that the courts would prevent any elected representatives from amending it. Why would they suspend it? As for the government, ever since the elections were

wrecked and Yingluk overthrown by the courts, there has been no functioning government for the military to overthrow. The army is now acting with impunity, controlling the media, raiding bookshops, arresting activists and ordering state officials to “report” to army bases. NOT A COUP, MY ARSE!!

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