ABSTRACT

Contemporary societies overwhelmingly chose to organise themselves politically in the form of states, social constructs within which different groups are expected to behave consistently with generally accepted norms. Social constructs, however, are not immutable. Groups' behaviours within the state are fluid and may cause fundamental changes in the polity's organisation. This is the case of *coups d'Etat*, when armies overtake the bureaucratically established executive and assume direct control of the state.

This research project adopts a new perspective towards the analysis of military *coups*. Based on a Constructivist approach to the dynamics occurring in the immediate aftermath of *golpes,* this research aims at improving our understanding of the phenomenon. Specifically, this paper will analyse how members of the army employ discourse legitimisation techniques to legitimise in front of the state's society their change of behaviour from law enforcement actors to policymakers.

This research analysed and collected the broader sociological and political research over discourse legitimisation practices, collating them into a coherent framework to be employed in the analysis of during- and post-*coups* discourses. According to this framework, discourse legitimisation techniques occur at three different levels. In the first one, carefully chosen words deliver moral judgements alongside objective descriptions of the reality. In the second, broader logical structures within a speech are used to justify and legitimise a specific course of actions. In the third, metaphors and overall narratives are employed to simplify the message and to create a strong connection between the speakers and their audience. The discourse legitimisation framework is then applied to two specific case studies – namely the attempted *coup* in Turkey in 2016, and the successful 2014 *coup* in Thailand – to verify its effectiveness and to highlight eventual shortcomings of the theoretical research.

Although the theoretical model proved to be a highly effective tool in the analysis of discourse legitimisation techniques in the two case studies, it also shed new light on future areas of research

which may greatly enrich our understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, the paper will also highlight how further research on the impact of expectations and on the role of the international community is needed to improve our knowledge on military *coups* beyond their over-surveyed material and structural characteristics.