



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on November 7, 2009

Treating Honduras Like a Colony

The Associated Press reported on November 6 that a deal to end the constitutional crisis in Honduras and form a unity government has fallen apart. Ousted President Manuel Zelaya and current leader Roberto Micheletti were pressured into accepting the deal by the United States.



The constitutional crisis began last summer when President Zelaya tried to extend his term of office without pursuing the proper process for amending the Honduran Constitution, which explicitly states that no one can run for President if he has already served as President. Amending the Honduran Constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote of Congress, but instead of his pursuing this constitutional route, Zelaya tried to hold a popular referendum to amend the Constitution.

The Obama Administration prefers to call what happened next a “coup.” The national legislature of Honduras, which has five different political parties, none of which has a majority, moved to prevent Zelaya from violating the Constitution he had sworn to uphold. The Honduran Supreme Court found Zelaya had acted illegally, that he was in contempt of court, and that he was violating the Honduran Constitution.

The “coup,” as Obama and the media likes to call it, was a Honduran resolution of a Honduran constitutional problem. No one is alleging that the people of Honduras do not have democratic elections. In fact, Zelaya just barely won election when he took his constitutionally limited single term in office. What we have, rather, is a question about who should best resolve a constitutional problem in Honduras.

Of course, a constitutional limitation on how long a President may serve is not unique to Honduras. For example, the 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: “No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice.” What would happen if President Clinton had tried to run for a third term in 2000, and had called for a preliminary “election” to determine that he had the right to do so?

Would the European Union or the United Nations have a right to try to work out a “compromise” between Clinton and those parts of our government which flatly denied his right to either call a constitutional election or to run for a third term while the 22nd Amendment was still part of the U.S. Constitution?

Nations with free and democratic systems have constitutional problems from time to time. About a year ago, after a general election in Canada, the three opposition political parties announced that they would decline to support the minority government of Stephen Harper, the Conservative Party Leader and Prime Minister. American citizens, like all free peoples, could exercise their right of free speech to



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comment upon who was right and who was wrong. But would the U.S. government have had any right to interject itself into Canada's affairs to try work out a "compromise"? Canada, because of the separatist impulses of Quebec, has a long-standing constitutional problem, and the people of Canada — not busybodies from around the world — have the right and the duty to resolve that issue.

When German Chancellor Schroeder called an election in the Bundestag in 2005, there was debate as to whether the Basic Law of Germany allowed this. Like all political documents, the Basic Law has inherent tensions: the Bundestrat, the legislature of state governments, has certain prerogatives; the Bundestag, the legislature of the electorate, has other rights; even the President of Germany has independent, though largely symbolic, rights. It was no business of the European Union or America how Germans worked out their own governance.

If the United States should not interject itself into the political affairs of Canada or Germany, why should it do so regarding Honduras? If the United States limits the terms of its Presidents, why should the U.S. government view as a coup the removal of a term-limited President in Honduras?

The effort to impose an international "interpretation" of the Honduran Constitution that purports to overrule the Honduran Supreme Court's interpretation has been derailed, at least for the moment. Obama and his political allies may lambast "imperialism," but attempting to treat Honduras like a colony is imperialism.



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