

# Judicial Coup in Thailand - a blow to democracy

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The unelected, antidemocratic and illegitimate Constitutional Court has staged a coup d'état, overthrowing Prime Minister Yingluck on a mere technicality. They claim that the elected Prime Minister did not have the right to move a government official.

It is a mere technicality because she is accused of "abusing her power" to appoint an in-law to the vacant position. While Yingluck has been accused of this ridiculous "wrong-doing", the military coup makers and the Democrat Party politicians who killed scores of pro-democracy demonstrators enjoy impunity.

The actions of this court would be laughable if they were not so serious. The court has previously ruled against the right of an elected parliament to amend the military constitution so that all senators would be elected. It also ruled that the government cannot build a much needed high speed rail link. In that case the old fogies stated that "it would be better to build roads". Apparently they have illusions that they experts in all matters and have the right to run the country instead of the government.

This coup d'état is basically in support of the anti-democrat mobs, led by Sutep Thaugsuban, who have brought chaos and violence to the streets of Bangkok. These mobs have also enjoyed impunity. It is merely the latest in a long line of military or judicial coups since September 2006 which have sought to reduce the democratic space and disenfranchise the majority of the population. Each time they have overthrown an elected government, subsequent elections have shown that the majority of the population continue to support such a government.

The Constitutional Court is part of the conservative elite alliance. This alliance is made up of the military, the top bureaucrats, the courts, the anti-Democrat Party, the middle classes and the NGOs. These are the guilty people who have promoted the destruction of democracy.

Since the end of last year violent right-wing anti-democratic mobs have openly used violence, including the use of fire arms, to wreck the February elections. At the same time middle-class academics and NGO leaders have joined a disgusting chorus of hypocritical calls for an appointed Prime Minister and measures to restrict the democratic franchise in the name of "peace".

The care-taker government that survives for the time being is made up of ministers who were not dismissed along with Yingluck. But it will be weaker and other sections of the anti-democratic order will try to remove them as well. Their aim is to change the rules before a new election in order to further destroy the democratic space.

Make no mistake, this is gigantic conflict between those who believe in the democratic process and modernity and those who believe in turning the clock back to the dark days when the majority of the population were ignored and insulted. It is not merely an elite struggle. It is not about succession to the throne and it is not primarily about the Shinawat family. Those who make such claims dismiss the political awakening and political participation by millions of redshirts and their supporters.

Yingluk's Pua Thai Party cannot be trusted to lead a fight for democracy against these continuing threats. Any defence of democracy must come from the red shirt movement. But what is needed is new leadership which is independent of Pua Thai and more closely allied to the organised working class.

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