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Connecting ontological (in)securities and generation through the everyday and emotional geopolitics of Falkland Islanders

Matthew C. Benwell

*School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, Daysh Building, Newcastle
NE1 7RU, UK*

Abstract: Debates about the security of British Overseas Territories (OTs) like the Falkland Islands are typically framed through the discourses of formal and practical geopolitics in ways that overlook the perspectives of their citizens. This paper focuses on the voices of two generations of citizens from the Falkland Islands, born before and after the 1982 war, to show how they perceive geopolitics and (in)security in different ways. It uses these empirical insights to show how theorisations of ontological (in)security might become more sensitive to the lived experiences of diverse generational groups within states and OTs like the Falklands. The paper reflects on the complex experiences of citizens living in a postcolonial OT that still relies heavily on the UK government and electorate for assurances of security, in the face of diplomatic pressure from Argentina. While Islander youth reflected on how their views about geopolitics and security might be considered marginal, relative to those who directly experienced geopolitical events in the Falklands during the second half of the twentieth century, the paper illustrates the multiple ways they can act as agents of (in)security.

Keywords: Ontological (in)security, Generation, Youth, Falkland Islands, Feminist Geopolitics.

Introduction

In September 2015 the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) launched an initiative to showcase the voices of its citizens to an international audience using social media. The #MyVoiceMatters campaign consists of short video clips or photographs posted on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube through which islanders aim to, 'dispel some of the mistruths circulated by the Government of Argentina and highlight that the people of the Falkland Islands are the key stakeholders in their future' (*Mercopress*, 2015). The Falkland Islands are a designated British Overseas Territory (OT), although their status is fervently disputed by Argentina which claims sovereignty over what it calls the *Islas Malvinas*.¹ The translation of the hashtag into Spanish (#MiVozCuenta or #MiVozImporta) is illustrative of the FIG's intention to reach and influence Latin American and Spanish-speaking audiences more broadly (traditionally supportive of Argentina's sovereignty claim over the Islands), through the use of this creative diplomatic device (Pinkerton & Benwell, 2014). In front of snow-dusted hills that witnessed infamous battles during the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War, one young man from the Islands is photographed with a placard reading: 'I have a right to say how my future will look. I'm a Falkland Islander. #MyVoiceMatters'. The accompanying tweet from the official FIG Twitter account reminds the audience that, 'There are three parties in this debate, not two as Argentina likes to pretend'. The succinct statements are overtly critical of Argentina's approach to doing diplomacy which insists on entering into dialogue over sovereignty with the UK government alone, and not the FIG.² They also hint at how Falkland Islanders experience security through the geopolitics of international relations with Argentina and the UK, and furthermore, how they can intervene and act as agents of security.

Notwithstanding the interesting creative citizen diplomacy embedded in these examples, I would like to use the #MyVoiceMatters campaign as a point of departure to make several arguments about conceptualisations of security in relation to British OTs like the Falkland Islands. Firstly, the campaign places an emphasis on the perspectives of citizens, which are sometimes contextualised and framed by the FIG to make specific diplomatic points. This is in stark contrast to academic writing about security and geopolitics of the Falkland Islands which has seldom presented the perspectives of the people living there (although see Dodds, 2002; Pinkerton, 2008). Instead, it typically refers to the Islands using terms like 'strategic gateway', setting up debates about the security of the Falkland Islands in relation to other British interests in the South Atlantic and Antarctica (Dodds, 2012, 2013; Dodds & Hemmings, 2014). These contributions have tended to theorise security of the Islands from a formal and practical geopolitical perspective (see Basham, 2015), undoubtedly essential for understanding how governments are crafting foreign policy (Kuus, 2013). What these accounts underplay and overlook, however, is how citizens understand and experience security (and decisions that are made under its rubric), and how they might actively respond.

Secondly, then, the Twitter campaign is illustrative of how citizens need to be considered more explicitly in understandings of security; Falkland Islanders experience foreign policy decisions and domestic political discourse (emanating from Argentina, the UK and beyond) in intimate ways and can creatively respond to insecurities caused by them alongside or independent of the FIG (Philo, 2014, p. 288). The perspectives of youth, when compared with those of older generations of Falklands Islanders, reveal markedly different responses and emotions in relation to their respective experiences of (in)security. For older Islanders who could remember the 1960s and 70s when Argentina and the UK entered into sovereignty

negotiations against their expressed wishes (see González, 2013), more conflictual relations with Argentina have provided a sense of certainty and ontological security (Innes & Steele, 2014; Kinnvall, 2002; Mitzen, 2006; Rumelili, 2015a). The 1982 war, its aftermath and more recent diplomatic tensions have seen the UK firmly committed to defending the Falklands and the Islanders' wish to remain as a British OT (Dodds & Pinkerton, 2013). Islander youth, while appreciative of these commitments from the UK and the security they provided, responded in different ways to the presence of a more hostile government in Argentina. The paper contributes to existing scholarship on ontological security calling for greater sensitivity to generational difference in how citizens frame geopolitical relations and their associated everyday experiences of (in)security.

These themes are explored here by drawing on ethnographic research undertaken in the Falkland Islands and the UK, presenting empirical data from interviews conducted with youth (aged 19-27) and adults from the Falkland Islands between 2011 and 2015. All of the citizens interviewed were extremely conscious of postcolonial power relations with the UK, given that they rely on promises of responsibility from this larger collective for their security. Despite this, their perspectives are seldom considered in academic research or beyond and Islander youth, in particular, experience a certain sense of marginality when they visit and/or study in the UK, as a result of the perceived lack of knowledge about the Islands among British citizens (see Mycock, 2010). The paper also reflects on how the perspectives of Islander youth on security and geopolitics can be marginalised and/or delegitimised given that they did not have direct experience of certain historical geopolitical events. At the same time, this lack of first-hand experience was underlined as something that enabled younger generations of Islanders to express alternative ideas about security and their hopes for future geopolitical relations

with Argentina and other Latin American nations. By presenting the views of citizens from the Falkland Islands, then, this paper emphasises the importance of 'bringing in the voices of those usually rendered marginal and silent in other accounts' (Sharp, 2011, p. 271).

S/security, youth and generation

Geographical theorising about security has, until very recently, been confined to the sub-disciplines of political geography and critical geopolitics. These discussions have tended to evoke, 'an "establishment" discourse, bound up in the strategising of states and supra-state organisations, notably but not exclusively in (or headquartered in) the Global North when responding to so-called global "terror", "criminality" or "radicalisation"' (Philo, 2012, p. 1). The fact that it has been the subject of several special issues in *Social and Cultural Geography* is evidence of its broadening conceptual importance across the discipline and changing approaches to its understanding (see Philo, 2014). Indeed, this is not to suggest that security has been absent from geographical research (as it has been central to research on, for example, the security of women, young people and children in public space, Valentine, 2001, 2004) but that its theorisation has been the subject of scholars investigating international relations and security. The nature of this work has seen, "'big-S" Security concerns...crowd out seemingly more mundane matters of "small-s" security, despite the fact that these two facets of S/security cannot but be closely inter-linked' (Philo, 2012, p. 2).

These kinds of dichotomies have been critiqued by scholars engaging with feminist geopolitics in particular (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001) who have looked to, 'disrupt the boundaries and scales of the geopolitical in linking seemingly local phenomenon and

experiences...with wider geopolitical processes and discourses of securitisation, disrupting overly simplistic global/local binaries' (Williams & Massaro, 2013, p. 752-3). In so doing they have teased out, 'the interweaving of global geopolitical machinations with the embodied experiences, emotions and agency of everyday peoples in everyday places' (Philo, 2012, p. 2). Critically, then, this is not a denial of the significance of Security discourses circulating at the macro-scale (i.e. by the state), rather an acknowledgement of 'the co-constitution of local, national and international politics' (Koch, 2011, p. 512; Bubandt, 2005). It is an approach which recognises that, 'small acts and practices can make a difference; the materialities of local geographies can find their way into the circuits of high politics' (Pain & Smith, 2008, p. 14). In this way, citizens, diplomats, politicians, prime ministers are all potential geopolitical agents, albeit with varying degrees of agency, who can shape understandings of, and policy responses to, things like (in)security (Hörschelmann, 2008a, 2008b).

The turn to investigating the everyday as part of a critical geopolitics has prompted research with groups previously marginalised by geopolitical research (Hopkins, 2007; Hörschelmann, 2008a). As Pain et al. (2010, p. 974) point out, 'the voices of young people have been perhaps most marginal of all within critical geopolitics. Relatively little is known about their views, feelings and political senses in relation to geopolitical events'. This is changing rapidly with the emergence of a body of work exploring the intersections between critical geopolitics, childhood and youth (e.g. Benwell & Hopkins, 2016; Kallio & Häkli, 2013; Leonard, 2013; Marshall, 2013; Skelton, 2010, 2013). This research avoids conceptualising the politics of childhood and youth in limited ways as only engaging with local, neighbourhood environments which have received the bulk of academic attention from children's and young people's geographies (Ansell, 2009; Hopkins & Alexander, 2010; Katz, 2004). Rather, it has

started to recognise the agency of children and youth in relation to global political events and processes, despite the persistent tendency ‘to discount the “political child” who speaks out against war, injustice or environmental degradation as naïve, or idealistic’ (Ruddick, 2007, p. 516). Young citizens, therefore, have ‘an ability to critique and subvert political discourses rarely recognised in debates on youth political agency and even in research on popular geopolitics’ (Hörschelmann, 2008b, p. 140; although critical debates about the definitions and limitations of this youthful agency are now emerging, see Bordonaro & Payne, 2012; Jeffrey, 2012; Punch & Tisdall, 2012; Vanderbeck, 2008).

This paper explores the perspectives of youth from the Falkland Islands, alongside those of adult Islanders, in relation to their sense of (in)security as a result of the ongoing sovereignty dispute between the UK, Argentina and the Islands. It identifies Islander youth as agents of (in)security who in diverse ways make their voices heard and seek to influence geopolitical debates and foreign policy (see Skelton, 2005). Despite this, the sense of marginality is palpable among Falkland Islanders, young and old, who regularly express frustration at being ignored as part of a dispute in which Argentina insists on entering into diplomatic dialogue with the UK alone (although the FIG and the Islanders are undertaking diplomacy in increasingly confident and creative ways, see Benwell, 2016b; Pinkerton & Benwell, 2014). Furthermore, writing about British OTs like the Falkland Islands, most especially on the subject of geopolitics and security, has tended to circumvent the voices of citizens living in these territories, while exploring Security through the geopolitical practices, representations and strategies of states and their politicians (see Clegg & Gold, 2011; Dodds, 2012, 2013; Dodds & Hemmings, 2014). So, Basham’s (2015) insightful paper on how Argentine and British politicians are framing national identity, sovereignty and security, focuses on the

configuration of political discourses crafted outside of the Falkland Islands. As she points out, there is scope for exploring how young citizens in Argentina, the Falkland Islands and the UK understand past and present conflicts associated with this specific sovereignty dispute (although see Benwell, 2014a, 2016a, 2016c; Benwell & Dodds, 2011). This paper, therefore, presents a conceptual, empirical and methodological challenge to normative framings of geopolitics and security that tend to dominate popular and academic commentary associated with the Falkland Islands. It shows how ethnographic and multigenerational research with citizens can generate fuller and more sensitive accounts of security, disrupting normative conceptualisations inherent to scholarship in security studies and geopolitics.

Dodds' (2002) comprehensive study focusing on British territorial interests in the South Atlantic and Antarctica is an exception to this body of work, and gives a very clear sense of how the Falkland Islands community itself looked to project its 'loyalty' to the UK, whilst resisting a post-colonial future involving Argentina. He shows how during the 1960s and 70s the, 'Falklands lobby used short-hand references such as 'loyal' and 'kith and kin'...not only to rail against Argentina but protest against its systematic exclusion as British subjects' (Dodds, 2002, p. 137). This was a period marked by sovereignty negotiations between the governments of Argentina and the UK (conducted against the wishes of the Falkland Islands) and a prevailing sense that Islanders were second-class citizens, compounded by the fact that they were not afforded British citizenship (this was subsequently granted in 1983, one year after the Falklands War, see González, 2013). The Islanders are consistently acknowledged by Dodds as active geopolitical agents through their involvement in certain rituals of commemoration and events (including the visits of British politicians) where they looked to perform their Britishness, yet the voices of citizens are largely absent (also see Lambert, 2005;

Dodds et al., 2007; Mycock, 2010). Dodds (2002), instead, prioritises and quotes at length diplomatic communiques and the statements of governors and politicians from the Falkland Islands and the UK.

However, in the final chapters of his text Dodds (2002) reflects on a couple of exchanges he had with Falkland Islanders referring to the 1982 war and its aftermath, which are of particular relevance to how they frame (in)security:

‘For the Falkland Islanders, the invasion, as one remarked to the author, was a “godsend” because it acted as a catalyst for renewed British commitment.’ (p. 202)

‘Many Islanders feel quite strongly that any gestures of goodwill towards Argentina might be wrongly interpreted as a sign of diminishing gratitude to those British forces.’ (p. 209)

For these Islanders (their ages are not specified), the 1982 war (and continuing tensions with Argentina) provided a sense of security as a result of the subsequent political and defence commitments made by the British government (a common view expressed to me during discussions with adult Islanders through the course of my research). Ostensibly, then, there appears to be a certain ‘ontological security’ provided by the actions of a neighbouring state, Argentina, that has a record of hostility towards the legitimacy and existence of the Falkland Islands. This hostility, enacted militarily and more recently diplomatically, is understood here to assure support from the British government, reaffirming the Islands’ consistent identification with the UK (as guarantors of the right to self-determine their future), and the desire to have this allegiance ‘recognised and affirmed by others’ (Innes & Steele, 2014, p. 15).

This paper, nevertheless, seeks to problematise simplistic theorisations of ontological security that have tended to extrapolate its psychological dimensions in relation to individuals (see Giddens, 1991; Philo, 2014), to debates about the security of states and their citizenry (e.g. Mitzen, 2006; Innes & Steele, 2014; Kinnvall, 2002; Rumelili, 2015a; Skey, 2010). The conceptual origins of ontological security have been ascribed to the psychoanalytical work of Laing (1960, p. 39) who suggested that an ‘ontologically secure person will encounter all the hazards of life...from a centrally firm sense of his [sic] own and other people’s reality and identity’. Conversely, an individual can experience ontological insecurity when such assurances are absent leading to, ‘a fear of discontinuity of understandable life and being “paralysed” by a preoccupation with potential risks to existence without an ability to trust in the self or others for protection’ (Botterill et al., 2016, p. 126). Giddens’ (1991) sociological application of ontological (in)security examines how individuals seek coherence, continuity and meaning in light of broader changes to social life in the modern era (see Kinnvall, 2016). The rather crude transference of these ideas about ontological (in)security onto ‘the state’ (and by association its citizens), in ways that elide differences between psychological and geopolitical framings of security, is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is characterised by an underlying essentialism that overlooks the different ways people living within a state can experience (in)security (see Botterill et al., 2016). Secondly, the personification of the state that is inherent to such framings of ontological security reproduces the rather abstract and state-centric focus that more recent interventions on security and feminist geopolitics have looked to critique (e.g. Philo, 2014; Williams & Massaro, 2013). So, for instance, Mitzen (2006, p. 342) contends that, ‘states might actually come to prefer their ongoing, certain conflict to the unsettling condition of deep uncertainty’. Similarly, Kinnvall (2002, p. 86) shows how, ‘a large group unconsciously defines its identity by

the transgenerational transmission of injured selves infused with the memories of the ancestors' trauma'. While there is a large body of work on intergenerational memory and its role in reinforcing narratives of the state, it is clear that the transmission of memory and its multiple meanings cannot be taken for granted and are subject to dispute, conflict, struggle and negotiation (e.g. Assmann, 2010; Benwell, 2016a; Edkins, 2003; Hirsch, 2012; Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003; Jelin, 2003; Jelin and Kaufman, 2000; Rothberg, 2009; Tyner et al., 2012).

In this paper, I engage with theorisations of ontological security at the level of the state, but am more interested in keeping 'the concept...close to the immediacy of grounded bodies/selves' (Philo, 2014, p.289). Influenced by recent geographical work on emotional geopolitics and security (Pain, 2009), I focus on the scalar intersections between state conceptualisations of ontological (in)security and the everyday experiences of (in)security of Falkland Islanders. In particular, the paper contributes to theorisations of ontological security by illustrating how citizen's perspectives on geopolitics and (in)security can be shaped by generation. Existing work on ontological security has either been blind to generation as a social variable or made assumptions about how it might shape experiences of (in)security. While Rumelili's (2015a) collection draws attention to the heterogeneous effects of ontological security and the changing nature of conflicts, very little reference is made to generational differences within the societies examined (see Becker, 2014 for a notable exception).

The recognition that 'each generation is located within its social, political and economic milieu' (Wyn & Woodman, 2006, p. 497), has been typically employed by scholars of Youth Studies to consider how 'young lives are being changed alongside large-scale transformations in education, work and relationship formation in many parts of the globe' (Woodman & Wyn,

2015, p. 1). However, others have cautioned against generational essentialism that might lead to overly crude distinctions being constructed between age groups. Notwithstanding the fact that, 'members of an historical cohort may experience the same events, these experiences will not impinge on them in the same way' (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 110). Mannheim's (1952) influential study has been used to argue against simplistic framings of generational difference and hierarchy, by emphasising the (intergenerational) interactions and continuities between generational groups, as well as the diversity and agency of individuals. So, for instance, Richardson's (2016) work has shown the importance of considering family circumstances and intergenerational relationships, in understanding how gender is conceptualised by different generations of Irish men. Hopkins et al. (2011), through their research on the formation of youthful religiosities among Scottish Christians, dispute the notion that 'intergenerational relationships are dominated by unidirectional handing down of religious ideas and practices from an older generation to a new one', preferring to emphasise a 'fluid field of transmission' (Hopkins et al., 2011, p. 325). In this way, young people were influenced by, and could in turn influence, the religiosities of their friends and adults across a range of everyday geographies. This approach acknowledges that the 'identities of children and others are produced *through* interactions with other age/generational groups and are in a constant state of flux' (Hopkins & Pain, 2007, p. 289; Vanderbeck 2007).

Such conceptualisations of generation have rarely been used to think about variations in citizen's perspectives of geopolitics and (in)security (although see Pain et al., 2010). This paper engages with two different cohorts of Falkland Islanders born before and after the 1982 war, to outline the importance of considering generation in their framings of the contemporary geopolitics of the Falklands. In similar ways to the research discussed here, the paper does

not essentialise generation as the single factor determining the geopolitical subjectivities of different groups of citizens from the Falkland Islands. Instead, it shows how young Falkland Islanders can respond, contest and shape debates concerning the geopolitical relations that characterise their lives (and those of their forebears), through online engagements with social media, for instance. Youth, then, can be considered as agents of (in)security with the capacity to formulate ideas about security, influenced by memories of past geopolitical events, but also contextualised within the dynamics of contemporary international relations (Benwell, 2016b; Berliner, 2005; Becker, 2014; Habashi, 2013).

Methodology

The research presented in this paper is drawn from ethnographic and interview data collected in the UK and the Falkland Islands from 2011-2015. The research design identified the value of in-depth qualitative research in teasing out some of the everyday ways that geopolitics is lived and experienced by citizens. Clearly, the small-scale nature of this study cannot purport to give generalizable insights into the views of all Falkland Islanders, rather the value of such work lies in the diversity and depth of perspectives that can be examined and reflected upon. The first phase of the study sought to explore the perspectives and emotions of Falkland Islander youth in relation to the geopolitics of the South Atlantic and, more specifically, the sovereignty dispute with Argentina. The theme of (in)security was frequently raised by the youth respondents as a result of broader geopolitical tensions with Argentina that coincided with the period of research. Many of the Islander youth interviewed were actively engaging with geopolitics and associated themes of (in)security in some way. This engagement ranged from their involvement in diplomatic activities of the FIG or other support groups linked to

the Islands, through to their use of social networking websites to express their perspectives on geopolitics. It should be noted that some (although not all) of the Islander youth recruited to take part in the research were those who were accustomed to talking about the geopolitics of the sovereignty dispute. The Falkland Islands have attracted increasing amounts of media attention in recent years (due to events like the 30th anniversary of the Falklands War and the 2013 referendum) and as a result the government have a pool of community representatives who are available to speak to journalists and researchers about their lives. This can make it more challenging to access youth who are not as (geo)politically vocal, especially in a small island community like the Falklands (see Benwell, 2014b).

Initially, the first phase of the research was not funded so recruitment and semi-structured interviews were conducted online. Snowball sampling enabled the recruitment of eight young women and three young men (aged 19-27) via email and then Skype was used to undertake the interviews over a period of three months in 2011. The award of funding from the Leverhulme Trust made possible two fieldtrips to the Falklands in 2013 and 2015. These enabled a further five young women and one young man to be interviewed, as well as facilitating additional ethnographic and archival research in the Islands' capital Stanley (these explored a range of topics explored further in Benwell, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a). The research followed ethical guidelines set out by those undertaking research with children and youth in the social studies of childhood (e.g. Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Christensen & Prout, 2002). Informed consent was received from all respondents after sending information sheets and verbally explaining the research. All of the interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed and coded thematically. Confidentiality of the respondents has been ensured through the assignation of pseudonyms.

Having developed an interest in how youth have been involved in geopolitics related to the Falklands question more recently, I returned to the Islands in 2015 to explore the historical precedents to this kind of citizen engagement. The second phase of the research focused on interviewing 14 Islanders in their 60s and 70s with recollections of how citizens were engaged in geopolitics during the 1960s and 70s. This was a period when many Falkland Islanders experienced profound insecurity as a consequence of sovereignty negotiations taking place between Argentina and the UK (without representatives from the Falkland Islands, Dodds, 2002). In response, citizens used the high-profile visits of politicians and journalists from the UK as opportunities to demonstrate their desire to remain as a British colony, by performing and embodying their Britishness (Dodds et al., 2007). The interviews explored their memories of taking part in these kinds of events and their motivations for doing so. These different phases of the research study, then, enabled an examination of how Falkland Islanders across different generations talked about, felt, and act as agents of, (in)security. The collection of data through the use of diverse interviewing methods created certain challenges. Interviews conducted online lacked the ethnographic and experiential richness of field visits and face-to-face interviews (Pink, 2009) making direct comparison difficult, although undertaking analysis of the Skype interviews before arrival in the Falkland Islands enabled me to follow up outstanding questions in more depth during the subsequent phases of research.

Critical considerations of positionality are necessary when undertaking any qualitative research and this study was no exception (Rose, 1993). My identity as a British national (alongside gender, ethnicity, generation and so on) conducting research on/in the Falkland Islands was regularly reflected on in my field diary and is explored in greater depth elsewhere (Benwell, 2014b). There is a risk that island communities are framed as a curiosity to be

‘gazed’ at by more mobile, ‘cosmopolitan’ academic researchers, so careful thought went into how the research was introduced and the phrasing of interview questions (Smith, 2010). In the case of interviews conducted via Skype, email correspondence and informal conversation before the interview were important ways to establish rapport with respondents and ensure they felt comfortable discussing geopolitically sensitive topics (Madge, 2010; Tarrant, 2013).

Considering generation and everyday ontological (in)security

During the Kirchner presidencies of Néstor and Cristina Fernández (2003-2015), Argentina made reclaiming the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands its principal foreign policy objective. Consequently, the stance of the Argentine government towards the Islands and its citizens hardened, evident in diplomatic language used by politicians and the various economic measures it introduced to pressure the British government (and not the FIG) into entering sovereignty negotiations (something the Foreign Office has refused to do without the willing participation of the FIG). These included restrictions on shipping routes (and the disruption of cruise ship itineraries) that previously connected the Islands with the South American continent and attempts to disrupt off-shore hydrocarbon exploration permitted by the FIG. The actions were framed by British politicians as an attempt to ‘strangle’ the economy of the Islands, ‘bully’ the people living there (Basham, 2015) and were even referred to as ‘economic warfare’ by some of the youth involved in my research. Interestingly, this abrasive approach to foreign policy was not entirely unwelcome among adult Islanders who could remember the uncertainty of the 1960s and 70s when Argentina and the UK entered into sovereignty negotiations without their consent (see Dodds, 2002; González, 2013):

‘I think people were very aware of you know what was going on and what the Argentines were trying to achieve [in the 1960s and 70s in reference to sovereignty negotiations with the UK]. And also of course we had absolutely zero trust in the Foreign Office. It was quite obvious what they were planning, scheming to get rid of the place. It was rather, you know, an unpleasant feeling.’ (Interview with Brian, 75 years old, 3 February 2015)

‘Delia talked about the “self-destructive” and “extreme” nature of the current Argentine government’s approach to the Islands and said it was probably better they were like this in some ways. She thought that if there was a more pragmatic government in power it might divide the Falklands community.’ (Field diary notes reflecting on a conversation with Delia, 62 years old, 9 February 2015)

While these foreign policy pressures exerted by Argentina created challenges for Islanders including inflated prices for fresh produce and lost revenue as a result of cruise ships deciding not to visit Stanley, many adults like Brian and Delia seemed to almost appreciate the ontological security provided by a more conflictual government in Buenos Aires. This, they felt, strengthened the support of the British government to the Falkland Islands, manifest in the statements of its politicians and the Prime Minister and, materially, through the military presence of the British armed forces at Mount Pleasant (the British military base in the Islands). As Gold (2010) has shown in relation to the case of Gibraltar, the imposition of hostile measures to isolate this British OT by Spain, were fundamental to the formation of Gibraltar identity and the strengthening of ties with Britain. A similarly conflictual relationship with Argentina avoided a return to the ‘cancerous uncertainty’ as one Falkland Islander in his late 60s described the 1960s and 70s, when Argentina and the UK embarked

on bilateral sovereignty negotiations. The prospect of a more conciliatory administration in Buenos Aires seemed to generate more unease among older Islanders compared with the outright hostility characterising the Kirchner presidencies (see Dodds, 2002 who examines Argentina's so-called 'charm offensive' towards the Islanders during the late-1990s under the presidency of Carlos Menem. The election of Mauricio Macri as President of Argentina in December 2015 presents the possibility of more cordial diplomatic relations between the UK and Argentina, although it is uncertain whether this will lead to direct dialogue with the FIG).

Of course, the event that had the most significant impact on British foreign policy in relation to the Falkland Islands was the 1982 war. In similar ways to the observations of Dodds (2002), adult Islanders like Wilfred who remembered the period running up to the war and its aftermath, spoke about the positive ramifications it had for the Islands:

'But in some ways sending the Task Force down and kicking them [the Argentine forces] off again re-united everybody and I think it did everybody a world of good. And we have never been so well off as now. And we can go to bed and realise that we are going to stay British now, because everybody is on our side. But it took a lot of convincing, in fact in the end it took an invasion to actually do it. But good on the British as far as I am concerned.' (Interview with Wilfred, 78 years old, 3 February 2015)

The 1982 war was clearly understood as a turning point in securing British commitment to the Falkland Islands, yet memories of the uncertainty that marked the decades preceding it were perhaps more significant in shaping how adults framed the contemporary security situation of the Islands and relations with/between the UK and Argentina. While Islander youth were also reassured by the strong political support the Islands received from the UK (and actively looked to ensure that this level of support was maintained, as I explore in the next section),

their ways of referring to relations with Argentina were noticeably different to the accounts of adults discussed above.

Whereas adults were quick to point out the improved political, economic and security situation of the Islands relative to the 1960s and 70s, Islander youth tended to express a range of emotions that emphasised their anxiety with what they considered as the increasingly aggressive tactics of Argentina (Pain et al., 2010):

‘I really, really wish that they would just give it up and just stop it because they’re making life difficult, not just for us, but for themselves. And, yes, they’re causing issues with shipping links and air links...I still feel a bit threatened by the Argentina situation, because we are a very small place, and we’re a very long way away from good friends.’
(Interview with Alice, 21 years old, 20 April 2011)

‘Yes, there are times when you do feel quite anxious...and occasionally the Argentines get quite aggravated and hint that they are going to reinvade, and we have a heightened state, kind of like in the UK where they put that terrorism state up, we have that but for the Falklands.’ (Interview with Sarah, 20 years old, 27 May 2011)

For these youth respondents the political and diplomatic pressures applied by Argentina were reminders of their insecurity and, in particular, the geographical isolation of the Falkland Islands relative to the UK. The distance was especially troubling for the respondents above, given the perceived possibility of Argentine military forces returning in the future (despite Argentina’s commitment to pursue their sovereignty claim through peaceful and diplomatic channels alone) and their reliance on the assistance of distant ‘friends’ (i.e. the British armed forces) for their defence. While not all Islander youth saw Argentina as a military threat

necessarily, many wished for a warmer and more cooperative relationship with their near neighbours:

‘And so, for me, it [in reference to rising tensions in the South Atlantic] has been very frustrating because we could have a very good relationship with Argentina and that would be beneficial to everyone. We could work in fisheries and oil-exploration and tourism and all this other stuff that would be beneficial to both sides, and it could make both sides a lot richer; not just financially but culturally.’ (Interview with Adam, 26 years old, 21 June 2011)

There was a sense here that Argentina had missed an opportunity to encourage more peaceful and productive relations with a generation of Islanders that did not live the 1982 war first-hand (and therefore might not internalise the same level of resentment as older generations), by implementing policies which disrupted their everyday mobilities, consumption habits and, at the national-scale, the economic development of the Falkland Islands. Despite contemporary geopolitical tensions, the youth respondents thought relations with Argentina had the potential to improve with a new generation born after the war (even if, in their view, these opportunities were being squandered by Argentina). As Fiona (26 years old) stated, ‘I would rather be harmonious with Argentina. I don’t have that hate in me for Argentina that the older generation have’. Exploring ontological (in)securities through this form of ethnographic and multigenerational research makes it possible to interrogate the interwoven and lived security concerns of citizens, whilst also problematising state-focused and normative theorisations of geopolitics and (in)security.

Although Islander youth were reassured by the presence of the British armed forces, some of those interviewed were acutely sensitive to how this defence commitment was understood and framed in the international media:

‘Everyone kind of thinks, “Oh militarisation of the south Atlantic, it’s a NATO base, it’s a huge strategic place”. And it just isn’t! Regardless of how crippled the Argentine military is at the moment, if they sent everything they had to the Falklands 2,000 people in the MPA [RAF Mount Pleasant] can’t defeat that. They can try and they can hold stuff at bay, but 30,000 verses 2,000 isn’t really going to go very far. So it is just there as the minimum required to be a deterrent relative to how much of a threat we think Argentina presents. If we actually thought Argentina weren’t going to invade tomorrow, we probably wouldn’t have as big a base as we do. It’s also really good for strategic training.’ (Interview with Kate, 26 years old, 10 February 2015)

In 2012 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the UK government published a White Paper entitled, ‘The Overseas Territories: security, success and sustainability’ (FCO, 2012). The document sets out the government’s commitment to its 14 OTs (which include the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and British Antarctic Territory) and identifies the diverse challenges they face in the twenty-first century. The first chapter in the paper emphasises the ‘Defence, security and safety of the territories and the people’ as one of the government’s key priorities stating: ‘We will continue to maintain an independent ability to defend the Territories – including their territorial waters and airspace – from any external threats they may face.’ (FCO, 2012, p. 22) These firm commitments were appreciated by Islander youth but accusations of British ‘militarisation’ of the South Atlantic aroused unease (Richardson, 2015), primarily because of how such headlines might be understood in

the UK. The youth respondents were well aware of the economic situation in the UK and what that might mean for the British public's support for the maintenance of a distant outpost in the South Atlantic; particularly if reports in the media emphasised its expense to the British taxpayer.

Importantly, from the perspective of the Islanders, these commitments to the security of Britain's OTs are not presented by the British Government as purely external, but as fundamental to the national security of the UK as well (the OTs were part of the UK's National Security Strategy in 2010 and the Strategic Defence and Security Review undertaken in the same year). Here, the security of Britain's OTs and the nation are conflated in ways that correspond with the response of Kate above. These kinds of arguments are indicative of the government's attempt to justify such distant possessions alongside its austerity programme initiated in 2010: 'Conversely, the Territories contribute to the security interests of the UK and our close allies. A number of the Territories provide invaluable training environments for all three Services.' (FCO, 2012, p. 22) These documents setting out the UK's foreign policy in relation to its OTs are a critical part of how the government reassures and reminds different audiences (e.g. in the UK, OTs themselves and other countries) about its commitment to their security and defence.

There were, then, generational differences in how Islanders talked about the current security situation of the Falkland Islands. For older Islanders who experienced and remembered the uncertainties that characterised the 1960s and 70s as a result of sovereignty negotiations between the UK and Argentina, the ontological security that came after the cessation of hostilities in 1982 seemed to be preferable. This meant the British Government finally committed to fully supporting the Islanders' right to self-determination, as well as defending

the Falkland Islands from future Argentine attacks. The twelve years of Kirchner governments in Argentina saw the resolve of the British government further bolstered in the face of increasingly aggressive diplomacy from Buenos Aires. While this was seen by some older Islanders as assurance of continued British support, for younger Islanders the deterioration of relations with Argentina since 2003 was more concerning (Cassese, 2016). In their lifetimes, the period prior to 2003 had seen relatively cordial relations between the UK, the Falklands and Argentina that culminated in the Anglo-Argentine Joint Statement on the 14th July 1999 (although this did not make progress towards the solution of the sovereignty dispute, see Dodds & Manóvil, 2001). However, the turn of the century saw Argentina harden its policy towards the Falklands, invoking feelings of insecurity for Islander youth in particular, despite the reassuring presence of the British military.

Youth as agents of (in)security

Sharp's (2011) work on subaltern geopolitics underscores marginal voices and their role in forming resistant or alternative imaginaries relative to dominant geopolitics. Moreover, her work picks apart the sometimes ambiguous relationships that marginal groups can have with dominant geopolitical structures and can be usefully applied to the everyday geopolitics of youth from the Falkland Islands. On the one hand, Islander youth underlined the agency and 'independence' enjoyed by their postcolonial generation (relative to the colonial era when Islanders were framed as more submissive) and yet, on the other hand, referred to occasions when they were required to 'perform' their Britishness in certain ways that reinforced notions of Falklands' dependence on the UK:

‘I always think with the Falklands, my parents’ generation, they come from the colonial times when basically they were told what to do, they didn’t have a choice... But then you’ve got my generation, which is the first real generation when people have... We’ve lived and studied in another country. We don’t have that inferiority complex that comes with living under colonial rule, which a lot of people my parent’s age have.’ (Interview with Amy, 27 years old, 10 February 2013)

‘I think there’s a worry that if people stop their being British, yes-we’re-really-British, thing in the Islands, then the UK government will forget about us, and be just like, oh, they’re not that bothered, and hand us back over.’ (Interview with Emma, 21 years old, 21 April 2011)

Islander youth considered their generation as more connected and confident when compared with preceding generations that had lived under British colonial rule (as opposed to living in a British OT). Nevertheless, they still remained conscious of their reliance on a larger collective for their security, manifest through the permanent presence of the British armed forces in the Falklands. The continuation of this military presence was framed as being dependent on the support of the British government of the day and its electorate, and in order to maintain this link Islander youth like Emma were conscious of the need to remind external audiences of their British identity (Edensor, 2002; Weber, 1998).

The 2013 referendum on the political status of the Falkland Islands was a key moment that was harnessed by citizens, young and old, to explicitly project their sense of British identity (Dodds & Pinkerton, 2013; Niebieskikwiat, 2014, p. 32). Indeed, some community leaders in the Falklands expressed their frustration at the reluctance of the FIG to fully capitalise on this rare opportunity for global exposure. In this case, citizens were instrumental in organising a

range of events that performed, represented and embodied their Britishness to the gathered international media. These iconic images from the referendum and the overwhelming vote to remain as a British OT have been continually referenced by the British Prime Minister in almost all subsequent speeches about the sovereignty question (fig. 1).

[Insert Figure 1 here – The 2013 Falkland Islands referendum (Photo source: The Penguin News)]

Similarly, Islander youth were acutely sensitive of the need to perform their nationality and loyalty to the UK (Dodds et al., 2007). This imperative was a consequence of uneasy contemporary relations with Argentina but also how the Falklands War was remembered and commemorated in the Islands. Islanders of all ages regularly take part in evocative commemorative activities that remember the sacrifices made by British soldiers to secure the future and ‘freedom’ of the Falkland Islands (Benwell, 2016a). These kinds of rituals are when the Falklands community are overtly reminded of their connections to the UK and the British military, given that more formal commemorations involve regiments stationed in the Islands. They were also aware of the importance of reaffirming their national belonging when they spent time in the UK. Young Islanders typically continue their education in the UK beyond the age of 16 as there is no provision in the Falklands. This brings them directly into contact with British citizens in sometimes troubling ways that can reveal their limited knowledge about the Falklands:

‘There’s no knowledge of the Islands, I don’t think. In my first course it was a bit awkward because everyone asked me where I was from and I was like the Falklands, and this one boy was like, “What, like Argentina?” Oh dear! ...Young people, they really don’t know anything. I changed courses and no one on the new course knows where it

is or anything about it. They didn't even know it was British.' (Interview with Owen, 19 years old, 27 November 2013)

There was, then, unease about how little Islanders' peers in the UK knew about the Falklands, as well as concern at more general misconceptions about their lives manifest through everyday interactions with British citizens. Perhaps more concerning was what this dearth might mean in the future if new generations of British people had little knowledge about the Islands:

'When I was at university a few years ago, people my age and younger, a lot of them didn't even know where it was. It's very important...People need to know more than that. Otherwise you're going to have a generation of people who don't understand the issues who maybe don't have much memory of the war footage or anything like that and maybe consider in the future, and if I think for my children and my children's children, you want to have that continuity that people understand the issues and wouldn't decide down the line, oh well, this isn't worth arguing over anymore, which I think is a fear that everyone has a little bit.' (Interview with Amy, 27 years old, 10 February 2013)

In response to these concerns, a number of the respondents talked about their involvement in formal political activities when they moved to the UK through organisations like the Falkland Islands Association, a British-based support group for the Islands. This participation was motivated by a wish to enhance British citizens' knowledge of the Falkland Islands and to present an image that moves on from exclusive associations with the 1982 war. Indeed, the FIG has also looked to incorporate youth into delegations that visit the UN and other Latin American countries in recent years, to present the face of the next generation of Islanders

(see Benwell, 2016b). These youth delegates are carefully selected for their ability to speak eloquently about the Falklands and their potential as future leaders in the community. Typically, they are also those who can trace their family heritage back seven to eight generations in order to illustrate the longevity of the Islanders' presence, significant for countering Argentina's sovereignty claim. This inevitably leads to the marginalisation of some other youth voices from, for instance, Chile and St Helena, communities that do not have such established histories in the Falkland Islands (Niebieskikwiat, 2014). It is necessary, therefore, to critically consider which youth agents are chosen for these kinds of formalised diplomatic activities associated with the FIG, and for what reasons.

Many other youth respondents were active more informally through their use of social networking websites like *Twitter* and *Facebook*, disseminating information about the Islands among their friends and followers, as well as countering perceived inaccuracies about their lives or the sovereignty dispute that they encountered online (Pinkerton & Benwell, 2014). Some talked about their use of British and Falkland Island flags as cover photos or profile pictures on their accounts as a way to further display their national allegiances (many of the respondents self-identified as Falkland Islanders *and* British). Islander youth, then, recognised the potential geopolitical ramifications of declining British interest in the Falklands and, thus, considered awareness-raising, especially when they were in the UK, as highly important. The concerns were not without historical precedent given the build-up to the Falklands War, and Islanders' fears that political commitment was dwindling amongst officials in Whitehall; fears that were subsequently realised when Argentina invaded in 1982 (Dodds, 2002).

The sense of marginality felt by Islander youth in relation to the dominant geopolitics of the South Atlantic extended to their everyday experiences in the Falkland Islands. In the

interviews, youth referred to how their perspectives on geopolitics and security were framed as inconsequential, compared to those who experienced the war first-hand. The emphasis placed on youth in recent government initiatives including the #MyVoiceMatters campaign and diplomatic visits described above, suggest that this attitude is starting to change as Jackie explained:

‘I think the youth sometimes feel that, I used to feel that I didn’t really have, couldn’t really have that much of an input if that makes sense? I know like I wasn’t here during the war and so politically I had obviously heard about it through my parents and grandparents and things. And although I had my own opinion on things, I felt a lot of the time that perhaps my opinion wasn’t quite as important as those who had obviously lived through it all. And I think that is something that is disappearing now. The youth can have their own opinion on these sorts of things. But when it is so close, you are constantly surrounded by it. There are memorials everywhere, there is [sic.] minefields everywhere, you are so close to it all...So do you know what I mean? Being surrounded by it all the time people used to be afraid, when they were younger, to make their opinions known, whereas now we are realising that actually our opinions are just as valid as everybody else’s and that we can make that opinion known.’ (Interview with Jackie, aged 26, 10 February 2015)

There was a perception amongst Islander youth that the legitimacy afforded to their perspectives had shifted significantly in recent years. This may have been a result of enough time passing since the 1982 war, the event that has so often marked the Falkland Islands and its international profile and relations. More important, I would argue, are the changing ways

youth have been enrolled in government-led diplomacy and the ways they are now able to express their views using online social networks.

Many of the youth respondents involved in this research were active in the doing of 'diplomacy', whether that was manifest through their use of the internet, daily interactions with British citizens or activities alongside the FIG and related support groups based in the UK. In particular, as agents of (in)security they were acutely aware of which audiences they wished to reach and influence. Most significant amongst these were British politicians and the electorate upon whom Falkland Islanders relied for continued diplomatic support and the provision of the Islands' military deterrent. On the one hand, this larger collective provided security and reassurance for the youth respondents, yet on the other, the dependency generated a sense of unease and insecurity. For these reasons, Islander youth consciously looked to remind British politicians and citizens of their identification with the UK, through some of the practices and performances outlined above. Generations of British citizens born long after the defining event in the recent history of the Falklands had scant knowledge about the Islands and many Islander youth were concerned about what this might mean for future relations with the UK. Since completing this research project the Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has touted a different diplomatic approach that encompasses 'sensible dialogue' with Argentina regarding the sovereignty question (Hope & Hughes, 2016). Notwithstanding its largely negative reception, most especially among politicians in the Falklands and the UK (*The Guardian*, 2016), it will serve as a reminder to the Islanders of the intersections between (geo)politics in the UK and the South Atlantic and the potential ramifications of an alternative British government (Mycock, 2010).

Conclusion

The rarely documented voices of youth from a British OT have been the principal focus of this paper building on a limited body of existing scholarship that has examined the (geo)politics of these territories (e.g. Clegg & Gold, 2011; Dodds, 2002; Lambert, 2005; Pinkerton, 2008). Instead of focusing on debates about (in)security and the Falkland Islands through the analysis of practical and formal geopolitical discourse, it has centred attention on the voices and emotions of those who live and experience (in)security in this British OT. The extracts from the youth respondents illustrate their sense of belonging and (in)security in the context of changing postcolonial connections between British OTs, the UK, and neighbouring nation-states. Young Falkland Islanders had equally complex, yet entirely distinctive, political geographies compared to their counterparts in the British OT of Montserrat (Skelton, 2005), illustrating the need to avoid broad generalisations about the citizens of these historically, geographically, (geo)politically and culturally diverse territories. The sense of being caught in the middle was palpable for Islander youth as they came to terms with the historical and contemporary geopolitical relations of the South Atlantic, so often dominated by the UK and Argentina.

The analysis of the perspectives of older Islanders has enabled the paper to contrast how references to (in)security and relations with Argentina can vary generationally. In a theoretical sense, this contributes to debates about ontological security that have been rather blind to generational nuance and tended to conflate security of the state with the security of its citizens. For older Islanders, with memories of the unsettling period of Anglo-Argentine diplomacy that marked the 1960s and 70s, there was a certain ontological security provided by overt confrontation with Argentina. The 1982 war and the tensions that have characterised

relations with Argentina over the last 12 years have guaranteed the support of the British government and set up Argentina as a consistent threat and other. Of course, Islander youth were well aware of the memories of the Falklands War, given that these were relayed to them through commemorative practices and intergenerational exchanges with teachers, parents and other adults (Benwell, 2016a). They were also conscious of the perceived authority that this gave those with direct experiences of historical events in the Falklands to speak about geopolitics and security, relative to their own. The past and present overlap in young people's readings of, and emotional responses to, geopolitics (Mitchell and Elwood, 2013) and as Rumelili (2015b, p. 18) points out, 'ontological security is not only produced through domestic social and political processes but also constituted via intersubjective expectations and understandings'. In other words, experiences of ontological security may not always be clearly distinguishable along generational lines when the intersubjective transmission of memory is considered.

That said, Islander youth were far more likely to talk about the ontological insecurities they experienced as a consequence of rising tensions with Argentina since 2003, and their hopes for a less combative administration in Buenos Aires. Islander youth had grown up in an era characterised by unequivocal diplomatic and military support from the UK regarding the sovereignty question, in contrast to their forebears. Their lifetimes had also seen a period of relatively cordial relations with Argentina, culminating in the Anglo-Argentine agreements signed in 1999, followed by more than a decade of heightened tensions ushered in with the Kirchner presidencies. With this historical context in mind, the diverse responses of Islanders from different generations on questions related to (in)security are perhaps more understandable. The election of Mauricio Macri as President of Argentina raises the prospect

of détente in the South Atlantic once again, although the legacies of the last 12 years and the 1982 war will prove difficult to overcome. This paper provides a sense of how such relations might be experienced by different generations of Islanders and invites further sensitive ethnographic investigation of citizens' perspectives on ontological (in)security, in ways that can circumvent and challenge normative accounts of geopolitics. Understanding citizen responses to the changing dynamics of geopolitics in the South Atlantic and the different ontological (in)securities they invoke, will be a critical part of any attempts to bring about more peaceful and cooperative relations between Argentina, the UK and the Falkland Islands.

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¹ The sovereignty dispute led to war in 1982 when the increasingly unpopular dictatorship ruling Argentina decided to invade the Islands. The ensuing military confrontation between the Argentine and British armed forces (assisted by citizens of the Islands) resulted in the deaths of nearly 1,000 men from both sides and three civilian women from the Falkland Islands.

² Argentina refuses to recognise the legitimacy of the FIG, framing the Falkland Islands as a colonial enclave still under the control of the British government (a point that is vehemently rebuffed in the Islands). To avoid giving any legitimacy to the FIG, Argentina therefore insists on bilateral negotiations with the British government.