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## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar el enfoque editorial con que los diarios *La Nación*, Argentina, *El Mercurio*, Chile, y *The London Times*, Gran Bretaña, presentaron la cobertura de la guerra de Malvinas (1982), y el rol que jugó en las decisiones periodísticas el interés nacional de cada país en términos de política exterior y defensa. A través del análisis textual de alrededor de 160 artículos de tapa y editoriales fue posible comparar las distintas versiones sobre el conflicto que resultaron de los enfoques escogidos por cada diario.

Desacreditar al país enemigo y a sus tropas, reproducir la narrativa oficial de los hechos, enfatizar las victorias propias en detrimento de las del ejército contrincante y justificar la guerra como un mal necesario en virtud del interés nacional, fueron algunos de los excesos en que incurrieron tanto *La Nación* como *The London Times* y que, además de desinformar, resultaron funcionales a los aparatos oficiales de propaganda de sus respectivos países.

El caso de *El Mercurio* es de especial interés dada la cercanía de Chile y Argentina y la disputa territorial que ambos países habían enfrentado recientemente (1978) en relación al Canal del Beagle. La histórica relación amor-odio entre Argentina y Chile claramente influenció la cobertura que *El Mercurio* realizó sobre el conflicto del Atlántico Sur.

El enfoque nacionalista con que *The London Times*, *El Mercurio* y *La Nación* informaron sobre la guerra de Malvinas ayudó a mantener –y a solidificar– el status quo de sus respectivos países.

Palabras clave:

Malvinas - guerra - cobertura - propaganda - aparatos oficiales de propaganda - interés nacional - Atlántico Sur - The London Times - El Mercurio - La Nación.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze how *The London Times*, in Britain, *La Nación*, in Argentina, and *El Mercurio*, in Chile framed the coverage of the Falklands/Malvinas War influenced by their respective country's national interest in terms of defense. Through textual analysis of around 160 front-page stories and editorials it was possible to compare the different war narratives that resulted from the three newspapers' approaches to the conflict.

By emphasizing their own countries achievements, describing the enemy's country and actions in a negative tone, reproducing the official narrative of events and justifying the war as a necessary evil to defend a national cause, *La Nación* and *The London Times* not only fell into misinformation and reporting errors, but also helped further governmental propaganda.

The case of *El Mercurio* is of especial interest considering Chile's proximity to Argentina and the territorial dispute that both countries had recently faced (1978) over the Beagle Channel. The love-hate relationship between Argentina and Chile was a clear influencing factor in *El Mercurio's* framing of the war.

With their coverage of the Falklands/Malvinas War, *La Nación*, *El Mercurio* and *The London Times* helped preserve –and solidify– their respective nations' status quo.

Key words:

Frame- coverage - Malvinas - Falklands - national interest - propaganda - war -invasion - islands - front page - territorial dispute - correspondents - control of information.

Framing the Falklands/Malvinas War. National interest in the coverage of *The London Times*,  
*La Nación* (Argentina) and *El Mercurio* (Chile)  
Marina Walker  
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## FRAMING THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS WAR. NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE COVERAGE OF *THE LONDON TIMES*, *LA NACIÓN* (ARGENTINA) AND *EL MERCURIO* (CHILE)

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In the dawn of April 2, 1982, Argentine forces occupied the Falkland/Malvinas Islands in the southeastern tip of the American continent. By the time the islanders woke up, the newcomers had taken over the seat of government and raised the Argentine flag. The episode raised euphoria in Argentina and anger and disconcert in Britain, which had held the ruling power of the archipelagos for the previous 150 years. It immediately started an international controversy between the two countries that soon developed into a war. The crisis finished 74 days later, on June 14, when Argentina surrendered to Britain and withdrew its forces from the islands<sup>1</sup>.

The South Atlantic drama soon turned into a media event that was attentively followed by the international community. Nonetheless, the information people around the world received about the conflict depended on who was reporting the news. One scholar called the Falklands/Malvinas War "one of the most under-reported and misreported wars since 1945"<sup>2</sup>. The difficulties of reporting from a remote place combined with state censorship in both countries "allowed the media to give way to speculation, fabrication and hearsay"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Acosta-Alzuru, C. and Roushanzamir, E. "A war by any other name: A textual analysis of Falklands/Malvinas War" in Malek, A. and Kavoori, P. A. *The global dynamics of news: studies in international news coverage and news agendas*, Ablex, Connecticut, 2000, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Wilcox, T. "We are all Falklanders Now': Art, War and National Identity". In Aulich, J. *Framing the Falklands War. Nationhood, culture and identity*, Redwood Press, London, 1992, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

“Falklands” for the British and the countries that supported its position, “Malvinas” for the Argentines, even the name of the disputed territory became a narrative strategy in the media scenario. It reflected the point of view of the commentator regarding the dispute over the islands’ sovereignty. The name choice is the most basic discourse level in which we can see an alignment of the media narrative with the diplomatic position of its country of origin<sup>4</sup>.

The purpose of this study is to show how a British, an Argentine and a Chilean newspaper, *The London Times*, *La Nación* and *El Mercurio*, framed the coverage of the Falklands/Malvinas war within their country’s respective social and political milieu, influenced by what a number of scholars have called “national interest”.

The first step in a study of frames and framing is to define the concept. Frames are, according to Stephen Reese, “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world”<sup>5</sup>. Hertog and McLeod agree with the definition but say that frames are more than just principles, “frames have their own content as well as a set of rules for the processing of new content”; so in the end frames are “cultural structures” with central concepts, peripheral concepts and a set of relationships among them. The authors say that these central concepts can be of three kinds: myths, narratives and metaphors that resonate within the culture<sup>6</sup>.

Then, how do frames operate in the media and the news process? A number of authors agree that to frame is to select a number of aspects of a perceived reality or event and size them in order to make them more or less salient<sup>7</sup>. Baden says that framing is a form of “structural bias” that results from the selection mechanism that takes place in the news process<sup>8</sup>. “Through repetition, placement and reinforcing associations with each other, the words and the images that comprise the frame render one basic interpretation more readily discernible, comprehensible and memorable than others”<sup>9</sup>.

Researchers have identified many factors that influence the production and selection of news, such as organizational pressures, interest groups, and social norms and values. This study argues that national interest is another variable that influences the way the media frame news, especially in issues regarding international affairs<sup>10</sup>.

The concept of national interest traces its roots to the earliest phases of the

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<sup>4</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, “A war by another name”, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Reese, S., Gandy, O., Grant, A., **Framing Public Life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world**, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 2001, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Hertog, J. and McLeod, D., “A multiperspectival approach to framing analysis: A field guide”. In Reese, S., Gandy, O., Grant, A., **Framing Public Life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world**, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 2001, p. 140.

<sup>7</sup> Entman, R., “Framing U.S. coverage of international news: contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents”. *Journal of Communication* N° 41, 1991, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Baden, J., “War with Iraq: How The New York Times and the Guardian of London covered the story after the first anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks”. *AEJMC Conference Papers*, Oct. 2003, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Entman, “Framing U.S coverage”, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Yang, J., “Framing the NATO air strikes on Kosovo across countries”. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* N° 65, 2003, p. 233.

evolution of modern state, in the sixteen and seventeen centuries, first in Italy and then in England; it replaced old terms such as “the will of the prince” or “dynastic interest”<sup>11</sup>. As Yoon points out, the concept is in itself ambiguous. For the purposes of this study we will define “national interest” as “a conception of an overriding common good transcending the specific interests of parties, factions and other entities smaller than the nation as a whole”<sup>12</sup>. Generally, “national interest” refers to foreign policy, while “public” or “general interest” are used when referring to the domestic scenario<sup>13</sup>.

Following Donald Nuechterlein’s framework, Yoon says that national interest comprises a number of elements that are not exclusive, such as defense interest, economic interest, world-order interest and ideological interest. He points that defense or security is “the cornerstone” of a country’s national interest as it is “the first and most general concern of a nation”. Security comprises a number of elements: “preservation of sovereignty and independence, preservation of territorial integrity and preservation of the lives of a nation’s inhabitants”<sup>14</sup>.

What happens when the national interest influences the media narrative, especially during wartime?

Yang suggests that, “in the process of producing international news, journalists select, prioritize and structure the narrative flow of events by identifying with their own countries. They frame news accounts on the basis of their own country’s ultimate interest”<sup>15</sup>.

Philip Knightley says that in the Falklands/Malvinas War patriotism turned out to be for many seasoned British correspondents “a stronger driving force than professionalism”<sup>16</sup>. According to Aulich, in both countries (Argentina and Britain) the official narrative of the events that were unfolding in the South Atlantic was tinted by a tide of “romantic nationalism”<sup>17</sup>.

In Britain, the Falklands cause projected “nostalgia” for common values such as nationhood, sovereignty and justice<sup>18</sup>. In Argentina, national pride and sovereignty were used as the last resort to raise popular support by a military rule that was faltering<sup>19</sup>. Both frames were reproduced and enhanced by *La Nación* and *The London Times*.

Yoon says that withholding information and toning down stories (two things that the media did during the Falklands War both in Argentina and Britain) indicates not only that national interest influences press coverage, but also that the media

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<sup>11</sup> Yoon, S., **National interest and press: A Q-methodological study**. Doctorate dissertation, University of Missouri, 1987, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Brands, H., “The idea of the National Interest”. *Diplomatic History*, N° 23, p. 239-61. In Yang, p. 233.

<sup>13</sup> Yoon, **National Interest**, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Yang, “Framing the Nato air strikes”, p. 234.

<sup>16</sup> Knightley, P., **The First Casualty: the war correspondent as a hero and myth-maker from Crimea to Kosovo**, The John Hopkins University Press, Maryland, 2002, p. 481.

<sup>17</sup> Aulich, **Framing the Falklands War**, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Wilcox, “We are all Falklanders now”, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> Caistor, N., “Whose war is it anyway? The Argentine press during the South Atlantic conflict”. In Aulich, p. 50.

often follows the government's understanding of national interest<sup>20</sup>.

The purpose of this study is the comparison of the different war narratives that resulted from the identification of the selected newspapers with their respective country's national interest in terms of defense.

The three newspapers' primary concern, following Kevin Foster argument regarding the role of American TV channels in Gulf War I, "has not been to provide an accurate record of events but to promote a narrowly nationalistic reading of them"<sup>21</sup>. Among the media studied in this paper, *La Nación* poses the most extreme example of frame influenced by national interest.

The case of *El Mercurio* is of especial interest considering Chile's proximity to Argentina and, at the same time, the territorial dispute that both countries had recently faced (1978) over the Beagle Channel<sup>22</sup>. Also, even if the country proclaimed its neutrality on the Falklands/Malvinas war, Chile gave considerable assistance to the British task force by "supplying communication facilities and allowing the use of land bases for supply and commando operations"<sup>23</sup>.

## BACKGROUND

### History of a dispute

The Falkands/Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands are located in the South Atlantic Ocean, 300 miles east of the Argentine shoreline, 340 miles northeast of Cape Horn. The population in 1982 was between 1,800 and 2,000, mostly concentrated in the capital of Port Stanley / Puerto Argentino. The inhabitants, who call themselves "Kelpers" after the seaweed that grows in abundance off-shore, are almost totally British and have no cultural (including language) or political links with the continent<sup>24</sup>.

Dabat and Lorenzano note that the islands are strategically and economically important due to three main factors: the probable existence of oil deposits, its proximity to the Antarctic and the commercial role of the inter-oceanic route through the South Atlantic<sup>25</sup>.

The conflict that erupted in 1982 was the consequence of a 149-year dispute between Argentina and the UK over the sovereignty of the archipelagos. In 1833, the British occupied the Falklands/Malvinas and expelled the Argentines<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Yoon, *National Interest*, p. 53-54.

<sup>21</sup> Foster, K., *Fighting Fictions, War, narrative and national identity*, Pluto Press, London, 1999, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Dabat, A. and Lorenzano, L., *Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule*, The Thetford Press Limited, Thetford, 1984, p. 118.

<sup>24</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule*, p. 45-48.

<sup>26</sup> Yabre, R., and others, "Some facts you may want to know about the Malvinas and have probably never been told". *The London Times*, April 24, 1982, p. 7.

By that year, disagreements over the islands had an already profuse history that involved Britain, Spain and France; in the second half of the eighteenth century, the three nations contended for them as a base of fishing operations<sup>27</sup>.

Although it is unclear who discovered the islands, it was British Captain Strong who first arrived there and named the territories after Lord Falkland, the First Lord of the Admiralty<sup>28</sup>. Strong did not settle in the islands and it was Spain who held legal rights to the Falklands/Malvinas until 1811. However, both the British and the French claimed them in the mid-1700s. Frenchmen from St. Malo (hence the name “Malouines”) settled there from 1764 to 1767. One year later, the British tried to establish a colony, found that the French were there, left and came back in 1771 and again in 1774<sup>29</sup>.

In 1769, Britain and Spain threatened war regarding the sovereignty of the islands. Klipper-Gross says that “this act prompted the first Falklands crisis”<sup>30</sup>. Later an agreement was reached, and between 1774 and 1811 Spain appointed nine successive governors. The last of them was instructed to leave the islands on March 18, 1811. For the next two decades the territories lacked all form of government until a new governor was sent there in 1820 by Argentina, who had become an independent nation from Spain in 1816<sup>31</sup>.

The Buenos Aires government “laid claim to Spain’s former rights and proceeded to set up a political and military command there”<sup>32</sup>. In 1833, and after military incidents that involved North American fishermen, Britain seized the islands by force and forbade Argentines to return. Argentina condemned the action and a long diplomatic dispute started<sup>33</sup>.

The Argentine claim on the Malvinas is based on two factors: the proximity of the islands to the country<sup>34</sup> and early settlement by Spain to whom Argentina belonged until 1816. The British case argues early settlement as well, reinforced by “capital expenditure and formal claims to the land in the name of the crown in the 18<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>35</sup>.

In 1965, the General Assembly of the United Nations issued Resolution 2065, which acknowledged that the Falklands/Malvinas was a British colony and urged both countries to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the conflict<sup>36</sup>. Another UN resolution calling for settlement of the dispute was passed in 1974<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Klipper-Gross, L., *News practice in times of crisis: The BBC’s coverage of four peacetime crises*. Doctorate thesis, University of Minnesota, 1990, p. 224.

<sup>29</sup> Yabre, “Some facts you may want to know”, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Klipper-Gross, *News practice in times of crisis*, p. 225.

<sup>31</sup> Yabre, “Some facts you may want to know”, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule*, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> Yabre, “Some facts you may want to know”, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano explain that “geographically the islands are part of the American continent since they lie on the continental shelf which stretches out from Argentina at less than 200 meters below the surface of the ocean”.

<sup>35</sup> Klipper-Gross, *News practice in times of crisis*, p. 227.

<sup>36</sup> Yabre, “Some facts you may want to know”, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, “A war by any other name”, p. 97.

In the beginning of 1982, the South Atlantic dispute was number 242 on the list of British Foreign Offices urgencies. In Argentina it had become a priority since 1981 for a shaky military junta in need of popular support.

Twenty-one years after the end of the Falklands/Malvinas War the disagreement over the sovereignty of the islands remains unresolved. Argentina's claims are based on what they call "historical rights", while Britain exposes the principle of "self-determination of the islanders"<sup>38</sup>.

### The scenario on the eve of the war

The military junta seized power from the Peronist Party in 1976 inaugurating one of the bloodiest stages in the Argentine history. In the name of restoring peace and social order and fighting Marxist subversives<sup>39</sup>, the junta installed a vast campaign of terror, known as the "Dirty War", whose major achievements were 30,000 dead or missing people (the "desaparecidos") and thousands of citizens forced into exile. Together with this, the junta established a neoliberal package of economic measures<sup>40</sup>. Generals Videla, Viola, Galtieri and Bignone led the junta's dictatorship successively until democratic elections were called in 1983.

By 1982, an economic crisis was affecting all orders of society with many firms in the mass consumer goods going bankruptcy. The junta's economic program had only strengthened the monopolist bourgeoisie and the military-industrial complex<sup>41</sup>. The Junta did not have many achievements to exhibit in the domestic scenario. The government "needed to find a spectacular course of action, which no one would disagree with"<sup>42</sup>.

In March 1982, the relationships between Britain and Argentina deteriorated when an unauthorized group of Argentine workmen arrived in South Georgia, Falkland/Malvinas Islands, to dismantle an old whaling station. The British protested the landing and some men left, but a handful of them remained and even raised an Argentine flag. Later, an Argentine ship stopped at South Georgia and brought provisions to the workmen; the following day the military junta announced that it would stand for its men in the islands<sup>43</sup>. This incident fueled the junta's determination

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> According to Dabat and Lorenzano (1984, 30-33) from 1956 to 1975 Argentina extended and deepened its capitalist development on a state monopoly base. This program failed to integrate Argentina to the world market and worsened the country's social and political problems. At this level of contradictions, the labor movement adopted hostile positions towards the policies of successive governments. An increasing radical student movement began to develop, providing the social base for a new revolutionary left influenced by the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions that in the late '60s resulted in the formation of politico-military organizations whose tactics didn't fit those of the working-class. The tendency toward the "militarization and fascization" of the state openly appeared during the 1973-1976 chaos as a way to restore social peace and order. The military junta's dictatorship (1976-1983) launched a "systematic campaign of extermination" aimed at worker activists and revolutionary and democratic intellectuals.

<sup>40</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, **Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule**, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> Caistor, "Whose war is it anyway?", p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Klipper-Gross, **News practice in times of crisis**, p. 228.

to occupy the islands but was not the cause of it. When general Leopoldo Galtieri took control from his predecessor, general Roberto Viola, in December 1981, he was already planning an invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas<sup>44</sup>.

On Thursday April 1, 1982, British intelligence reported a probable Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas. A number of diplomatic movements started aimed at persuading Argentina from seizing the islands. However, the Argentine fleet that had left the continent on March 28 was about to hit the islands. In the dawn of April 2 Argentine forces occupied the capital of the archipelagos, Port Stanley/Puerto Argentino, and imprisoned the government's guard. The next day, Britain broke its diplomatic relations with Argentina and the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 502 demanding Argentina's withdrawal from the South Atlantic territories<sup>45</sup>.

The occupation of the islands took the British government by surprise and presented Primer Minister Margaret Thatcher with a crucial challenge in a moment when her popularity was in its lowest level, as showed by opinion polls<sup>46</sup>.

David Monaghan says, though, that Thatcher soon realized that the Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas could pose a golden opportunity for the Conservative government to "repackage its ideological project into a more acceptable form". Through a discourse that was mounted on the tradition of great military triumphs, the government encouraged a view of the Falklands war as a key moment in "the British national myth"<sup>47</sup>.

### The relationship with Chile

Argentina's relationship with its close neighbor Chile can be defined as a long-standing love-hate one that was reflected in Chile's proclaimed neutrality in the Falklands/Malvinas war. While most Latin American countries supported Argentina's cause when the South Atlantic conflict escalated, Chile's neutrality was interpreted as a "cold shoulder" or even "a position against Argentina"<sup>48</sup>, according to Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir.

The Chilean government had reasons to distrust Argentina. In 1978, both countries were about to go to war regarding a border dispute over an eastern access to the Beagle Channel. The intervention of the Vatican, among other factors, helped to ease the frictions<sup>49</sup>.

Besides this conflict, Chile and Argentina had a number of things in common such as a population with a European heritage, a high literacy rate and a border

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<sup>44</sup> Caistor, "Whose war is it anyway?", p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Throughout 1981 and into the first months of the next year, the Conservative government's popularity ratings were below 30 percent (Klipper-Gross, 1990, p. 230).

<sup>47</sup> Monaghan, D., *The Falklands War: Myth and countermyth*, Anthony Rowe Ltd., London, 1998, p. 7, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule*, p. 35.

along the Andes chain. In the beginning of the '80s, non-elected military governments ruled in both countries. Chile was under Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, which enforced repressive anti-communist policies<sup>50</sup> similar to those of the Argentine junta.

In regard to Chile's position in the Falklands/Malvinas war, Dabat and Lorenzano pose the question whether "Pinochet acted merely as a reactionary dictator allied to U.S. imperialism, or as the leader of a national bourgeois class fearful of encirclement and territorial loss"<sup>51</sup>.

### **The media scenario: PR machines on both sides of the Atlantic**

Both the Argentine and British governments used censorship and propaganda to further their military goals in the Falklands/Malvinas War. Censorship, as described by Phillip Knightley includes suppressing and delaying information, toning down stories and, in this case, protecting the government's own image as the only real source of accurate information<sup>52</sup>.

As shocking and unexpected as the war was for the British government, the military and the Ministry of Defence "were able to exercise almost complete control" over the limited number of journalists with the task force. There were 17 in total and the foreign press was not allowed in the group who traveled to the South Atlantic. The speed for transmission was slow and much material was pooled.

Eric Louw notes that the British military's PR machine was so effective during the Falklands war that it became a "testing ground for media control", whose lessons were later followed by the U.S. government during the Grenada invasion (1983) and the Gulf War (1991)<sup>53</sup>.

In Argentina, the military junta allowed in the islands a handful of correspondents, who were ordered to abandon the place when the conflict escalated; most of them worked for the government-owned news agency and TV station. The rest of the media had to get their news from the official communiqués provided by the junta, which by the end of April announced that it would take "total control over information on the war" and warned that any disobedience would result in "the shutting down of the medium and the arrest of its editor and director for undetermined time"<sup>54</sup>.

It's important to note that control of information in Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas war was nothing but the continuation of a long-standing policy of censorship developed by the military junta since 1976 as part of its fight against the alleged "Marxist subversives". "According to the Argentine National Commission

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<sup>50</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 98-99.

<sup>51</sup> Dabat and Lorenzano, **Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of military rule**, p. 118.

<sup>52</sup> Knightley, **The First Casualty**, p. 481.

<sup>53</sup> Louw, E., "The war against terrorism: A public relations challenge for the Pentagon". *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, N° 65, 2003, p. 217.

<sup>54</sup> Escudero, L., **Malvinas: El gran relato. Fuentes y rumores en la información de Guerra**, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1996, p. 106.

on Disappeared People, who published the report *Nunca Más*, about 100 journalists disappeared after the coup". Fox says that in the face of the harsh repression of journalists, a system of self-censorship became common among the Argentine media in the mid '70s and early '80s<sup>55</sup>.

We cannot ignore the propaganda efforts displayed by both the Argentine and the British governments when we analyze the coverage of the South Atlantic conflict. Nonetheless, our hypothesis is that *La Nación* and *The London Times* not only accepted but also furthered their respective governments' narratives on the war by framing the conflict with a nationalistic stance and tone.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Three newspapers were selected for analysis: *La Nación* (Argentina), *El Mercurio* (Chile) and *The London Times* (Britain). The criterion used for their selection was that the three medium should be considered papers "of record" in their respective countries and present a mainstream approach to news.

Since its foundation in 1870 by Bartolomé Mitre, a member of the Argentine oligarchy, *La Nación* has followed a conservative, pro-establishment line. It is considered one of the best newspapers in the country. During the 1976-1982 dictatorship, *La Nación's* editorial line was supportive of the military junta's economic policies and fight against subversion. Its circulation was of 230,000 to 250,000 copies<sup>56</sup>. As most Argentine media during the war, *La Nación* only had correspondents in the islands during the first phase of the conflict (April); when the war escalated, the paper was ordered by the junta to withdraw its journalists.

Founded by Agustín Edwards, from a leading Anglo-Chilean family, *El Mercurio* has been considered one of the best newspapers in Latin America. Like *La Nación*, it has a conservative and pro-establishment approach to news. Its image was stained during the '70s and '80s for its proximity with the Pinochet regime; only papers that belonged to the Edwards and Picó families were allowed to be published in those years<sup>57</sup>.

*The London Times* has a good reputation in Britain. In 1981 it was sold together with its sister paper, *The Sunday Times*, to Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate, News of the World; Murdoch already owned *The Sun*. According to Jeremy Tunstall, Margaret Thatcher personally agreed not to send the case to the Monopolies Commission; the argument was that both papers were operating at a loss, and in danger of dying. According to the author, for most of the 1980s the paper "broadly supported Mrs. Thatcher and the Conservatives". During 1981-82 its circulation was of 290,000 copies<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Fox, E., "Mass communication in the Falklands/Malvinas War". *Media, Culture and Society* N° 6, 1984, p. 49.

<sup>56</sup> Caistor, "Whose war is it anyway?", p. 51.

<sup>57</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, "A war by any other name", p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> Tunstall, J., *Newspaper power. The new national press in Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 251-253.

## METHOD AND SAMPLE

The method used in this study is textual analysis. The premise is that texts are polysemic; language “is a socially shared, reciprocal activity, where meanings are embedded in active and ongoing relations with a specific historical context”. From this perspective, Wilkins says that “underlying differences in word usage and understanding often illustrate historically specific class-based social, economic and political experiences”<sup>59</sup>.

We have chosen a purposeful sample of **front pages** and **editorials** published in *La Nación*, *El Mercurio* and *The London Times* on the three dates that have been considered by a number of authors as the crucial stages of the Falklands/Malvinas War: 1) April 2 to 4, The Argentine occupation of the Falklands/Malvinas; 2) May 2 to 5, the first British attack and the sinking of the General Belgrano (Argentina) and the Sheffield (Britain); 3) June 14 to 16, the surrender of the Argentine forces and the end of the war. Around 160 stories were read and analyzed for this study.

Through textual analysis this study searched for discursive strategies in the construction and presentation of the information: placement and size of news, headlines, photos, narrative structure, word usage such as the presentation of the enemy and the own forces and government; the definition of the conflict and place such as invasion/occupation; Falklands/Malvinas; use of personal pronouns such as “us” or “we” and use of adjectives and comparisons; tone toward the war; omissions.

One limitation of the sample is that regarding the editorials there was not always comparison on a one to one basis because not all newspapers published their commentaries on the dates under study. For day A, for example, there may be one editorial for each newspaper and for day B there may not be editorials for one or two of them.

## FINDINGS

### **April 2: Argentina occupies the islands**

The way the three newspapers under study organized their covers on the first day of the conflict set the tone for what would be their respective frames throughout the next 73 days. On April 2, the news on the South Atlantic tensions was the main headline in the three newspapers. While *La Nación* devoted its whole front page to it, *The London Times* and *El Mercurio* carried other news as well. For the British and the Chilean papers the Falklands/Malvinas conflict was a key issue, but not the only one that mattered.

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<sup>59</sup> Wilkins, L., “Conflicted interests, contested terrain: Journalism ethics codes then and now”, *AEJMC Conference*, Sept. 2003, p. 1.

*La Nación's* six-column title clearly showed the newspaper's alignment with the Argentine diplomatic position and reflected the government's excitement about the plan to recover the islands: "Operations to back national sovereignty get started in the South". Under the main headline the paper informs that the UK requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council and then quotes the Argentine ambassador in the UN saying that the reason of the crisis is "Britain's irrational refusal to negotiate a just and logical solution". The newspaper's frame concerning Britain is more evident in the narrative when it says that the UK had "illegitimately possessed the islands" for almost 150 years. It is interesting to note that the newspaper's main headline is not supported in any line of the cover. Readers are not told what the "operations in the South" are about. There are no official sources quoted in the main article either. The choice of the cover images is also an eloquent statement of the frame of *La Nación*: a map of the Falklands that occupies one-fourth of the page and a fairly big photo of Argentine Foreign Affairs minister, Costa Mendez, smiling.

In contrast with *La Nación's* generous display, *The London Times's* April 2 headline for the Falklands/Malvinas issue is just two columns long. "UN meets on Falklands invasion fear", reads the title, which also rapidly set the newspaper's approach to the conflict: the Falklands belong to Britain and Argentine forces are invaders. The prominence given to the UN also mirrors the British government's priority at the time: persuade the UN to stop the Argentine ambitions on the islands.

*El Mercurio's* three-column main headline speculates on the Argentine determination to recover the islands: "Argentina would occupy the Malvinas today". The second headline in importance reads, "Britain denounces 'the imminent invasion'". The newspaper was careful to use quotation marks around the words "imminent invasion". The only photo that illustrates the story shows the British ambassador in Argentina. In the first day of the conflict, *El Mercurio's* framing is fairly balanced toward both Argentina and Britain. This will change on April 3.

*La Nación* is the only one of the three newspapers that published an editorial article on the issue. Entitled "Conflict in a critic stage", the article openly blames Great Britain for its reluctance to negotiate the sovereignty of the islands. It also states that the Malvinas are Argentine "by inalienable right" and says that the Argentines are confident that the islands "will be restored to the country from whom they have been taken". At this early point, *La Nación's* identification with the government's narrative of the conflict was already almost complete.

As expected, *La Nación* referred to the archipelagos as "Malvinas" and *The London Times* as "Falklands". *El Mercurio* used both names.

### **April 3: Argentina and Britain break diplomatic relations**

The three newspapers titled their editions with the confirmed news on the Argentine occupation of the islands. *La Nación's* two-line long, six-column wide cheerful title "National merriment for the recovery of the Malvinas" contrasts with the severe, factual tone of the *Times's*: "Fleet assembles for Falklands action", which

frames Britain as the subject of the action, emphasizing the UK response to the aggression. *El Mercurio* proclaimed “Argentine invasion without resistance”, framing the Argentines as trespasser forces and the Falklands’ British guard as a submissive body; this last assumption is not historically accurate since one Argentine captain was killed and two others were wounded during the clash with the British guard, as the same paper states in the deck.

*El Mercurio* published in the front page a communiqué of the Chilean Foreign Affairs Office, which expressed the country’s concern on the South Atlantic events and its “invariable respect of the international law”; the official report was an elegant condemnation of the Argentine action.

The three newspapers’ cover photos showed celebrations of the Malvinas’ occupation in the historical Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires.

In its deck, *La Nación* stated that national support for the Argentine forces in Malvinas was “unanimous”. Stepping forward in its identification with the national cause, the newspaper establishes an “us/other” ratio: “Foreign ministry Costa Méndez traveled to expose our position at the UN”. In the narrative, *La Nación* again defines the occupation of the islands as “operations” and says they were “a success”. It also persists with the idea that Great Britain had historically rejected negotiations with Argentina; the justification of the islands’ occupation by blaming the British is the same strategy used by the Argentine government, as showed by a message delivered by president Galtieri on April 2, which *La Nación* reproduces on the cover: “Our decision [the occupation of the islands] emerged from the need to put an end to Britain’s delays and refusals to reach an agreement”. The information on the British decision to break diplomatic relations with Argentina is placed in the left-bottom corner of the cover.

In contrast, this news was the kicker that accompanied the main headline in the *Times*, “Carrington expels Argentine envoys”. The British paper calls the Argentine action “seizure” and the Argentine forces, “invaders”. Yet, in another front-page article it is Thatcher’s government which comes under fire: “The government is in deep trouble...” says the *Times* while noting that throughout the political parties there was “a sense of anger over what is regarded as a tardy response to a threat...” In contrast with *La Nación*, the *Times*’ nationalistic frame allows criticism of the government.

Another ingredient of the *Times*’ frame will be the idea of British technological superiority. In the April 3<sup>rd</sup>’s front page we read a reference to the nuclear-powered submarine, HMS Superb, which the paper said was en route to the South Atlantic and “expected to reach the area during the weekend”. The rumor was published as news in many British and Argentine media as well, until the submarine’s presence was noted on April 21<sup>st</sup> in its base in Scotland, which it had never left. The Superb’s bluff has been considered one of the clearest examples of how misinformation and speculation operated in the media scenario of the Falklands/Malvinas war<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Adams, V., *The media and the Falklands campaign*, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1986, p. 65.

In its April 3 editorial titled “Naked aggression”, the *Times* says that Argentina’s action is the most evident example of unprovoked aggression and military expansion “since the end of Adolf Hitler”, names the junta “fascist rulers” and calls for military action unless Argentina backs down. “We still have one of the world’s more powerful navies”, says *The Times*. *La Nación*’s editorial, “The Argentine Flag in Malvinas”, elaborates on the “rescue” of the islands from the “intruders” and says that the recovery has a significance for the “national spirit” of Argentina.

*El Mercurio*’s editorial defines the Argentine action as “a grave violation of the international law”, talks about “Argentine alleged rights on the islands” and says that a British counteraction would be “an exercise of legitimate defense”.

#### **April 4: UN Resolution 502; Britain prepares task force**

In its main headline, *The Times* voices again the British determination to resist the Falklands’ occupation, presenting the country as the subject of the action: “Emergency Privy Council at Windsor, Fleet Arms for Falklands Operation”. *La Nación*’s headline is a statement by president Galtieri in response to the British reaction, “If the Argentine people are attacked, the country will attack too”, while *El Mercurio* gives prominence to the UK’s decision to send a fleet to the islands: “Mrs. Thatcher ordered the departure of the task force”. *El Mercurio*’s second headline in importance reports on UN Resolution 502, which ordered Argentina’s withdrawal from the Falklands/Malvinas. *La Nación* only states this fact in the deck, under Galtieri’s statement.

Photography accompanies the selected frame of the stories. The *Times* emphasizes the British military strength with a three-column image of the Sea Harrier jump jets on the HMS *Hermes*; *La Nación* goes for a two-column picture of president Galtieri. *El Mercurio* stresses the Argentine invasive presence in the islands with a photo of a scary bulldozer riding in the quiet Falklands’ downtown.

It’s interesting to note that both *La Nación* and the *Times* present the view and the voice of the “enemy” country in their coverage, but the newspapers give prominence to their own countries in the placement and length of the news and in the photography.

In the April 4 edition, *El Mercurio* and the *Times* report on the *Superb*’s trip to the Falklands/Malvinas. “HSM *Superb*, the nuclear powered attack submarine which was dispatched to the area 10 days ago in a vain attempt to deter the Argentine invasion, should have arrived in the Falklands area by now”, assures the *Times*. *El Mercurio* says that the *Superb* was in front of the Argentine shore, near Buenos Aires.

The *Times* editorial of the day is one of the most eloquent of the 74 days in terms of the papers’ nationalistic narrative of the war. Titled “We are all Falklanders”, the long article declares that force need not be “but may ultimately become the only way to resolve the issue of opposing wills”. The editorialist legitimizes the use of force comparing the Falklands/Malvinas conflict with the British liberation of the Polish in World War II. “In 1939 we stood by Poland and went to war ... now we are

in the same position with the Argentine dictatorship”.

The use of a universal “we” is a discourse strategy to separate “us” from the “others” who are different<sup>61</sup>; it also suggests an ideal community in which “we” all share the same goals. “Persist we must”, repeats the editorialist in several parts of the article. “We must, where we can, prevent the expansionist policies of a dictatorship affecting our interests”. A few paragraphs further it presents the Falklands cause as a matter of national interest, beyond parties and factions: “This is not just the responsibility of Government. It is the responsibility of the entire British people”.

*La Nación*’s editorial criticizes UN Resolution 502 and the countries that supported it, especially the U.S. and France. It elaborates on the “British colonialism” and the “British nostalgia for the lost empire” and uses the inclusive “we” to fuel the national cause: “Our spirits are strong in the fight against those who have tried to persuade us to give up our rights”.

### May 2: First British attack

With Britain’s first aerial attack on the Falklands/Malvinas on May 1, war officially starts. In their headlines and decks, *La Nación* and the *Times* emphasized the damages inflicted to the enemy; if there is a reference to their own country’s reported damages, it is buried somewhere in the body of the story. Photo choices fit the frame: the *Times* displays a six column graphic in the top of the cover, which is a careful description on how the attacks happened (it includes references such as “ageing Argentinian Pucara strike plane are on airstrip but helpless against Harriers”); *La Nación* carries two dominant photos: President Galtieri dressed in military clothes and Foreign Affairs minister Nicanor Costa Mendez.

“Tough battle in response to British attack on Malvinas”, says the Argentine newspaper. The deck explains that the aerial strike “was repelled” by Argentine forces, which shot down British planes and damaged enemy’s ships. In the text we read that the “at least four” planes were shot down. There are no references to Argentine losses. The paper also emphasizes that there is “continental support” for the Argentine cause. All sources in the cover are official sources and the report from the battlefield comes from the official news agency, Télam (the agency suspended its services from the islands on May 5).

The *Times*’ headline is short and factual: “The blitz on the Falklands”. A second headline reports Argentine losses: “Two Mirages shot down – runway is cratered” (*La Nación* said that the runway “was not damaged”). Also in contrast with the Argentine paper it says that the British aircraft was not damaged and that only one ship was “slightly damaged”.

*El Mercurio* gives Britain a dominant role on the cover: “British forces attacked Malvinas by air and sea”; the cover’s illustration is an impressive exhibit of British taskforce strength. There is no reference to an Argentine counterattack. In the deck,

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<sup>61</sup> Acosta-Alzuru and Roushanzamir, “A war by any other name”, p. 105.

the paper reports on the Argentine losses, but it says that both countries had claimed “losses and casualties.” The paper avoids referring to Britain’s action as an invasion; instead, it calls it “incursion”.

In the editorials, *La Nación* and the *Times* blame each other’s country for the escalation of the conflict. “The fault lies with the Argentineans. They invaded”, says the *Times* as it refers to the British attacks as the “easiest and least bloody way to enforce the (British) strategy”. *La Nación* states that “Argentina’s goal in taking up arms is not insignificant”; fueling its patriotic tone it says that the country is committed to defend its sovereignty with “blood and fire”. Only in the last paragraph of their articles both papers leave a door opened for a diplomatic solution.

*El Mercurio*’s editorial blames Argentina for the events in the South Atlantic and says that the country’s “intensions” on the Falklands provoked the British attacks; a few paragraphs forward it adds, “Argentina is blocking all paths to a reasonable solution”. The editorial’s cartoon is also devoted to the Falklands/Malvinas issue. It shows a bar attendant chatting with a client: “Argentines are good talkers, but Admiral Woodward is winning the war”.

### **May 3: British torpedoes hit the Belgrano**

The interesting feature in May 4 editions is the sparse relevance given by *La Nación* to the British attack on the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano as opposed to the *Times* and *El Mercurio*. While these two newspapers carried the news as their main headline, *La Nación* only mentioned the fact in the last sentence of the deck and did not elaborate it further in the cover. The Argentine paper’s title “Tense calm after the battle” sounds vague and irrelevant considering that Argentina’s second largest ship was in danger. Instead, the paper chooses to transcribe two military communiqués, which praise the previous day’s battle as “a success” for Argentina.

The *Times*’ editorial “Prisoners of their past” refers to “terrific tensions” and the “hopeless situation” in Argentina’s current scenario. Based on the enemy’s evilness, as constructed by the *Times*, the paper urges that British action on the Falklands/Malvinas “must be maintained and if necessary increased to secure the ultimate demoralization of the Argentine forces”.

### **May 4: Sinking of the Belgrano**

On May 4, finally, *La Nación* echoes the news in its full dimension: “The General Belgrano was sunk outside the exclusion zone”. *The Times* and *El Mercurio* carried similar headlines but only mentioned the ship’s location issue in the deck or in the body of the story and didn’t present it as a fact. *The Times* said that the ship “was believed” to be outside Britain’s 200 mile exclusion zone but, interestingly, in a cover’s graphic the sunk ship is drawn just inside the exclusion zone.

*La Nación* describes the attack on the Belgrano as “treacherous”, the same word used by the military in the official communiqué, which is also reproduced in the

cover.

As for the *Times*, it's interesting to note that in the deck the paper exposes the controls on information by the Ministry of Defence, "The news [of the sinking of the Belgrano] came from Buenos Aires and Washington, but the Ministry of Defence in London declined to confirm or deny it". The *Times* runs in the deck the official justification for the sinking of the Belgrano: "She was constituting a threat". A second cover story is a pooled dispatch from the HMS *Invincible*, which elaborates on the "compassion" showed by the task force toward the "battered Argentine Navy".

Together with the sinking of the Belgrano, *El Mercurio* ran another story that emphasized the British achievements: "British helicopters attacked two Argentine navy patrols". Also, while the *Times* and *La Nación* published photos of the Belgrano (taken many years before 1982), *El Mercurio* ran a photo of the nuclear powered submarine, the HMS *Conqueror*, that torpedoed the ship.

### May 5: Sink of the HMS Sheffield

Just like the previous day with the news on the Belgrano sinking, the three newspapers carried the sinking of the HMS Sheffield as their main headline. While the *Times* and *El Mercurio* stated that Argentina had sunk the ship, *La Nación* said that "London acknowledged the sinking of the powerful destroyer Sheffield"; with this headline the paper framed Britain in the undermined position of recognizing a defeat and emphasized that the inflicted loss was a big one ("a powerful destroyer"). All three papers published old photos of the sunken ship, but *El Mercurio* also ran one on the Argentine ship that destroyed it.

This day almost all were positive news for the Argentine side according to *La Nación*: "680 survivors from the Belgrano have been rescued" and "Two Sea Harrier were shot down". For the *Times* it was one of the most negatives covers since the beginning of the conflict: it reported the shooting down of a Sea Harrier plane (Argentina claimed it was two) and the death of at least 30 servicemen (on board of the Sheffield). Regarding the Belgrano, the emphasis was on the casualties and not the rescued men: at least 300.

*El Mercurio* compensated the bad news for the British side putting the UK as the subject of the action on another story: "British bombarded Falklands Airport" (in this piece it reported the disagreement on the number of British planes shot down: "Two according to the Argentines and one according to the British version"). The photo choices emphasized the British side: a British marine doing military training, Margaret Thatcher, and the photo of the Sheffield. Also, both *El Mercurio* and *La Nación* published a photo of the destroyed runway in the Falklands/Malvinas' capital; it was distributed by the Argentine official news agency with authorization of the censors and was the first image that portrayed Argentine losses since the beginning of the war. *La Nación* did not publish it.

After the loss of the Sheffield and the General Belgrano, the *Times*' editorial showed a slight shift in its pro-war tone. Entitled "For a better peace," the article

urges “no more lives should be lost and no more blood spilled than is absolutely essential”. It nonetheless sticks to the national/official narrative justifying the sinking of the Belgrano and saying that the loss of the Sheffield is “a somber reminder of the price the nation may be expected to pay if deterrence breaks down”. At the very end it says that the loss of both ships should not be in vain. “We all must seek a better peace”.

### June 14: The final clash

The British have already landed in the Falklands and are pushing toward the capital, Port Stanley/Puerto Argentino. The war is very near its end and the British are taking over key sites of the islands. *La Nación* frames the news of the day emphasizing Argentina’s resistance to the British attack: “Our forces fight with determination to reject the invaders”; in the deck it says that the national air force had successfully attacked British positions. For an unaware reader might seem to mean that the Argentine forces were giving the enemy a tough fight. The reality was that Argentine defenses were almost completely folded<sup>62</sup>. The paper recognizes that Argentina had “technological disadvantages” but says that this fact had not favored the British so far.

Even if the event of the day favored the British forcers, the *Times* surprisingly titled its cover with the news on nine servicemen who had died the previous day. The patriotic tone appears in a second article in which a Reuter correspondent with the task force reports on her experience under Argentine fire. The identification of the journalist with the soldiers is clear: “For most of the night we were mortared by Argentine troops”. Then she compliments the British servicemen: “One cannot withhold respect for these tough men”.

An interesting side feature of the day is the opening of the Soccer World Cup in Spain and the defeat of the Argentine team (which by that time was the World Champion) in the first game. The three papers ran the sports story in the cover. Interestingly, *El Mercurio* carried it as its main headline: “Belgium defeated the World Champion”.

### June 15: Argentina surrenders

*La Nación* and the *Times* titled their editions with the news on the “ceasefire” in the Falklands/Malvinas. While the *Times* writes about “the white flags of surrender flying in Port Stanley”, *La Nación* avoids saying that the Argentine forces had capitulated. Instead, it states that both commanders in chief were negotiating the terms of the ceasefire; by doing this it avoids placing Argentina in a complete destabilized position. The Argentine paper says in its deck that “our forces have fought with all the resources available against an enemy who, equipped with the

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<sup>62</sup> Ribas, G., “Cronología general de la Guerra por los archipiélagos australes”, *Todo es Historia* N° 16, 1983, p. 26.

most modern technology, took over the Argentine defenses". As usual, *La Nación* published the official communiqués, which elaborate on the Argentine forces "heroic resistance".

*El Mercurio* did not hesitate announcing Argentina's defeat: "Argentine forces surrendered". The paper uses the English name of the Falkland/Malvinas capital "Port Stanley" instead of Puerto Argentino as it has done before. Like the *Times*, *El Mercurio* publishes a large photo of Margaret Thatcher smiling, which reinforces the idea that Argentina had lost.

Now that the conflict is over the *Times* gets to publish the number of British casualties: 201 as released by the government. The *Times* editorial "The Truce" praises "the spirit of the country" for the "freedom" of the islands; in its traditional "we" approach it makes an emotional recognition of the British soldiers in the Falklands/Malvinas. *La Nación* builds its editorial over the concept of "national unity" and says that the military defeat should bring the Argentine people even closer. In the last paragraph of the story and maybe for the first time since the conflict started, *La Nación* challenges—though not openly—the military status quo: "Only with a national structure that tolerates dissent and open discussion of the national problems, we will be able to build a better Argentina".

### June 16: The aftermath

*La Nación* announced in the cover that "Our forces withdraw from Malvinas"; even in this stage of events, the paper was careful in its word choice to avoid the word "surrender" in titles and decks. Instead it used "Argentina terminated the Malvinas battle" or "the military contest in the islands doesn't alter Argentina's decision to claim sovereignty on the archipelagos". The news on riots in Buenos Aires against the military junta for the defeat in Malvinas was placed in the left bottom corner of the paper. The story was, instead, the lead article in *El Mercurio*'s cover, "Disturbances [in Buenos Aires] for the surrender" and had a prominent display as well in the *Times*. While *La Nación* said that the demonstrators were around 4,000 people, the *Times* said they were 15,000 and *El Mercurio* went for 40,000.

The *Times* and *La Nación*'s editorials of the day summarized the papers' respective frames of the conflict. The *Times*' "Freedom Day" calls the Argentine action on the Falklands/Malvinas "an invasion of the nation's [Britain] spirit" and praises the country's "strength and resolution". Interestingly, the paper proposes a "ceasefire" on the mutual projections both countries have of each other: "Britain has no colonialist and triumphalist intentions in the South Atlantic; Argentina likewise should have no need to be seen as a fascist dictatorship ever intent on some unacceptable *Lebensraum* for her people". *La Nación*'s "With responsibility, with grief" solemnly says, "One should have not to love the home country to not feel grief in time of national adversity". The editorial elaborates once more on "British colonialism" and says that the main lesson to be learnt from the war is that "a nation's spirit is greater than its military successes".

## CONCLUSION

*The London Times* and *La Nación* framed the coverage of the Falklands/Malvinas War from a national self-interest stance by emphasizing their own countries achievements in both the military front and the diplomatic scenario, describing the enemy's country and actions in a negative tone, using an "us/other" ratio to present news, reproducing the governments narrative of events and justifying the war as a necessary evil to defend a national cause. This approach not only led to misinformation and factual errors such as the Superb affair, but it also helped further governmental propaganda.

Nonetheless, while *La Nación* allowed almost no commentary against the military junta in its pages, neither in the news stories nor in the editorials, the *Times* published some criticism of the Thatcher's government, mostly through the voice of the opposition political parties, especially in the early stages of the conflict and later when the Belgrano and the Sheffield were sunk. It's true that, operating under a dictatorship that punished disobedience with closure, *La Nación* did not have many options. But it's also a fact that the paper had editorially supported the junta's policies since it had taken over in 1976<sup>63</sup>.

We can apply to both papers, *La Nación* and *The London Times*, what Phillip Knightley has said regarding the British media in general during the Falklands/Malvinas War: despite its propagandistic skills, governments could not have achieved what they did in terms of media coverage without some compliance of the media. "If it was rape, then, it was rape with contributory negligence"<sup>64</sup>.

From the beginning of the conflict the *Times* framing of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict mirrored the country's official narrative; it didn't question even once the colonial status of the islands, which had been pointed out by the UN in 1965 through Resolution 2065. Even if the Argentine version of events was included in the articles, the construction of the enemy as "irrational invaders" led by a "fascist junta" undermined any credibility the Argentine sources may have. Therefore, as presented by the *Times*, there was only one accurate source of information: Britain. Most of the stories were produced by the newspaper and carried bylines in the cover.

The *Times* framing also enhanced the myth of a glorious British past with references, for example, to Britain's role in World War II its and military superiority. The latter was clear in the photo choice, with profuse display of the task force; surprisingly most of the times the photos were not credited. Boosterism of the military action was clear until the first week of May, when the Sheffield and the Belgrano were sunk. Valerie Adams says that these losses constituted a turning point in the war commentary<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Caistor, "Whose war is it anyway?", p. 51.

<sup>64</sup> Knightley, *The First Casualty*, p. 481.

<sup>65</sup> Adams, *The media and the Falklands campaign*, p. 95.

*La Nación* identification with the national cause and the government's action was almost total during the 74 days of the conflict. The paper published as news the communiqués issued by the junta without contrasting that information with independent sources. The paper didn't even attempt to hide these editorial decisions: in many instances a literary transcription of the communiqués accompanied the news presented in the cover.

The almost complete lack of bylines in the cover, with the exception of the stories written by correspondents in Europe and the US, is another indicator of *La Nación's* frame of the war: what matter the most was the paper's editorial line and that it fit the official narrative. By relying on the official version of the war, *La Nación* presented a picture of the events that was not only inaccurate but also fallacious.

The national interest stance was evident in the use of personal pronouns such as "we" and "our" in the presentation of news; by doing this, the newspaper is no longer an independent witness of events but part of those events (in this case the defense of a national cause). The *Times* only used this we / other ratio in the editorials. Another textual strategy influenced by national interest used by both *La Nación* and the *Times* was the presentation of their respective countries as the subject of the action that was being described such as *La Nación's* "Our forces fight with determination to reject the invaders".

Photography in *La Nación's*, which carried no credits, was coherent with its frame of the war; portraits of the junta's commanders were extensively used to illustrate the most critical moments of the conflict such as the occupation of the islands.

Even if it always showed the two sides of the story, *El Mercurio* took a frank pro-Britain stance during the war; this frame was consistent with Chile's diplomatic position and with the long-standing history of mutual distrust with Argentina for border disagreements. Therefore, national interest, i.e. the love-hate relationship with Argentina and the fears over the border dispute, was also an influencing factor in *El Mercurio's* framing of the war.

Its extensive coverage of the conflict emphasized the British achievements by placing that news in the upper part of the cover or giving them greater display and presenting Argentina as the trespasser. Since the beginning of the conflict the paper condemned Argentina's action in its editorials as a "grave violation of the international law" and justified a British military intervention. Photography furthered this frame throughout the war showing the strength of the British taskforce.

Also, *El Mercurio's* word usage of both "Malvinas" and "Falklands" and Puerto Argentino / Port Stanley first and Port Stanley / Puerto Argentino in the final stage of the war evidenced its stance, ambiguous some times and pro-Britain most of the time.

The study of the framing of the Falklands / Malvinas War by *La Nación*, *The London Times* and *El Mercurio* shows how meaning is constructed by the media and the result is three different narratives that cannot be isolated from its social, political and cultural context of production. Each newspaper told the story that best suited

its country's national interest in terms of defense and foreign policy. The three media, in the end, managed to preserve –and solidify– their respective nations' status quo.

#### PRIMARY SOURCES

*La Nación*, Buenos Aires, April 2-4; May 2-5; June 14-16, 1982.

*The London Times*, London, April 2-4; May 2-5; June 14-16, 1982.

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