THE HONECKER AFFAIRE AND THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL SEEN FROM AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

El caso Honecker y la caída del Muro de Berlín vistos desde periódicos estadounidenses

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ABSTRACT

The present article examines the 'Honecker affaire' coverage by two American newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The episodes analyzed broke out with Erich Honecker's entrance into the Chilean Embassy in Moscow in 1991, seeking refuge to avoid German justice. Although this case represented one of the most entangled incidents in contemporary Chilean foreign relations, bogging this country down in a major diplomatic crisis with the USSR —then the Russian Federation and then Russia— and Germany, American foreign policymakers and public opinion remained indifferent. Nevertheless, after detailed scrutiny —borrowing tools from content, discourse and framing analyses within the ideological framework of news production— two conflicting political positions are reflected, especially on the GDR ex-leader and consequently on the aftermath of the Cold War. We affirm that when events are not significant or even newsworthy, newspapers' 'feet on the ground' correspondents allow their supporting ideologies to flow and run freely.
Keywords: public opinion; framing; speech; Honecker; Chile.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo examina la cobertura del 'asunto Honecker' por dos periódicos estadounidenses, *The New York Times* y *The Washington Post*. Los episodios analizados estallaron con el ingreso de Erich Honecker a la Embajada de Chile en Moscú en 1991, buscando refugio para eludir la justicia alemana. Si bien este caso representó uno de los incidentes más intricados en las relaciones exteriores chilenas contemporáneas, empantanando a este país en una gran crisis diplomática con la URSS —luego la Federación Rusa y luego Rusia— y Alemania, los responsables de la política exterior estadounidense y la opinión pública permanecieron indiferentes. Sin embargo, tras un escrutinio detallado —tomando herramientas del análisis de contenido, discurso y *framing*, dentro del marco ideológico de la producción informativa—, se reflejan dos posiciones políticas enfrentadas, especialmente sobre el exlíder de la RDA, y en consecuencia, sobre las secuelas de la Guerra Fría. Afirmamos que cuando los eventos no son significativos o incluso de interés periodístico, los corresponsales de los periódicos 'en terreno' permiten que las ideologías que los sustentan fluyan y corran libremente.
Palabras clave: opinión pública; encuadre; discurso; Honecker; Chile.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous investigations within political communication studies,[1] have explored the articulation of news to transfer an ideological discourse.[2] However, they have mainly researched widely covered news on significant subjects that stir societies and individuals. The main approaches have been from framing analyses, discourse shaping public opinion, and policymakers' assessments and research on media as ideological trenches from which elites spread political positions.

Nevertheless, what logic operates when the issue is not prominent as to be considered extensively? How do journalists report news that will not set the agenda? How do newspapers examine international affairs that do not affect people's lives? We try to answer these questions by analyzing a case study from a multidisciplinary approach.

According to the above, we have scrutinized an international crisis through the lenses of two American newspapers, elucidating its coverage and the ideological forces shown. We refer to the 'Honecker affaire', which arose with the entry of Erich Honecker to the Chilean Embassy in Moscow in late 1991, asking for political refuge. This stumble antagonized USSR, then Russian Federation and then Russia, Germany and Chile, becoming a transcendental event for the three countries, considering their political, social and economic processes within an international order transformation.

As a remaining issue at the end of the Cold War, the main opposing forces —Germany and Russia— visualized in this impasse an opportunity to demonstrate their —respectively, nascent and remnant— strength.

This diplomatic crisis, alien to the United States, was not a transcendental matter neither for American public opinion, as the press coverage reflects, nor for US foreign policymakers, as shown in declassified files. For instance, the President of Chile's official visit to the United States was carried out amid the crisis on May 13 and 14, 1992. In preparation for bilateral meetings, the American Embassy in Santiago (1992, p. 2) reported that the Chilean Head of State's "closest

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[1] According to the *Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, it represents a field of study that relies on an interdisciplinary base that draws on concepts from communication, political science, journalism, sociology, psychology, history, rhetoric, and others, encompassing the many different roles that communication plays in political processes (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008, p. xxxviii).

[2] For our purposes, 'ideology' is understood as: "Any systematic and all-embracing political doctrine, which claims to give a complete and universally applicable theory of man and society, and to derive therefrom a programme of political action" (Scruton, 2007, p. 317). Two social-scientific features of the term are adopted: an account of the existing order in the form of a 'worldview' and a model of a desired future as a vision of the 'good society' (Heywood, 2017, p. 11).

advisors [were] counseling him to avoid raising difficult or awkward issues: poisoned grapes[3] and Cardoen's[4] difficulties". Consequently, they did not discuss the Honecker affaire during the meeting held in The Oval Office on May 13 (The White House, 1992).

Despite the limited prevalence of this diplomatic crisis, we evidenced that The New York Times and The Washington Post, reporting the facts, reflected two opposing views, one supportive and the other against the ex-East German leader. The coverage of this crisis demonstrates how a secondary issue becomes a 'battleground' of ideas, considering that reports are reproductions of the social and political context within which journalists operate.

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE 'HONECKER AFFAIRE'

On December 11, 1991, the former East German leader Eric Honecker and his wife Margot went to the Chilean Embassy in Moscow. For some, it was a surprise, while others considered it an unexpected guest's visit since the objective was to find refuge in the diplomatic facility and avoid his extradition to Germany, where a trial awaited him.

Chile was through a transition to democracy, and the new President Patricio Aylwin —supported by a center-left political coalition— had reestablished relations with the USSR and appointed the socialist leader Clodomiro Almeyda as ambassador. The latter had not only been exiled in the GDR with other Chileans but had also developed a close relationship with Honecker, which became a mutual commitment to be returned.

What came to be known as the 'Honecker affaire' became a struggle of tensions between the USSR —later Russia—, Germany and Chile, in the context of the Cold War's outcome and political transformations in the three countries, where Germany asserted its influence as a power.

In Chile, the matter also had domestic political repercussions. The ruling coalition fragmented among those who felt it was time to return the hand of the person who had sheltered them in their struggle against the dictatorship. Therefore, accepting him inside was a matter of loyalty. In contrast, others felt obligated to cooperate with German justice and hand him over, avoiding compromising relations with Germany.

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[3] In 1989, an incident occurred due to two cyanide-contaminated grapes from Chile, for which the United States Food and Drug Administration prohibited the importation of Chilean fruit.
[4] Carlos Cardoen was one of the most important producers of cluster bombs in the 1980s, accused of selling arms to Iraq.

The account of this guest in the Chilean Embassy is a cluster of tensions, interpretations, suspicions and symbols in a contest of power, ideology and loyalties, which was resolved with Honecker's departure for Germany on July 29, 1992 (Medina & Gajardo, 2019; Medina & Harvey, 2021; Soto, 2020; Ulloa & Medina, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The processes of production and reception of the news media have been widely analyzed in political communication studies. Approaches on lexicogrammatical features (Bagnall, 1993; Meyer-Gutbrod & Woolley, 2021; Nicholls & Culpepper, 2021; Windsor, 2020); analyses on the news transmitting discourses (Bell, 1991; Bradshaw et al., 2020; Moyano & Rivera, 2020; Van Dijk, 1988); and others focusing on ideology (Ivanova & Jocelin, 2021) and sociocognitive dimensions of news production and interpretation (Fowler, 1991; Hameleers & Fawzi, 2020; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Kress, 1983; Leeper, 2020; Schmitt-Beck & Grill, 2020; Sevenans et al., 2016; Van Dijk, 1995).

As the very nature of political communication, the studies listed above are interdisciplinary and profited from the influence of the social sciences —the economic, political, social and psychological aspects of news processing—. However, they exhibit a common aspect, to a greater or lesser extent, a reduced historical-temporal horizon, which affects the understanding of the context (McGarr, 2020; Rojas & Valenzuela, 2019).

In that sense, the present case study derives its theoretical underpinning from an interdisciplinary method. In response to Epstein's call (2020, p. 117), we applied a historical approach, focusing on its political and behavioral forces, to contribute to deepening the analysis of media patterns in periods of polarization and global political reordering.

FROM FRAMING TO NEWS DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Within a context of "maturation of social media as a form of political communication and information consumption and the decline in the fortunes and authority of institutional journalism" (Entman & Usher, 2018, p. 298), with certain exceptions (Kaiser, 2020; Nassar, 2020; Nicholls & Culpepper 2020; Walker, 2004), we realized that framing analyses have decreased over time. Furthermore, considering that Fisher (2020) "never used framed news" and his only concern when reporting was the "search for emotional impact [...] trying to make sense with the very basic meaning of life, obviating any sophisticated apparatuses", a framing inquiry would probably be out of place.

Nevertheless, we observed that despite their denial, "journalists are framers" (Baden, 2020, p. 229) and following this reasoning, from a sociological conception and for our purposes, the approach that better connects with the use of news as ideological tools is 'framing'. This method considers 'frame' as a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to a set of happenings related to an issue, which is the essential component of a larger unit of public discourse, known as 'package', that entails a policy position that derives from the frame, as well as multiple 'symbolic devices' that symbolize the manifestation of frames and policy positions (Davis, 2009; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143; Linstrōm & Marais, 2012, p. 31).

In terms of the nomenclature offered by Van Dijk (1988, pp. 32-33; 2009, pp. 136-139), even though he does not correlate it with framing studies, this sociological notion as a whole is an 'overall macrorule'. Since it defines the 'thematic organization and its global coherence', the package would become a 'macrostructure', attending that it works as the main discourse skeleton and considering that it is composed of several 'macropropositions', these last are 'symbolic devices'.

From the constructionist conception, framing shapes an individual cognitive process, incorporating framing devices to activate a schema hypothetically consistent with the journalist's preferred frame (Baldwin-Philippi, 2020, p. 482; Van Gorp, 2007, p. 65). In other words, "linguistic expressions of active/positive or passive/negative stimuli that exhibit a force-dynamic pattern are capable of constructing and framing people's cognition" (Yang et al., 2016, p. 18), or in simple, the most essential and desired effect is to influence individuals' judgments or choices (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984, p. 342; Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004, p. 75).

As conceived by Pan & Kosicki (1993, p. 57), we considered both connotations of frame "as a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving" and as an expression of "journalistic professional routines and conventions". Thus, framing analyses approach news from two perspectives, communication strategies and discourse as social phenomena.

For this case study, we established certain adjustments according to the examined news. Within the structural elements, specifically the 'domain', 'shared values' were not considered since the worldviews and models of society were in conflict at the end of the Cold War. For example, while TWP appealed to 'democracy' and 'justice', NYT evoked the value of 'loyalty' as attenuation of crimes. Although outputs of the process are not explicitly mentioned in the same category of components, we conclude that they are the audience responses. Therefore, we suggest that —at least for our analysis, where the journalist does not seek a change of conduct— the result of the

process should be the 'news text'. Consequently, rather than considering 'news text' as the central regulator of the process, we consider that these functions should be attributed to the 'uses of language' and the main 'guidances' are to be the 'journalist's beliefs'.

JOURNALISTS AND NEWS CONTENT

News contents represent different views and actions of social actors or groupings. One method of analysis might be to consider them as social practices and, therefore, to consent that they are fragments of a social environment in terms of its constrictions and relations (Carlson, 2020, p. 582), configuring the scenario where journalists maneuver (Archer & Clinton, 2017, p. 354, p. 368; Curran & Seaton, 2018, pp. 5-16, 317-340).

News is reported and also interpreted. Interpreting entails a singular point of view, which the prevailing ideology of the interpreter could permeate. Helfer & Aelst (2016, pp. 60, 64) consider that although journalists do not have more significant repercussions in the news production process, their perceptions of political relevance, news selection and how they report are highly influenced by their political beliefs and orientations. Therefore we sought to interview the two journalists who reported this affaire from Germany, Stephen Kinzer[5] from the NYT and Marc Fisher from TWP.

Fisher's (2020) testimony was consistent with the above regarding the journalist's ability to select news. He affirmed the nonexistence of editors' political guidelines due to distance and rudimentary Internet at that time. In fact, during his eight-year term in Germany, he exercised absolute freedom of action in the selection of news; he decided "what people needed to hear and how to report it".

DATA COLLECTION

Considering that the crisis occurred in the early 1990s, we decided to analyze newspapers, which remained the primary source of information for the American population, despite the ascending influence of television (Communications Management Inc., 2011, pp. 12-14; Robinson, 2002). According to a report prepared by Fredric A. Emmert (2002) for the United States Information Agency (USIA), more than two-thirds of American adults read a daily newspaper on an average weekday. The top five daily newspapers by circulation in the 1990s were: The Wall Street Journal

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[5] This journalist excused himself from sharing his experiences twice. April 17 and May 1, 2020.

(WSJ), USA Today, The New York Times (NYT), Los Angeles Times (LAT), and The Washington Post (TWP).

Now, analyzing media's political affinity and its impact on their discourse, it should be noted that Van Dijk (1998, pp. 22-23) did not identify significant differences in ideological terms between NYT and TWP during the early 1990s. Instead, there was an overall 'American' ideological perspective on news events and the world, which was consistent with the behavior of these two newspapers in domestic politics between 1991 and 1992, representing an exception (Eisinger et al., 2007, p. 25).

Facing the necessity to identify influential newspapers for American decision-makers, we explored government files. Therefore, we found a report from the Director of Public Affairs of the CIA suggesting meetings "regularly with key players from media organizations [in order to provide the CIA Director] a voice in any upcoming discussions of the intelligence community" (DeTrani, 1991). Finally, the Director approved the proposal for certain newspapers to be regularly invited.

Therefore, considering the assessment of US officials, we built up our sample on four media: NYT, LAT, TWP and WSJ. The starting database encompassed a corpus of 99 news reports and editorial sections about the 'Honecker affaire', published between March 15, 1991, and July 30, 1992 (LAT [8], NYT [48], TWP [32] and the WSJ [11]).

Subsequently, extracting data from primary and secondary sources (Medina & Harvey, 2021; Soto, 2020; Ulloa & Medina, 2020), then analyzing the particular dynamics and levels of intensity, we identified ten (10) milestones of the crisis, beginning with Honecker's entrance to the Chilean Embassy in Moscow and concluding with his departure.

Table 1. Milestones of the crisis

Nº	EVENT	DATE
1	Honecker's entrance to the Embassy	Dec. 11, 1991
2	Protesters outside the Embassy	Dec. 14, 1991
3	Chile's refusal to hand over Honecker	Dec. 15, 1991
4	Asylum search in Cuba	Dec. 19, 1991
5	Transfer to Botkin Clinic	Feb. 23, 1992
6	German protests towards Chile	Mar. 5, 1992
7	Chilean President states a prompt solution	Mar. 11, 1992
8	Indictment against Honecker	May. 14, 1992
9	German statements on soon return	Jul. 23, 1992
10	Departure from Embassy and return to Germany	Jul. 29, 1992

Source: own elaboration.

After a quantitative reading of the coverage of the 'Honecker affaire', in terms of the number of words dedicated, which reflects the interest given by each newspaper, we established that two showed the most significant concern by covering every single event of the ten (10) identified. The NYT and TWP comprised 44,51 % and 35,44 % of the total sample.

Table 2. *Quantitative evaluation of coverage*

EVENT	LAT	NYT	TWP	WSJ	TOTAL	
1	150	373	1.462	89	2.074	18,89%
2	-.-	452	205	-.-	657	5,99%
3	82	289	138	-.-	509	4,64%
4	-.-	171	159	-.-	330	3,00%
5	-.-	475	373	-.-	848	7,73%
6	-.-	189	248	-.-	437	3,98%
7	-.-	415	132	-.-	547	4,98%
8	-.-	122	82	-.-	204	1,86%
9	-.-	1.015	69	51	1.135	10,34%
10	1.034	1.405	1.038	759	4.236	38,59%
	1.266	4.906	3.906	899	10.977	100%
	11,53%	44,69%	35,58%	8,2%		

Source: own elaboration.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language performs as the dominant resource to build the main elements of discourse —content, participants and semantic roles—, which is consistent with the relevant role played by institutions in the production and consumption of the text (Fowler, 1991, p. 70), approach applied by critical linguists to demonstrate newspapers' usage of the ideological significance of transitivity (Fowler, 1991; Kress, 1983; Seo, 2013; Tang, 2021; Van Dijk, 1995).

Consequently, we have benefited from this method to investigate the two antagonist observations of Erich Honecker's entrance into the Chilean Embassy in Moscow in 1991 —and himself—, founded on selections from the system of transitivity, a part of the ideational metafunction of written language, which delves into variances in meaning among several types of processes (Banks, 2002; Halliday, 1994; Sihura, 2019). Part of the analysis has been applied to newspaper headlines, as they tend to summarize the news stories, capture the reader's interest in the information given (Fairclough, 1996, pp. 75-76, pp. 107-109; Keeble & Reeves, 2015, pp. 113-115), function as opinion manipulators or reinforcers (Simmons, 2019, pp. 163-176), and are thus worthy examples to determine the newspapers' ideological postures. We selected three of these processes, material (in terms of doing), relational (connections between existences) and verbal (written communication).

MATERIAL PROCESSES

As it has been noted, both TWP and NYT gave the highest coverage of the case and reported events from the very spot; thus, most of their headlines (H) were constructed as 'material processes'.

Table 3. Headlines as material processes

H1	Honecker Fights Extradition Call	(NYT, 13 Dec. 1991, A.23)
H2	Send Erich Honecker Home	(TWP, 13 Dec. 1991, A.28)
H3	Honecker Rebuffed by Chile In Quest for Political Asylum	(TWP, 13 Dec. 1991, A44)

Source: own elaboration.

The term 'material process' refers to any unit executing or undertaking some physical action, so it is presented as controlling the process and described as the 'primary agent' (or actor). In *H1,* the unit conducting the situation is 'Honecker', in *H2,* we could infer it is USSR or Chile, and in *H3,* Chile is the monitoring entity. On the other side, along with the leading actor, we identify 'actions', described as either concrete, physical activities ('fights' in *H1* and 'rebuffed' in *H3*) or abstract events ('send' in *H2*). In this case, the three headlines represent their main units participating actively in the process. Nevertheless, *H2* and *H3* reflect a Honecker associated with the process passively, a mere participant deprived of control, dealing with a 'secondary agent'. *H2* and *H3* show Honecker unable to manipulate events and as a passive victim suffering other's actions, as the 'patient' or 'goal' of the process.

Next to the two mandatory elements of processes (participant and process as such), there is a third element, the 'circumstantial component', which shows an identical role along the process, like locations ('home' in *H2* or 'Chile' in *H3*), origins of the process ('extradition call' in *H1* or 'quest for political asylum' in *H3*) or the main action's consequences ('rebuffed' in *H3*).

It should be noted that because transitivity roles are semantic, they are syntactically modifiable and consequently responsible for alterations in the meaning of the discourse. For instance, unlike *H1*, *H2* and *H3* are passive structures where the 'patient' is in the subject position, but specifically in *H2*, although the verb 'send' has an entity character, the script does not expose the identity of the agent, thus placing the prominence of the message on the patient and the action to be carried out on him, this is why we could ask 'who is to send him home?'.

Abstract activities as material processes entail influential evaluative functions. From the headlines above, we decode that the verbs 'fight', 'send', 'rebuff', and 'quest' are not stating concrete facts but reproduce the writer's assessment and interpretation of the evolution of events.

Furthermore, if we look back to the event that came to unfold as the prelude to the crisis analyzed —Honecker absconding to the USSR to evade German justice—, headlines and subheadings (SHs) depict more clearly the divergent ideological postures:

Table 4. Headlines and subheadings as material processes

H4	Honecker Taken to Soviet Union; Germany Demanding His Return	(NYT, 15 Mar. 1991, A.1)
SH4.1	200 Killed Trying to Flee	(NYT, 15 Mar. 1991, A.6)
H5	Germany Angry as Soviets Transfer Honecker to Moscow	(TWP, 15 Mar. 1991, A.42)
SH5.1	Move Came as Bonn Prepared to Try Ex-Leader for Killings of Would-Be Escapees	(TWP, 15 Mar. 1991, A.42)

Source: own elaboration.

When comparing *H4* and *H5*, it is evident that both consider Honecker as the 'patient', but the difference is in the 'agent' that performed the maneuver of moving him to Moscow. NYT in *H4* chooses to maintain the attention on the 'patient', showing him as an inert unit 'taken' rather than bringing to light the 'agent'. On the other hand, TWP in *H5* explicitly unmasks the agent that accomplished the action, in this case, the 'soviets'. Likewise, slightly further analysis on *SH4.1* and *SH5.1* provides more clues on the usage of abstract actions and the verb 'kill', asserting that SHs are also opinion manipulators when concrete actions are described or even if the identification of the 'agent' is given to readers' assumptions. Effortlessly it appears how NYT and TWP dealt with the charges over Honecker since *SH4.1* asseverates that the 200 persons assassinated were effectively trying to 'flee' —understood as 'escaping' or 'deserting'— from East Germany, *SH5.1* casts a shadow on the doubt considering the victims as 'Would-Be Escapees'. Moreover, *SH4.1* again articulates the cases mentioned as an abstract action, leaving the 'agent' anonymous, while *SH5.1* does not hesitate to point out Honecker as the responsible.

VERBAL PROCESSES

Media seize upon 'verbal processes' as a distinguishing feature by reporting speeches from elite individuals or official authorities, which appears to garnish with a human face the institutional discourses, seeking a sort of evocation of moral principles, human sentiments or feelings from the reader (Young & Soroka, 2012). However, in our case, these tools did not behave as a distinctive characteristic between supportive and opposite reports, since throughout the whole crisis, they maintained the same option to account for actions depersonalized, mentioning only institutions, States or capital cities. For example, the Chilean government declined to expel 'the guest' out of the Embassy twice, which was headlined as follows:

Table 5. *Headlines as verbal processes*

H6	Chilean Embassy Refuses to Evict Honecker	(NYT, 16 Dec. 1991, A.14)
H7	Chilean Embassy Retains Honecker	(TWP, 16 Dec. 1991, A.18)
H8	Germany Protests Chile for Sheltering East German	(NYT, 6 Mar. 1992, A.12)
H9	Bonn Calls for Honecker's Return	(TWP, 6 Mar. 1992, A.20)

Source: own elaboration.

The first time (*H6* and *H7*) was "in attention to his advanced age and poor health". In contrast, the second (*H8* and *H9*) was based on the principles of International Law, as no signs of illness were found after a week of medical procedures at the Botkin Clinic (Medina et al., 2019). It should be noted that in both situations, the 'speakers' are Chile (*H6* and *H7*) and Germany (*H8* and *H9*), which embody institutional roles. However, while in *H6* and *H7*, the 'target' is Honecker, in *H8* and *H9*, it is Chile, although, in *H9*, it could also be Russia. Additionally, both 'speakers' are delivering their messages from a position of power since TWP and NYT opted for performative verbs: 'refuses', 'retains', 'protests', and 'calls'.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that when media seek to exert more significant influence on public opinion, they rename institutions, citing authorities and individuals, so the discourse adopts a human face, evokes feelings, and the reader becomes closely involved with the story (Kelsey, 2017, pp. 27-52; Valenzuela et al., 2017).

LEXICAL STRUCTURE

As well as transitivity, lexical choices are decisive in constructing meaning, given their function in categorizing socially and ideologically (Fowler, 1991, p. 84; Nicholls & Culpepper, 2020). One of these elections is managing with paragraphs (Ps) within the script that, as headlines and subheadings, delineates editorial lines and journalists' interests.

As a sample of the distinct patterns followed by NYT and TWP during the affaire, we need to recall Honecker's escape to Moscow again since the manner they treated him allows us to comprehend their denoted ideological opposition by the usage of modifiers such as 'Prime Minister' or 'Communist hard-liner':

Table 6. Managing lexical structure in paragraphs

| P1 | Erich Honecker, facing prosecution for actions he took as the longtime Prime Minister of East Germany, has been quietly moved to a hospital in the Soviet Union, and Germany today demanded his immediate return. | NYT, 15 Mar. 1991, A.1 |
| P2 | Honecker, for 18 years the unquestioned ruler of East Germany and its Communist Party, faces a life sentence for his alleged role in the deaths of nearly 200 East Germans killed by their country's border guards. | TWP, 15 Mar. 1991, A.42 |

Source: own elaboration.

In *P1,* Honecker is generously treated, first asserting he was 'facing' prosecution while he was actually avoiding justice, then suggesting that being in office for a 'longtime' would entail the execution of specific 'actions' instead of mentioning crimes, but *P2* reinforces his responsibility as 'unquestioned ruler' of his country and the only party authorized to function as his communist character and connects with the sensibility of those detractors of his 'role in the deaths of nearly 200 East Germans' during his long term. This concise example provides context to show the labels used by NYT and TWP when referring to Honecker, which turned out to represent the most distinctive feature between the two coverages, confirming how labeling becomes an ideological decision (Coronel, 2020; Strömbäck et al., 2017), like the well-known dichotomy in the use of expressions "terrorists" and "freedom fighter" (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 258). In our analysis, we have handled similar logical appraisals to recognize the labels, which we collected and grouped on the basis of synonymy:

Table 7. *NYT Labels (L1)*

| L.1.1 | [longtime Prime Minister] - [78 years old] - [Communist Party chief] - [loyal ally] | Kinzer | 15 Mar. 1991, A.1, A.6 |
| L.1.2 | [leader] - [head of ruling Communist party] - [head of security] - [symbol of the cold war] - [hard-line Marxist] - [supporter of the Soviet Union] - [traditional hard-line Communist] - [faithful servant] - [security chief] | Kinzer | 30 Jul. 1992, A.6 |

Source: own elaboration.

Table 8. *TWP Labels (L2)*

L.2.1	[leader] - [78-year-old] - [Communist hard-liner] - [unquestioned ruler]	Fisher	15 Mar. 1991, A.42
L.2.2	[Supervisor the Berlin Wall] - [deposed head of government] - [dictator]	Editorial	13 Dec. 1991, A.28
L.2.3	[loyal ally] - [79-year-old fugitive] - [Communist Party boss] - [ousted leader]	Fisher	13 Dec. 1991, A44
L.2.4	[lifelong hard-liner] - [supreme leader] - [communist since youth] - [communist longtime leader] - [architect of the Berlin Wall] - [unrepentant] - [old stupid man] (quoting a German citizen)	Fisher	30 Jul. 1992, A.20

Source: own elaboration.

INTERTEXTUAL PRACTICES

As stated, the analyzed media kept the complete coverage in institutional terms. Consequently, they did not display many 'intertextual practices'. There was an absence of conversational styles, such as the well-known 'journalistic dialogue' used by newspapers to reproduce universal values in an interaction between the script and the receiver (Fowler, 1991, pp. 211-218; Hornmoen & Steensen, 2014, p. 548). Likewise, due to the small segments given to this issue, there was no room for elaborated narrative models, and journalists just went to their points, showing a lack of interest in influencing (Hänggli, 2020, pp. 9-10).

Another fact that ratifies that these newspapers were not trying to persuade neither the decision makers nor the American public is the slightly use of 'attribution processes', a procedure associated with objectivity and accuracy (Birks, 2019, p. 17, pp. 77-79; Hong, 2021), but could turn to a questionable practice when fragments of discourse are selected or skipped (Martín, 1995 p. 54). Nevertheless, in the same event, we found an omission from the NYT, which avoided a quote from the Chilean President initially reported by Reuters, which was actually cited by TWP (SP2.3.2), as shown in the lead (LPs) and supporting paragraphs (SPs).

Table 9. *Citations and omissions of quotes*

H1	Honecker Fights Extradition Call		
LP1	The former East German leader Erich Honecker, fleeing manslaughter charges in a united Germany, said today that he had taken refuge in Chile's Embassy in Moscow and that he would fight pressure from Russia for his extradition to his homeland.	Reuters	NYT, 13 Dec. 1991, A.23
SP1.1	In a statement distributed outside the Embassy, Mr. Honecker said, "I have requested political asylum in the Soviet Union because I am politically persecuted." He added, "Political persecution rules out extradition."		
H2	Send Erich Honecker Home		
SP2.3.1	Mr. Honecker still resists going quietly to face up to his criminality. Reuter reported yesterday that, faced with Moscow's order to leave, he has requested political asylum in the Soviet Union on the grounds that he -of all people- is being "politically persecuted." "Political persecution rules out extradition," said his statement.	Editorial	TWP, 13 Dec. 1991, A.28
SP2.3.2	The president of Chile, hearing a similar claim from Mr. Honecker, said, "Political asylum is granted to people who are the victims of political persecution by a dictatorship. Mr. Honecker is not." Mr. Honecker used to be the dictator. The dictatorship, no thanks to him, is now gone. He should be made to face up to his countrymen.		

Source: own elaboration.

DIRECT QUOTES

Though some research shows that journalists turn sources statements into indirect reports (Thetela, 2001, p. 362), this case study suggests that direct quotes play a significant role in highlighting an irrefutable source coming from the newsmaker's own voice; as distance and rejection from the source; to reinforce the newsmaker's message if it agrees with the newspaper's thought; and to furnish the report with a human face (Bell, 1991; Martín, 1995).

Similarities in attribution strategies on the same news and sources are displayed in Table 9, in using direct quotes from Honecker's written statement ([*SP1.1*] and [*SP2.3.1*]), but different attitudes towards the speaker derived from the surrounding discourse are also evident. NYT positions direct quotations in a privileged place (*SP1.1*), demonstrating the importance it attaches to Honecker's speech, support for his actions and the need to provide a humanitarian approach. (*H1*) reinforced this where 'to fight' gives the former German leader a heroic and epic attitude. Likewise, in (*LP1*), in addition to the verb 'fight', it points out the 'struggle' is against Russia, without naming Germany, which pressed more energetically for Honecker's return. By selecting Russia as the 'opponent', the NYT seeks to connect with a Cold War rhetoric to find a common adversary and to garner support for the ex-hierarch's cause.

In contrast, TWP differs from NYT, where quotes represent the paper's views. Positioning direct quotes in the third and last supporting paragraph (*SP2.3.1*) reflects the importance of expressing its line of thought and opinions rather than allocating Honecker a showcase for his arguments, as well as the reduced significance and credibility of his statement and even himself. Moreover, the tone indicates that TWP takes distance from —and even plays ironic with— the morality of those quotes. To begin with, the headline (*H2*) clearly expressed the sentiment of potential readers through supplication to Chile or Russia once and for all to allow Honecker's return to Germany. Similarly, the verb 'send' is pejorative since it generally refers to objects or things. However, the first line (*SP2.3.1*) is more severe, presenting him as a scandalous coward who "still resists going silently to face his criminality", which also reflects that TWP considers him guilty even before the trial begins.

Explicitly referring to direct quotes, only two clauses from the original statement are cited (*SP2.3.1*), preceded by an ironic comment —between dashes— about his request for political asylum due to his situation as "politically persecuted". It adds "of all people", sarcastically stressing Honecker's victimization since German courts required him. In addition, authorities of the former GDR had to appear for events for which he ultimately became primarily responsible. Likewise,

within the same supporting paragraph (*SP2.3.2*), it quotes the President of Chile to refute his assertions outright.

THE END OF THE CRISIS: DEPARTURE FROM THE EMBASSY AND RETURN TO GERMANY

Finally, as a corollary, it is necessary to analyze the event that ended the crisis, namely, the abandonment of Erich Honecker from the Chilean Embassy in Moscow on July 29, 1992. As shown in Table 2, NYT devoted the most space to this milestone; for TWP, it was the second most important. For this purpose, we will examine the most representative 'framing devices' used from two categories offered by Pan and Kosicki (1993, p. 59): syntactical structure and script.

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE

As Pan & Kosicki (1993, p. 59) sustain, headlines are the most salient cues to activate certain semantically related concepts in readers' minds, to the point of becoming the most powerful framing device of the syntactical structure, and leading paragraphs are the following most essential devices to use.

Table 10. *Headlines and leading paragraphs*

H10	Honecker Flown to Berlin to Face Criminal Trial	Kinzer	NYT, 30 Jul. 1992, A.6
LP10	After taking refuge in the Chilean Embassy in Moscow for the last seven months, Erich Honecker, the former East German leader, was flown today to Germany, where he faces trial on corruption and manslaughter charges.		
H11	Honecker Returned To United Germany	Fisher	TWP, 30 Jul. 1992, A.20
SH11.1	Former Communist Leader Jailed in Berlin		
LP11	After 2 1/2 years on the run, Erich Honecker, longtime leader of communist East Germany and an architect of the Berlin Wall, returned tonight to a reunified Germany and a prison cell, where he will await trial on charges of manslaughter, embezzlement and abuse of power.		

Source: own elaboration.

As *H10* shows, NYT designates Honecker's coming back to Berlin to 'face' German justice, giving him a characteristic of courage, without considering that during the previous two years, all his moves were evasive maneuvers. Instead, in *H11,* TWP reinforces the fact of German reunification, suggesting he is not returning home but to a foreign and different place from which he escaped. Also, in *SH11.1,* along with exposing his communist condition, it is indicated that he is

'jailed', which could reflect an association of both circumstances. It shows the seriousness of the imputed crimes and the high probabilities of being found guilty and convicted.

After a specific time, Honecker returns to Germany to appear in court. Regarding the lead paragraphs, both present an introductory summary of the situation. However, NYT (*LP10*) only considers the 'last seven months' of permanence in the Embassy of Chile. Likewise, it refers to the said facility as 'refuge', a term of International Law for persecuted people or in a situation of helplessness. It reiterates what is stated in *H10*, that Honecker 'faces' a trial, despite referring to the accusations, which is explained by the robustness of the 800-page summary, which left no other option than to mention the charges made.

On the contrary, TWP (*LP11*) considers the entire period of evasion from justice '2 1/2 years' from his escape to Moscow. In addition to reiterating Honecker's ideology and preventive arrest, it shows his long tenure as a ruler, makes his charges explicit and appeals to the symbolism that represents the 'abuse of power'. However, the most representative of the decline of the former hierarch is to consign him as the 'architect of the Berlin Wall', whose return to reunified Germany symbolizes the defeat of his plan.

SCRIPT STRUCTURE

In this category, we first considered both scripts as stories, in the sense of descriptions of events, figuring out if journalists bridged the audience to the scenario that Honecker faced upon his arrival in Germany, transcending the atmosphere through sensory experiences (Gibbs, 2011, p. 253; Swart et al., 2022).

Considering the social functions of storytelling, both journalists succeeded, displaying their narrative talent in recreating detailed views of the panorama. For instance, NYT recovered a lugubrious scenery, pointing out that the arrival was a stealth operation 'at dusk' and that the ex-leader was taken in a black limousine "shielded from public view and spectators were not able to see him". For its part, TWP mirrors an entirely different city than the one he left more than two years ago, "one he would barely recognize", where "his proudest monument, the gaudy Palace of the Republic on Berlin's imperial boulevard, *Unter den Linden*, [was] shuttered and covered with graffiti" and "street names honoring his communist heroes […] changed".

However, by strictly analyzing the script structure, it was necessary to identify the critical components of the event, or what Van Dijk (1988, p. 50) calls the 'story grammar', where it was also possible to recognize discrepancies. For this purpose, we applied the so-called '5Ws+H model': who,

what, when where, why and how. As expected, NYT articulated its narrative to lessen disapproval towards Honecker, justifying his irruption into the Chilean Embassy with emotional feelings for his relatives in that country (why). On the contrary, TWP spared no effort to reveal Honecker's true intentions, providing more detail to describe his actions (what) and locations (where) used to evade justice during his more than two years 'tour' (when).

Table 11. *5Ws+H Model*

		NYT, 30 Jul. 1992, A.1, A.6	TWP, 30 Jul. 1992, A.20, A.28
		Kinzer	Fisher
Who	Person	Erich Honecker	Erich Honecker
What	Action	Take refuge	Everything to avoid the trial
When	Time	Last seven months	Two and a half years
Where	Places	Chilean Embassy in Moscow	- Party compound - Home of a sympathetic pastor - Soviet military hospital near Berlin - Soviet government dacha near Moscow - Chilean Embassy in Moscow
Why	Purpose	To flee to Chile and spend remaining years with daughter and family	To keep unrepentant
How	Maneuver	Entering Chilean Embassy with wife	- Accusing former allies in Moscow of betrayal - Appealing nearly every communist country for asylum - Claiming to have cancer despite being declared healthy by top Russian doctors - Confronting Chile, Russia and Germany against one another for eight months on his fate

Source: own elaboration.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The processes of production and reception of the news media have been widely analyzed in political communication studies. Approaches on lexicogrammatical features, analyses on the news transmitting political discourses, and others have focused on ideological and sociocognitive dimensions of news production and interpretation. However, they have focused on covering significant issues that have stirred societies and individuals.

Thus, this article examined the press dealing with a side issue for the United States, a foreign diplomatic crisis known as the 'Honecker Affair'. Extracting data from primary and secondary sources, then analyzing its particular dynamics and levels of intensity, we identified ten milestones, beginning on December 11, 1991, with Honecker's entry to the Chilean Embassy in Moscow and concluding with his departure on July 29, 1992.

During the end of the Cold War, the American press showed no significant political disparities but a general 'American' ideological perspective on national and international news events. Nevertheless, in this case study The New York Times and The Washington Post reflected two opposing political viewpoints.

In order to determine the newspapers' ideological postures, we applied framing and discourse analysis tools to focus on three processes from the system of transitivity: material, relational and verbal. Therefore, it was possible to evidence how, through lexicogrammar, specific semantic roles and relations were replicated through the ideological construction of discursive practices.

From a general perspective, we can point out that NYT treated Honecker generously, giving him the characteristic of courage and conducting the situation. He was presented epically, constantly asserting he was 'facing' different 'fights', like the German justice prosecution, while avoiding justice, without considering that during the previous two years, all his moves were evasive maneuvers. Nevertheless, the warrior disappears when reporting about the imputed crimes. Then Honecker turns to be a 'faithful servant' and a 'loyal ally' dominated by alien forces and overtaken by the events, whose longtime in office entailed the execution of specific 'actions'. The benevolence reaches the point of manipulating direct quotes from Chilean authorities and omitting the results of medical tests to continue alluding to his poor state of health.

In contrast, TWP performed harshly on Honecker, reflecting him associated with the news passively, a mere participant deprived of control, but when reporting the crime allegations doubtless unmasked the agent that accomplished the action without hesitating to point out him as the responsible. TWP repeatedly reinforced his authority labeling him as 'unquestioned ruler', 'supervisor of the Berlin wall', or 'dictator', and 'supreme leader' of his country and the only party authorized to function in order to bolster his "role in the deaths of nearly 200 East Germans".

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that news is reported and interpreted. Moreover, interpreting entails a singular point of view, which the prevailing ideology of the interpreter could permeate. Therefore, we found that news was not the central regulator of the news production process but the use of language. Nevertheless, the central guidance did not emanate from the editors but reflected the 'journalist's beliefs' and their perceptions of political relevance, which impregnated news selection and reporting. In other words, despite their denial, journalists ended framing.

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