



INVESTIGACIÓN / RESEARCH

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**POLITICAL AND BUSINESS INFLUENCES IN THE SPANISH PRESS.
CHANGE OF DIRECTION IN THE NEWSPAPER *EL PAÍS***

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ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on a review about the national and international news about the alleged reasons for the change of director in *El País*, the newspaper with more readers in Spain. A marked decrease in the number of readers and investment in advertising as well as political influences are the most repeated ideas in the digital national and international press. From the analysis that was performed it is concluded that the mercantilist model continues working in the printed media, the press is not already the fourth power, the press is a part of the first one since it relates to economic and political issues.

KEY WORDS: *El País* – Politics – Economy – Readers – Digital – Newspapers – Online

**INFLUENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y EMPRESARIALES EN LA PRENSA
ESPAÑOLA. EL CAMBIO DE DIRECCIÓN EN *EL PAÍS***

RESUMEN:

Este artículo se enfoca en torno a una revisión hemerográfica de la prensa nacional e internacional con objeto de exponer las causas atribuidas al cambio de director en el diario *El País*. Un acusado descenso en el número de lectores y de inversión en publicidad, así como influencias políticas son las ideas más repetidas por los distintos periódicos, de forma que del análisis realizado se concluye que el modelo mercantilista sigue funcionando en los medios impresos y que la prensa ya no es el cuarto poder, sino parte del primero al relacionarse directamente con cuestiones económicas y políticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *El País* – Política – Economía – Lectores – Digital – Periódicos – Online

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1. INTRODUCTION

The media are entities with a great weight on the public sphere, which translates into a great social relevance. Journalism and politics go hand in hand and, in this unique relationship, the mercantilist model that determines the corporate structure to which the media belongs prevails, so that "*the financial situation of the company will set the tone of workers and the journalist cannot be excluded*" (Labio, 2001, p.87).

The press is no longer the fourth power, but it has become part of the first one as it is directly related to economic and political issues, says Labio, and in this respect the professional independence of information is replaced by a clear commitment to the ideology of the media one works for.

This lack of independence causes the informational treatment of the media to be structurally conditioned by the socio-political context, but also by the economic constraint imposed by the dictatorship of advertising. This phenomenon is not new, in fact, in Spain we can establish the existence of national media following bipartisanship imposed by PP and PSOE, we mean the newspapers *El Mundo* and *El País*.

The plummeting sales of copies and advertising-sourced revenues as well as the pressure exerted by the ruling power has led to changes in the management structure of the Spanish newspapers, resulting in the dismissal within one month of the directors of *El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia*. Changes open up a period of instability and upheaval in newsrooms that some analysts link to the rise of digital media and the direct rescue of publishers carried out by part of the political power.

Throughout this article, and using a methodology based on a selected bibliography, we will try to point out the factors that have influenced the change of direction in *El País*, the national newspaper with a higher rate of readers. According to the General Media Study corresponding to the first quarter of 2015, among the mainstream media *El País* maintains its leadership as the most read newspaper (1,533,000 daily readers) "*though it continues with a slump in its audience, this time it exceeds 13 % as compared to the same wave of EGM'14, with the sharpest within the media*" (Ymedia, 2015).

Therefore, this article focuses on collecting the literature on the change of director in the national and international press, in order to draw a complete profile on the reasons for the dismissal of Javier Moreno, the appointment of the current director, Antonio Cano, and the implications this internal operation of the media has had at a political and economic level.

1.1 Newspapers, political and economic power.

The structure of information is the stuff that aims to "study the system of social media, both in its internal organization and functioning, and its interactions with other subsystems of the social system" (Quiros, 1991, p.307).

Based on this definition, Ramón Reig remarks (2009, p.388) that it is due to the structure of information that professionals can meet "*the world and their world, that is, the secrets of their profession and the environment in which these intricacies are involved*" So it is in this interplay between information, politics and economy where the interplay of a more complex system is evident.

This interplay between data elements, economic and political shows that the concept of structure is not isolated and that we must frame it within the system of market economy, which, says Marciano, is based on the diversification of media and is in optimal conditions:

Confront and clarify some of these capital changes of our time, because their purpose is to articulate economy, politics, communication and culture within the same process of analysis, the main focus should be the general shape and characteristics that capitalism acquires worldwide as a global system (Marciano, 1992, p.20).

In this sense, Labio says (2006) that the economic pressure can be marked from the moment the media belongs to a corporate structure with interests aimed at economic benefit, so that advertising and the financial situation of the company mark the pattern of workers.

At politically level, there is a similar situation and, in this regard, "*we see that the media represent the interests of one party or another*" (Labio, 2006, p. 87), it is because those with power have more options "*to influence the structure and functioning of society*" (Cachero, 2006, p.85).

In the same vein, Fernando Quirós says there is:

An undeniable connection between the power centers of the international system and the real issuers of the process of international communication. The identification of the informative speech with power comes from both governments and private companies (Quiros, 1991, p.74).

Power, control and ruling class are interrelated concepts, so Manuel Castells states that:

The power is not located in an area or specific social institution, it is rather spread throughout the field of human action. However, there are concentrated forms of power relations in certain social forms that condition and frame the practice of power in society in general and impose domination. Power is relational, domination is institutional (Castells, 2009, p.142).

The use of the press to achieve specific objectives related to the interests of the ruling class is not a new phenomenon in the history of communication; in fact, it is in the nineteenth century when the hand of the capitalist bourgeoisie is passed from

one stage which is dominated by ideological information to mercantile information, the media being conceived as a company concerned about achieving economic benefits.

However, it is from World War II when there is a process of globalization in the field of the media, which, according to Manuel Delgado (1998), try to dominate the entire chain of the process up to the dissemination and relationship with users of communication.

The essential role of the media is to keep the public informed, but this task is in conflict with the political interests of governments, which is why the information provided to citizens is restricted and shaped.

Journalistic information plays a key role in shaping public perception and the shaping of public opinion. In advanced societies today, it reaffirms its status as a key resource to exercise power. Thus, control becomes a key aspect to deploy social influence (Casero, 2009, p.354).

This structuring of the public perception is seen by Lorenzo Gomis (1991) as a method of interpreting social reality, so that it jeopardizes the subjective value of Journalism as it takes for granted that the journalist is part and parcel of a news-building commercial institution.

In the same vein is Mar de Foncuberta (1995) by providing a structuralist approach that determines that the main interest of the newspaper company is always economic and coincides with the definition of the information industry made by Herbert Schiller:

The media are the executing arms of the system. The rulers are able to rely on the help of the media. Now and then something happens and they make a fuss about this and that, but if the media practice something vaguely resembling social responsibility, alarm, anger and immediate retaliation in the hubs of the system will occur. But as the media are part of the system of power, controllers have nothing to worry about Mosco (1983, p.134).

In short, the treatment of information is subject to political and business structures, which implies a strong attack on the autonomy and freedom of the journalist and implies that non-communication sectors get involved in the construction of informational texts.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this piece of research is to show how the political and business influences, as had already happened in other newspapers such as *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*, have fostered the change of director in *El País*, the newspaper with the highest rate of readers in Spain.

3. METHODOLOGY

Out of the approaches resulting from a review of the case at newspaper libraries, we shall make informed valuations in the discourse analysis in order to develop reflective statements regarding the debate. Thus, the working method chosen to approach the issue under research uses qualitative techniques, in addition to a review of the literature on the relationship between the press and political and economic power.

The approach to the object of study is made on several fronts that allow research more fitted into communicative reality. First, a literature review was conducted to frame the issue within a theoretical context. Next, we performed thorough work of documentation and tracking of news related to the directional relief in *El País* in a total of 220 newspapers, 37 out of which were national and 183 international. For the international press, we have focused on the major European powers (France, Italy, Germany and England), United States and Latin America, countries covered by the international edition of the newspaper.

Through strategic sampling, we have analyzed the news that have appeared in the media (printed and digital) in Spain, both in their sections of information and opinion (editorials, blogs, forums or columns) in the first quarter of 2014, months in which the first rumors appeared, confirmations and implications around the change of director, to try to reconstruct how and under what conditions this change occurs in the first newspaper in Spain in terms of audience.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 *El País*. Economic context.

Founded in 1976 by Jose Ortega Spottorno, Jesus de Polanco and Juan Luis Cebrian, *El País* belongs to Prisa Group which also owns the newspapers *Cinco Dias* and *AS*, the radio network *SER*, *Digital +* and publishers *Santillana*, *Alfaguara*, and *Aguilar*, among others.

Designed by Reinhard Gade and Julio Alonso, *El País* became the newspaper of democratic Spain at a time in which the transition from Franco to democracy was still in full swing. A decisive contribution to this was the role played during the attempted coup d'état of 23-F, as it was, in full uncertainty, the first newspaper to take to the streets a special edition called "*El País, with the Constitution*" positioning itself clearly and calling citizens to take part in demonstrations in favor of democracy.

During the 1980s, the newspaper established itself as a leader of the Spanish press ABC in opposition to *ABC*, of a conservative trend. A contribution to its prestige was made by the rigorous treatment of journalistic standards and by being the first one to establish internal quality control parameters. So, it was the first Spanish newspaper to create the position of "Press Ombudsman" and to write and publish a book style that became a benchmark in the world of journalism. It also established several partnerships with other European social democratic newspapers.

During the 1990's, it had to deal with a new political and journalistic situation. The tension brought about by the corruption scandals of the Socialist government of

Felipe González polarized the Spanish leftist and rightist political and media reporters, *El País* fitting into the first group. Despite being accused of defending the socialist interests, *El País* managed to maintain its position as general best-selling daily in Spain's, albeit at a short distance from *El Mundo*.

During the governments of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the newspaper increasingly published articles that were critical or opposed to the policies of the Socialist government, a trend that has continued during the government of Mariano Rajoy and that some journalists such as Saenz de Ugarte (2014) point that "*it has taken place in parallel to the growing economic problems of Prisa, obliged to negotiate in a vulnerable position with the largest banks to renegotiate a huge debt*"

In 2011 the Prisa Group recorded the greatest losses in its history, 451 million euros, a figure six times higher than the figure for 2010. The economic crisis, coupled with a change in the pattern of news consumption, has caused a fall in readership, so that in Spain the newspapers accumulate 11,550,000 readers per day, 2.2% less than at the end of 2014. These figures paint a scenario marked by the continued drop in ratings, which causes Spain to be one of the countries of the European Union with the lowest reading rate in Europe, only surpassed by Italy, Portugal and Greece (infoeurope, 2014).

The effects of the crisis have also been felt in a decrease in advertising investment, which in 2013 was 3.7% as compared to 2012, a setback that is more in the mainstream media, which recorded 8% that added to a 15.8% decline in the previous year makes the decline in revenue in the newspapers to be almost 25% in just two years, according to data from Infoadex study of advertising investment in Spain in 2014 (PRNoticias, 2014).

To the poor economic performance, we must add a palsy in the central subsidy system, bank occlusion and publishing dysfunction in the recent years, resulting in the rescue of the big publishing companies (Prisa, Unidad Editorial, Godó Group and Vocento, among others) to have relied on political power, and this clear political dependence has been reflected in changes in the structure of directions of headers.

As was the case with the dismissal of Pedro J. Ramirez, who was in charge of the newspaper *El Mundo*, and only the first three weeks later, the change of direction in *El País* has raised many speculations at national and international level. The main one focuses on the figure of Nicolas Berggruen, owner of Berggruen Holdings and CEO of Liberty Acquisitions Holding Corp, the American investment fund which in 2010 became the majority stake of Group Prisa.

What at first goes through a single investment operation ends in the sale of 57.7% of the capital in the new Prisa and its conversion into shares with all social rights, including the right to vote. Through this operation, Berggruen and his partner in Liberty, Martin Franklin, became members of the Steering Committee which control the majority of shares --next comes Juan Luis Cebrian with 0.28%- about 4% each

one as the highest number of stock options² of the company, more than 7.5% per head.

The investment, which is announced as "*purely financial*" and it even says that the new owners would not intervene in the day to day, causes changes in the editorial line of the newspaper, at least on the most sensitive issues, "to the new strong man".

The information and the editorials of Prisa's newspaper about Israel do not have the radicalism of the past, and also it has been a long time since it is not possible to read the libelous articles or the furiously anti-Semitic vignettes that were quite common not long ago (Jorda, 2014).

To Jorda, the entry of Liberty in the shareholders of Prisa would explain both the arrival in Jerusalem of the writer Enric González and the dismissal of the vignette writer Romeu, just a month before the announcement according to Liberty, but after criticism by several US senators.

Despite the economic boost of Prisa due to its entry into the shareholders of Liberty, the desperate situation facing the media conglomerate is a constant fact in recent years.

In 2008 the group maintained a positive balance in its net profit by 300 million achieved after selling its headquarters in Gran Vía (Cadena Ser), Miguel Yuste (*El País*) and Caspe (*Radio Barcelona*). However, because of debts, 2009 resulted in the sale of 21% of the TV platform for *Digital Plus* subscribers to Telefonica for 470 millions and 22% to Telecinco for 517 millions. Paolo Vasile chain also acquired *Cuatro* for 550 plus millions (*20Mminutos*, 2012).

The deep economic crisis in the group leads to its gradually selling its media properties and results in high labor unrest that began in 2008 when the newspaper undertake a major restructuring involving its division into three companies: content, print and services, as well as outsourcing of its sales department.

After this milestone, in 2010 Prisa outsourced the work of the 300 workers of its computer department, who were no longer on the payroll of the company and came to be on the payroll of the company Indra. The situation was aggravated by the announcement of a redundancy, in October 2012, involving the dismissal of a total of 128 workers, 21 early retirements and a decrease of 15% in salary for the rest of a payroll that was reduced to 464 workers.

And all this, while the CEO, Juan Luis Cebrian, "*pocketed around 13 million euros in 2011, an amount that stands for the income of the newspaper for advertising in two months or for what it would cost to hire 400 new editors*", as published by Pascual Serrano (2009) in *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

² A stock option is a right granted by the company to its collaborators to buy a number its shares at a specified price (the strike price) for a period of time.

Since the entry of Liberty as a shareholder, the restructuring plan and operational efficiency of Prisa has covered EREs in *Cadena Ser* (258 dismissals), Prisa TV (784), *Cinco Días* (21), Prisa Revistas (45) and Prisa Brand Solutions (24). If we add the dismissals in *El País* to all this, in total the layoffs at Prisa would reach 1,281 out of the 2,500 workers it has anticipated to have worldwide.

4.2. Change of Director

Of all the clusters that make up the group, the newspaper *El País* is the one that has the highest rate of layoff, this is why, after the last ERE, the workers' assembly requested the resignation of its director, Javier Moreno, as they considered that "*He has been disqualified for exercising the office he holds and we demand him to submit his resignation immediately due to the pressures and threats against workers*" (20 Minutos, 2012).

Few imagined that this situation would be marked by controversy just one year later. In mid-February 2014, the dismissal of Moreno and the appointment of Antonio Cano (at that time, a correspondent in Washington) as new director occurred. The appointment comes amid an accusation by nearly 35% of workers and it was preceded by an internal report in writing setting out its vision about the newspaper and about the most appropriate changes to be made to curb its loss of audience and influence.

An alleged "*computer error*" resulted in a copy of the report reaching fifty journalists and collaborators of the various American delegations, the report revealing the Caño's suggestion to change the entire management team as "*they do not connected with either the editorial staff or the society to which the daily must open*" (Infolibre, 2014).

The report explicitly proposes to replace Javier Moreno with a "*professional (assuming that from the house) with a recognized career and respected by the Editorial Staff*" (Infolibre, 2014) and poses a scheme with three directors: one for *El País* on paper, another for the digital editing and one for the American edition. Also, it adds the convenience of assigning young people being 30 years to the management team and criticizes the "*forms and luxuries still squandered by the members of the internally called group of colonels*" (Soteras, 2014).

This report is interpreted by many as a "*right-wing election program*".

Such an appointment would fit in the turn that has long been perceived in the editorial line of *El País*, which is every day closer to governmental positions, especially on economic policy. Mariano Rajoy's interests coincide with those of large companies and banks that are the creditors of the gigantic debt of the newspaper (Soteras, 2014).

The official appointment of Antonio Cano occurred on February 26 via an official statement, although it did not become effective until May 4 to mark the 38th anniversary of the newspaper.

The arrival of Caño to the management of *El País* has caused numerous changes within the payroll of the newspaper:

The new management team is made up of Eva Saiz, as deputy director of the printed edition; Bernardo Marion, deputy director of digital publishing; and Luis Prados, responsible for the American edition. All of them must be added to David Alandete, assistant director, and those who made up the core of the former hard core were appointed correspondents (Lardiés, 2014th).

Thus, Vicente Jiménez, who was assistant director, was designated to New York to replace Sandro Pozzi; Carlos Yárnoz, a former deputy director, to Paris; Juan Manuel Romero, who was the one who carried the weight of the editorial work, was appointed legal correspondent; Berna G. Harbour was designated responsible for *Babelia* and Jan Martinez Ahrens goes to Mexico where there is already a large team which includes Luis Prados, Bernardo and Salvador Marin Camarena. Mexico is one of the key places for the Spanish newspaper, since the digital edition of *El País* is done at night in that country.

The changes made by Caño made part of the payroll to revolt.

Two thirds of the editorial staff of *El País*, ie, 72%, is positioned against the arrival of Eva Saiz as a deputy director, which shows the internal tensions existing for two months at the headquarters of Miguel Yuste (Vozpópuli, 2014)

The most common complaints, according to *El Confidencial Digital* (2014), suggest that no one on the payroll knows her, while some of the editorial staff claim that "*she has only got a master's degree, she was a scholarship holder and has had a collaborative contract*".

However, the frontal rejection Saiz is motivated by her statements concerning the plenary session in the Senate after the publication of the papers of Barcenas, where the journalist claimed that:

Rajoy is a great parliamentarian. He does not like talking to the press, but in parliament the truth is that he grows and does it very well. Rajoy had been warned, he knew they were going to demand his resignation, and he decided to attack (*El Confidencial Digital*, 2014).

These statements have been interpreted as a defense of the Prime Minister and some see in them a prediction that the line of the newspaper will turn right, even further since Javier Moreno was relieved.

The phrase "Rajoy is a great parliamentarian" shows that the new Deputy Director has no knowledge of Spanish parliamentarism according to her office, this is the complain of the editorial staff. They claim that they are preparing for a "rightwardness" of information during the time of Antonio Caño (Ecoteuve, 2014).

4. 3. Impact on the national press

While the appointment of Antonio Caño has had little impact on national printed media, which have been limited to a brief post about it, in the digital press the change of direction of *El País* has been a salutary lesson and there are many media that see the removal of Javier Moreno as a rightist turn of the mythical legendary defender of the ideals of the left. A change that has taken place in parallel to the growing economic problems of Prisa, obliged to negotiate in a vulnerable position with the largest banks to renegotiate its huge debt.

In this sense, *Libertad Digital* (2014) notes that changes are explained in detail in the report in which Antonio Caño expressly calls for the replacement of the current chief of *Nacional*, Javier Casqueiro (who would be sent as a correspondent to Maghreb), with Jose Manuel Romero, who already held this post in the past and is "known for his excellent relations with Minister Gallardón." And he insists that the heads of the daily are the ones who define the report as "a manifesto of rights" because:

The still head of *El País* in America is not known for having a leftist politics, which is seen by the staff as an approach by Cebrián to the Government of Mariano Rajoy, who at all times has aided Prisa in its indebtedness (*Libertad Digital*, 2014).

Journalists as Inigo Saenz de Ugarte (2014) suggest that "*perhaps it is a coincidence, but the image with which El País summarizes the first day of debate of State of the Nation is a picture of Rajoy making the sign of victory*" And he notes:

From 2007 to 2012, the newspaper *Público* seized a number of newspaper readers from the newspaper of Prisa, precisely because of the widespread perception that it had moderated its viewpoints. That has increased in the past two years when its editorials have praised some of the economic reforms of the Government of Rajoy (Saenz, 2014).

The leaked report by Caño shows that:

El País has been cornered on one side of the ideological spectrum and this situation should be redirected from an ideological shift to the right, away from the social democratic position of the newspaper since the 1980s, when it decided to become a media near to the PSOE and its leaders, from González to Rubalcaba, including Almunia and Zapatero (Saenz, 2014).

This same perception that a rightist turn is in progress can be read on other digital media. So *Vozpópulix* states that, with the substitution of Javier Moreno:

The newspaper goes a step further in a change of direction, it is increasingly criticized by large sections of readers because of its friendly editorial line with the PP. The evident decrease in unfavorable criticism of Mariano Rajoy is related definitely to the excellent relations between Cebrián and the Vice President of the Government, Soraya Saenz de Santamaria (Lardiés, 2014b).

Other online media are more aggressive, and so the blog of opinion and information about media *La mosca mediática* (2013) reported that since "Rajoy saved *El País*, its changes are obvious". Regarding the Barcenás case, this blog adds that *El País*:

Does not crush the PP but the PP of its hated Aznar, never the PP of Rajoy. With this strategy, Rajoy takes revenge on Aznar, whom Rajoy does not forgive for his having -- with his hard core headed by Esperanza -- made things very difficult for Rajoy as an opponent (*La mosca mediática*, 2013).

Similarly, he states:

This unnatural pact between *El País* and Rajoy, the latter prevents the most widely read and influential newspaper from shaking the street, it does not support the revitalization of the PSOE or any new political party or social movement [...] thereby the Galician succeeds in preventing *El País* from putting its finger in his eye due to his mistakes concerning taxes (*La mosca mediática*, 2013).

In the same vein is Daniel Toledo (2014) in Elconfidencial.com, where he points out that Prisa, and *El País* by extension, have "*a lot to thank the great Spanish companies, which will hardly run contrary to the Executive*", and he goes back to June 2012 to remind that Telefonica, Santander and La Caixa "*took a step forward to enter the capital of Prisa in a sort of rescue operation of large homeland multinationals for a company beset by a debt of 3,500 millions.*"

Meanwhile, *Diario Crítico* went further and published an article entitled "Cebrián 'yielded *El País* to Rajoy to save the Prisa Group", within which we can read:

Cebrián already knows how to 'save' the Prisa Group from bankruptcy: by handing the Government of Rajoy the head of Javier Moreno on a platter and replacing him in the direction of *El País*. They speak of Antonio Caño, the correspondent in Washington. But in any case, Prisa is just a breeze in a media storm, because the rumor has exploded about a full tsunami in all media (*Diario Crítico*, 2014).

Together with the rivers of ink published on the evident ideological shift of the newspaper, several national media begin to interrelate the substitution of directors the press has undergone in weeks: *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo* and *El País*, the newspapers with more readers in Spain.

Thus, the journalist José Sanclemente (2014), in his article "Who has got rid of three directors of the newspaper?", analyzes the common factors of what he calls "*a record of mortality making us think if we are not facing an epidemic*". According to Sanclemente, the common element in all three newspapers is that their sales and advertising have plummeted, a premise that if extrapolated to the entire press would mean that "*all directors of this country should leave their post in charge of their newspaper, as readers and advertisers are leaving the paper in a rush*".

Therefore, he notes that:

The lethal virus must have to do with the orientation of content, a disease difficult to cure [...] its symptoms are clear: high political pressure, obstruction of advertising irrigation, editorial dysfunction and, eventually, induced cerebral

coma not to cause more serious injuries in the informational device (Sanclemente, 2014).

While the dismissal of José Antich in charge of *La Vanguardia* was due to the imposition of the King on Godo Group, as noted by *Periodista Digital* (2014); the dismissal of Pedro J. Ramirez in charge of *El Mundo* is motivated by the pressures of Rajoy and RCS MediaGroup. The journalist himself points out in his last letter, never published in *El Mundo*, that the reasons for his removal from office are due to "*the revelations of the 'Bárceñas affair', the illegal financing of the PP, SMS exchanged between Rajoy and his former treasurer, and payments received by the husband of Maria Dolores de Cospedal after the merger of Caja Castilla-La Mancha*" (Vozpópuli, 2014).

To Paul Sebastian in his opinion column in *La República.com*, the dismissal of Javier Moreno in charge of *El País* resembles that of Pedro J. in *El Mundo*:

Because political, financial and media powers come into play, and because greater control of total information is intended to the benefit of the palaces of Moncloa and Zarzuela -shaken by both newspapers in recent months- that claim for 'the reason of institutional state. However, the official arguments offered are others: the directors of the dailies on paper have been dismissed due to the falling sales and advertising revenue of their newspapers and the forced turn in favor of their Internet editions (*Periodista Digital*, 2014b).

The columnist even points to the curious coincidence of the resignation of both after the trips of Rajoy to Washington and Rome.

Much more critical is Manuel Ortega (2014) in his blog *La Tramoya*, where, under the title "*El País, captured and disarmed by Cebrián, surrenders to La Moncloa*" he reports that readers of the newspaper should have been turned to stone after seeing how "*what has been considered to be the official organ of the Spanish progressive center-left has released a platform signed by Mariano Rajoy ('The Other Side of the Strait')* in which the Prime Minister broken down several issues in African politics".

In his article, "*Rajoy puts a symbolic end to the war maintained for years by the Popular Party and the Prisa Group*" and the days when "*Rajoy ordered the boycott of Prisa Group media after allegations of terminally ill Jesus Polanco*" (Ortega, 2014) are left behind.

Regarding the ideological and editorial change, the reporter notes:

The prospects have generated a permanent state of tension in the editorial staff of *El País* where we are astonishedly witnessing a change in the editorial line which clashes with the one internalized over the years by many of its members [...] Caño has decided to surround himself with a young inexperienced guard in the day-to-day editorial work, but also with no past in order to maintain a line of support to the Executive but remain critical as regards social issues such as abortion or certain Cabinet members to preserve some hallmarks of the newspaper to its readers (Ortega, 2014).

Maruja Torres is also quite critical. In the section she stars in the magazine *Mongolia*, the former columnist for *El País* stated that *"Of El País there are remains, ruins, exceptions and the loyalty of its more addicted readers. I do not believe its information,"* while holding that *El País "is a puppet of the government [...] we know that the major newspapers are in the hands of the capital and the government. It is logical to do what they want with them, including dismissal and imposition of directors"* (*El Plural*, 2014).

The magazine *Mongolia* (2014) is also quite sharp in its comments about Moreno being replaced and states that *"El País has gone so rightist that it is hard to imagine how a new turn could be, considering that 75% of the Management Board has direct links with the financial sector"*. A view shared by journalist Enric Sopena.

The director of *El Plural*, in his article *"El País, from left to right. Quo Vadis, Juan Luis?"* states:

All indications are that the rightist government has allied with Juan Luis Cebrian to save *El País*. But the price of this covenant is ominous. The center-leftist newspaper has become a center-rightist newspaper. But with an addition. The PP is not center-rightist, but extreme rightist. (Sopena, 2014).

4. 5. International implications

The impact on the European press has not been as significant as the one generated by the dismissal of Pedro J. Ramirez and it is practically limited to aseptically inform about the change in the leadership of the newspaper. Only the Italian press highlights the rightist turn undertaken by the Spanish newspaper and points out that the dismissal of Javier Moreno as director of *El País* shows "leniency toward Rajoy".

So *Europa Quotidiano*, under the headline "El País svolta a destra. Il tramonto of 'giornale-partite'" (*El País* turns rightist. The sunset of the 'party newspaper'), states that *"El País has returned to the storm. While the director will change, there is growing controversy over the change in the policy of the newspaper, getting increasingly closer to the government of Rajoy"* (Siniscalchi, 2014).

"In addition to a decline in journalistic quality", referring to the publication of false pictures of Hugo Chavez in his hospital bed, the newspaper continues:

The editorial line has made an approach to Rajoy [...] since his election in 2011, Cebrián does not stop speaking well of Rajoy at every opportunity, while maintaining good relations with the Vice President of the Government, Soraya Saenz de Santamaria (Siniscalchi, 2014) .

Even he states that *"it promotes the idea that the government of Spain is leaving the crisis behind"* and that, from the first to the last page dedicated to the State of the Nation, *"it was accompanied by the photo of smiling Rajoy lifting his thumb up as a token of victory"*

The article concludes by arguing that *"it is expected that a historic and important header as El País may be able to find a way to continue to exist to ensure the plurality of the Spanish information, dominated by pro-government and right-wing newspapers"* (Siniscalchi, 2014).

The possibility that there may be more dismissals in the Spanish press was pointed out by the *Milano Finanza* in its article "CSR rischio il direttore di El País" (RSC, a risk to the director of *El País*), in which it announced that the substitution of Pedro J. Ramirez could cause a domino effect in the editorial market and that *El País* would continue *"the revolution set by RCS for its main Spanish newspaper"* (Montanari, 2014).

The Italian newspaper pointed to the possible replacement of Moreno with Antonio Caño and that *"the relationship with the politics and government of Rajoy, the same reasons that in the Iberian market caused the expulsion of Ramirez of El Mundo"* would be the underlying reason (Montanari, 2014).

In France, the most significant thing could read in *Le Figaro* (2014) where Gauchet published "Les mouvements dans les médias" (The movements in the media), an aseptic article in which the newspaper makes a brief review of the curriculum of Antonio Caño, *"the fifth director of the newspaper, founded in 1976 by Juan Luis Cebrian, who will start his duties on May 4, the anniversary of the creation of El País"*.

In the British and German media, the impact was zero, while in the Anglo market only the printed edition of *The New York Times* collected the story. On February 18, the newspaper published an article entitled *"El País Outs Editor; 3rd Spanish Paper to Do So Amid Financial Woes"*.

Signed by Minder and Carvajal, it points out the drop in advertising and sales of copies as the main reason for the replacement, however, it never misses an opportunity to mention that *"newspapers have continued denouncing systemic corruption and bank accounts in Switzerland that have tarnished the main institutions of Spanish society, including the government, the monarchy and corporate tycoons"*.

In this sense, echoing a statement by Pedro J. Ramirez in which he states that *"it becomes clear that the government and the powerful economic institutions are taking advantage of the crisis in the business model and the weakness of the newspapers to try to control more and more information"* (Minder and Carvajal, 2014).

There is more impact in the online media *Médium.com* and *Talking News Media*. In its section *Media and the Press*, the former includes "Antonio Caño Replaces Javier Moreno as Director of El País". The news indicates that this change just two weeks after the dismissal of Pedro J. Ramirez and the arrival of Caño is seen as *"another step in the conservative change of the newspaper"* (Laurent, 2014).

The same impression is transmitted by *Talking News Media* that, in a much more neutral tone, refers to the fact that the turmoil in the Spanish editorial scene continues with Moreno being replaced with the correspondent in Washington of the Spanish daily. The newspaper points out that "*the situation in the newspaper business is complicated because of the problems we all know*" and states that "*bringing new blood to work is not a bad idea*" (Hebbard, 2014).

Elaborating on that matter, *The World News* (2014), in an article entitled "Antonio Caño will replace Javier Moreno as director of the newspaper *El País*", refers to the fact that the news was confirmed after appearing in the "last two days in various digital media, which pointed to a shift in the traditionally progressive line of one of the most influential newspapers in Spain".

The information continues:

The news was known in Spain days after the dismissal of Pedro J. Ramirez, founder of *El Mundo*. The former director of the main rival and of *El País* then pointed to pressure from the conservative government of Mariano Rajoy [...] in just two weeks, the directors of two of the most important newspapers in Spain will leave their posts (*The World News*, 2014).

Due to the huge presence of Prisa Group in South America, many Latin American media mentioned the replacement of Moreno with Antonio Caño, who was considered by many as the "*viceroys of America, due to his power on the other side of the Atlantic and the confidence of Juan Luis Cebrian in him, so he, sometimes acted above the director of the newspaper he worked for*" (*Libertad Digital*, 2014).

This is undoubtedly due to the fact that Caño personally managed important businesses of Prisa in Latin America. However, if, at the national level, the press is particularly critical of the relief brought about at the top of *El País*, in Latin America the media echoed this quite impersonal substitution.

So *Caracol.com* of Venezuela states that "*the Board of Directors of the Spanish newspaper El País today unanimously appointed Antonio Caño director the newspaper to replace Javier Moreno, the newspaper reported in a press release*" (Caracol, 2014).

In the same vein, *El Nuevo Diario* (2014) of Nicaragua entitled "The Spanish newspaper *El País* with new director." In the news, it develops that "*the Board of Directors of El País, 'unanimously' appointed Antonio Caño director of the newspaper to replace Javier Morend*".

Meanwhile, *Mundiario, El Primer Periódico Global de Análisis* (2014) notes in its headline: "*Antonio Caño will be director of El País, upon the proposal by Juan Luis Cebrian,*" *Infobae America* (2014): "*Change of direction in the newspaper El País, Spain's most widely read daily*" and *Contactolatino.com* (2014), "*Antonio Caño appointed new director of El País*".

Only Argentine newspapers delve into the possible causes underlying the dismissal of Javier Moreno. Thus, the daily *Clarín* published that "*the coming to power of Caño is interpreted as a continuity to the conservative shift the newspaper has undergone in recent years*".

This significant change in the most important newspaper in Spain comes shortly after the change of command in the newspaper *El Mundo* [...] the recent changes in *El País* are also interpreted as a continuation of the conservative shift that showed the daily newspaper in the past years. Since the victory of the Popular Party in the 2011 elections, the president Prisa Group praised the figure of Mariano Rajoy and his relations with the media, as opposed to management by José María Aznar (Algañaraz, 2014).

La Nación also states that "*El Mundo, second Spanish daily as regards circulation, also recently changed the conducting of its editorial staff*" and notes that the Spanish press:

Is amid a deep crisis resulting from several years of decline in advertising, in part due to the recession in most countries, and the circulation of hard copies, impacted by new technologies and forms of news consumption (*La Nación*, 2014).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This piece of research shows how, in the field of journalism, the change of director in *El País* is perceived as a direct result of political and business influences. While the printed media are silent about it, the digital media, which are less dependent on subsidies and institutional advertising, point to the economic crisis that has gripped Prisa Group and a change of ideological trend in the newspaper as the hidden causes underlying the replacement of Javier Moreno with Antonio Caño.

Internationally, the impact on the German and British press is zero, while some Italian and French media suggest identical approaches as the Spanish online media and see a political maneuver in the substitutions of the three directors of the printed newspapers with highest reading rate in Spain: *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*. Thus, *Milano Finanza*, for example, suggests that the dismissal is due to a rapprochement of positions towards the government of Rajoy, as happened with Pedro J. Ramirez.

The same trend is found in the Anglo-Saxon press and in the Argentine newspapers *La Nación* and *Clarín*, while the rest of Latin American news media that mention the news do it from a strictly informative point of view and even accurately reproduce the official statement by *El País*, something that occurs mainly in Latin American headers of Prisa Group, as is the case with *Caracol*.

We performed the analysis and conclude that the mercantilist model still works in the printed media and the press is no longer the fourth power but part of the first one as it directly relates to economic and political issues.

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