

# THAILAND COUP

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Monday 12th December 2016, first year students of Global Governance had the pleasure to attend a conversation with Claudio Sopranzetti about the social and political implication of the May 2014 coup in Thailand.



THAILAND, May 2014

Sopranzetti was born and raised in Italy, but after reaching his BA in Anthropology and Linguistics he decided to work on the field in order to apply his studies in real life. As he said during the conversation, you must have a direct contact with the reality that you are studying, in order to deeply understand how their minds, and thus their society, works.

He joined NGOs in Kenya and travelled around West Africa, Asia and went studying at Harvard University. While conducting several researching, he got very “fascinated” by the history of Thailand, collaborating with local artist and journalist.

In fact the Thailand was the object of the Global Conversation. The talk analysed the causes and consequences of the May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014 coup in Thailand, defining it as one of the many arising challenges of democratization process taking place in Asia. Mr. Sopranzetti divided the causes that led to the coup into two processes, similar to the ones that were affecting Asia in general: the emergence of a global antidemocratic middle class; and the need of a new system of global governance.

He decided to focus his presentation on the junta’s aggregate plan to destroy the democratic goals achieved until that moment, negating the freedom of expression, through the repression of the popular, academic and political voices. This plan evolved around three major elements:

- 1) The turn into law of a new centralized administrative structure;
- 2) The broadcast of an ideological apparatus that embodied the new vision of the Thai polity and the importance of legalism over the process of democratization;
- 3) The establishment of a new class set between traditional elites, military forces and popular middle class.

He emphasised that this transformation did not take place in an international space, even though all the premises of the Thailand coup were wide spreading in Asia. It rather occur into “the emergence of a new Beijing consensus”.



THAILAND DURING THE COUP

Where precedent rebellion and authoritarian moments in Thailand ( between 1932 and 1992) found economic and ideological support in the United States of America's anti-communist idiom, since the coup of the junta has cosied up to China, and approved much of the ideological apparatus that had sustained its anti-democratic governance.



The conversation has been really interesting and gave us a lot of information about the democratization process of Asia in general and Thailand in particular, that we were not aware of. Moreover what we found really "special" is the anthropological point of view through which he described what happened, which was something unusual and completely new for us. The passion and the "truth" that he reported during the speech were really fascinating and helpful in

order to understand a situation that we all heard of but never really and deeply comprehended. Above all, all of us really appreciated the tools and advises that Mr. Sopranzetti gave us at end of the Conversation, such as that the theoretical studies are meaningless if not applied in real life and that if we want to make research about anything the best efficient and in some sense only way is to come into direct contact with the interested party, listening to different points of view and to see things with someone else's eyes, not only from us.

Written by

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