

Is it a Coup in Honduras?

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As diplomatic talks between deposed Honduran President Miguel Zelaya and the representatives of the government that took over following his ouster continue to mire in deadlock, questions remain as to whether or not his removal was really a coup or a necessary action to stop a would-be dictator.

According to Tulane professor Anthony Pereira, the answer to those questions lies in the way it all went down.

"In my opinion this was a coup," says [Pereira](#), professor and chair of the political science department. "The nature of the endgame that removed the president ? he was removed at gunpoint by soldiers and sent out of the country ? would indicate that it's a coup."

The issue that led to the removal of Zelaya on June 28 was his efforts to introduce a referendum that would allow a president to run for reelection. Pereira believes, however, that there is only tenuous evidence that Zelaya was trying to set himself up as a dictator.

"The case that this was going to be an imminent extension of Zelaya's power is hard to make," says Pereira. "It's a bit of a stretch to say that the referendum was an attempt to seize power and stay in office. That would be very difficult under the rules of the game that are in place."

With the negotiations stalled, there is increasing pressure on the United States government to intervene, but Pereira says U.S. involvement is not inevitable.

"While the mainstream foreign policy position is to not recognize the [interim]

government, there is some division there, partly due to the support Zelaya received from Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez." The United States has long viewed Chavez as a destabilizing force in Latin America.

Whatever the outcome, Pereira says he and other [political science](#) faculty see the ongoing events in Honduras as solid material for the classroom.

"It seems like this might drag on for a while, in which case we could have a great teaching moment."