Military Coups in Thailand:
The Strategic Arguments to Justify a Democratic Setback

Lipikar Narayaem Lindman
# Table of Contents

**Acronyms** .......................................................................................................................... 3

1. **Introduction** ......................................................................................................................... 4

2. **Background** .......................................................................................................................... 6

3. **Theoretical Framework** .......................................................................................................... 7
   3.1. Security .............................................................................................................................. 8
   3.2. Corruption .......................................................................................................................... 9
   3.3. Monarchy ............................................................................................................................ 11

4. **Research Design** ..................................................................................................................... 13
   4.1. Choice of method ............................................................................................................... 13
      4.1.1. Discourse analysis and frame analysis ........................................................................ 13
   4.2. Choice of cases and actors ............................................................................................... 14
   4.3. Operationalization of the discourses - indicators ............................................................. 15
   4.4. Data sources ..................................................................................................................... 16
      4.4.1. Restrictions ................................................................................................................ 17
   4.5. Time frame ....................................................................................................................... 18
   4.6. Analytic schema ................................................................................................................. 18

5. **Findings and Analysis** .......................................................................................................... 20
   5.1. 2006 Coup d'état ............................................................................................................... 20
      5.1.1. Security ...................................................................................................................... 20
      5.1.2. Corruption ................................................................................................................ 23
      5.1.3. Monarchy ................................................................................................................... 24
   5.2. 2014 Coup d'état ............................................................................................................... 26
      5.2.1. Security ...................................................................................................................... 26
      5.2.2. Corruption ................................................................................................................ 28
      5.2.3. Monarchy ................................................................................................................... 29

6. **Discussion** ............................................................................................................................ 31

7. **Conclusion** ............................................................................................................................ 33

8. **References** ............................................................................................................................ 35

**Appendix: List of Searched Words and actors** ....................................................................... 42
**Acronyms**

CDRCM – Council For Democratic Reform Under Constitutional Monarchy
NCCC – National Counter Corruption Commission
NCPO – National Council for Peace and Order
NSC – National Security Council
RTA – Royal Thai Army
1. Introduction

Democracy is a universally recognised ideal and provides an environment for the protection and effective realisation of human rights. World leaders have pledged to commit to a world in which “[…] democracy, good governance and the rule of law as well as an enabling environment at national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development” (United Nations, 2017). Therefore, the importance of the control of the military by civilian officials elected by the people is fundamental in a democracy. However, in reality there are military establishments that have been gaining significant power and achieved considerable autonomy, and governments have never managed to establish supremacy over their armed forces (Kohn, 1997:2ff). One of the military establishments that have gained considerable power and autonomy, and it is out of reach of civilian control, is the Royal Thai Army (RTA).

In Thailand, coups have become the norm for change of political leadership and government, and has evolved in a cyclical pattern – starting with a coup, followed by an election and a short period of open politics, before a crisis leading to another coup (Bunbongkarn, 2004:47). Thailand is once again experiencing a resurgence of coups in 2006 and 2014, and the country is now under a military rule. Surveys conducted by Bjarnegård and Melander (2014) raise an interesting question about Thai people’s perception of the military role in political process. The majority of Thai people support military interventions when the government is incapable of ruling, but at the same time appear to desire a democratic state and democratic institutions. Surveys by the Bangkok Post and Suan Dusit Poll found most people interviewed in Bangkok, selected provinces and from various occupation across the country supportive of the 2006 coup (Bangkok Post, 2006b). This raises the question of how the military achieve its support and legitimacy, as it is often presumed that military influence or takeovers are considered undesirable. The case of Thailand is interesting to study as the vicious cycle of coups and democratic instability in the country has an impact on political development on the region, but also on the daily lives of the people in Thailand who wish to live in a stable political and democratic society.

With frequent military intervention, democracy in Thailand is fragile. When compared to other cases of military coups in other parts of the world (such as 1973 Chilean Coup d’état and 1992 Georgian Coup d’état), military takeovers are often violent and not approved of by its own citizens. Therefore, the case of Thailand is unusual and relevant because the latest interventions (2006 and 2014) were considered bloodless, and the RTA succeeded in gaining power and legitimacy from the support of the people without accomplishing political
takeovers through armed and violent means. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to try to understand what strategic arguments Thai military used to justify their frequent involvement in state politics. There are reasons to believe that the RTA used strategic arguments instead of explanations for the coups, due to frequent involvement of the Thai military in politics (with 19 coups) since the abolishment of absolute monarchy in 1932 (Hodal, 2014). Accordingly, the paper seeks to conduct a descriptive analysis of how the armed forces framed their decisions to intervene in 2006 and 2014. The research question is then as follows: *What strategic arguments were most prominently used by the Royal Thai Army to justify their intervention in state politics in 2006 and 2014?*

Understanding how the military framed its reasoning in 2006 and 2014 is important due to the need of trying to interpret what kind of strategic arguments the RTA has been using to justify their actions and which seems to give the institution the support it needs. Discourses such as security, corruption and monarchy discuss risk and opportunities for a military institution to take advantage of and utilise as arguments to justify and execute an intervention. Therefore, the present paper considers frame analysis as a suitable tool for the conduction of the analysis as it makes it clearer if the discourses of security, corruption and monarchy are used to the military’s advantage as strategic arguments in their mission to oust elected governments and justify coups. Here, it is believed that framing of a problem by a powerful actor can provide a change or alteration of perception by receivers, which is crucial in affecting the opinions and support of the people. In addition, to compare the 2006 coup and 2014 coup will reveal if there is a discourse and strategic argument that was paramount, and in which that the military believes is always working and is legitimate to keep the institution in politics and power, as well as a tool to gain justification.

The paper begins with a short background, followed by a review of previous research on the security, corruption and monarchy discourses and which is to be used as theoretical tools and foundation for the analysis. The research design is then presented with a discussion of the chosen methodological framework, data selection, operationalization of discourses, and restrictions and limitations of the study. An analysis of the findings follows. To finish the paper, a summary of the results and a concluding discussion will be presented.
2. Background

After the abolishment of absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand bore witness to multiple military coups. Since 1991 Thailand has enjoyed a period of democracy and for many years, people believed that a military intervention were history until the country faced a resurgence of coups in 2006. Thailand has once again moved towards an era of re-intervention of the army in Thai politics (Bangkok Post, 2006g). In 2006, the RTA launched a bloodless coup against the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and declared martial law and announced it had formed an interim regime (Walker, 2006). In 2014, eight years after, Thailand’s military has once again seized control of the country in another bloodless coup, and suspended the constitution after rival factions failed in negotiations to end six months of political turmoil. This resulted in the nation’s 19th coup in 82 years. This coup was considered as a softer so-called “judicial coup” in which Thaksin’s sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was removed as prime minister after a controversial court ruling found her guilty of abusing power (Hodal, 2014).

Civil-military relations in Thailand are characterised by a resurgence of military influence in Thai politics, and there are political domains which exist beyond the control of elected civilians: the monarchy, the monarch’s Privy Council, the courts and the military; these institutions have impinged upon democratic development, and these institutions shows remarkably insistent on influencing the political process in the country (Chambers, 2010:835ff). Prime ministers have been removed by force or ousted by court order, and election results have been thrown out. This indicates an inherent turbulence in Thai politics, that democracy in Thailand is periodic and short-lived (Ghoshal, 2015:156). Fragility of representative institutions has allowed military to take control of state power since the ending of absolute monarchical rule. Through effective control over state apparatuses, the military has dominated political decision-making, and therefore, the separation between democracy and military rule remains fragile in Thailand (Bunbongkarn, 2004:47).

Before Thaksin came to power in 2001 and after the abolishment of absolute monarchy, Thailand went through six decades of unstable governance, alternating between democratic governments, which usually were controlled by the military and the bureaucratic elite, and military juntas (Kurlantzick, 2003:285). The old establishment forces comprising the monarchy, the military and the bureaucracy, faced a serious challenge when Thaksin came to power. The former prime minister opened up a political space for himself and his political cliques that had long been sealed off by traditional elites. The old establishment feared that the consensus that had held Thailand together in years past and protected the power of the
elite was coming loose at the seams. This consensus guaranteed the primary role of the old establishment in politics and was supposed to be inviolable (Chachavalpongpun, 2011:1021ff). Since being deposed 2006, Thaksin has since been in exile. In 2011, Yingluck and her Pheu Thai (For Thais) Party, the third-generation successor to Thaksin came to power. Yingluck became Thailand’s first female prime minister on a wave of support. However, she was plagued by criticism over her governance and links to her brother. Although a political un-known, she carried the marker of her older brother (who referred the sister as his “clone”). Her elevation to party leader and the subsequent election campaign was orchestrated by a group of experienced political allies linked to Thaksin, and he was the overwhelming influence on Yingluck’s political career (Dalpino, 2012; BBC, 2017; Jane’s Intelligence Weekly, 2011).

Thaksin challenged the old establishment, and by succeeding in ousting the former prime minister would open up opportunities for the military to change and influence the succession of the next government. However, Yingluck succeeded him. Therefore, it is most likely that the coups of 2006 and 2014 aspired to change the political circumstances and break the influence of Thaksin. Accordingly, here it is believed that the RTA was motivated to use strategic arguments instead of pure explanation for the military coup d’états.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section deals with the presentation of previous research which will provide the foundation for the analysis. Here, the discourses regarding the military, the corruption, and the monarchy are presented. It is possible to find strategic arguments from discourses used by the military, and some literature asserts that there are some circumstances that have higher risk of military intervention. Security discourse is interlinked with the army’s mission, and heightened perceived risk of conflicts entails the probability of military intervention. Corruption is a widespread problem for many states to counter, and in Thailand frequent corruption in the political system hinders the democratic and political progress. Therefore the corruption rhetoric opens an opportunity for the military to use as arguments to intervene. The last discourse deals with the concept of the monarchy, and the symbolism of the monarch. Thailand in particular is a unique case when it comes to its own king, and the power and influence the royals have over the country is very significant. Therefore, utilising the monarchy as a strategic argument for the coup would entail an advantage to gain public
acceptance for the RTA. Thereupon, it is argued that the three discourses provide the armed forces the arguments and leverage to justify their involvement and military coups.

3.1. Security

It is no surprise that the military is very much involved when it comes to security. The very core of military institution is to deal with all threats against the state and society. Heightened perceived risk of conflicts and unrest opens up opportunities for the military to participate in state politics. Furthermore, it is also believed that it gives the institution the incentive to use the narratives of “guardian of the nation, and provider of security and stability” as strategic arguments to justify more prerogative position for the institution. Consequently, security discourse would then be an ideal tool to promote and argue for in military coup d’états.

Civilian control of the military is a necessary condition for democratic rule. Democratic rules and processes can survive if democratically elected political leaders and their appointed officials control the armed forces (Kohn, 1997; Croissant et al., 2010). If elected officials’ effective power to govern is limited by various veto actors such as militias, monarchs, or religious leaders, peoples’ control and power is then undermined. The very features that enable militaries to fulfil their mission (protecting communities by projecting coercive force towards enemies) also grant them the ability to enforce their will upon the societies that created them (Croissant et al., 2010:953f).

The role of the armed forces is to be “the guardian of the nation”, where the task is to ensure preservation and restoration of domestic law and order, and the concerns of the safety and stability of the state and society, and in which ensuring the military influence in political matters. However, according to Croissant et al. (2010) this must be under the command of legitimate civilian authorities (pp. 955ff). Huntington (1957) discusses that one of the responsibilities of the institution is to enhance the military security of the state. The view toward national policy then reflects the professional responsibility for the armed forces’ security of the state.

Authoritarian rulers in Asia have often relied on the armed forces’ coercive capabilities to guarantee regime security and maintain law and order. Many elected governments in Asia has of yet not been able to end military domination of internal security, counterinsurgency operations and domestic intelligence. Asian armed forces have always enjoyed much more extensive roles in providing internal security. Internal conflicts represent one of the most serious threats to territorial integrity and national security. Persistent internal conflicts make
civilians dependent on the military’s coercive power and thus inhibit the reduction of armed forces prerogatives in internal security and other areas, and in addition, the inability of elected governments to provide peaceful means to settle social conflicts undermine the legitimacy of civilian actors and democratic institutions (Croissant and Kuehn, 2009:190ff). Thus, it creates a breeding ground for extension of military influence and intervention into political realm.

In the case of Thailand, the armed forces were also part of creating the nation. Before the military coup of 2006, civilians had almost no influence in defence policy-making, leaving all external defence issues to the military (Croissant and Kuehn, 2009:190). The Thai military institution is not informal, but the influence it has had in politics has often gone beyond the political power that the institution has been formally given. Informal groupings within the armed forces, which have access to other influential power centres, such as the Royal Palace and the Privy Council, can also be found (Bjarnegård, 2009:112). Furthermore, the military’s prominence in Thai politics was founded on the self-image as ultimate guardian of nation and monarchy, as well as on its wide-ranging non-traditional functions in national development and internal security provision (Croissant et al., 2012:18). The armed forces in Thailand have been concerned not only with national defence but also with other dimensions of national security such as political stability. A “guardian” role continues to be advocated by the military. Before 1932 abolishment of absolute monarchy, the military’s mission was to safeguard the king and defend the country from outside aggression. After, the perspective was altered to that of protecting the new constitution and the new regime, which means that the guardianship mission was expanded for the first time into political affairs (Bunbongkarn, 2004:47ff).

3.2. Corruption

Corruption is a discourse which gives appealing opportunities for the military institution to use as a strategic argument when intervening in state politics. Corruption is widely considered unacceptable, and by using the rhetoric of “corrupt politicians” or the failure of state administration due to corruption, provides opportunities for the military to gain access to politics, and to justify coups.

Scholars who study corruption argue that corruption breaks the link between collective decision-making and people’s powers to influence collective decisions; corruption undermines the culture of democracy. Political corruption is the inappropriate use of common power and authority for purposes of individual or group gain at common expense. The very
logic of corruption involves exclusion and uses its control over resources to achieve gains at the expense of those excluded in collective decision-making or organisation of collective actions. Democracy is directly harmed when people lack a collective agent they can trust to execute collective decisions because they are effectively disempowered; corruption not only leads to inefficient and ineffective government but also produces an atmosphere that is arbitrary (Warren, 2004:328ff).

In the political realm, corruption scandals have rocked governments around the world. In the scholarly realm, studies have argued that corruption hinders both political legitimacy and economic growth, and these concerns have implications for democratisation (Blake and Martin, 2006:1). An important informal institution co-existing with democracy is clientelism, and it is seen as constraining genuine political participation for the majority of people. Clientelism as the exchange of personal favours for political support is a good breeding ground for various forms of electoral corruption such as direct vote buying (Bjarnegård, 2009:7ff).

Corruption in Thailand has long been recognised as deep-rooted, diverse and complex in form, constantly adapting to the rapidly changing political, economic and social environment. It is generally agreed that political corruption in modern-day Thailand is closely related to the country’s political instability (Mutebi, 2008:148ff). Corruption in Thailand became a serious problem because of the low salaries of civil servants and political leaders, which ample opportunities for corruption in public agencies, and the low probability of detection and punishment of corrupt offenders (Quah, 2003:240ff). Under the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the military has been engaged in a subtle process of transformation, which has amounted to a re-politicisation of Thailand’s armed forces. Thaksin was deeply interested in military matters, and believed that a successful civilian prime minister needed to find a way of accommodating the military and retaining the upper hand over them. By extending the benefits of his rule to major institutions such as the police and the military, was one way of trying to ensure his political longevity (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005:121ff).

When coming to power in 2001, plenty of the appointed members of Thaksin’s first cabinet were men with high-ranking military backgrounds. A few of them was even classmates to Thaksin when he attended the Armed Force Academies Preparatory School. Relatives as well as classmates to Thaksin were appointed in a range of key military and political positions. After one year in office, Thaksin had created for himself a remarkable base of royal supporters, several of whom commanded key frontline troops. Thaksin faced little
opposition from other armed services over the creation of a personal patronage network based on his army classmates. In order to secure support from the military, the former prime minister used a variety of methods in which he appointed no less than 53 Army Generals to posts as advisor to the prime minister; later he added further 30 generals (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005:121ff).

3.3. Monarchy

The monarchy discourse is special in the context of Thailand. The influence and popularity of the monarchy gives the military another leeway to gain political power and legitimacy. When Thailand became a constitutional monarchy, the monarchy lost its formal power. However, the moral authority of the pillar is partially free-floating and can be utilised by others, especially by the pillars of military and bureaucracy (Baker 2016:393ff). The role of the monarch in past or present politics is beyond public discussion due to lèse majesté law that will penalise anybody who defames the monarchy. Thus, further contributes to overlooking the political role of the monarchy (Winichakul, 2008:13ff). Even though the role of the monarch is beyond public discussion, the monarchy discourse is important and relevant. The King is politically and socially significant, and by using the discourse as justification would raise the legitimacy and acceptance from the public for military interventions.

The monarchy’s political role in Thai democracy is often misunderstood due to the common misconception of the monarchy’s principle of being “above” politics. However, being “above” politics no longer entails being beyond or out of politics, but more of overseeing normal politics. This means that the monarchy is being held as a moral authority superior to normal politics; “above” the political process but no longer outside the system (Winichakul, 2008:15ff).

Winichakul (2008) discusses how the monarchy and its politics are in need of three important characteristics: being sacred, popular and democratic. It is of importance to enhance the king’s perceived virtuous or moral power as a righteous king, and this has been found in its embodiment in King Bhumibol Adulyadej. King Bhumibol has often been portrayed as a popular king, a saviour of democracy, something that cannot be replicated by politicians. (pp. 21f; Hewison, 1997:58ff). His Majesty was deeply adored to the point of worship by the people, some of it is due to his achievements in stopping political disarray, his many development projects for helping the poor and him calling himself as a democratic “elected king” (Handley, 2006:5ff; Hewison, 1997:58).
Even though the monarch has reinvented the institution’s place in democracy as “above” politics, the king becomes an alternative source of legitimacy to the electoral democracy, and his moral authority is far superior to the elected ones (Winichakul, 2008:28f). According to Surin (1992), the common perspective of political centrality of the monarchy is:

“Although the King does not have any political or administrative power under the system of constitutional monarchy, his role in times of political crisis has been crucial. […] Support of the monarchy remains an indispensable source of political legitimacy. A political leader or regime, even a popularly elected government, would not be truly legitimized without the King’s blessing.” (Surin, 1992:334f).

Thus, the monarchy has become to be seen as crucial to political stability, and seen as a source of unity and strength in Thailand (Hewison, 1997:61f). The tacit support of King Bhumibol is necessary for any individual or group that aspires to govern Thailand (Goshal, 2015:161f).

Hyper-royalism is an intense, excessive royalism and has increasingly occupied the space and time of public life in Thailand. The royals have become sacred beings and royalism a religion. Consequences of failing to show loyalty result in severe punishment and social sanctions. Hyper-royalist discourses exaggerate the importance of the monarchy to the extent that is to believe that Thai society cannot survive without it. Royal authority is clean and righteous, in contrast with the elected one (Winichakul, 2016:7ff). McCargo (2005) argues that Thailand’s political order is characterised by network-based politics, which the author calls network monarchy. The core aim of network monarchy was to promote the power and prestige of the throne, and the prestige will then create a broader legitimacy for those associated with it. In a network monarchy, the throne would gain credit for success and failures would be blame on corrupt and allegedly self-serving politicians. Network monarchy is in need of various sources of legitimacy, including the monarchy’s enormous popularity. As long as electoral politics in Thailand were seen as corrupted and flawed, the monarch was needed to exercise emergency veto powers (pp. 503ff).

Chambers and Napisa (2016) argue that there is a need to discuss power and legitimacy of RTA in terms of its connection to the monarchy. The relationship between the two institutions is what they call “monarchised military”. Over many years, the military’s self-defined top national security mission is to protect the monarchy. An asymmetrical nexus between a powerful monarch, Privy Council and a military leadership sustain a palace-centred
political order from which the military obtains its legitimacy. The conceptual “monarchised military” reflects the extent to which the armed forces have depended upon a discourse of royalism to maintain or extend their power, and relied on the King’s moral support and that the military owed their allegiance to the King (pp. 428; Pathmanand, 2008:129).

This section has demonstrated that the discourses of security, corruption and monarchy provide irresistible and strong arguments and narratives for the military to repeatedly use as strategic arguments to justify coups d’états. Thereupon, it is expected to find that the discourses would be prominently applied in 2006 and 2014 regardless of the contexts, and used as instruments framed by the military.

4. Research Design

This section strives to present the general design of the paper. Firstly, the choice of method will be discussed with an introduction to discourse and frame analysis and in which frame analysis will be the chosen method. This is followed by a discussion of operationalization of the discourses with the establishment of indicators, and presentation of selected data sources and actors. Lastly, a discussion of the chosen time frame, a presentation of the paper’s analytical schema and limitations will be presented.

4.1. Choice of method

The present paper will be of a qualitative and descriptive design with a case study on Thailand. No comparative analysis with other countries will be executed; the argument here is that the case of Thailand is unique in itself in which the military can execute coup d’états with popular support. To follow what Teorell and Svensson (2007) discuss, one cannot explain a phenomenon without having described it first. Descriptive conclusions are a necessary step towards the causal and descriptive analysis is the building blocks in causal research and has its own intrinsic value (pp. 7f).

4.1.1. Discourse analysis and frame analysis

Discourse analysis can be used as analytic research tool and there is no definite definition of what discourse is or what discourse analysis entails. However, discourse can be seen as a determined way of speaking of and understanding the world. It plays a crucial part in creating and changing them; the role of the discourse is the constitution of the world (Winther Jorgensen and Phillips, 2000:7ff). A discourse is a collection of rhetorical expressions and
perceptions on certain field of subjects. Discourses include and involve literature texts, statements and peoples’ perceptions and ideas. One of the tasks of discourse analysis is to uncover actors’ thoughts and motivations. The strength with this kind of analysis is that it puts questions of creation of the perception of reality, and how it can affect consequences and actions (Beckman, 2005:83ff).

Frame analysis is as a method within discourse analysis in which one studies the role of ideas in politics, the construction of policy and problematizations. One of the main functions of politics is to find solutions on common problems. However, either solutions or problems are objectively given, the conception or what is to be considered as issues, are dependent on actors and their perception, interpretation and framing of issues. When something is problematized and become generally accepted as a problem and institutionalised, then one can move on to political solutions (Erikson, 2011:10ff). Framing to shape the manner in which we interpret certain issues and situation is powerful because it induces us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways, essentially making some aspects of our multidimensional reality more noticeable than other aspects (Kuypers, 2009:190f). Frame analysis has been used as an analytic tool within social science, international politics and media research. By constructing a compelling sense of injustice and collective identities for the protagonists and their targets, frames provide a diagnosis and prognosis of a problem and a call to action to resolve it (Steinberg, 1998:846ff).

Frame analysis can be applied to and has been used within policy making, media and other fields of studies (see Bacchi, 2012; Vliegenthart and Zoonen, 2011; Steinberg, 1998; Hawk and Dabney, 2014) – here however, the present analysis seeks to uncover if the Thai military junta frame their overtaking and justification to intervene by using the strategies of the discourses security, corruption and monarchy. Discourse analysis and frame analysis are often used to discover hidden motives or agendas in policies, texts and so forth. This paper however, will conduct a frame analysis by looking at how the RTA framed the coups by using the discourses as strategic arguments.

4.2. Choice of cases and actors
The arguments for the choice of the events of 2006 and 2014 will be presented in this section. The 2006 coup d’état was one of the biggest political events in 21st century in Thailand, and after 15 years of democracy, people believed that Thailand would not return to the period of military rule. The selection of 2014 coup is based on the argument that it is the recent military
take-over in Thailand, and that country is still under the governance of a military junta. Hence, 2006 and 2014 coups are the most recent political incidents, and the most relevant to examine. The reason for not conducting a comparison with more coups, such as the one in 1991 or earlier, is because of the space and time limit. The paper has not enough room for a more extensive study with more cases, and the time given is not enough for such analysis.

The targeted actor in this paper will be the Thai military, the RTA. The coup-makers in 2006 called themselves the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy (CDRCM) (later dropped under Constitutional Monarchy off its name) and in which later established a civilian government which was called National Security Council (NSC). The military junta in 2014 established the name National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO).

4.3. Operationalization of the discourses - indicators

To make the analysis feasible, operationalization of the strategic arguments and discourses is needed. Therefore, it is of importance to establish indicators, which would then serve as guidelines while conducting the analysis of the data materials. If some of these words or phrases were used, referred or mentioned in their statements, or interpreted as connected to policies and actions taken by the military, it would then be considered and interpreted in this paper as conscious act of using strategic arguments related to the discourses, and to justify the takeovers. The indicators are based on the discourses and the relevance to the discourses presented previously. Furthermore, the indicators will be in bold letters where they occur in the analysis, to clearly show where they appear.
4.4. Data sources

The materials, which are to be collected, scrutinized and analysed, will be considered in this paper as primary sources. Furthermore, during the whole process of finding the data, a conscious awareness of reading equal amount of articles and statements, as well as giving equal time to the materials from both 2006 and 2014 coups must be present, in order to be certain that the analysis, findings and the conclusion is credible. This is to prevent a distortion of the results.

The empirical data for the analysis is derived from limited amount of sources related to the question of the paper. As this paper employs an inductive approach to examine the
framing of the 2006 and 2014 coups d’états by the military junta, news media sources are a tremendous contribution to obtain materials possible for the analysis. Here, it is argued that news media possess large amount of coverage of the events, which makes it possible to find references to quotations and statements, as well as descriptions and analyses of the incidents themselves.

After having established what sources the materials will be extracted from, what is to follow is the presentation of which news media agencies the analysis will constitute: Bangkok Post is a broadsheet English-language daily newspaper published in Bangkok. One can find large quantity of news on politics from Thailand and ASEAN. The Nation Thailand is one of Thailand’s most updated English news website on Thai news. One critical point of choosing Bangkok Post and The Nation Thailand is the risk of bias or tendencies to portray news in a certain perspective. Both Bangkok Post and The Nation Thailand might focusing on readers which might not reflect the perspectives of the whole Thai population, and that they might target foreign expats, higher educated Thais, or target groups which enjoy reading English articles. Furthermore, foreign expats might be more critical of military coups, which in turn shapes the content of the articles from the news agencies. In retrospect, this could serve as an advantage for the analysis as well; if Bangkok Post and The Nation Thailand are more critical to the RTA, the arguments by the military would then be more apparent, which would make it easier to conduct the analysis. The data extracted from the news agencies will foremost be derived from the database Factiva.

In addition to news media sources, statements from CDRCM will be extracted from the website AsianLII, where one can find official translation of military announcements. Furthermore, the paper will draw materials from the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand where statements, summary of national broadcasts, announcements and policies from NCPO can be found.

To make the material accessible for the analysis, establishing some key words would make the search for the data much easier. The searched actors and general key words relevant and used during the analysis can be found on the appendix at the end of the paper. Focusing on searching for actors will increase the possibility of finding statements or references by the military in news articles, thus making the analysis easier to conduct.

4.4.1 Restrictions
Press freedom in Thailand has deteriorated since 2015 following the 2014 military coup (Freedom House, 2016). This could create limitations of finding news articles which are not
modified to the new restrictions, or articles that are taken down. Moreover, the increased censorship might as well create a sense of fear of legal actions against journalists and media agencies, which could affect the content of the news, limit the amount of critical articles, and creating the possibility of de-framing and constructing the news in certain ways. In addition, *lèse majesté* laws create restrictions on critical articles and research, as well as media news that are offered. To write negative things about the monarchy on the Internet or on published articles can lead to imprisonment, which makes it harder for freedom of speech and expression.

As the official language in Thailand is Thai, it is most likely that there are huge amount of research and data which are not accessible if one cannot read or speak the language. This can create constraints on the conduction of the analysis as the data can then only be derived from English news articles and translated summaries of statements and policies. Moreover, translations can further constitute uncertainties as some important aspect or key messages could be lost in translation from Thai to English, or that there are no sufficient translations to words or phrases used in the Thai language.

### 4.5. Time frame

In order to be able to execute the analysis, the importance of establishing a time period in which the paper will be focusing on is needed. The time frame of the examination will be emphasised on the period of 2006 and 2014 coup d’états in Thailand. The 2006 coup began 19th of September and the 2014 military take-over in 22nd of May, which will be the starting points of the analysis. As some of the materials will be extracted from media sources, it will be difficult to have a large time frame as that would lead to excessive amount of data. Furthermore, the crucial period of obtaining statements from military of the coup would be during the few weeks after the takeover itself. Thus, the ending periods of the analysis will be one month after the both coups.

Policy statements from CDRCM will be limited to the availability of announcements from *AsianLII*. Moreover, all available and relevant posts, national broadcasts and announcements from NCPO found on the website of *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand* will likewise be examined.

### 4.6. Analytic schema
This section presents the analytic schema of this paper, which will visualise the findings of the data and the analysis, and make it easier to follow the analytical process. The findings of the strategic arguments of the discourses will be interpreted and classified on the schema into two classifications: 1. Frequency, and 2. Argument. Frequency entails how prominently the different discourses are used in the analysed articles and military statements. The argument classification deals with how the discourses are being used, either considered as the main and dominant strategic arguments for the military or not. Furthermore, the frequency classification is then described as either high, medium or low, and the argument classification as either primary, present, or not present. The criteria for in which how it is considered high, medium or low, is how often the military state the indicators for the reasoning of coups d’états in the data, and induces actions, policies and laws which strongly connects to the strategic arguments and discourses. High represents if the strategic arguments of the discourses permeate in every article and statements by the military. Medium is if the discourses are used but not as frequently, and low is that the discourses are barely used or non-existent. The criteria for which it is considered and interpreted as primary, present or not present, is if the statements or actions are to be considered as the main strategic argument for the intervention. Primary is whether the military clearly argued that the reasoning for the coup is based on the strategic arguments of the discourses. Present entails if the armed forces mention the strategic arguments relating to the discourses, but they are not necessarily interpreted as the main arguments; it is interpreted as more in passing. Not present is wherein there are no findings or evidences of strategic arguments of the discourses in statements or policies and actions that can be perceived to be connected to the reasons for coups. Establishing an analysis schema in different classification creates a nuanced picture of the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
<th>2006 COUP D’ÉTAT</th>
<th>2014 COUP D’ÉTAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1. Frequency: High/Medium/Low</td>
<td>1. Frequency: High/Medium/Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Argument: Primary/Present/Not Present</td>
<td>3. Argument: Primary/Present/Not Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the findings and analysis of the data collected and scrutinized.

5.1. 2006 Coup d’état

5.1.1. Security:

The army commander General Sonthi Boonyaratglin staged a coup d’état the 19th of September 2006 and ousted the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. CDRCM declared itself in control and martial law nationwide. Announcements made declared that the coup was necessary to correct “unprecedented division in the country” (Bangkok Post, 2006f). When analysing the materials from Bangkok Post and The Nation, there is a theme throughout the articles in which the military often use the arguments of the country being divided. The coup makers cited unprecedented division in the country, widespread suspicion of abuse of power, and activities bordering on lèse majesté for taking power (Bangkok Post, 2006e). Community radio stations throughout the northern region came to be seen as significant threat to the CDRCM authority as they could be used by supporters of the ousted...
prime minister to incite public resentment against the CDRCM (Bangkok Post, 2006d). Furthermore, The ousted Thaksin has it difficult returning to Thailand, as the arguments of the new appointed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont that:

“[…] it could create further rifts in the country because there would be clashes between his supporters and opponents. […] Therefore the Privy Council wants the military council to speed up the national reconciliation.” (The Nation, 2006d)

Thaksin requested to return to Thailand, but was denied by General Boonyaratglin. According to the general, if the former prime minister were allowed to return to Thailand, the purpose of the military coup would be sabotaged. The military rulers have cited bitter division within the country, rampant corruption and lèse majesté as three underlying reasons behind the coup (The Nation, 2006b).

Another theme within the security narratives which the coup makers utilise, is the rhetoric of order and restoration. An official translation of the announcements of CDRCM made 19-20th of September 2006, entailed the statement of General Boonyaratglin that the army has taken control over the State Administration to restore national public order and prosperity (AsianLII, 2006d). The CDRCM declared that:

“[…] for the keeping of public order, that the Martial Law shall be enforced through out the Kingdom of Thailand […]”. (AsianLII, 2006a)

“In order to facilitate the State Administration, to keep control of all situations which may be caused by persons having bad intention to the nation and to restore the nation as soon as possible, the following officials shall be appointed […].” (AsianLII, 2006b)

Furthermore, an announcement regarding political movements in 24th of September declared that:

“Prohibition for Political Movement, prohibiting meeting or political activities at any place by at least not less than 5 persons. […] Such movement however may cause problems and obstructions for the Administration for the State affairs and may lead to social disunited.” (AsianLII, 2006e)
The announcement of request cooperation in dissemination presents that the RTA clearly using the strategic arguments of security discourse by stating:

“Whereas the State Administration has been taken over by the Council for Democratic Reform; In order to **restore the unity of the nation** which is the fundamental basis for solving and rehabilitating the State **crisis** in due time, the Council for Democratic Reform hereby requests cooperation from mass media of all kinds and categories as well as all mass media entrepreneurs and all reporters to report the truth in a creative way so as to restore the **national unity** and bring the country back to peaceful situation as soon as possible […].” (AsianLII, 2006i)

The framing of public order is found in majority of CDRCM announcements. The CDRCM often stated the need to protect the liberty of the individual in legal communisation and to maintain and **restore national public order and peace** (AsianLII, 2006h).

Addition to the arguments of there being rifts in the country and the need to restore order, the violent conflict in the South of Thailand was also an argument for the military to intervene. Violence in the three Muslim-majority southernmost provinces in Thailand showed no signs of abating since Thaksin took control of the country. Chulanont was handpicked by the NSC led by General Boonyaratglin as prime minister to end conflicts among Thais and the violence in the deep South (Bangkok Post, 2006j). The new prime minister told in an interview on 3rd of October that he have been appointed to **solve national problems**. There seems to be two key problems. The first one is political, and the second is the southern **unrest** (Bangkok Post, 2006h).

After all the data has been selected and analysed, it is clear that the RTA has been framing the coup by employing the strategy of security discourse. This is of no surprise as security is one of the main missions for the military, and therefore an appealing argument for the institution to utilise and gain justification to involve in state affairs. The framing of indicators in their statements and announcements such as **division, public order, control, restore, abuse of power, problem, disunity, crisis, unrest, rifts** etc., proves that the military is very much indeed using the security discourse as one of their strategic arguments to justify the coup, and that the security discourse is a very prominent argument throughout the event. Therefore, the main conclusion is that the security discourse is a strategic argument which is **high in frequency** and considered as the **primary argument**.
5.1.2. Corruption:

When the army commander General Boonyaratglin took control over the government, the Council argued that there seemed to be widespread corruption and independent agencies were subverted by politicians, and that the national government through the current administration has caused conflicts and undermined the harmony of the people (Bangkok Post, 2006f). On 24th of September 2006, the CDRCM announced an asset inspection, with the statement:

“Whereas there is a ground to suspect that the Administration of the State affairs under the Council of Ministers vacating office by the result of the Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy was carried out dishonestly for personal benefit or benefit of others which were seriously caused damage to the country. […] The Inspection Commission shall have powers and duties to inspect all performances and projects as approved or consented by any person in the Council of Ministers or by the Council of Ministers vacating office by the result of the Democratic Reform Council under Constitutional Monarchy as to whether they were carried out honestly or not. If there is a reasonable ground to believe that any performance or project has been carried out dishonestly or corruptly and there is a circumstance that any person relates to such dishonest or corruption or involves circumstances of unusual wealthiness or an unusual increase of his or her assets, the Inspection Commission shall have the power to seize or attach all related assets of such person […]” (AsianLII, 2006c)

What it is very clear is the CDRCM attack against Thaksin, and the accusation of him being corrupt. The deposed prime minister and his cabinet members have been given a deadline to declare their assets and liabilities to the National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC) by October 18 since their removal from power. The new NCCC said:

“Usually the Constitution Court was needed to judge cases involving political office-holders, who intentionally submitted falsified lists of assets and liabilities or concealed them. […] As for political office-holders found to be unusually rich with suspected ill-gotten assets, the commissioners can refer those cases to the Office of the Attorney-General’s Court of Criminal Litigation against Persons Holding Political Positions. In addition, there have been about 200 cases involving
cabinet members and other political office-holders implicated in corruption in state projects.” (Bangkok Post, 2006a)

During their 19th announcement the RTA emphasised on the continuation of the prevention and suppression of corruption. Therefore, it was necessary to revise the Organic Law on National Counter Corruption Commission, B.E. 2542 (1999) (AsianLII, 2006j). Furthermore, a revision of the police reshuffle lists in 25th of September saw several classmates of Thaksin, the ousted prime minister (Bangkok Post, 2006i).

Indicators such as corruption, falsification and dishonesty being used in the statements, clearly shows the use of corruption discourse as strategic argument. The corruption argument is very much present, but while analysing the data, it appears that the discourse was not as frequent as the security narratives. However, this does not rule out that the corruption is considered as one of the primary strategic arguments by the CDRCM. Moreover, the targeting and accusing of Thaksin and his cabinet of being corrupt and having personal connections to the police indicates how the corruption narratives was very argued for by the RTA. This resulted also to the demands of Thaksin and his cabinet to declare their assets to the NCCC. The conclusion is therefore that the corruption discourse is medium in frequency and is regarded as a primary argument.

5.1.3. Monarchy:
In the events of the 2006 coup, the CDRCM dissolved both houses of parliament, the government and the constitution court. The announcements in particular emphasised on that the Council was under the King, and confirmed that the Privy Council and all courts except the Constitution Court remained in power. Furthermore, the announcements entailed the arguments of how:

“The national government through the current administration has caused conflicts […]. The country has been governed in a way as to suggest widespread corruption […]. This has led to political activities becoming problem-plagued on many fronts and the situation had worsened to the point where violations against His Majesty the King, whom the people hold in the highest regard, are in danger of occurring. […] For this reason, the Democratic Reform Council with the monarch as its head, […], has found it imperative to seize power of government from this point onward. […] The council is committed to preserving national peace and security
and to **upholding the monarchy** whom we Thais hold in the highest respect.”
(Bangkok Post, 2006f)

The use of the monarchy as strategic argument is prevalent. In almost all statements or national broadcast, there is a mentioning of His Majesty or declaring the reason for coup is due to violation against the monarchy. On 19th September, announcements about political participation of students entailed that the students should be encouraged to participate in politics under the democratic regime of government with the **King as the Head of State** (AsianLII, 2006f; AsianLII, 2006g). In their 10th announcement, with the request of cooperation in dissemination, the CDRCM not only used the strategic argument of the discourse security, but as well as monarchy:

> “Our nation has been damaged due to the lack of unity for so long. It is, therefore, necessary for all Thais to be united in restoring and rehabilitating our country so as to bring our nation back to peaceful situation as soon as possible, so as to serve the **will of His Majesty the King** abruptly.” (AsianLII, 2006i)

It is interesting to see that majority of the articles and announcements are often referred to King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The monarchy discourse has become one of the primary argument for the takeover. General Boonyaratglin has during the events of the coup, complained and accused Thaksin of being a **threat to the monarchy**, and someone who had deeply divided the nation and grossly interfered in the country’s independent bodies (The Nation, 2006c). Furthermore, His **Majesty the King** has given his tacit endorsement to Boonyaratglin’s leadership and integrity (The Nation, 2006f). Another conscious action with the use of the monarchy discourse as strategy is how the new appointed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont presented his new economy vision. In contrast to the growth-driven economy policy of Thaksin, the government led by Chulanont would promote the **self-sufficiency economy** philosophy of His Majesty the King (Bangkok Post, 2006j and h).

The English name of CDMCM had after a time been changed to prevent misunderstanding in the global community that the coup had His Majesty the King’s blessing. Therefore, the name Democratic Reform Council under **Constitutional Monarchy** will drop “under **Constitutional Monarchy**” from its name, according to the permanent secretary for foreign affairs Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn (Bangkok Post, 2006c; The Nation, 2006a). The Foreign Ministry also came forward and instructed the Thai embassies around the world to
state vigorously that as the country’s head of state and the embodiment of the nation, **His Majesty the King is consulted on political issues**. Thus, the coup leaders sought and received an **audience with Their Majesties the King and Queen** to report on their actions and on the situation (The Nation, 2006e).

In 2006, the use of the monarchy discourse as strategic argument is prevalent. Since the beginning of the coup, the military junta has clearly framed that the takeover was a necessity due to **violations against His Majesty the King** and how Thaksin was a **threat to the monarchy**. Furthermore, here it is argued that the name of the coup-makers is of a conscious purpose: Council for Democratic Reform **under Constitutional Monarchy**, even though they later dropped the last part of the name. In addition, General Boonyaratglin used the framing of **how the will of His Majesty** was to restore unity in the country, and implicitly indicates that it was the military’s role to execute his wishes. Furthermore, the King gave his endorsement to General Boonyaratglin, in which the action made it possible for the military to use the monarchy to justify the coup. The monarchy as a strategic argument is therein **high in frequency** and as the **primary argument**.

### 5.2. 2014 Coup d’état

**5.2.1. Security:**

The army chief, General Prayuth Chan-O-Cha, has declared a coup and ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to prevent further loss of life and prevent the **conflict** from escalating. The establishment of NCPO has now seized power from the caretaker government on 22**nd** of May, 2014 (Bangkok Post, 2014b). General Chan-O-Cha justified his decision to stage the coup as necessary to prevent further loss of life and stop the **political conflict** from escalating. A military takeover was necessary to return the situation to normal. To **maintain peace and order** there would be a more intense enforcement of the law against resistance (The Nation Thailand, 2014b; Bangkok Post, 2014a; ibid, 2014c). The Junta told foreign media on 30**th** of May that it needed to step in to prevent Thailand from regression into **chaos** like Syria, Libya and Iraq. The Army deputy of staff Lieutenant-General Chalermsukh said:

“The intensification of Thailand’s decade-long **conflict** six months before had made it potentially deadly. The civilian government could not run the country because of its lack of a full mandate.” (The Nation Thailand, 2014a)
It is very clear that the security narratives is very prominent in the military reasoning to take over, and this is very apparent as the security discourse saturate in most articles and announcements. On May the 30th, General Chan-O-Cha, Head of the NCPO conducted a national broadcast expressing the reasons for the coup. With the official translation from the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, he stated that:

“The reason National Council for Peace and Order has taken control of the national administration was because of the prolonged political deadlock and protests. There were also various violent situations, use of warfare weapons, including corruption and widespread illegal activities, affecting the well-being and livelihood of all people. […] The NCPO has taken control of the situation, temporarily, in order to stop the violence and break the deadlock that had prevented the previous government from moving the country forward, and to solve urgent problems affecting the economy.” (MFA, 2014c)

In the broadcast, General Chan-O-Cha emphasised two scope of work that the NCPO needed to work towards: the first part was concerned with the maintaining national security:

“There the invocation of Martial Law, the supreme security law, was necessary as it allows officials to take immediate control of violent situations. General laws had been ineffective in preventing violent conflicts from spilling over, harming innocent households. The application of Martial Law also ensures safety and security to lives and properties of all people while all sides learn to respect law and order as well as human rights. […] Regarding the curfew, it is intended to restore peace and order, and to provide security for the society. […] All the measures that we have been used above had one common goal – to restore peace, order and security to our society.” (MFA, 2014c)

There had been many legal obstacles which had resulted in looming civil disorder and civil war according to the RTA. The military had followed the situation and stated that they deemed it necessary to step in to rapidly resolve the situation. The first act was to halt the use of violence and stop the on-going protracted protests; it was to prevent a bloody situation of civil war. This reasoning was included in many official translations of their announcements (MFA, 2014f; MFA, 2014a; MFA, 2014b).
Indicators connected to security discourse, and in which can be found in the statements of the 2014 military junta are political conflict, restore peace and order/national security, protests, violent, safety and security, law and order, civil war etc. This shows how the security discourse is an understandable strategic argument for the military to use, as the institution itself has to deal with situations regarding the threats to the state and society, and thus, an appealing argument to gain legitimacy and to justify the coup. Furthermore, another indicator that shows the conscious framing of security as strategic argument is within the coup-makers name: National Council for Peace and Order. The security discourse is one of the primary strategic arguments for the coup makers. This is very apparent in majority of the analysed and collected data. Therefore, it can be concluded that the security strategy is according to frequency high and argument primary.

5.2.2. Corruption:
When it comes to the corruption discourse, it is not as apparent as it was in 2006. In a broadcast on May 30th, General Chan-O-Cha mentioned that the reason for imposing martial law was of prolonged conflict, but also due to corruption:

“There were also various violent situations, use of warfare weapons, including corruption and widespread illegal activities, affecting the well-being and livelihood of all people. […]” (MFA, 2014e)

The 6th of June National Broadcast by General Chan-O-Cha mentioned a bit more of the corruption narrative and hinted that:

“State officials and other systems were being controlled and manipulated in every way by corrupt individuals, political parties and populist schemes. […] We need to solve many issues; from administration to budget system, corruption, and even the starting point of democracy itself – the election. Parliamentary dictatorship has to be removed.” (MFA, 2014h)

In the National broadcast on July 18th, the NCPO discussed the importance of political reform, anti-corruption, and a system of good governance to bring about transparency. The army stated that for those who had viewpoints different from the NCPO, the junta did not want anyone who fights for democracy to disregard their safety, and overlook corruption and
misadministration (MFA, 2014f). Furthermore, the NCPO’s One Month progress report, the military mentions corruption in their future policy plans, which entailed that:

“[…] Concerning the **corruption** examination, the NCPO also instructed the **Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission** to continue working on this matter. At the same time, the NCPO established a committee to inspect rice-related **corruption** in order to ensure fairness.” (MFA, 2014d)

While analysing all the data and articles available, it is clear that NCPO did not emphasize corruption as one of their main strategic arguments. The corruption discourse is framed, but not as extensively as in 2006 where the RTA specifically targeted and accused Thaksin and his government of corruption. In 2014, the mentioning of corruption is present but it was on the 6\(^{th}\) of June National Broadcast that General Chan-O-Cha clearly and explicitly stated that state officials was manipulated by **corrupt individuals** and **populist** scheme. The corruption discourse was present, but is to be regarded as in **frequency low** and **argument present**.

5.2.3. Monarchy:
The referring to His Majesty is often cited throughout every announcements by NCPO, for example:

“The people will be encourage to participate in these markets in line with the cooperatives system, in accordance with the **royal initiative of His Majesty the King** to strengthen civil society at the village […].” (MFA, 2014a)

In the broadcast on May 30\(^{th}\), General Chan-O-Cha mentioned that after the NCPO achieved its mission, the military will go back to national defence duties and look after the country and the people, and to ensure long-lasting happiness and prosperity in **accordance with the philosophical principles bestowed by His Majesty the King** (MFA, 2014c). Furthermore, The National Broadcast by the NCPO on June 6\(^{th}\) stated that if the country will be ready to move towards becoming a fully functioning democracy, Thailand must be **ruled with good governance as His Majesty the King** has clearly and continuously shown the people (MFA, 2014h).
The monarchy discourse is present in the NCPO’s announcements, but in retrospect, it is not entirely certain that the military is using it as a main argument. On the 8th of August National Broadcast, General Chan-O-Cha declared that:

“The Monarchy is above all conflicts as every government exercises the King’s prerogatives through the executive, legislative, and judicial powers to use in administering the country. Our King is a Constitutional Monarch; whatever endorsements or actions conducted are made in accordance with the Constitution or the little remaining customs and traditions of old. For that reason, I ask for your cooperation and understanding on this matter and please do not bring the royal institution down to be among conflicts again.” (MFA, 2014).

In the article by The Nation Thailand (2014c), General Chan-O-Cha was quoted saying that the monarchy has nothing to do with the coup. The general has informed His Majesty the King about the seizing of power, and sent a letter instead of seeking an audience. This would according to the General, eliminate the fear that the palace could be dragged into the conflict (Bangkok Post, 2014e). Moreover, on August 24, General Chan-O-Cha was given the Royal Command as the 29th prime minister of Thailand, and a Royal Command to appoint 32 ministers to administer state affairs. On September 4th, His Majesty the King granted an audience to the General and the council of ministers to take an oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King before assuming the office (MFA, 2014e). General Chan-O-Cha is also expected to ask His Majesty the King to grant royal endorsement to his new cabinet (Bangkok Post, 2014d). This Royal Command is a big indication to the importance of taking advantage of the monarchy to gain legitimacy for NCPO and the coup.

In 2014, the framing of the monarchy is not as explicit or applied as in 2006. General Chan-O-Cha was very careful of framing the monarchy as a reason for political intervention. He clearly stated that the Monarchy is above all conflicts and had nothing to do with the coup, and one should not bring the royal institution into the conflict. However, the NCPO has referred to the monarch on multiple occasions in their announcements; such as “The country must be ruled with good governance as His Majesty the King has clearly and continuously shown us”, or “how the country need to be in accordance with the philosophical principles bestowed by His Majesty the King”. Furthermore, the action of the General was given the Royal Command as the 29th prime minister also made it possible for the military to use the monarchy as a strategic argument to justify the intervention and to be in power. To conclude
this section, the interpretation of the monarchy discourse in 2014 is that the frequency was medium and argument was present.

The completed analytic schema is then as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
<th>2006 COUP D’ÉTAT</th>
<th>2014 COUP D’ÉTAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Frequency: High</td>
<td>1. Frequency: High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Argument: Primary</td>
<td>2. Argument: Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Frequency: Medium</td>
<td>1. Frequency: Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Frequency: High</td>
<td>1. Frequency: Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

6. Discussion

The interpreted results presented in the previous section give evidence that the discourses of security, corruption and monarchy are present and employed as strategic arguments, but to various degrees. To relate to previous research and compare the 2006 and 2014 coup d’états, it is to be argued that the military uses the framing of “guardian of the nation, and actor of security and stability” on both cases. This shows evidence on how the RTA take advantage of the perception of the country being in disarray and there being threats to national security, and therefore argues for ensuring the military influence in political matters and promises of restoring “peace and order”. Thailand has not been able to end military intervention in politics, and with persistent framing of the country being in conflict and the government being unreliable, further create the belief of military dependency.
Regarding the corruption discourse, it is clear in 2006 that the aspect of politicians being “dishonest and corrupt”, and Thaksin’s personal network were framed as one of the reasons to oust the government. The target on the former prime minister and his cabinet regarding assets as well as a reshuffle of police list indicates how the military became aware of Thaksin’s attempt to ensure his political longevity, and thus used corruption as a reason to justify the oust of the prime minister. The 2014 coup however, the framing of corruption was more in line with the literature of how corruption was damaging to the state administration. Corruption has been framed with relation of corruption being a hindrance to democracy and the participation of the people.

The monarchy discourse has been present on both cases, and it is evident that the King is often referred to. The literature, which discusses the popularity and the importance of King Bhumibol, is presented in 2006. His “will” is framed as one of the most important and righteous in comparison to the “corrupt and dishonest” politicians. This is connected to hyper-royalism and how King Bhumibol is regarded as sacred and with the highest respect. Furthermore, it is clear that in 2006, the coup makers established some kind of network monarchy and monarchised military in order to gain legitimacy. The RTA used the perception of the institution being the “guardian of the King” by accusing Thaksin of being disloyal to the monarchy and a threat to the throne. By portraying how the monarch is in need of military protection, the army would then gain legitimacy to oust the government. Moreover, by given the royal endorsement and command, further the perception of justification of the coup among the public.

In 2014, the strategic argument of the monarchy discourse took a different approach. General Chan-O-Cha employed the narrative of the King Bhumibol being “above politics”, and how His Majesty is being sacred and should not be dragged down to political conflicts. Furthermore, it is evident that there is a need of a tacit support from His Majesty to ensure political survival; it is of importance to gain royal endorsement and command to be able to legitimise the governance of the country. Therefore, it was necessary for the NCPO to be granted the royal endorsement.

It is to be concluded that all three discourses are not used as the primary argument or as high in frequency throughout the different coups, but they are nevertheless present. When it comes to the security discourse, it appears to be the prominent strategic argument throughout 2006 and 2014 coup d’états, and the corruption discourse was only dominant in 2006. The monarchy discourse however, permeated in 2006 but showed to a significant degree of being used in 2014 as well. Thus far, it appears that the security narratives were employed as the
main strategic argument. When comparing to 2006, with accusation against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, it was very clear that the RTA framed one of the reasons for the coup was due to corruption. However, this was not the case in 2014, therefore, it seems possible that the framing of corruption as strategic argument is based on the context. This can also be discussed regarding the monarchy discourse, where it appears that the monarchy was used as dominant strategic argument for the 2006 intervention, but not in 2014.

The task of this paper was to investigate if the RTA prominently used the strategic arguments relating to discourses of security, corruption and monarchy in the coup d’états. The findings indicate that all three discourses were used during the event, but in different degrees. One problematization which was present while writing this paper, was the uncertainties and difficulties to isolate other factors (such as democracy discourse – failed democratic institutions, political deadlock or recreating a functioning democracy: see MFA, 2014d; MFA, 2014f; The Nation, 2006g, The Nation, 2006c), which could likewise be used by the armed forces as strategic arguments to justify the coup, and in receiving public support and legitimacy. There is the possibility that other discourses constitute as main arguments in the framing of reasons to intervene in state politics, but has not been pursuit while conducting the analysis and writing this paper. Furthermore, there is a small reliability concern which needs to be taken into consideration. There is always the present risk of not exactly finding the same selection of materials if someone where to conduct the same study, as the selection of the articles can vary depending on the search.

7. Conclusion

What strategic arguments were most prominently used by the Royal Thai Army to justify their intervention in state politics in 2006 and 2014? This paper set out with the ambition to answer this question. With the guidance from the literature of security, corruption and monarchy, the results suggests that the three different discourses are present on both 2006 and 2014 coup d’états, but to various degrees. It appears that the security discourse was framed as the prominent strategic argument on both cases. Corruption and monarchy discourses were portrayed and employed differently in 2006 and 2014, which indicates the possibility of this being based on the context. With corruption being prominent in 2006 but not in 2014, might suggest to the context of Thaksin being in power, therein accusing and ousted the former prime minister by using corruption discourse to gain justification. The findings show a nuanced picture of how the discourses were framed and how prominent they were used to
justify the coups. Therefore, it has come to the conclusion that the RTA most prominently used the security discourse as strategic argument in 2006 and 2014.

Moving on to consider the important question why the monarchy or corruption discourses did not permeate throughout 2014? The differential results regarding the monarchy discourse may be due to the sensitivity of placing King Bhumibol in a political context. The King was in the old age of 84 in 2014, and his health has been in decline for some years before (Hume and Olarn, 2014). Furthermore, the reverence and popularity of the monarchy is important to gain legitimacy from the people, however, King Bhumibol’s heir has a bad reputation and faces an uphill battle to win the trust and adoration his father has achieved (Fuller, 2015). Therefore, it is most likely that using of the monarchy as an instrument in 2014, compared to 2006, has to be approached more carefully. Regarding the contrasting results of the corruption discourse might be due to Thaksin was, compared to Yingluck, depicted and considered as an “enemy” to the nation and the monarchy (Chachavalpongpun, 2011:1028). Therefore, it is suggested that there was a necessity to attack Thaksin and his government more rigorously. Yingluck has been often accused of being a “puppet” to her brother, and it is to believe that it was he rather than his sister who ran the country in exile (Eimer, 2013). There is the possibility of her being seen as a less of a threat.

To move forward with this study, an interesting alternative to incorporate and compliment the study is by conducting a bivariate/multivariate regression analysis. By doing surveys on the opinion of the people of Thailand, it is possibly to uncover what strategic arguments or discourses which convince the public the most, and in which gives the legitimacy and justification to the RTA. Furthermore, expanding the study to include more cases would cover more aspects and provide a more extensive picture.
8. References

Primary sources:


Bangkok Post (2006a). *Asset lists demanded by NCCC; Thaksin, cabinet get 30 days to comply*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006b). *BANGKOK POST COMMENT; Council has to do the job right*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006c). *Council shortens its name to prevent misunderstanding; ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006d). *COUP AFTERMATH/CHARTER DRAFT PANEL/ASSET SCRUTINY; CDR wary of local radio in the North*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006e). *COUP D’ETAT; Armed forces and national police take over government/Martial law imposed, constitution abrogated, cabinet dissolved/Unprecedented division in the country cited as main reason*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006f). *COUP D’ETAT IN THAILAND; By Bangkokpost.com*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006g). *EDITORIAL; A step back so as to move forward*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006h). *INTERVIEW/THAILAND’S NEW PRIME MINISTER; Priorities are political reform, southern peace*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006i). *POLICE RESHUFFLE/CHANGES NOT SEEN GOING FAR ENOUGH; Revised list puts Thaksin’s men in ‘freezer’*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2006j). *SURAYUD NEW PM; Self-sufficiency economy gets new push over Thaksinomics*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2014a). *EDITORIAL – Coup offers no solution*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].


Bangkok Post (2014c). *NCPO denies staging ‘coup’*. The Bangkok Post, available at: Database Factiva, [Received 11 December 2017].

Bangkok Post (2014e). *Prayuth sends letter to King.* The Bangkok Post, available at: Database *Factiva,* [Received 11 December 2017].


MFA (2014b). *National Broadcast by General Prayut Chan-o-cha Head of the National Council for Peace and Order.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, available at: [http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/621](http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/621) [Received 14 December 2017].

MFA (2014c). *National Broadcast by General Prayut, Head of the National Council for Peace and Order, on 30 May 2014.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, available at: [http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/593](http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/593) [Received 13 December 2017].


MFA (2014e). *PM and cabinet members take an oath of allegiance to H.M. the King.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, available at: [http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/elibrary/article/674](http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/elibrary/article/674) [Received 10 December 2017].


MFA (2014g). *Political Situation in Thailand : National Broadcast By General Prayut Chan-o-cha Head of the National Council for Peace and Order (8 August 2014).* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, available at: [http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/638](http://www.thailandtoday.in.th/politics/current-situation/638) [Received 12 December 2017].


The Nation (2006a). *Change of name.* The Nation Thailand, available at: Database *Factiva* [Received 18 December 2017].

The Nation (2006b). *New PM must now do away with remnants of Thaksin’s reign.* The Nation Thailand, available at: Database *Factiva* [Received 17 December 2017].

The Nation (2006c). *Sonthi: Civilian govt in 2 weeks.* The Nation Thailand, available at: Database *Factiva* [Received 16 December 2017].
The Nation (2006d). *Thaksin’s return ‘a threat’*. The Nation Thailand, available at: Database Factiva [Received 16 December 2017].

The Nation (2006e). *The CNS will only help itself by being open*. The Nation Thailand, available at: Database Factiva [Received 17 December 2017].

The Nation (2006f). *When is the abhorrent practice of staging a coup justifiable?* The Nation Thailand, available at: Database Factiva [Received 17 December 2017].

The Nation (2006g). ‘*Yellow ribbon coup* was a very high price to pay’. The Nation Thailand, available at: Database Factiva [Received 16 December 2017].


The Nation Thailand (2014b). *Law violators face tough action, Prayuth warns election when situation is right; reforms in all aspects that are causing conflict*. The Nation Thailand, available at: Database Factiva [Received 16 December 2017].


Secondary sources:


Appendix: List of Searched Words and actors

- **Surayud Chulanont** – Thai politician, prime minister and head of Thailand’s interim government 2006-2008. Former Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Army.

- **Sonthi Boonyaratglin** – former Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army and Council for National Security, the military junta that ruled the kingdom. Became the de facto head of government of Thailand after the coup in 2006.

- **Prayuth Chan-O-Cha** – retired Royal Thai Army officer, head of the National Council for Peace and Order and current prime minister of Thailand, 2014.

- **Saiyud Kerdphol** – retired commander of the Thai armed forces, close ties with President of Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda.

- **Prem Tinsulanonda** – retired Thai military officer who served as prime minister in 1980. President of the Privy Council and served as Regent of Thailand from the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej 2016.

- **Thaksin Shinawatra** – Montenegrin businessman and politician, prime minister of Thailand from 2001-2006.

- **Yingluck Shinawatra** – Businesswoman and politician, prime minister from 2011-2014.

- **Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy → National Security Council (the interim government)** – coup makers in 2006, and then became the interim government.

- **National Council for Peace and Order** – the military junta that has ruled Thailand since 2014.

- **Military, Military Junta, Military brass**

- **Coup**

- **Lèse majesté**

- **Protests, demonstrations**

- **King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Monarchy, King, His Majesty**