



“LAS MALVINAS SON ARGENTINAS”

SOVEREIGNTY, POPULISM, RESOURCE NATIONALISM AND THE
MALVINAS ISSUE DURING THE KIRCHNER ADMINISTRATIONS
(2003-2015)

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Introduction

“The War in 1982 is the worst thing that could have happened to us”. That is a sentence often heard when speaking to Argentinians about the Malvinas issue. Not just because they lost the War and 600 unprepared boys with it, but because in a short period of time their sovereignty claim on the archipelago in the South Atlantic became completely worthless. In that sense they were their own worst enemy. After the War, with the resurrection of democracy in Argentina, succeeding governments have tried to slowly restore diplomatic and economic ties with the United Kingdom. Although the sovereignty claim on the Malvinas remained part of the Argentinian Constitution, the governments that came after the War did not follow-up on this provision very pro-actively. Especially Carlos Menem’s administration (1989-1999) was focussed on promoting the economic relationship between Argentina and the UK. This all changed with the election of Néstor Kirchner in 2003.

In November 2018, I was sitting in a cab somewhere 1300 kilometres south of Buenos Aires in a small town called Puerto Madryn in the province of Chubut. The rear window of the cab was covered with a big sticker that shouted: “Las Malvinas son argentinas”. When I asked the cab driver why she had that prominent sticker on her window, she replied that this was the municipality who obliged them to have this sticker on their cars. This experience in small town, 1500 kilometres away from the Malvinas, meant for me the starting point of my investigation into what the Malvinas mean for Argentinians, what role it has played in Argentinian politics, but more specifically, how and why the Kirchner administrations (2003-2015) reinvigorated the claim on the sovereignty of the islands in the South Atlantic. As Néstor Kirchner and his successor Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015) often have been associated with populism, I want to find out how an active pursuance of the Malvinas claim fits into the populist agenda of the Kirchners.

Néstor Kirchner was the first president after the War (2003-2007) to actively claim the Malvinas, halting a long period of *demalvinization* of Argentinian politics. His wife, Cristina Fernández was even more radical in her efforts of diplomatically confronting the British. She was very active in trying to find regional and multilateral support for the bilateral dispute. Also domestically Cristina turned many stones.

She appointed a special secretary for Malvinas issues, she founded a Malvinas museum in Buenos Aires, she empowered the Centre for Malvinas Veterans (CECIM La Plata) and gave the veterans the status of hero instead of victim. In order to find out why the Kirchners did all of this, it is necessary to decompose their background and their political ideology, which they came to call Kirchnerism.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical exploration of three concepts that play a crucial role in the politics of the Kirchners: national sovereignty, populism and resource nationalism. I have taken a step back to see the broader Latin American or global context of these concepts and I have assessed the conceptual debates that previous authors and renowned academics have exhibited. For instance, René Antonio Mayorga and Kurt Weyland have made enlightening contributions to the discussion about the role and development of (neo)populism in Latin America. I want to see how their vision and those of others are applicable to the political style of the Kirchners. The second chapter provides the Argentinian historical and political context starting after the Malvinas War in 1982. It describes the neoliberal administration of fellow Peronist Carlos Menem (1989-1999) and his neoliberal successors, to contrast later with the interventionistic policies of the Kirchners. I elaborate on the political ideology of Kirchnerism, being a side-branch of Peronism, just like Menemism, but with very different characteristics. The third chapter combines the previous two chapters and my own research in order to analyse the specific case at hand.

My analysis is based on field research I have conducted in Argentina combined with a thorough literature study. In 2018, I stayed in Buenos Aires for two months where I started in a bookshop and ended up amidst the inner circle of Kirchnerists. It was through the bookshop *Libros del Pasaje*, where I spent many hours, that I found the names and contact details of most of the experts related to either Kirchnerism or the Malvinas. One of them, Sonia Winer, is a sociologist at the UBA, expert on the Malvinas issue and strong advocate for Kirchnerism. She proved to be a tireless source of information as well as a stepping stone into the network of Kirchnerist politicians, scholars and veterans of the Malvinas War. Winer invited me to several events, with the most remarkable being a discussion on the sovereignty related to the Malvinas issue in the Chamber of Deputies.

I sat in a small room and listened to verbal contributions by several well-known Argentinians, such as Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (1980 Nobel Peace Prize Winner), Fernando Solanas (film director and now senator), Daniel Filmus (Secretary for Malvinas Matters), Alicia Castro (between 2012 and 2016 Argentina's ambassador to the UK), Ricardo Alfonsín (2011 presidential candidate), including several other politicians and Malvinas veterans. Most of them were worried about the renewed signs of friendship between the UK and Argentina under Macri. Also they viewed the upcoming Brexit as an opportunity for renegotiating the sovereignty of the Malvinas.

During these two months in Argentina I visited the Malvinas Museum, founded by Cristina Fernández, where I interviewed Mario Volpe, the former director of the Museum and veteran of the Malvinas War. Besides that, I travelled twice to the city of La Plata, to the south of Buenos Aires. There I met with Alejandro Simonoff, a professor in International Relations at the UNLP specialized in the Malvinas issue. He spoke about '*la nación amputada*' in relation to the Malvinas case. In La Plata I also joined a manifestation at Centre for Malvinas Veterans (CECIM) to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the War and to inaugurate their new headquarters. In order to get different views and a balanced opinion I also conducted interviews with academics who were somewhat more neutral or even critical of the Kirchner administrations. What I have noticed among most of the Argentinians I spoke with is that they have a sense that the Malvinas are part of their national identity. I have tried to compress all of the information I have received, during my field research and afterwards during the literature studies, into my own analysis of the Malvinas issue under the Kirchner administrations. Unfortunately Cristina Fernández never responded to my interview request. In 2018 she was still a senator for *Frente para la Victoria* and since December 2019 she is Argentina's vice-president.

Chapter 1

National Sovereignty, Populism and Resource Nationalism

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for a better understanding of the Malvinas dispute and the reason for which the Kirchner presidents reinvigorated the claim on the Islands. By highlighting the discussions regarding relevant concepts such as sovereignty, populism and resource nationalism, this chapter establishes the theoretical fundament of the thesis. This first paragraph starts off with discussing what sovereignty in a theoretical sense entails in order to find out what it means for the Kirchners. Then I will use the concept of sovereignty as a stepping stone to take a broader look at populism in a Latin American context. In my eyes both concepts are closely intertwined and play a significant role in the politics of the Kirchners. The second paragraph elaborates on the concept of Latin American nationalism and the different forms in which it may appear. One of the forms I will take a closer look at is nationalism related to the state management of resources.

1.1 National Sovereignty and Populism in Latin America

‘It is an injustice how in the 21st century there still subsist a colonialist enclave a few hundred kilometres from our shores...it is totally absurd when pretending dominion over a territory that’s more than 14.000 kilometres away from them.’ – Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Ushuaia, 2012 (Dodds, 2012, p. 684).

In countless discourses Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández have claimed that the islands in the South Atlantic are part of Argentinian territory. Both domestically as well as externally, they repeatedly stated that the United Kingdom is trespassing Argentina’s national sovereignty.

Latin America has a long history in the juridical tradition of preserving national sovereignty, and also in the devising of special mechanisms to defend and enforce it, either in the domestic sphere, or through international law. The notion of national sovereignty is as old as the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 (Almeida, 2013, p. 472).

Ever since, the concept has been developing and has been consolidated by the UN Charter (1945), 'which despite its alleged coverage of the "peoples of the United Nations", is entirely respectful of the rights of its member states, which are totally sovereign in matters of internal politics' (Almeida, 2013, p. 472).

As Almeida points out, the Charter made national sovereignty part of international law. However, it was not reassuring former colonies who remember the imperialist tendencies of big colonial powers throughout the ages. Almeida links the lack of regional economic integration to the fear of losing national sovereignty. 'This is perhaps one of the reasons why it constituted a main tenet of the juridical thinking developed in Latin America since the early 19th century. Threats of European intervention after the new independence of the Iberian American States, British economy hegemony over the entire continent and its meddling in political conflicts on many political occasions, and the rise of the United States as a dominant power at the end of that century, are factors that explain the development by Latin American jurists of new concepts arising from the old Westphalia principle. The strict adherence to national sovereignty was one of them, to be enshrined in a "juridical theology" which is responsible, in most cases, for the slow march of various schemes of regional integration in the continent' (Almeida, 2013, p. 473).

Nevertheless, Latin American countries are sometimes trying to achieve more regional cooperation. Throughout the years several supranational projects were started, such as MERCOSUR, ALBA, CELAC or UNASUR, but these projects are being endangered, not only by the fear of losing autonomy, but mostly by the inability of Latin American countries to uphold their own promises for more ambitious regional cooperation plans. 'In fact, every agreement in Latin America is comprehensive, all encompassing, pervasive, .. and not feasible' (Almeida, 2013, p. 488).

Thomas Legler, in his article 'Post-hegemonic Regionalism and Sovereignty in Latin America' (2013), decomposes the concept of national sovereignty in three parts: that of the sovereign; territory or space and authority. 'Taken together in different empirical constellations they constitute distinct sovereignty regimes' (Legler, 2013, p. 328).

He paraphrases Hinsley in order to give a definition of the concept: 'Sovereignty is the absolute authority of a sovereign within a given political community or territory.' He questions this definition on the point where it mentions 'absolute authority'.

In his opinion, absolute authority of a sovereign over a certain territory is impossible. There is an ongoing debate on the question what the effects are of globalization on the governmental authority over their marked territories. 'The problems that many countries in the global South confront establishing their domestic authority while paradoxically enjoying external sovereignty in the interstate system has led to a phenomenon which Robert Jackson (1993) once described as "quasi-states" (Legler, 2013, p. 331).'

Legler also highlights a contrasting division in the debate between the skeptics and the optimists. Almeida would fit into the group of what Thomas Legler calls the skeptics, when it comes to the scholarly debate on the regionalist analysis. 'Optimists essentially argue that recent changes in regionalism, from the open, U.S.- dominated regionalism of the 1990s to post-liberal, post-neoliberal, or post-hegemonic regionalism in the new millennium, are having a transformative impact on sovereignty' (Legler, 2013, p. 327).

They suggest that a new sovereignty regime is emerging, particularly in South America, which goes beyond national sovereignty, is linked to the construction of a regional polity, and in which sovereign authority is vested not only in the heads of state and government but also in intergovernmental organizations, transnational civil society, and citizens (Legler, 2013, p. 327). Skeptics recognize the attempts for regional cooperation, but they do not see those projects succeeding because of the persistent fear of losing control over the national sovereignty. In fact, they say that the upcoming regionalism only reinforced national sovereignty and enhanced mainly presidential authority.

Both the skeptics and the optimists come together on some points related to the sovereignty implications of recent regional trends. For example, there is a general consensus in the literature that current Latin American regional construction builds on a strong tradition of defensive multilateralism and defensive regionalism and that U.S. influence in the Latin American countries has been reduced. However, what both the skeptics and the optimists fail to mention, is what Legler calls the dual spatial autonomy.

This means that national sovereignty is interwoven with and mutually reinforced by regional sovereignty. Sovereign authority at the domestic level within Latin American states is enhanced and protected by the creation of a regional shield against both extra-regional market forces and U.S. power (Legler, 2013, p. 328). And as we shall see later on in this thesis, that not only counts for U.S. power but also for the power of Great Britain.

More in general, Argentina's foreign policy has been swinging like a pendulum from more international integration to more autonomy. The former being influenced by the theory of peripheral realism, that was established in the 1990s in Buenos Aires and directly influenced Carlos Menem's external affairs. Carlos Escudé's theory of peripheral realism looks at the costs and benefits of international cooperation and it comes to the conclusion that the path of isolationism in the end is less profitable for a country than to seek integration with the First World countries. Escudé states that, given the subordinate position in the international world order, Argentina should seek alliances with the United States as well as other countries in the top of the international pyramid, in order to obtain economic prosperity (Del Pezzo, 2016, p. 125).

The Kirchners strongly disagree with Escudé's theory and they have always looked for regional cooperation combined with a focus on autonomy and self-proficiency. Also Alejandro Simonoff (2003) finds Escudé's conclusions too weak: 'The problem with Escudé's theory is that the profits of this system will always remain eventual or shies away from a confrontation in the future, eternalizing the current path' (Simonoff, 2003, p. 11). The focus on autonomy and self-proficiency comes from the notion made by Juan Carlos Puig who believed that First World countries profit from the system as it is, where they are the Centre that has the power to exploit the peripheral countries by importing cheap basic resources and selling exporting back expensive end-products. That is why Puig states that peripheral countries should work their way up in the international pyramid by becoming independent from First World investments (Del Pezzo, 2016, p. 125). Ever since the 1990s Argentina has been switching from external relations based on Escudé's theory of peripheral realism and to the opposite side, to Puig's concept of autonomism.

The rise of populism in the 21st century can also be seen as a response to globalization. In Latin America and around the world, populists respond to the fears of civilians who see their local community being incorporated into the global village. 'Let's take back control' is an often-used sentence in populist' rhetoric. In a historical survey of the concept of sovereignty made by Hinsley, he found that articulations of sovereignty tend to be more pronounced and widespread when 'conditions have been producing rapid changes in the scope of government or in the nature of society or both' (Kallis, 2018, p. 293).

Taking back control is not only about combatting globalization or creating a perception of effective sovereigntism. Aristotle Kallis links the contemporary rise of populism to a new form of sovereigntism that crosses conventional political lines and extends beyond any particular sphere or institution. He focusses on the locus of the performance of sovereignty. 'Staging emotive spectacles of reclaimed sovereign power is an essential facet of the populist strategy that seeks to juxtapose such performances of a re-empowered demos to the alternative of a profound systemic crisis that threatened the very security and welfare of the people' (Kallis, 2018, p. 294). An antidote to this crisis proved to be the reterritorialization of power with a line of defense, provided by populists, that underlined the danger 'outside' and reconstituted popular sovereignty 'inside'. A tactic that was also used by the Kirchners. They staged an emotive spectacle by claiming sovereignty of the Falklands and by creating an external danger, being the presence of a NATO military base on the Islands, they reconstituted popular sovereignty internally.

Robert Barr (2017) showcases three waves of populism in Latin America. According to him, populism first appeared in the aftermath of the Great Depression, with the collapse of the export-led economic model. These populist leaders promised political inclusion and economic gains for the *descamisados*, to use the word of Perón. Most of these populists became very popular. These leaders drew support from millions of people, partially because of the success of the import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies. After democracy returned in the beginning of the 1990s, we notice a new surge of populists in Latin America.

These new populists, or neopopulists, embraced neoliberal market reforms, reducing the state interference and its protection of the lower classes. In opposition to the neoliberal policies, a new populist movement arose at the beginning of the century, that aligned itself with the radical left.

Kurt Weyland is one of the most thorough authors when it comes to elaborating the concept of populism in Latin America. He defines populism 'as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers' (Weyland, 2001, p. 5). He distinguishes three kinds of conceptualization: cumulative, radical and classical conceptualization. According to Weyland, the traditional approach to Latin American populism has been the cumulative one, that used several attributes from different domains. From the 1960s till the 1980s most authors consequently used the cumulative concept of populism. They tried to understand the rise of populists between the 1930s and the 1960s.

The cumulative concept connects populist politics to its social roots, its socioeconomic background and substantive policies. It mainly focusses on the expansionary economics programme and redistributive measures. Most authors also noted a personalistic style of political leadership directed at the 'common' people. A charismatic individual that wins and exercises power by maintaining direct contact with a largely unorganized mass of followers. These cumulative authors linked the rapid advance of industrialization, urbanization and education to the growth of a mass participation, that started to undermine the traditional political authority. This is what they saw as the birthplace of populism in Latin America (Weyland, 2001, p. 5).

The cumulative concept had a long predominance. The military dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s sought to eradicate this kind of populism, meaning the organization instability, economic irresponsibility and excessive distributive generosity that it brought about. However, in the new democracies that emerged from the 1980s, populist leaders reappeared as well (Weyland, 2001, p. 6).

Although they also drew their support from large unorganized masses, they were different from the classical populists. This posed a conceptual problem. As he states:

‘Most important, the growing divergence of populist political strategies and the socioeconomic strategies of classical populism called into question the prevailing cumulative definitions. In fact, none of the new leaders displayed all the defining characteristics stipulated by the cumulative notions’ (Weyland, 2001, p. 7). In the new political and socioeconomic setting, it became difficult to nominate the new populists according to the cumulative concept, to a specific socioeconomic setting. Where Carlos Menem is a good example of a populism ‘new style’, combining neoliberal reforms with a populist attitude, his Kirchner successors are yet again examples of the classical cumulative populists. That is why this thesis will stick to discussing a more classical notion of populism.

Another authority when it comes to elaborating the concept of populism is the Argentinian political scientist Ernesto Laclau. Most authors that worked on this theme after Laclau refer back to his work *On Populist Reason* (2005). In his opening chapter, he reaffirms the difficulties that populism as a concept poses. Laclau states that populism is a frequently used concept, applied to a lot of different political movements. An often-seen feature of the literature on populism is its difficulty to give the concept a precise meaning (Laclau, 2005, p. 25). Especially the authors that have based their work on the classical populism of the 60s and 70s have difficulties to find exact words to describe this phenomenon.

This also shows Gino Germani in his book *Authoritarianism, Fascism and National Populism* (1978). ‘Populism itself tends to deny any identification with or classification into the Right/Left dichotomy. It is a multiclass movement, although not at all multiclass movements may be considered populist. Populism probably defies any comprehensive definition (Germani, 1978, p. 88). In his opinion, populism often seems contradictory. It claims equality of political rights and universal participation of the ‘common’ people, but it is often combined with a sort of authoritarianism under charismatic leadership. Populism includes a demand for social justice, defense of small property, strong nationalist components, and the denial of the importance of class. It is anti-elitist, usually considered inimical to the people and the nation. ‘Any of these elements may be stressed according to cultural and social conditions, but they are all present in most populist movements’ (Germani, 1978, p. 88).

Luckily the literature of the 21st century provides clearer guidelines. According to René Mayorga, the concept of populism has been anchored in four theoretical perspectives: First, the historical-sociological perspective, which stresses mobile socialization and sociopolitical coalitions arising in the context of the crisis of oligarchic domination, the early stages of industrialization, and the transition from a traditional to a modern society. Secondly, the economic perspective, which draws attention to populism as a type of redistributive policy and state interventionism responding to economic elites' weaknesses and inability to develop class hegemony. Then, the ideological perspective, which identifies populism with a specific discourse articulating the constitution of a "popular" actor and the contradiction between this actor and the dominant classes. Finally, the political perspective, which explains populism as a pattern of mobilization of subaltern and/or excluded masses by personalistic leaders that is not based on institutional structures of political mediation (Mayorga, 2006, p. 134).

Mayorga makes a distinction between historical populism and neopopulism. He states that, unlike the historical populism, neopopulism functions within the democratic system. According to him, neopopulists accept the rules of the political competition, but at the same time resorts to the legitimacy of the leader, who presents himself as redeemer and embodiment of the people and the nation. As an ideology, neopopulism can therefore be seen as a pattern of ideological legitimation that functions within the boundaries of the representative democracy. It even takes advantage of the resources that representative democracy and its electoral mechanisms provide (Mayorga, 2006, p. 135).

The most important difference between neopopulism and classical populism is the appearance of what Mayorga calls 'the outsiders', by which he means the populists that spring up from outside of the established party system. 'At a first glance, the emergence of outsiders seems akin to "thunder in a clear blue sky." But outsiders become key players essentially because of an auspicious context: a crisis of governability and a profound decay and breakdown of party systems' (Mayorga, 2006, p. 136). He blames the existing political party systems for not being representative enough in order to satisfy the needs of the people.

David Doyle also focusses on the idea of political outsiders. He follows a definition of populism given by Kenneth Roberts (2007). Populism to Roberts 'refers to the top-down political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge elite groups on behalf of the ill-defined *pueblo*, or "the people".' Doyle states that Néstor Kirchner was part of new wave of populists that came after the neopopulists (Fujimori, Menem etc.). That batch of populists, although not homogeneous, portrayed many elements of the main characteristics that are mentioned above. These highly-personalized populist movements are all based on relative political outsiders with an anti-systemic and anti-elitist discourse (Doyle, 2011, p. 1449).

However, there is a discussion about whether Néstor Kirchner can be categorized as part of this new group of the more classical populists that came after the neopopulists. Doyle believed he did form part of that group but other authors are more doubtful. For example, Hunter and Weyland notice a difference between his candidacy and his presidency. Néstor Kirchner was not a very known politician. Therefore he was sometimes qualified as an outsider, but he was also a governor of the province of Santa Cruz. For his presidential bid he got support from insiders such as Eduardo Duhalde, the sitting president at the time of the elections in 2003. Furthermore, Kirchner did campaign against neoliberalism in the classic Peronist caudillo-style, but his rhetoric lacked an us-versus-them- tone that is a characteristic of other populists. (Barr, 2017, p. 155) Other populists, like his successor and wife, Cristina Fernández, who was known for her rhetoric of 'be with us or be against us'.

Furthermore, the policies and discourse of the Kirchner's had a strong anti-imperialistic character. This was, among other things, reflected in their campaign against the British presence on the Malvinas. With anti-imperialism and regionalism comes also the defense of national sovereignty. In order to get a better theoretical understanding of this kind of populism, it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning of national sovereignty for populists in Latin America.

Concluding you could say that Latin American populism as a concept is very hard to define. The most often-used definition is the one given by Weyland, who saw populism 'as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers.' (Weyland, 2001, p. 5) Furthermore, authors make a distinction between classical populism and neopopulism. Paradoxically, neopopulists are associated with the implementation of neoliberal market-reforms in Latin American countries, whereas classical populists are associated with redistributive economic measures, social policies and anti-imperialism, state interventionism and nationalism. Common ground can be found in the role of a strong charismatic leader. On top of that, populism can also be linked to the concept of sovereigntism. By promising to take back control over sovereign borders and by appointing an external threat, populists often gain support from the people who have seen their societies changing by globalization. Finally, Argentina's external politics since the 1990s have been functioning as a pendulum, switching from a focus on international economic cooperation and integration towards an emphasis on autonomy and self-proficiency.

1.2 Nationalism and Resources

Nationalism plays a considerable role in populism, but also more specifically in the politics of the Kirchner' administrations. Therefore, it is vital to elaborate on the concept of nationalism in a Latin American context by showing how previous academics tried to conceptualize nationalism and how they assess the role and impact of nationalism in the Latin American region. More recently, during the presidencies of the Kirchners, nationalism is linked to state management of national resources, which plays an interesting role in the issue of the Malvinas.

One of the oldest and most cited authors on Latin American nationalism is Kalmart Silvert, who published an article named 'Nationalism in Latin America' (1961). He sets out an overview of subdivisions of the many ways in which the word nationalism is used, with suggestions for their significance within the Latin American context: The first subdivision is nationalism as patriotism. Refers to the love of the country and national community, on the one hand, on the other hand the collection of symbols expressing this love.

Glorification of the race, military pomp and ceremony on the occasion of national holidays, martial anthems, and homage to the symbolic baggage of the nation are celebrated on many occasions in Latin America. Secondly, nationalism as social value. Refers to the norm defining the loyalty due to fellow citizens and to the secular state as the ultimate arbiter of all conflicts of public interest. This aspect of nationalism is the crucial one, for a broad loyalty to fellow citizens and a fitting set of functional institutions is the critical social factor permitting, in the end, economic development. Here nationalism is defined as a social psychological concept with its particular institutional referent, the state. Thirdly, nationalism as ideology involves those explicit bodies of thought employing the symbols of nationality in order to promote actions intended at least partially to glorify the nation as a good in itself. The ideologies of nationalism are the most discussed of all the aspects of the subject, not only because of their visibility, but also because they touch on the delicate subjects of expropriation, racism, xenophobia, anti-imperialism and political extremism (Silvert, 1961, pp. 3-6).

Nationalism can serve two purposes from the point of view of a nation: first, a domestic purpose, direct inward, towards the nation's domestic concerns. And secondly, an external purpose, directed outward, towards its relation with other nations or peoples. Whitaker confronts the concept via an historic approach, consulting mainly other historians. Whitaker cites Hans Kohn, a famous American philosopher and historian: 'nationalism is "first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness" – specifically, "the individual's identification of himself with the 'we-group' to which he gives supreme loyalty"...Yet while "Nationalism as a group-consciousness is a psychological or sociological fact" it cannot be explained in psychological or sociological terms alone, for nationality is a historical and political concept' (Whitaker, 1962, p. 4).

Whitaker also cites Carlton Hayes, another authority on the studies of nationalism, who defined nationalism as "as fusion of patriotism with a consciousness of nationality" and nationality as a product of cultural and historical forces – specifically, a product combining "a common language (or closely related dialects) and... a community of historical traditions." Hayes, too, stresses "the fluidity of nationalities in the long run of history."

He differentiates sharply between cultural nationalism and political nationalism, holding that when the cultural bases of nationality become 'by some process of education...the object of popular emotional patriotism, the result is nationalism' (Whitaker, 1962, p. 4).

Interesting about the book of Whitaker is that he uses Argentina as a case study of the history of nationalism in Latin America. In the first chapter, he already stated that nationalism came via the European Enlightenment and via the United States before reaching the newly independent countries on the continent of Latin America in the 19th century. Then, in the second chapter he discusses the case of Argentina. 'Argentina is representative of Latin America at large in the sense that it is already well advanced in stages of economic, social, cultural and political development which most of the other Latin American countries are still striving to reach' (Whitaker, 1962, p. 25).

Whitaker roughly divides Argentine nationalism in three phases: In the first phase, which extended from the beginning of independence about 1810 to the turn of the century, Argentine nationalism was essentially introspective, liberal, and benevolent save during the interlude of the Rosas tyranny in the 1830's and '40's; and at all times its chief function was to combat particularism and promote union. The second phase, from the 1890's to the 1940's was marked increasingly by cultural and economic nationalism and xenophobia, combined with a growing concern for Argentina's international role and, towards the close, an expansionist, aggressive spirit. For Whitaker, the third phase is harder to characterize because for him it was still recent, but also because he observes a fragmentation of the Argentine society since the 1940's until his days in 1962. 'But the most distinctive trait of the period seems to be the trend towards harnessing nationalism to a social revolution in the interest of the masses – those called *descamisados* under the Perón regime' (Whitaker, 1962, p. 26).

For this thesis, it is interesting to mention what Whitaker writes about the beginning of nationalism in Argentina. He states that nationalism in Argentina started thanks to Great Britain and began to take shape even before the struggle of independence from Spain. He refers to the British attempts to seize Buenos Aires in 1806-1807. During the siege, the locals were left on their own by the Spanish crown.

The citizens of Buenos Aires successfully defended their territory, which gave a mayor boost to the Argentinian pride. It was celebrated as *El triunfo argentino*, which was also the title of a poem written by a well-known bard of the time, Vicente López y Planes. 'It also helped to bring about, years later, the adoption of "Argentina" as the name of the new nation state' (Whitaker, 1962, p. 27). It was basically this triumph over the British that gave the Argentinians their independence and national pride. Bearing this in mind, a struggle against the British presence on a group of islands relatively close to the Argentinian coast, is perhaps easier to understand.

Going back to more modern stages of nationalism in Latin America, Eric Hobsbawm mentions in his article 'Nacionalismo y nacionalidad en América Latina' (2010) that in Latin America the identification with a nation-state through the admiration of a person who supersedes the nation-state is more important than other forms of political identification. Hobsbawm links the old tradition of the *caudillismo* to the modern concept of nationalism, seeing some classical caudillos transforming into revolutionary or populist leaders.

How does Hobsbawm see the current and the future state of nationalism in Latin America? He mentions three characteristics of the current state of nationalism in other parts of the world to illustrate the anomaly of Latin America. The first characteristic he mentions is that nationalism is justified along ethno-linguistic/religious lines. Secondly, nationalism often comes with ideas of separatism. Thirdly, nationalists are focused on a clear religious, political or a cultural past and heritage. In some more extreme cases this includes a longing for territorial expansion. Finally, nationalists often find internal enemies, like the sitting government or immigrants, more than that they are directed outwards against other states.

Latin America differs from these global characteristics of nationalism. This is what Hobsbawm calls the anomaly of Latin America. When it comes to the first characteristic of ethnic-linguistic justification, the common tongue in Latin America is Castilian or Portuguese, although some use minorities have an indigenous language as their mother tongue but these are not in any way a possible replacement for the European languages.

Also, the historical-religious aspect of nationalism in other parts of the world, does not add up for Latin America. 'The religious history of all continental states is Catholic, and although there are both nativist and syncretic cults, no country, with the probable exception of Haïti, sees these cults as essential for their identity' (Hobsbawm, 2010, p. 323). Furthermore, the vast amounts of immigrants from the other side of the ocean have successfully integrated in the most significant countries, such as Uruguay, Argentina and the south of Brazil, with the possible exception of the big Jewish community in Argentina who were (auto)excluded for one or two generations. Surprisingly, even the Arab immigrants were accepted in the Latin American societies and they succeeded in obtaining high-ranked positions in several of the Republics, e.g. the former Argentinian president Carlos Menem, who was a child of Syrian immigrants.

Finally, Hobsbawm does not predict many future conflicts internally or externally arising from nationalistic sentiments within the region: 'Undoubtedly, the so-called nationals serve within the countries to reinforce domestic demagogues and populist leaders, but given the low profile of labor migration in this area, the ever-present and popular xenophobia typical of Western Europe and North America does not seem to exist' (Hobsbawm, 2010, pp. 324-325).

Another important element in Latin American nationalism in general, but also in the nationalistic ideas of the Kirchner presidents, is the collective belonging expressed through the idiom of natural resources. Both Néstor Kirchner as well as Cristina Fernández have stated that by controlling the Malvinas, the British are able to steal natural resources from Argentina. The Kelpers, as the citizens of the Malvinas are called, are among the richest populations in the world. They profit from the presence of natural resources such as fish, petroleum and minerals. Resources that belong to Argentina, as the Kirchnerists say.

A main argument of resource nationalism is that people of a given country, rather than private corporations or foreign entities, should benefit from the resources of a territorially-defined state. 'Resource nationalism is a geopolitical discourse about sovereignty, the state, and territory, as well as the rights and privileges of citizenship, national identity, and the values a group assigns to resources like oil, gas and minerals' (Koch & Perreault, 2018, p. 612). Resource nationalism often appears in the form of political speeches or through the nationalization of resource industries, but it can also appear in the form of graffiti, statues or popular mobilizations. Like that, resource nationalism has political economic and cultural symbolic forms, both of which are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Ordinary citizens or groups of activists can use the language of resource nationalism to combat foreign influence in their countries resource industries, contesting how benefits and harms are divided (Koch & Perreault, 2018, p. 612).

Between 2006 and 2014, the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Argentina have started to nationalize their oil and gas industries for over several billion dollars in assets. This can be seen as a counter-reaction to the years of *laissez-faire* policies of neoliberalism that used to dominate Latin American politics after the 1990s. The term that is used to capture these policies is resource nationalism. 'It is a return to the failed import-substitution policies of the past.' (Haslam & Heidrich, 2016, p. 2) Haslam and Heidrich understand resource nationalism as a combination of policies: increased state apportionment of profits from extractive industries; heightened regulation to better integrate production processes with national economies, and state influence in or a determination of directions of trade of natural resources. They state that in theory, resource nationalism could contribute to the development of a country, although the past has shown that this is far from certain. Among other factors, it depends on whether the state is capable of extracting the resources and if that state is able to manage the income that these resources generate. Professor Nievas, sociologist at the University of Buenos Aires, mentioned in an interview I held with him, that in case Argentina would successfully claim the Falkland Islands, it would not have the financial means to extract the oil that the British are currently extracting.

The return to resource nationalism can be attributed to a decline of neoliberalism and a resurgence of leftist politics in Latin America. However, the fact that these leftist politicians, such as Néstor Kirchner or Lula da Silva in Brazil, have laid emphasis on the national recuperation of resources can also be contributed to the commodity boom that started in the early 2000s. The demand for commodities, such as oil, minerals, gas and agricultural products, like soy beans, rose thanks to the emerging markets of the BRIC-countries. Prices of these commodities rose between 300 percent and 1000 percent which greatly benefited the terms of trade for Latin American countries, as commodity exporters. For Argentina, this might have been an extra incentive to try to claim the resources around the Malvinas.

Concluding, two related concepts play a role in the politics of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández: nationalism and resource nationalism. Nationalism has a long history in Latin America. It comes often in the form of patriotism, with a strong love for the *Patria* and for the national community. Although it has always been present in Latin America, it has gone through several important phases. In the case of Argentina, the years of Peron introduced a new kind of nationalism that has influenced nationalistic politicians for years to come, including the Kirchnerists. Perón harnessed nationalism to achieve a social revolution in the interest of the masses. A nationalism that is mainly directed inwards, for domestic gain. At the start of the 2000s, nationalism in Latin America gets a new dimension. Influenced by the commodities boom, the new leftist patriots implement policies that are directed to nationalizing the exploitation of the country's resources. Resources that can also be found in large numbers around the islands in the South Atlantic.

Chapter 2

From neoliberalism to state interventionism

After having laid out the theoretical fundament of this thesis and after having explained the bigger concepts that surround it, this chapter provides a historical context and political context of the issue of the Malvinas in Argentina. The first paragraph tells the history of the rapprochement between Argentina and Great Britain during the years of Carlos Menem, a neoliberalist and Peronist, who in my opinion is an interesting example to contrast with the Kirchners because his policies regarding the issue of the Malvinas were the opposite of those of the Kirchners. Then this paragraph describes the dramatic temporary end of neoliberalism in Argentina with the fleeing of Menem's successor Fernando de la Rúa from the Casa Rosada. This is to get a better image of the anti-neoliberal circumstances under which Néstor Kirchner came to power. Then, the second paragraph shows the political context of Kirchnerism. It pictures how the Kirchners governed and how they tried to undo almost all of the neoliberal reforms that Menem had implemented. How Argentina went from a Washington Consensus 'poster child' towards a state-led economy.

2.1 Menem's rapprochement with Great Britain (1989-1999)

The end of the war over the Malvinas in 1982 also meant the reinstatement of democracy in Argentina. Raul Alfonsín was the first president to be elected freely after more than 50 years of dictatorship. However, this did not mean direct reconciliation with Great Britain. In fact, the diplomatic relations between Argentina and Great Britain only hardened. This was partially due to the strong position of the Margaret Thatcher who made clear that there was no leeway for negotiation on the position of the Malvinas. Where Thatcher refused to talk about the formal sovereignty of the Malvinas, Alfonsín refused to renew the dialogue with the UK unless the subject of the Malvinas could be raised during these exchanges. Several meetings between both countries, organized by the Swiss Foreign Ministry, were fruitless. Military training sessions by the British Army in the South Atlantic led to an Argentinian effort to ask for support at the UN, to achieve a complete removal of the military presence in the region (Dodds & Manóvil, 2007, p. 110).

Change came with the change of power. Margaret Thatcher got replaced by the John Major and Alfonsín made way for Carlos Menem. Menem's government had a more pragmatic stance and aimed at restoring diplomatic relations with Great Britain. This had a lot to do with the political ideology of Menem and his government. Seen from a neoliberal perspective, many of his actions with respect to foreign affairs are explainable. This is also recognizable in the way his government dealt with the issue of the Malvinas. Menem's primary objective was to restore order and calm in the Argentinian society, which would eventually benefit the economy as well. He hoped to attract foreign investments to Argentina. For that, a good relationship with foreign powers, including Great Britain, was vital. When assuming office, Menem spoke in front of Congress, proclaiming that he would do anything in his power to recuperate the Malvinas. But he added: 'But also in this area we will act realistically. We need the diplomatic channels that we use to reaffirm our rights do not hinder our economic relationship with Europe' (Sánchez & Gómez, 2014, p. 117).

The UK and Argentina signed two agreements in Madrid, in 1989 and 1990, in which they agreed upon a "sovereignty umbrella". The umbrella was supposed to freeze the sovereignty dispute and to protect the legal positions of both countries in respect of the sovereignty dispute. Simply said, it meant that Argentina would stop its sovereignty claims of the Malvinas. In return, the British also allowed Argentina to trade with the European Community. The EC-Argentina trade had been blocked by the British since 1982. Furthermore, they lifted the mutual tax restrictions to improve financial and economic relations. Both of which were important steps for the neoliberal policies of Menem (Del Pezzo, 2016, p. 129).

From 1990 and onwards new steps towards reconciliation between Argentina and Great Britain were taken. First, both countries created a system of communications, in which they could inform each other on the activities of the fishing fleet in the South Atlantic. Secondly, they gave a joint declaration in which they declared that position on the question of sovereignty remained unchanged. Thirdly, under the auspices of the Red Cross, Argentinian relatives were allowed to visit the graves of their lost family members at the Darwin cemetery on the Malvinas.

Secondly, the Argentinian Constitution of 1994 acknowledged that the Falklanders had their own language and cultural traditions, instead of being just an abstract geographic location. Fourthly, the Malvinas ought to be more actively involved in negotiations over future contact and relations with South America. These were important steps for the local Malvinas community, because now they were finally recognized as a community distinct from the Argentinian communities as well as that they were independent enough to negotiate on its own. The new Argentinian Foreign Minister, Guido Di Tella, would even phone 'Kelpers' privately to talk about the territorial dispute. Fifthly, new commissions such as the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission (1990) and later the South West Atlantic Hydrocarbons Commission (1996) organized new means to keep an open and constructive dialogue between the two countries. Finally, Menem's government officially ended the state of hostility of Argentina with Great Britain (Dodds & Manóvil, 2007, p. 111).

All of these measurements ensured a renewed regional integration of the Malvinas and a profound improvement of Anglo-Argentine diplomatic and economic relations. However, later on in his presidency, Menem started to move from the policy of *desmalvinización* of the Argentinian society towards *remalvinización*. This meant that his policies towards the Malvinas became more and more paradoxical. On the one hand, Argentina was still pursuing co-operative arrangements but on the other hand they started pushing their sovereignty claim over the Islands again. This was reflected in an annual session held in the late 1990s by the UN Decolonisation Committee. The Argentinian delegation kept pushing their claim on the Malvinas to be respected. The UK-Falkland delegation kept repeating their right of self-determination. The Falklanders reminded all the states present of the colonial danger of larger states consuming the smaller ones without regard of international law and the right of self-determination.

In October 1998, Augusto Pinochet was detained by the British police in London. Pinochet was facing extradition to Spain, who asked for his arrests as a suspect of human right abuses in Chile between 1983 and 1989. Although Margaret Thatcher had already stepped down, she reminded the British people that Pinochet and Chile had helped the British during the Malvinas War against Argentina.

As a retaliation for Pinochet's arrest, starting in March 1999 Chile detained its flight service between Punta Arenas and the Malvinas, which left the Islanders without flight connections to the mainland. Therefore they became dependent on the Royal Air Force (RAF) air link with the UK. After diplomatic pressure by Argentina, their MERCOSUR partners Uruguay and Brazil stated that they would no longer be able to host RAF emergence diversion facilities on their soil. This practically meant that flying to the Malvinas from the UK would be too big of a risk. The Falklanders saw that they were left isolated without the regional support. They asked the UK government to reopen negotiations with Argentina. In the past, they had relied mostly on Chile's partnership in case the Argentinians turned against them (Dodds & Manóvil, 2007, p. 112).

The MERCOSUR pressure on the Falkland community, organized by Argentina, led to a new Joint Statement in 1999. It consisted of six components: First of all, for the first time since 1982, everyone with an Argentinian passport was allowed on the Malvinas, instead of just family members of fallen soldiers. Second of all, both countries signed a fishery agreement, in which they promised to combat illegal fishing. Third, a new monument could be placed on the Darwin cemetery where the Argentinian soldiers were buried. Fourth, after a seven-month break, from October 1999 flights were to be resumed between Punta Arenas and the Malvinas, with a regular lay-over at the Argentinian town of Rio Gallegos. Finally, the Argentinian government promised to review the names that were given by the military junta in the early 1980 to certain places on the Islands, such as Puerto Argentino (Stanley). All of these new actions happened under the earlier-mentioned "sovereignty umbrella" which stated 'that none of the above will prejudice either side's claim to sovereignty (Dodds & Manóvil, 2007, pp. 113-114).

Going back to the figure of Carlos Menem, it is important to realize that Menem was elected without the strong support of an existent political, economic, military or labour structure. He got chosen as a 'outsider', even though he was the nominee of the Peronist party, like the Kirchners were also nominees of that party. Knowing that, it is even more surprising that Menem got elected while pursuing neoliberal market reforms, which contrasted sharply with the interventionist, isolationist and anti-imperialist character of Peronism that use to be the ruling economic philosophy in Argentina.

Menem's critics, within and outside of his party, believed that he drastically changed Argentina's economy because he wanted to please the United States. This assumption is too short-sighted. Domingo Cavallo (2017), who was first Menem's Minister of Foreign Affairs and later President of the Central Bank, wrote that Menem had observed the changing world order. He had anticipated on the end of the Cold War and he predicted that globalization would provide opportunities for Argentina. It might be difficult to prove that Menem was a visionary, but it is clear that he was far more outward looking than most of his predecessors had been since the 1930s. His charisma, simplicity and common sense convinced the Argentinian voters that he was would be a trust-worthy president (Cavallo & Cavallo, 2017, p. 189).

To say that Menem changed his policies just to please the United States is short-sighted, but during his presidency he did show a special interest in maintaining a good relationship with the US government. The Cold War was over, the United States had secured their global ideological hegemony. American-led globalisation was unavoidable and only an open alignment with the US would put Argentina in a more advantageous position. Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella said that Argentina was willing to have 'carnal and abject relations with the United States' (Aguiló, 2018, p. 25).

Externally Argentina took on a very active role. Some of its foreign policies became source of controversy: For instance, Argentina's military participation in the Gulf War, the open support of US suggestions for high-ranked positions of international organizations, the active support of a US campaign for the defence of human rights on Cuba, the backing of the restauration of the democratically-elected government on Haiti or the participation in all kinds of peacekeeping missions (Diamint, 2002, p. 16). Many of these examples were initiatives taken by the United States, that suddenly could count on Argentinian support. Another case that led to controversy domestically, was Argentina's nomination by Bill Clinton in 1997 as part of the group of the so-called Major Non-NATO Allies of the United States. These countries are not official members of NATO, but do have a strategic working relationship with the US Armed Forces.

It confers a variety of military and financial advantages that would otherwise not be available. Other countries on that list are: South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel among others. Argentina was the first Latin American country to be accepted as a Non-NATO Ally. Domestically, Menem's government tried to keep a much lower profile. They presented the drastic market reforms as inevitable, after the last few crisis years under the presidency of Alfonsín. In an address to Congress in 1989 Menem stated: 'We are going to privatize as much as necessary, it is not a question of dogma but of necessity...As I pointed out many times, I don't believe in privatism or statism. I believe in 'Argentinism' with capital letters. Privatising public companies is an instrument to fulfil our true aims of justice, independence and sovereignty..I understand that we are at a crossroads that is cultural and goes beyond economic and political issues' (Aguiló, 2018, p. 29). With *Argentinism* he tried to introduce a new political ideology in an attempt to depoliticize discourse and policies. By converting the economic and the political field into a cultural issue, he presented neoliberalism as a part of common sense.

At first the neoliberalist policies worked out quite well in economic terms. Foreign investments flowed in, consumerism boomed, the infrastructure was Americanized, with large shopping malls and luxury hotels as a result. Also, in 1991, Domingo Cavallo, the before-mentioned Minister of Finance, came with the Convertibility Plan. A plan that was organized around fiscal tightening, connecting the peso to the dollar combined with the unrestricted opening of the economy. The Convertibility Plan was successful in tackling the hyperinflation that was developed under the Alfonsín-regime. On top of that, labour markets were deregulated, state enterprises were privatized and many public utility services were privatized, such as the national airline, the operations of the railways, waterways, airports and the national post service among others. Economists praised Menem's policies as an economic miracle. There was optimism that Argentina finally had embraced the road of development. Neoliberalism was provided with the social validation it had lacked in the past. The early 1990s in Argentina, the *fiesta menemista* as they came to call it, were characterized by consumism, optimism, frivolity and opulence (Aguiló, 2018, p. 30).

After Menem's re-election by a large margin in 1995, the downsides of the unrestricted neoliberal policies started to become more and more apparent. The economic growth did not translate in the decline of unemployment, rather on the contrary: joblessness grew because of the loss of jobs at state-run companies by 70 percent. The influx of cheap import products made local industries otiose. Furthermore, the inequality grew out of hand: the Gini-coefficient was 0.36 in 1974 but by 2001 it stood at 0.51 with a ratio of 58.4 respectively. In 1998, the Argentinian economy came in a recession, partially due to financial crises in Russia and Asia. Now that the country came in a crisis at the end of the 1990s, people started to blame the widespread and continuing corruption by Menem's officials as a major contributor to the country's problems. That is also how Menem's successor framed it.

Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001) did not blame neoliberalism for the existent crisis, but much more he wanted to eradicate the corruption that had been running Argentina's politics for years under Menem's supervision. By promising that he would not alter the Convertibility Plan, de la Rúa gained a lot of support amongst those that were afraid to go back to the times of hyperinflation. Ending the Plan would also mean an end to the First World aspirations. De la Rúa failed on both fronts: he failed to counter the economic decline as well as he failed to combat corruption. The economic crisis continued because he did not change the economic model of Menem, he even re-appointed Domingo Cavallo as Minister of Finance. Also, a scandal in 2000 of members of parliament taking bribes to pass a Labour reform bill, showed that corruption had not been tackled (Aguiló, 2018, p. 33).

That is how Argentina went from a Washington Consensus 'poster child' to another deep economic crisis in 2001. The Argentinians had enough of the deep recession and of its government. At the end of the year, protesters took the streets chanting '*Que se vayan todos*' to express their discontent with the ruling political class. Social movements called for protection against market expansion. During riots in cities like Rosario, Mendoza, Buenos Aires, shops were looted and the police reacted with force (Undurraga, 2015, p. 24). De la Rúa had to escape with a helicopter from the Casa Rosada and was forced to resign. Cavallo (2017) calls it an institutional coup that paved the way for an institutional rupture that was unprecedented in Argentinian history.

First, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá took over the presidency, but he stated that he wanted to hold on to the Convertibility Plan, which led to new upheavals by the protestors after which Saá had to resign 11 days after he was assigned. Peronist Eduardo Duhalde succeeded him (Cavallo, 2017, p. 222). The 'Coup' in 2001 meant the end of the neoliberalist project that had started under Carlos Menem in 1989 (Cavallo & Cavallo, 2017, p. 222).

The expectations for Duhalde's presidency (2002-2003) were not all too high. The main issue for this government was the economic crisis and trying to bring down the foreign debts. Reopening discussions on the Malvinas issue was not a top priority at that time. Most countries were not interested in strengthening its diplomatic and economic ties with Argentina, due to the social upheavals and political instability. The economic paralysation also led to a diplomatic paralysation. This happened also because the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Ruckauf, failed to see the opportunities that international cooperation could bring about (Rut, 2003, p. 20). Duhalde did manage to restore political power and order.

Duhalde resigned in 2003 to make way for the governor of the province of Santa Cruz, Néstor Kirchner, to become the new president. Kirchner won because Carlos Menem withdrew from the second-round run-off against Kirchner. Kirchner became president with only 22 percent of the votes which he had received thanks to the public support of Duhalde.

2.2 New kind of Peronism under the Kirchner administrations

When Kirchner took on the mandate, he was considered a 'weak' president, because he did not win the elections through a majority vote. To show that he was able to lead, he immediately reached out to social movements like the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, to the unions and to leftist academics. He tried to gather support for his mandate beyond party lines, what he called *transversalismo*. He called upon everyone, not matter what party they were from, who had a nationalist and Peronist consciousness, to support him. He found support among dissident radicals, communists, socialists or from young militants among others. For example, his vicepresident, Daniel Scioli, was originally a businessman (Galasso, 2016, p. 66)

Kirchner needed support for his counter-reforms, that were supposed to undo the neoliberal free market reforms that had dominated Argentina and Latin America as a whole. The commodity boom stimulated Argentina to start a period of economic recovery and debt renegotiation (Levy, 2017, p. 25). The dollar weakened, the peso strengthened and inflation started to decline (Cavallo & Cavallo, 2017, p. 240). Wages rose gradually and after 2005 more rapidly, the public expenditure grew significantly and unemployment dropped (Wylde, 2017, p. 1121). The post-neoliberal government wanted to combat social inequality through a strong state intervention in the economy and society and through redistributive policies. They empowered state institutions and collective organisations, such as workers' unions and human rights associations (Undurraga, 2015, p. 26).

Where Menem had focussed on international cooperation, on strong ties with the United States and on inviting foreign investment, Kirchner did the opposite. He positioned himself as an anti-imperialist. His interest lied within being self-sufficient, putting heavy taxes on foreign products to stimulate local industries and on being less dependent on the support of the U.S. Kirchner wanted to strengthen regional cooperation, via the MERCOSUR, the trade union of the southern countries. He was also active in the creation of UNASUR, which was a union of South American countries to act as a counterbalance to a trade agreement proposed by the U.S. Kirchner's boldest move however, was that he said 'no' to the IMF when they asked for austerity programmes. He believed that the IMF had been the cause of the economic crisis. He also saw the IMF as a form a Northern American imperialism (Galasso, 2016, 67). In 2005, after increasingly hostile relations between the IMF and the Argentine government, Kirchner decided to pay off the debt in total, to get rid of the IMF's supervision. He paid the debt by increasing the national debt in pesos.

Another sharp contrast with Menem's government was Kirchner's emphasis on human rights. One of Néstor's first actions in government was that he asked Congress to cancel the amnesty laws, called *Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida*, that president Alfonsín had adopted in 1986-1987, thereby stopping the trials against those who were accused with crimes against humanity (Levy, 2017, p. 28). In 1985 started the 'Trials of the Junta', that were unique because they never before had a country put on trial those who were politically responsible for mass violations of human rights.

Later in 1989, Menem gradually pardoned those who got convicted. Kirchner established a warm band with the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, the mothers and grandmothers of children of the disappeared, were the first organized group to protest against the military dictatorship. Up to now, they have been calling for justice every Thursday since 1973. Kirchner was the first president that openly supported the *Madres*. Also, Kirchner created an *Espacio de Memoria y Derechos Humanos* in Buenos Aires to strengthen the human rights movement in Argentina (Levy, 2017, p. 31).

Néstor Kirchner was a new kind of Peronist. From the 1940s and onwards Peronism had always relied on the power of workers and unions, but also it had been a conservative movement that ruled with a powerful elite, that included the union leadership. Carlos Menem was also a Peronist, who had abandoned the working class by privatizing state companies and pensions. Kirchner, a left-wing Peronist, was a political activist, an unknown 'outsider', who advocated for social justice, and who was against military dictatorship. When he was studying Law at the La Plata University, he saw many of his fellow students disappear or killed by security forces. That is what explains his strong support for human rights organizations. Also, social organizations became involved in the policy-making and in the implementation of new government programmes, particularly those concerned with social protection and human rights (Levy, 2017, p. 44). 'It is a weird Peronism, a Peronism after Peronism' (Galasso, 2016, p. 79).

In 2007, Néstor Kirchner decided not to go for a second term in office. He wanted to make way for his wife and senator Cristina Fernández to run for the presidency. The idea was that by switching from one to another they could avoid the constitutional restriction of doing only two successive terms. That is how they would create a Kirchner dynasty (Cavallo & Cavallo, 2017, p. 241). Cristina's election was hard-fought, winning with 45 percent of the votes against her direct opponents, Elisa Carrió and Roberto Lavagna (both independent candidates) who respectively got 23 percent and 17 percent of the votes.

The plan was to continue most of the policies that Néstor Kirchner had already set in motion. Cristina Fernández re-appointed most of the cabinet members that had already served in Néstor government. Although Néstor remained involved in a lot of the decision-making, Cristina showed a different style of leadership. She became known for her boldness and explicitness about her opinions. She was able to give seemingly endless improvised speeches, which she made to the state-controlled media, where she made her policies known. International media often talked about Néstor's wife when they referred to Cristina. They overlooked the fact that she already had quite a lengthy career in politics. She had been involved in politics since her student life, when she also met Néstor. In the 1990s, she had been elected in both Houses of Congress (Levy, 2017, p. 51).

Cristina Fernández had a strong power base to build on. Partially that was thanks to the economic growth, a reduction in debts for the first time in decades and a widespread feeling of progress and optimism that was created during the presidency of Néstor. Politically, Néstor and Cristina had worked hard to find support. Néstor had become the leader of the *Partido Justicialista*, the Peronist party. They had worked on aligning local governors and local governments to their leadership. Furthermore, they gained a lot of support from human rights organizations, union confederations and social organizations.

Cristina wanted to continue 'The Model', as Néstor Kirchner had called his economic policies. This model was based on the idea of a developmental state, in which the government oversees the economic activity for the benefit of the society. In this 'Model', capitalism is accepted as the running system and they accepted that the market has its own domain, but the 'free market' is rejected. The market is part of society and both have reciprocal responsibilities. The idea is that the state provides the necessary infrastructure and will guarantee the rule of law and the market will ultimately pay back the debt by paying taxes and providing social security (Levy, 2017, p. 65).

The Kirchners created a new social contract. First, they widely expanded social welfare to the poor and working classes. In addition, they increased the minimum wage. Secondly, the middle-class was attracted to the new regime, thanks to macroeconomic developments and a favourable exchange rate policy from which the middle-class profited. Finally, stimulation of export favoured the agro-industrialist. A agro-industry that was dominated by transnational corporations (TNC's). That is how this government ensured that welfare was spread among multiple classes (Wylde, 2018, p. 334).

However, during Cristina's rule, tensions between social groups started to rise. She created a political atmosphere of 'be with us or be against us', which obviously led to polarization. In 2008, there was widespread social unrest caused by farmers when Cristina's government announced an extension of the *retenciones* (export taxes) on soybean products from 35 percent to 40 percent, which greatly affected producers of soybeans (a prime export product of Argentina), but also producers of maize, wheat and sunflower seeds. Farmers around the country blocked major roads to ports and cities, preventing the passing of trucks carrying agricultural products (Wylde, 2018, p. 334). From 2008 and onwards, opposition against Cristina's government started to grow, criticizing the economic policies and accusing the government for being authoritarian and corrupt. Also, the global economic recession hit Argentina's export revenues hard.

Polarization grew significantly during Cristina's presidency. This was very clearly reflected in the media, where moderate debates and nuanced opinions lost ground. Cristina's supporters and Cristina herself often used the classical media to convey their message, where the opposition often made use of social media or published books. There was loud criticism on social media on the way how the government used public revenues to pay for advertisements that were meant to promote a certain publication that looked favourably upon the government's policies (Levy, 2017, p. 75).

In 2009, Cristina's government launched *Fútbol para Todos*, a state television programme that had bought all the rights to broadcast the Argentinian league matches as well as the international games of the national team.

The broadcasting rights that previously had been in the hands of Clarín, a private media-agglomerate that was often critical of Cristina and her policies. When *Fútbol para Todos* ended in 2017, it had cost the Argentinian state, in eight years' time, more than a hundred million euros. This led to criticism about the way the government spend public revenue for populist purposes. On top of that, opponents were critical about the way Cristina made extensive use of television and radio broadcasting for political purposes.

On the 27th of October 2010, the surprising news came that Néstor Kirchner had died as a result of a heart attack. He was then 60 years old. His funeral at the Casa Rosada attracted large masses, who were chanting "*Fuerza Cristina*" to show their support. This chant became one of her campaign slogans, during the electoral campaign one year later in 2011. A few days after Néstor's funeral, Cristina broadcasted a five-minute-long message on the state television where she reinvigorated the figure of the former president and where she thanked the people for their widespread signs of support. She was especially thankful for the presence of large amounts of young people among the crowd during Nestor's funeral.¹ (Pucciarelli & Castellani, 2017, p. 399).

You could say that after Néstor Kirchner's dead, Kirchnerism changed into what you could call 'Cristinism'. Cristina became more outspoken, more militant and her policies more profound. Her support grew stronger after Néstor's dead, especially among the middle-class and young Argentinians. She reached the height of her popularity in October 2011, when several opinions polls showed a 63 percent approval rate against a 16 percent disapproval rate (Pucciarelli & Castellani, 2017, p. 399). The high popularity rate was translated into a re-election in that same year. Almost exactly a year after Néstor passed away, in the presidential elections of October 2011, Cristina Fernández was re-elected president by an unprecedented margin of 54 percent of the votes to 16 percent for the second-placed candidate Hermes Binner of the Socialist Party (Galasso, 2016, p. 257).

¹ The national broadcast of the 1st of November:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5WHx8WJqMI>

Economically Argentina was overcoming the international crisis that started in 2007. Cristina's new government could lean on economic numbers that showed a growing economy, record-high levels of consume, goods and services, public revenue and industrial capacity. During the year 2011, poverty rates became historically low, as well as unemployment. Furthermore, the income of workers grew with 370 percent for both the formal and informal sector (Pucciarelli & Castellani, 2017, p. 399). Cristina's policies were meant to deepen 'the Model'. This came in the form of welfare extension. Besides extending minimum wages and raising wages for the workers, she also maintained or even raised generous state subsidies in a number of areas, but especially in transport, energy and fuel. Obviously, these redistributive measures came at a cost: inflation. Also, Cristina abandoned fiscal and current surpluses, she used export restrictions to limit the amount of foreign exchange in the domestic economy and she issued high import taxes on foreign products to back the domestic industry, which created advantages for a part of the society, but certainly not for all (Wylde, 2018, p. 337).

Economic inclusion of the workers was one of the main pillars, but Cristina's government became also known for its struggle for social inclusion. An important part of that fight was Cristina's strong advocacy for women's rights. Although women's rights were already clearly incorporated in the Argentinian Constitution, in practice these rights were all too often being violated. Partially that was because of the strong influence of the Catholic church, that was at odds with most of the efforts for social inclusion. In terms of reproductive rights, the Kirchner governments advanced in small steps. They eventually made contraceptives freely available and they expanded sex education. The Catholic Church remained powerful and often intervened behind the scenes, which meant that contraceptives were not distributed and that doctors were pressured to treat women who are entitled by law to have an abortion, such as victims of rape. Another major challenge for women in Argentina is male violence, present at all levels of society, which leads to many, mostly undocumented cases of injury or even death. In 2015, as a result of large protests under the slogan *#NiUnaMenos*, the Supreme Court and the government agreed to set up a registry of femicides and to create better records to support women suffering violence (Levy, 2017, p. 71).

During Cristina's time in power there was a broad legal recognition of the rights to gender and sexual identity. She tried to make an end to the society where the Catholic Church delivered and had guided social and sexual education. This meant that Cristina's government gave new legal rights to the gay community. In 2010, a law was passed through Congress that introduced same-sex marriages, which in many ways was an advance of the society's acceptance of gay relationships. This new law led to a more widely spread tolerance in Argentina towards homosexuality (Levy, 2017, p. 72).

Cristina Fernández' battle for more social inclusivity made her very popular among young Argentinians. This was quite unique in the modern political world where politicians struggle to engage voters in general and young people in particular. During the Kirchner' presidencies, young people become politically organized and were given an influential platform by Cristina, that was named *Cámpora*, which was also the name of the president that organized the return of Perón to Argentina in 1973. The organization, with the original motto of 'our country is the other', referring to the importance of social inclusivity, is led by Maximo Kirchner, Cristina's and Néstor's son. In the 2015 elections, the *Cámpora* managed to get 24 deputies and three senators in Congress. All of them were loyal to Kirchnerism. On Cristina's last day in office, in December 2015, something unique happened: supporters turned up on the Plaza de Mayo, spontaneously and not organized by activists, to thank her and to wish her all the best (Levy, 2017, p. 73).

Chapter 3

Reinvigoration of the Argentinian claim to the Malvinas

In the previous two chapters, I have laid out the theoretical framework of this thesis and I have sketched a political and historical background of the last two decades in Argentina in which it underwent major changes. In this chapter, I shall apply both the theoretical insights and the scene-setting context to my analysis of the Malvinas issue in Argentina from 2003 until 2015 when successively Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández held the presidential mandate. The first paragraph positions Kirchnerism within the issue of the Malvinas, addressing the motivation for Néstor Kirchner to reinvigorate the claim of the Malvinas, after which the second paragraph focusses on the efforts made by Cristina Fernández, which proved to be more radical. For this analysis, I will use the information that I have gathered during the interviews with experts in this field.

1.1 Kirchnerism and the issue of the Malvinas

In this paragraph, I will explain why Néstor Kirchner halted a long period of appeasement policies that started after the war in 1982 in which successive governments had sought to restore bilateral ties with the United Kingdom. Instead, Néstor Kirchner and later Cristina Fernández, reinvigorated the claim on the islands in the South Atlantic. What motivated them and how does this fit into the ideology of Kirchnerism?

During the interviews I conducted in Argentina, most of the experts often mentioned the descendance of the Kirchners as an obvious explanation for their preoccupation with the Malvinas issue. Both Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández have their roots in the Patagonian province of Santa Cruz. Their hometown is Río Gallegos, which is also the city where the ships and airplanes departed in 1982 to go the Malvinas. It is the place where the local population waved the soldiers goodbye, some of which never returned. Río Gallegos is the place where the war was experienced most vividly and most gruesome. Buenos Aires lies 2500 kilometers further north which is why a lot of Argentinians lived through the war in a different way.

It is likely that the first-hand experience of the Malvinas War in Río Gallegos might have motivated the Kirchners to newly put emphasis on the Argentinian claim of the Malvinas. Up to today, Río Gallegos is still the only city in Argentina with a flight connection to the Malvinas.

Besides of personal motivation, there are also several ideological reasons for which the reinvigoration of the claim of the Malvinas became a top priority within Kirchnerism. First of all, the notion of national sovereignty, on several different levels such as economic sovereignty, sovereignty of debts and territorial sovereignty, plays an important role within Kirchnerism. Furthermore, the defense of national sovereignty coincides with the anti-imperialist character of the Kirchnerist governments. They wanted to end the omnipresence of foreign influence in Argentina, that had mainly spread during the neoliberal governments of Carlos Menem. As mentioned before, the Kirchners wanted to 'take back control' with a strong state interference in many different parts of society. This also meant the rejection of the territorial presence of a foreign power relatively close to the Argentinian coastline.

The emphasis on national sovereignty is not unique in Latin American politics. However, as described in the previous chapter, when Néstor Kirchner got elected in 2003, Argentina just experienced one of the worst economic and institutional crises in its history. Kirchner had to rebuild the country without a strong popular mandate (Montero & Vincent, 2013, p. 123). A full restructuring of the political regime was necessary to regain the lost trust of the Argentinian people in their politicians. Kirchner sought to create his own new model. A model that found its basis in developmentalism. He wanted to distance himself from previous governments, demonize the past and turn the page of history through social and cultural change. The objective was to reconcile society with politics by creating a common national project (Montero & Vincent, p. 126), of which the reinvigoration of the Malvinas issue became part.

On the first day of his presidency, the 25th of May 2003, Néstor Kirchner immediately declared that he would use the opportunities of bilateral engagements as well as international fora, such as the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations, the OAS or the MERCOSUR, to reclaim the sovereignty of the Islands of the South Atlantic, which included Malvinas, Sandwich del Sur and Georgias del Sur (Sanchez & Gomez, 2014, p. 50). It became his mission to find a multilateral cooperation to back the sovereignty claim against the United Kingdom. He wanted to make the issue of the Malvinas a Latin American wide struggle for sovereignty over the former colonial powers.

During the first two years of Néstor Kirchner's government, the Anglo-Argentine diplomatic relationship faced challenges, arising from the Malvinas issue. Besides from the struggle over fishing licenses, the Kelpers were also much more reluctant in allowing flights coming from Argentina. In 2007, triggered by the reduction of (charter)flights to the Islands, the Argentinian government made its intentions known, that they only wanted to allow weekly flights, under Argentinian flag. The Kelper committee resisted, which ultimately led to the total suspension of direct flight connections coming from the Argentinian mainland to the airport of Port Stanley (Del Pezzo, 2016, p. 129).

At the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Kirchner and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Rafael Bielsa, continuously made the Argentinian claim known. They used the occasions at the General Assembly as well as the Decolonization Committee to find multilateral assistance for the bilateral dispute. However, according to the Argentinian representatives, the British were only acting unilaterally, which was in violation of the UN resolution 31/49, which 'calls upon the two parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands are going through the process recommended in the above-mentioned resolutions (UN RES/31/49). Among the British unilateral actions that the Argentinians complained about were the selling of fishing licenses in the disputed areas, the actions of the fishing police in the South Atlantic, the British announcements of increasing military presence in the area as well as the presence of a military base that had a capacity that by far exceeded the regular size of a military base on the islands (Gómez, 2006, p. 6).

During my field research in Argentina I spoke with Mario Volpe, a Malvinas War veteran, a self-proclaimed Kirchnerist, vice-director of the Malvinas institute CECIM La Plata and the former vice-director of the Malvinas Museum. The museum was brought to life at the end of Cristina's second-term in office, on the 10th of June 2014. What is interesting about this museum is that it presents itself as space to think about Argentina as an 'Atlantic' country, 'to imagine our relationship with the sea.'² But more in particular, the museum invites visitors to learn about the geography of the Islands, the flora and fauna, broadly the political-historical context of the South Atlantic region and it vividly lets the visitor relive different socio-historic experiences of the War. For instance, the second floor hosts the 'Malvinas Experience' which shows the ties between the Islands and the continent. It talks about the years during Spanish colonial rule, the years of British 'occupation', the 'milestones' of the War and the current diplomatic 'fight'.

The over-arching mission of the museum is thus to give Argentinians a maritime scope. This is exactly what Néstor Kirchner had in mind. When asked about Kirchner's motivations for reinvigorating the claim on the Malvinas, Mario Volpe told me that Kirchner based his motivation on the Peronist concept of a maritime Argentina. For many years, Argentina's focus was continental, solely directed 'inwards', on agriculture and exploiting the riches of the land. Argentinians saw the sea as a place for tourists. Perón already had the idea of redirecting Argentina's attention to the Atlantic. Néstor Kirchner reinvigorated that idea, part of which was reclaiming sovereignty over the Islands in the South Atlantic.

Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández had several economic and strategic reasons for which they made the claim on the Malvinas a top priority of their policy-making. First of all, they pictured an image in which the British are stealing the riches of the sea close to the Argentinian coast. The waters surrounding the islands in the South Atlantic are full of natural resources, such as fish, petroleum, minerals, among others. In that sense, the sovereignty claim is not just focused on the Islands itself, but also on the maritime sovereignty that comes with it.

² <https://museomalvinas.cultura.gob.ar/>

These resources have made the Kelpers a rich population, with a GDP per capita of 70.000 USD (2015 est.). On the Argentinian mainland, in comparison, the GDP per capita counts for 20.000 USD (2017 est.)³

The Islands' economy thrives on fishing and tourism. Fishery represents 34 percent of the total GDP counting for 108 million USD per year. A large part of that income is generated by the fishing of squid. In 1985 Margaret Thatcher allowed the islanders to fish in waters claimed by Argentina. This was a historic step for the Kelpers, who suddenly could become economically autonomous. In 1994 they established an Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), which they called 'Falkland Island Outer Conservation Zone', with the space of 200 nautical miles around the islands. Nowadays, it is not just the local fishers who do most of the fisheries catching. The Malvinas government extended 25-year fishing licenses to companies from Taiwan, Korea, Spain and some joint ventures with Indonesia, while other countries have filled the southern seas with factory vessels with high seas daily catches of 50 tons. These vessels process and freeze catches onboard which are then transferred to other ships that take the cargoes to Europe.

The important thing is that since these licenses are transferable. It allows whoever possess them (mostly local entrepreneurs) to make associations, joint ventures with any other outside company, to exploit the waters of the Malvinas. This means that the local resident who holds a license, but does not have the logistics or infrastructure, joins a foreign fishing company which has vessels, crews and all the staff needed for the catches and the trading. The fact that these fishermen are making considerable profits by exploiting waters, that Argentina claims to be theirs, is a thorn in the side of the Kirchners. In 2016, with Macri already in the Casa Rosada, an UN commission on the limits of the continental shelf, ruled that Argentina's territorial waters lie at 200 to 350 miles off their coast. This also implied that the Malvinas and the waters surrounding it should be part of Argentinian territory.

³ https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_fk.html

It is not just fish that the Kelpers are extracting from the waters surrounding the islands in the South Atlantic. In 1995, the Menem administration and the UK government signed a Joint Declaration in which they expressed the intention to jointly study the hydrocarbon potential of the disputed seas in the South West Atlantic. The British Gas Company and the Argentinian YPF would work together to look for petroleum and gas reserves. (Wälde & McHaldy, 1995, p. 301) In 2007, the Kirchner administration unilaterally withdrew from the agreement. In 2010, three British oil companies started drilling for hydrocarbon reservoirs 100 miles north of the archipelago. This fueled protests among the Argentinians, including their government, who stated that this was a huge violation of their sovereignty. Jorge Taiana, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, promised that they would do 'everything to defend and preserve our rights.'⁴ The government summoned the *chargé d'affairs* of the British Embassy and they warned Argentina-based oil companies to not intervene with the Malvinas oil explorations. Fabian Volonte, also a Malvinas War veteran, told *the Guardian* that he did not have faith in the threats made by his government: 'We lost the war, now we have to watch the British growing rich from it and we can do nothing about it. It is just shame upon shame for Argentina.'⁵

The drilling kept on going and Argentina filed a lawsuit in 2015, accusing three British and two US oil companies of performing illegal acts by entering Argentinian territory. Daniel Filmus, the Secretary for Malvinas Affairs in Cristina's second government (2010-2015), told the BBC that they would use the force of the law, national and international law, to prevent these countries from taking the riches which belong to forty million Argentinians. Filmus: 'Argentina has extradition treaties around the world and we intend to use them. The area that is being drilled is as much ours as the center of Buenos Aires. Neither the UK nor any other country would allow anyone to enter their territory and take away their riches.'⁶ And as Mario Volpe told me, whoever possesses Malvinas, possesses five important elements for life: energy (petroleum), sweet water, proteins (fish), metals (for industry).

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/feb/07/falkland-islands-oil-britain-argentina>

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-32354222>

Furthermore, the archipelago in the South Atlantic serves as a gateway to Antarctica. Argentina is one of the six states that claim sovereignty on a part of Antarctica. Argentine Antarctica, as they came to call it, is a triangular section of the Antarctic peninsula that lies between the 25° West and 74° West meridians and 60° South parallel. This area is disputed, because it overlaps with similar Chilean and British claims. However, all sovereignty claims are suspended by the Antarctic Treaty which came into force in 1961 and of which Argentina is a contracting party. Article IV point 2 of the Treaty states: 'No acts or activities taking place while the present treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any rights of sovereignty in Antarctica. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim, to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica shall be asserted while the present treaty is in force.' But existing claims may persist. The British have based their Antarctic claim on the proximity of their territories in the South Atlantic. In December 2012, the UK Foreign Office announced that they would rename the southern part of the British Antarctic Territory into Queen Elizabeth Land. Cristina's government immediately criticized the name because that area overlaps with Argentine Antarctica.

Another thorn in the side for the Kirchner administrations and for the Argentinians in general is the strong military presence on the Malvinas. After the War, the UK invested heavily in the military defense of the Islands. In 2014, the Minister of State confirmed that the Malvinas were housing 1060 troops.⁷ The Islands are also hosting a marine base as well as an airbase. The Argentinians see the military presence and the large-scale training sessions as a provocation and as proof that the British are occupying the Islands. The British government has always responded that they would only deploy the minimum amount of military personnel that they consider necessary to protect the Islands. Cristina Fernández also claimed that the Malvinas serve as a NATO base. During a ceremony at the Casa Rosada to mark the 32 year anniversary of the Conflict, Cristina called out the British saying that the Islands had turned into a NATO base. 'This is a truth they cannot hide'.⁸ She also claimed that they were testing nuclear weapons.

⁷ <https://en.mercopress.com/2014/03/08/military-personnel-in-falkland-islands-totals-1.060-says-mod>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-26999735>

In a response, a group of Malvinas residents posted a tweet⁹ with a picture of penguins, mocking the Argentinians that these were the nuclear missiles that they were looking for. Up to today, Kirchnerists are convinced that the Malvinas are hosting a NATO base. Mario Volpe said in the interview I conducted with him that it was ridiculous that the British needed 2000 soldiers to protect 2000 inhabitants.

3.2 Cristina Fernández's strategies

Although Néstor Kirchner was the first Argentinian president since the War to actively claim the Malvinas, most of the experts agree that Cristina's attempts were much more profound. The interviews I have conducted and the literature I have studied mostly talk about Cristina's engagement in the Malvinas issue. I decided nevertheless to include Néstor's presidency into my research because his years in office marked a turning point in the Argentinian political discourse concerning the Malvinas issue. But it was his wife that made it one of the key pillars of her foreign policy.

The renewed Argentinian claim of the Malvinas can be better understood when taking note of the broader outline of Cristina's foreign policy. Her governments (2007-2015) aimed at reintegrating Argentina in to the world through: the strengthening of international law, respect for human rights, democratic governance, a system of balanced commerce, a better distribution of the benefits of globalization and a democratization of the decision-making within international organizations. Particular emphasis was laid on the economic and commercial integration into the world, and specifically the Latin American region (Bologna, 2010, p. 244).

A former official of the Secretariat for Malvinas Affairs, Sonia Winer, told me that she saw Cristina's second government (2010-2015) as the most active one when it comes to reinvigoration of the issue of the Malvinas. Winer, who now works as a Social Sciences professor at the UBA, said during an interview I conducted with her that Cristina laid a strong emphasis on defending human rights and promoting peace in the region.

⁹ https://twitter.com/falklands_utd/status/451720510729367552

She saw the British presence and the military base as a clear violation of human and sovereign rights as well as a threat for peace in the region.

Although Cristina institutionalized the claim on the Malvinas it was already Néstor Kirchner who made a key decision. In the eyes of Winer, it was crucial that Kirchner decided to intervene in the Commission for Malvinas Veterans, that was founded in 1994 by the Menem administration to funnel and resolve problems that veterans face. However, back then, the commission was constituted of veterans that had been part of the military regime. When Kirchner took over, he decided to reinstall the commission with veterans who saw themselves as victims. Victims of torture and the humanitarian crimes committed by the same veterans during the war. Néstor Kirchner put these victims, so-called civilian veterans, in charge of the National Veterans Commission, which was seen as a powerful message. CECIM La Plata became the leading institute. From then on, the official memory of the War changed. A distinction was made between a veteran from the military and a civil veteran.

There is also a ambiguity in the Kirchnerist approach of the Malvinas. If you see the veterans as heroes, you are reinvigorating the reason for which they went to war, but if you nominate them as victims you are attenuating your own arguments for wanting to reinvigorate the claim on the Malvinas. In a way the reinvigoration of the claim also gives new life to the memory of the War. Cristina Fernández openly questioned the reasons for which the War had happened. This ambiguity was part of her strategy.

Cristina tried to detach the War from the negotiations regarding the sovereignty over the Islands. She tried to show that Argentinians themselves had been victims to the atrocities of the dictatorship so that her government and Argentina as a country could not be held responsible for the violent military take-over. She recognized that the War made their sovereignty claim worthless. And for criticasters who said they she reinvigorated the War with her renewed claim, she would reply that her way was the pacifistic way, the Gandhian way. She wanted to demilitarize the whole issue, which was also why she saw the military base on the Malvinas a big provocation.

By making this a peaceful, diplomatic and a human-rights based sovereignty claim, she managed to receive a lot of support from developing countries from all over the world. Besides that, Cristina made this a regional issue. She would use all the regional fora to address the issue and to seek alliances. '*Volveremos a Malvinas de manera America Latina*' became a known lemma of her government. Also she sought alliances with civil society organizations, even with UK-based NGO's. Fundamental was the appointment of Alicia Castro as Argentinian ambassador to the UK. Castro, as syndicalist who served before as ambassador to Venezuela and had good connections with the Chávez regime. She found an ally in the person of Labour-leader Jeremy Corbyn.

The Center for Malvinas Veterans (CECIM) in La Plata became the sounding board for Cristina's government policies with respect to the Malvinas issue. CECIM is well-known for creating bonds with human rights organizations in Argentina, such as the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH), Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ), but most often with the Movimiento por la Paz, la Soberanía y la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos (Mopassol). With the latter, CECIM worked together to create an educative program that was meant to raise awareness among Argentinians about the consequences of the British occupation of the islands in the South Atlantic and what danger that brings about for the entire region. According to CECIM's constitutional statute its primary goal is to: 'Permanently defend the sovereign rights in the South Atlantic, Malvinas, Georgias and Sandwich del Sur from every dominion both colonial and imperialistic ... and to permanently defend the human rights' (Winer, 2013, p. 131).

Besides from setting new objectives, Cristina and her government claimed that they just followed up on what national and international law obliged them to do. The current Argentinian Constitution states in one of its provisions: 'The Argentine Nation ratifies its legitimate and imprescriptible sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the corresponding maritime and insular spaces, as an integral part of the national territory.'

The recovery of these territories and the full exercise of sovereignty, respecting the way of life of its inhabitants and in accordance with the principles of International Law, constitute a permanent and inalienable objective of the Argentine people.’¹⁰

What principles of international law is the Argentinian Constitution referring to? Without getting into a juridical discussion, it is good to know on what historic and legal grounds the Argentinians base their claim on. First of all, from a historical perspective, the Argentinians claim that they occupied the Malvinas before they were usurped by the British in 1833. As can be read on the current official government website, the Spanish authorities first occupied the islands in 1765 and when Argentina became independent in the 1820s, the Malvinas automatically became part of the newly constituted Argentina. In June 1829, Luis Vernet was named Governor of the isles in the South Atlantic. Only four years later, the British Corvette ship *Clio* occupied the Malvinas making it part of the British Empire.¹¹ It is this piece of history that gives Argentinians reason to claim that the British are occupying their islands. However this history is disputable. At least the part where it says that the Spanish were the first to inhabit the Islands. There is no consensus among scholar about who discovered the Islands, but most of them agree that evidence favors Spanish, Portuguese or Dutch sailors, rather than the British. But it is fair to say that most of the historic research and writing regarding Malvinas has been done by Argentinian scholars (Laver, 2001, p. 20). This is only to mark the complexity on which historical claims are based.

Legally, they are basing their rights on the UN resolution 2065 that was adopted by the General Assembly in 1965. This resolution, brought forward by the Fourth Committee (Decolonization Committee) of the United Nations, considers the 1514 resolution of 1960 ‘that was prompted by the cherished aim of bringing an end everywhere colonialism in all its forms one of which covers the case of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)’ (UN/RES/2065).

¹⁰ <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/ejercito/malvinas>

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

The General Assembly also call on both governments to proceed with the negotiations as recommended by the Special Committee on the situation with regard to the implementation of the Declaration of Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the problem. In the last sentence of the resolution the General Assembly asks to take the interests of the population of the Malvinas into account. The first part of this resolution and the reference to the 1514 resolution insinuates that the Malvinas dispute is a case of returning the right to self-determination. However, the British hold on to the last sentence in which the wishes of the inhabitants need to be taken into account. That is why they arranged an sovereignty referendum on the Malvinas in 2013. On a turnout of 92 percent, 99.8 percent voted to remain part of British territory. Guillermo Carmona, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies responded to this outcome: 'This has no value at all since Argentina rejects the possibility of self-determination for an implanted population, such as the implanted British population in the Malvinas.'¹² And according to Daniel Filmus, this referendum was just a weak attempt to undermine the successes of Argentine diplomacy in all the international fora.¹³

Concluding, Cristina Fernández was much more active and radical when it comes to claiming the sovereignty of the Malvinas. She institutionalized the claim by creating the Secretariat for Malvinas Affairs, appointing Daniel Filmus as Secretary, making CECIM La Plata the leading institute for Malvinas Veterans, by founding the Malvinas Museum, naming the syndicalist Alicia Castro ambassador to the UK, and by finding regional and human-rights based support, through continuous claims at the UN and around the globe. At the UN she annually made her claim known to the Decolonization Committee, referring to the UNGA resolution 2065. Cristina's administration did not fall back after the British organized a referendum in 2014 on the Malvinas to show that the local population wanted to remain part of British territory. The Argentinians claim that the population was planted there. The historic claim that the British were the first settlers of the Islands is also disputed by all kinds of scholars, but most of them are Argentina based.

¹² <https://en.mercopress.com/2012/06/13/falklands-referendum-has-no-value-and-does-not-change-argentina-s-position>

¹³ Ibidem.

Conclusion

Whilst writing this thesis, the Argentinians just elected Alberto Fernández as their new president. The neoliberal, conservative Mauricio Macri lost his re-election with 40 percent of the votes against 48 percent for Fernández, whereby Macri became the first incumbent Argentinian president to be defeated in his re-election bid. Alberto Fernández's running-mate is Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who now is back in power as vice-president of the Republic. She started the election period as a candidate for the presidency, but she decided to take one step back to make way for her former chief-of-staff Alberto Fernández. This tactic was designed to attract the key centrist voters who might have been afraid by the fiery leftist Cristina. Alberto is considered to be more moderate. When taking office, Fernández made a clear reference to the Malvinas issue: 'We reaffirm our strongest commitment to honor the First Transitory Clause of the Argentine Constitution and we shall work tirelessly to boost the legitimate and imprescriptible sovereignty claim over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and corresponding maritime and insular spaces... We shall do it knowing that the peoples of Latin America and the world are supporting us, and convinced that the only possible way is peace and diplomacy. We shall honor the memory of those who fell fighting for sovereignty. We shall work for the peaceful resolution of the disagreement and based on the dialogue proposed by the United Nations Resolution 2065..There is no more room for colonialisms in the 21st century.' With that, Fernández skillfully sums up some of the key characteristics of Cristina's policy-making with respect to the Malvinas issue.

From a theoretical perspective you might see why these three concepts that I have chosen are applicable to this specific claim. First of all: national sovereignty. It is a recurrent theme in Latin American history and current politics. It has obviously a strong basis in the colonial history of the continent. At first it was the threat of renewed European interventions after independence and later it became the long arm of the United States that tried to keep control of their self-proclaimed backyard. In the case of the issue of the Malvinas, it is the British Empire that holds on to its strategic outposts that leads to an ongoing neocolonial sentiment of oppression among Argentinians.

That is one of the reasons why the Decolonization Committee of the UN still gathers every year, to give the Argentinians the right to put forward their sovereignty claim. As we have seen, Latin American countries build on a strong tradition of defensive multilateralism and regional cooperation. Nevertheless, Argentina's foreign policies have been swinging from a neoliberalist thrive to fully opening up the market for foreign investments towards a leftist approach of protection of the national industry and building on regional partnerships. The latter also comes down to a sense of taking back control, which is a global characteristic of populism. It is a form of effective sovereigntism, as Kallis called it, that crosses conventional political lines and goes further than the regular political spheres or institutions. Creating an outside danger, for instance the so-called NATO base on the Malvinas, is used as an antidote for an internal crisis (for example the economic crisis in 2001 or the war with the agricultural sector in 2010) that reconstitutes popular sovereignty on the 'inside'.

The Kirchners match many of what political scientists have considered as characteristics of populism. Néstor Kirchner got elected in 2003 being an 'outsider' of the broken Argentinian political system that was facing a crisis of governability. Both Néstor and Cristina challenge the political elite on behalf of the ill-defined *pueblo*. When it comes to distinguishing them between the classical populists and neopopulists I would argue that they better fit the description of a classical populist because neopopulists like Menem and Fujimori are clearly different in the sense that they pursued neoliberal market reforms. What they have in common is that both need a strong personalistic and nationalistic leader. Nationalism is a concept that is often associated with populism. The same counts for Kirchnerism.

Nationalism has always been present in Latin American history, but Péron introduced a new kind that aimed at achieving a social revolution in the interest of the masses. This Peronist style influenced many nationalistic politicians in Argentina, including the Kirchners. But their kind of nationalism had another addition that was influenced by the commodities boom. Resource nationalism as they called it was directed at nationalizing the exploitation of the country's resources. Resources that the British are stealing, in the minds of many Argentinians.

Resource nationalism combines many before-mentioned elements: As Koch and Perrault have stated, it is a geopolitical discourse about sovereignty, the state, and territory, as well as the rights and privileges of citizenship, national identity, and the values a group assigns to resources like oil, gas and minerals.

Therefore, from a theoretical and political perspective, the issue of the Malvinas served many purposes for the Kirchners. In short, by reinvigorating the claim on the Malvinas, they caused a chain reaction of a national anti-colonial sentiment, creating an external threat, overcoming the crisis of governability, uniting the unorganized nationalistic masses and ultimately strengthening their populist powerbase.

After the '*fiesta menemista*' of the 1990s and the deep economic crisis in 2001 it was clear that Argentina needed radical change. Where Menem valued a good relationship with Great Britain for the sake of attracting British investors, the Kirchners were not restricted by the goal of making way for foreign businesses. Instead, they wanted to promote and favor their own national industries which had practically been dismantled under Menem. Resources, like oil and gas, are obviously important to feed the industry. Both can be found in the sea surrounding the Malvinas. Apart from the economic crisis in 2001, which gave Néstor Kirchner an opportunity to seize power, another important historic event was Néstor's death in 2010. Since 2008, Cristina's popularity had gone down because of corruption scandals and her feud with the agricultural sector. The death of her husband gave her renewed support which led to a remarkable re-election at the 2011 presidential elections. During her second-term she became more radical in her foreign policies. She became more outspoken and more polarizing. It was either be with us or be against us.

Besides of political ideology, there are also some more obvious reasons for which the Kirchners gave new life to the claim on the Malvinas. During the field research I conducted I have discovered what the Malvinas mean to the Argentinians in general, and to the Kirchners in particular. In 1982, The Kirchners waived the young soldiers goodbye from their hometown Río Gallegos where the ships departed to fight on the Malvinas. Their proximity to the War and the human right abuses that happened there, has probably been a strong motivation for their commitments with regards to the issue of the Malvinas.

The advocacy for human rights became part of their Malvinas strategy. They made a distinction between veterans who were part of the military regime and veterans who were forced to fight in the War. By portraying the latter group as victims of torture and abuse of the dictatorial regime, the Kirchners made themselves known as human right defenders for which they gained support from other human rights defenders and NGO's worldwide. Also they distanced themselves from the militaristic way of solving the Malvinas dispute. Cristina recognized the fact that the War had been the biggest set-back in the history of their sovereignty claim. She pursued the peaceful, Gandhian and diplomatic way, by which she also gained regional support of several other Latin American countries and regional organizations who understood their struggle with imperialist powers. Cristina's administration made CECIM La Plata the leading institute and sounding board for the Malvinas claim.

As is common for populists, the Kirchners follow on a widespread national sentiment that the Argentine nation is 'amputated' (*la nación amputada*) or that they lost a younger sister (*la hermanita perdida*). Both of these phrases I have heard when talking to 'normal' Argentinians, who did not see themselves as Kirchnerists. I have also ascertained that it was mainly Cristina who made the renewed Argentinian claim widely known. She build on the before-mentioned sentiments in which the British occupied their Islands and that they are stealing their natural resources. Also the presence of British armed and naval forces feeds into the argument that Argentina is facing an external threat.

On top of that, there is a link to be found in the radicalization of Cristina's policies in her second-term and the start of British oil drilling in the South West Atlantic from 2010 and onwards. The story of the hydrocarbon explorations exemplifies the changing diplomatic ties between the two countries. By signing a Joint Declaration in 1995 Menem sought cooperation with the British government to work together to find petroleum and gas in the ocean. Cristina broke that partnership in her first year as president, after which the British found possibilities to drill the petroleum. This development infuriated the Argentinians, who saw the Kelpers doubling their revenues. They had already become wealthy by selling fishing licenses in their self-proclaimed EEZ. The Falkland Island Outer Conservation Zone as they call it was drawn by Thatcher at the beginning of the 1990s.

She decided that the Falklanders had the right to sell the fishing licenses to foreign companies, from all over the world. Therefore the Argentinians have to endure the sight of Korean fishing vessels extracting costly squid from waters that they consider to be theirs. Finally, the Malvinas serve as a gateway to Antarctica. Argentina and the UK have an overlapping claim on a part of the South Pole. The UK base their claim on the territorial presence in the islands in the South Atlantic.

And most basically, the Malvinas dispute is also a consequence of uncertainty over who occupied the islands first. Even though the Kirchners were masters of rewriting history, there is no evidence that the British were the first inhabitants of the Malvinas. If we were ought to believe Argentinian scholars it is most likely that Spanish settlers were there before the British, after which it was part of Argentina for four years at the beginning of the 19th century. Was it clear though, is that the British ship Clio claimed the Islands in the 1830s making it part of the British Empire. It has been British territory ever since, with the exemption of a few weeks in 1982.

With Cristina Fernández back in power and Brexit underway, it is my prediction that the Malvinas issue is going to face a new chapter. The Kirchnerists saw new possibilities arising from the upcoming Brexit. The peaceful claim shall be brought forward with more pressure than before. The Fernández-Fernández administration will undo all the steps of rapprochement with the UK that happened during Macri's years in office. The Argentinians may work together with their former colonizer Spain, who is simultaneously claiming Gibraltar after the UK left their Union. In any case, it does not seem like the dispute will be resolved any time soon.

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