STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS WAR
AN IMAGE OF WAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The 1982 war in the Falkland Islands and surrounding waters in the South Atlantic Ocean marked dramatic changes in the contemporary world. By any reckoning, it was a war that should never have been fought. It was a war unlike any other war in the twentieth century, and since 1945 it was the first war to erupt outside the construct of the Cold War paradigm. The ten week war between Great Britain and Argentina clearly demonstrated the military and diplomatic power of the western democracies, and paved the way for the United States' incursions into Grenada, Panama, and even the Gulf War of 1990-91. This analysis will examine the Falklands conflict as a prototype of future wars. In the coming century, wars of this type are more rather than less likely to occur; wars devoid of vital national interests, wars of jingoism and media hype, wars of power projection and technology.

The Falklands/Malvinas War is unique in its character and therefore worthy of examination, in order that wars of this type may be avoided in the years to come.

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Prelude

In the spring of 1982 the world's attention focused for some seventy-three days on a war in the remote reaches of the South Atlantic. The conflict between the right-wing dictatorship in Argentina and the waning colonial power, Great Britain, seemed at the outset to be so implausible as to be comic operatic—like something from Gilbert and Sullivan. However, the outcome and its ramifications were to prove anything but comic opera.

In an era that seems characterized by instability and international confrontation, the war in the Falkland Islands (or as the Argentines call them: "Las Islas Malvinas") stands out as a profound example of the frailty of peace and the potential for catastrophe when diplomacy fails, emotions rule, and one nation seeks to project power over another. The Falklands/Malvinas War also stands out as the first conflict involving a major western nation that took place outside the framework of the bi-polar post World War II construct. In this light the events in South Atlantic during the spring of 1982 seem as much like something from the 21st century as they do a remnant of the colonial era.

Scholars, strategists, and pundits tell us that the 20th century ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. They postulate that since the opening of the Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, modern society has actually been living through the first years of the 21st century. However, the old century may have begun to close seven years earlier with what the authors R. Reginald and Dr. Jeffrey M. Elliot titled the

"Tempest in a Teapot"[1] and what Margaret Thatcher called, "the world's first computer war."[2]

In a sense all modern conflict is global, and geographic isolation can no longer insulate civilization from the effects of war, even small ones. In that regard, the Falklands experience needs to be examined and its impact assessed. The governmental misjudgments in Buenos Aries and London, the diplomatic failures at the United Nations and in the United States, the conduct and effects of modern, high-technology combat and the powerful weight of public opinion hold clues that may prove useful in designing responses to future conflicts.

This analysis will attempt to evaluate the Falklands conflict as a prototype for 21st century war with consequences far exceeding the battlezone and whose lessons are for the world, not just Britain and Argentina. The Falkland/Malvinas War stands as a prototype of future wars because it exists outside the pattern established by other twentieth-century conflicts. It was a brief, violent war fought without ideology or compelling national interests. It was a war between two countries who were otherwise cordial trading partners. It was a war at the edges of technology and atavism. It was a land war, a sea war, an air war, and an information war. It was a conflict in which the loser out numbered the winner, and the victor was punished nearly as much as the vanquished. In 1993 Prime Minister Thatcher wrote, "it must be admitted that the Falklands were always an improbable cause for a twentieth-century war."[3] In the multi-polar world of the 21st century the greatest dangers may come from "improbable causes."

War came as a shock to both Britons and Argentines, and indeed, to the world as a whole. It was a clash no one predicted or even thought possible. "Of all the battles,

skirmishes, and wars waged among and between nations in the twentieth century, surely the Falklands Conflict must rank as the strangest. In a struggle outwardly reminiscent of the halcyon days of gunboat diplomacy and European imperialism, Argentina invaded the Falklands/Malvinas, which it had claimed since the beginning of its Republic, quickly occupying those desolate isles in an almost bloodless, one-day campaign. Within two and one-half months, Great Britain had mounted an expeditionary force, reinvaded the Falklands and South Georgia Island, and swiftly reconquered its former colony. Approximately 1,000 persons died during the campaign. Such are the facts."[4]

Such may be the facts, but they alone hardly tell the complete story. This war changed the way the British people perceived their modern history. It made heroes of the conservative, Tory government and created the image of Margaret Thatcher as "the Iron Lady." It destroyed the Galtieri junta in Argentina and directly contributed to the return of democracy after decades of military rule. It envigorated the British military and nearly collapsed the Argentine. It demonstrated conclusively the capability of western power projection and the viability of high-technology weapons systems. It affected strategic decision makers around the globe and influenced the direction of world events many thousands of miles from the scene in the South Atlantic.

The experiences of the Falklands/Malvinas War will serve as an example to be scrutinized by strategic leaders everywhere. The motivations, the decision making, the ethics, as well as the effects of warfare in the "information age," will long outlast any of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, or marines who fought for, or the diplomats who debated the sovereignty of these remote and barren isles.

Miscalculations

"The only excuse in going to war is that we may live in peace unharmed"

Cicero

The sound advice of Cicero not withstanding, nations often resort to war for reasons less definable than survival or security needs. The 1982 Falklands War serves as a prime example of how nations can find themselves at war for reasons other than vital national interests. In fact, the Falklands War is a conflict devoid of true national interest by either of the combatants. The very idea that Argentina and Great Britain would actually shed blood over "the last outpost of a forgotten empire"[5] seems preposterous—"a freak of history"[6]

"The issue, on the face of it, was that of sovereignty. Whose flag was to fly over Governor Hunt's flagpole? Whose government was going to rule these islands whose population was too small to rule itself?...That two great nations should have fought a war and lost their young men in the 1980s for the right to fly their flag over this land was incomprehensilble to most of the rest of the world."[7] British rationale for this conflict was perhaps best expressed in 1992 by Margaret Thatcher, when she wrote in her forward to Admiral Sandy Woodward's memoirs, "If the islands were invaded, I knew exactly what we must do—we must get them back."[8] It was that simple and that complicated. For

Argentina, and especially for the members of its ruling junta the reasons were a bit more complex, but hardly less esoteric. "There can be no doubt that the action was linked to the country's profound internal political and economic crisis."[9] However, the decision for war had more to do with national pride, interservice rivalries, power posturing among the junta membership, and the desire to provide a distraction from the so called "Dirty War," against Argentine leftists and other dissidents who challenged military rule.

Obviously, these were significant issues to the government in Buenos Aires. Their mistake was in risking the destruction of their regime by miscalculating Britain's willingness to fight for principle, as well as for pragmatic interests. Prior to launching their attack on 2 April 1982, the Argentine leadership neglected to heed Sun Tzu's maxim: "War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied."[10]

The dispute over Falkland/Malvinas sovereignty is as old as exploration and settlement itself. Conflict and acrimony have dominated the political history of the islands, just as isolation has dominated their social history. Even the exact date and nationality of the discoverer are uncertain. It may have been Magellan in 1519 or 1520 as he sought out the entrance to the Straight that now bears his name. Amerigo Vespucci, on his third voyage to the South Atlantic, reported sighting land "500 leagues...on a southeastern course from the coast...in an area of violent winds and...huge seas."[11] The discoverer may have been either of the Englishmen, John Davis in 1592 or Sir Richard Hawkins in 1594, or perhaps it was the Dutchman Sebald van Weerdt in 1598. Most historians credit Davis in 1592, but landfall wasn't made until a century later when English Captain John

Strong cruised the sound between the two largest islands in the group. He gave them their present name after "the then Treasurer of the Royal Navy, Viscount Falkland."[12]

Actual settlement of the islands did not take place until 1764 when the French established Port Louis on East Falkland (which they called Les Iles Malouines). A year later the English under Captain John Byron (the poet's grandfather) placed a colony on Saunder's Island off the western coast of West Falkland. Both of these colonies were in violation of the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht that gave Spain preeminence in that region of the Americas. In 1767, France ceded the base at Port Louis to Spain and by 1769 or 1770 the Spaniards drove the British from their post, thus precipitating the first Falkland Islands crisis. In 1790, Britain and Spain signed the Nootka Sound Convention "by which Britain formally renounced any colonial ambitions in South America and the islands adjacent. The Falklands were now occupied by Spain, until the collapse of its New World empire in the early nineteenth century."[13]

Argentina's claim to the islands dates from the 1820s when they inherited the former claims of Spain. Whalers from the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata (the predecessor of modern Argentina) developed a base for their whale and seal hunting industry in the former Spanish port. A dispute over the seizure of an American vessel *Harriet* precipitated the reassertion of British colonial efforts, in spite of the terms of the Nootka Sound Convention. The United States mission in Buenos Aires dispatched the USS *Lexington* to the Falklands in 1829. There the ship's captain, Silas Duncan, sacked the Argentine station and sailed away. His act of arguable piracy provided the British their opportunity to fill the power vacuum left figuratively in *Lexington's* wake. On January 2,

1833, two British warships HMS *Tyne* and HMS *Clio* evicted the remaining Argentines and reestablished the British crown colony.

"With the exception of the two months in 1982, the British have remained in possession of the Falklands ever since."[14] Despite a tranquil society of British descent, the economic and political forces at work in the islands have been a simmering caldron of ambiguity since the 16th century. The Argentineans have neither forgotten nor forgiven the events of 1833, despite the fact that for 164 years the British alone have populated the islands. Their logic and their long memory were not unlike the dynamic at work in Palestine, Bosnia, Kurdistan, Armenia, Rwanda, or Chechnya, just, thankfully, less violent. Unresolved issues such as these will surely continue to provide political challenges and military threats into the new millennium.

Beginning in 1965 Argentina's claims on the Falkland territory accelerated. Using United Nations interests in colonial divestment, Argentina pressed its cause. This period became what Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins called, "a seventeen year war of diplomacy."[15] The failure of the diplomatic struggle, the failure of successive British governments to take seriously the Argentine claims, and the consistent failure of outside mediation resulted in the very real war of 1982.

Why would two nations so connected as the United Kingdom and Argentina drive themselves into a war over such a seemingly useless place as the Falkland Islands? The practical value of these islands is near zero; any strategic value disappeared when the Panama Canal opened. Oil potential remains a vague rumor, and if there should be deposits of oil they would prove hideously expensive to extract. Neither Argentina nor Britain stands to gain from ownership of the Falklands. Perhaps the opening line from the

Hastings and Jenkins book establishes the truth more nearly than any other work. "The Falkland Islands' misfortune has always been to be wanted more than they are loved."[16] National pride not national interests brought these two countries to war. Rash calculations, misinterpretations, and disingenuous negotiating destroyed their respective abilities to solve the situation through a bargaining process. The intransigence of both parties caused them to appear as two bellicose, old gentlemen who find themselves committed to fight a duel that neither can afford to win, let alone lose.

To the rest of the world the Falklands War was all the more confusing because the combatants were old friends not old enemies. They were trading partners in food, industrial products, consumer goods, and military hardware including ships and aircraft. Argentina is in many ways more European than Latin American; her largely emigrant population has always included a large number of British subjects. The industrial base, high literacy rate and relatively high standard of living with a productive middle-class makes Argentine society a standout in the Southern Hemisphere. The fatal flaw in this Greek tragedy was Britain's complete failure to discern Argentina's depth of feeling for the Malvinas. "The claim to sovereignty over the Falklands is held by the people of Argentina with a passionate and unswerving intensity."[17] Even though devoid of an Argentine populace, these bits of wasteland remain part of the national identity of Argentina. "I cannot stress too much the deep and almost universal belief of the Argentine people that the Falklands should be theirs."[18]

The British also failed to demonstrate their policies with actions that were consistent with those policies. They supported the islanders' right to self-determination, but openly encouraged them to seek closer ties with Argentina. They forced the colony of

British Honduras into a reluctant independence as Belize, they engaged in negotiations with China concerning the divestiture of the colony of Hong Kong, they reduced the garrison in the islands and retired the Antarctic patrol vessel HMS *Endurance*. Their actions cast doubts concerning the British commitment to their island colony and its residents. "One unspoken question was whether the interests of the Falklanders and those of the United Kingdom necessarily coincide...?"[19] These questions unspoken or otherwise, allowed the Argentine government to deceive itself as to the true intent and resolve of the British government.

In the unstable world of the 21st century these questions may have even deadlier consequences than they did in 1982. Negotiations that lack candor or sovereignty claims that lack legitimacy have greater potential for flaring into conflict in the absence of the stabilizing influence formerly provided by the world's superpowers.

Projecting Power

"a damned close run thing"

Wellington

The Duke of Wellington's wry comment about his Waterloo victory might apply to the South Atlantic campaign. The limits of Britain's power and prestige were certainly tested in their quest to return the Falklands to Anglo-control. Their military capability, their diplomatic power, their economic stamina, and the public will for this undertaking all stressed the Thatcher government substantially. Had the outcome been any different the Tory Party would have fallen as a consequence, just as the humiliating defeat of the Argentine expeditionary forces and loss of life brought down the Galtieri regime.

In order to secure the Falklands both Britain and Argentina had to project their forces over time and space. Britain, of course, had the more daunting task of moving its forces over 8,000 miles with only one intermediate staging base and virtually no land based aircraft to work with. The aging Vulcan strategic bombers that could operate from the base at Ascension Island were the one exception. They then had to conduct multiple amphibious landings, defend the beachheads from air and sea attack, and support the ground assault with "over the shore" logistics. They then had to conduct a "foot-mobile" movement to contact of between 20 and 60 miles in length and attack an entrenched

enemy 3 to 4 times their strength who were supported by air, artillery and armor-- a bold task by any measure.

The ability to project decisive power under adverse circumstances defines the Falklands conflict. Argentina had the capability initially, but they failed to sustain it and the initiative shifted to Britain. Even though Argentina seized the islands "with no ultimatum or declaration of war" [20] they were truly unprepared for the swiftness and ferocity of the British response. They had calculated their action to be a fait accompli and were shocked by the sailing of the naval task force sent to punish them. The British fleet was the largest amphibious force committed anywhere since the Inchon landings in 1950, and the largest commitment of combatant ships since the Battle for Okinawa in 1945. It was a clear expression of British resolve and intent. The task force by itself was a huge demonstration of British power. The rapidity of its assembly, the commitment of merchant shipping and cruise liners, and the willingness of the British government to dedicate that percentage of the total navy to the expedition galvanized attention on the crisis in favor of the British position.

With every mile that the task force drew closer to the islands the Galtieri government felt the pressure tighten. In the amazing time of forty-eight hours the Royal Navy put the lead elements of its task force to sea. Eventually this fleet would number two aircraft carriers, twenty-three destroyers and frigates, six submarines, and sixty-seven amphibious warfare or support ships. Facing them the Argentines also had a significant naval force consisting of one carrier, nine destroyers and frigates, one cruiser, two submarines and twenty others ships (patrol craft, transports, and logistics support ships). It was certainly one of the finest fleets in South America, or indeed the Southern

Hemisphere. For all of the comparisons now made to Gilbert and Sullivan, this was no small effort—no tempest in a teapot. This was lethal naval power steaming to battle as had not been seen for nearly two generations.

Korea and Vietnam had been a gradual building of combat power over a period of months and years. Soviet incursions into Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan had been sudden and swift, but they lacked the scale and long reach of the Falklands war. They also lacked the focused efforts of land, sea and air power. The Soviet Navy never played a role in combat operations except to a very limited extent during World War II. Nor had the Soviets any significant experience with littoral operations or in conducting large-scale amphibious assaults. Only the United States could match the naval power that The United Kingdom unleashed in the South Atlantic. Quite possibly only the Netherlands or France could have rivaled the efforts of Argentina. Both sides in this conflict clearly demonstrated the capacity for significant maritime power projection.

Two aspects of the power projection element that must be noted are the use of submarines and the use of airpower against the fleets. The Falklands saw the first use of both since World War II. The seesaw battle in the air never established either antagonist as supreme and aircraft remained a threat to ships and land targets on both sides right up to the cease-fire. As to the submarine, its role in the war may be considered decisive. After HMS *Conqueror* sank the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* on 2 May, the tenor of the entire war changed. "The *Conqueror* located the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* and its escort of two destroyers south of the Falklands and slightly beyond the 200-mile exclusion zone. The British felt that this small force, armed with Exocet missiles, posed a clear threat to the British task force. At the same time, other Argentine ships north of the

zone were apparently conducting the same sort of probing action. Since the threat could not be ignored, *Conqueror* attacked the *General Belgrano* with torpedoes."[21]

After the sinking of the *Belgrano* and the loss of 323 of her ship's company, the Argentine Navy lost its nerve for surface warfare, and the fleet was essentially confined to waters within twelve miles of the Argentine coast. This, despite the fact that they still possessed a significant surface warfare capability. From this point on the British task force was virtually free from a surface threat, and the war's course shifted ever more in favor of Great Britain. The sinking of *Belgrano* affected the thought processes of the British as well. The military high command, the Thatcher government, and the British people were genuinely taken aback at the violence they had unloosed. There was general concern for the extreme loss of life on *Belgrano* and a sense of some guilt that the deed had been done outside their own, self-imposed exclusion zone. Of course, it was hard to dispute the extreme strategic and operational impact the sinking had on the overall conduct of the war. Later in the war the Argentine submarine *San Luis* attempted to replicate the British achievement by "twice firing torpedoes at British ships but without success."[22]

The projection of national military power demonstrated by both sides in this conflict was truly a function of the post bi-polar world. The super powers were on the sidelines of this event from the very beginning. Subsequent military actions in Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf used the same model that characterized the Falklands conflict. The stabilizing influence of the East-West standoff between The Soviet Union and the United States, or more correctly, between the Warsaw Pact and NATO was unable to lend stability to this situation. Both super powers avoided the military

confrontation even though deeply involved in the diplomatic efforts to avert the fighting. Short wars, and more especially, short and sudden wars seem to demand the capabilities of naval or other rapid deploying forces to demonstrate resolve by moving swiftly to the trouble spot without massing great amounts of other conventional forces. Between World War II and the war in the Falklands only the U.S. incursions into Lebanon in 1958 and the 1965 airborne intervention into the Dominican Republic compared stylistically to operations that have followed the Falklands. However, both Santo Domingo and Lebanon were significantly smaller operations and did not involve nearly the levels of combat that were found in the Falklands, nor were they particularly a "forced entry" scenario.

While this was clearly a conflict outside the control of the super powers, both the United States and the Soviet Union tried first to prevent it, and second to manage it. Ultimately the Soviet Union's influence was small; that of providing the Argentines with some strategic intelligence. However there was no love lost between Moscow and Buenos Aires and Soviet influence there was minimal. On the other hand, the United States decided to aid Great Britain with materiel and intelligence once diplomacy failed. The granting of basing rights at Ascension Island was critical to eventual British success, as it was their only intermediate staging base anywhere in the theater of operations. Ultimately, it was Britain's capacity to project her forces over the 8,000 miles of ocean that made the decisive difference.

The Siren Song of Technology

"Almost all the aspects of the art of war are 'theoretical' in time of peace; they only become 'practical' when the actual killing begins"

Field Marshal Earl Haig

As noted earlier, Margaret Thatcher called the Falklands conflict, "The world's first computer war." She meant that technology played a vital role in the conflict for both sides and that this conflict was a significant glimpse into the future of warfare. Some would say that technology was the defining characteristic in this war that was otherwise seen as anachronistic. The precise role that technology played may be yet debatable, but it is safe to say that technology helped to distinguish this war from its predecessors. On the 4th of May "when the Argentine Exocet missile hit the British destroyer *Sheffield* and destroyed it through the resulting fires, the world media proclaimed that 'smart' weapons had revolutionized naval warfare."[23] Certainly, the Exocet strike on *Sheffield* stunned the British public out of a sense that the war might be without costs. It also helped the Argentineans to come to terms with the sinking of *Belgrano* two days prior. The Exocet missile and the Harrier vertical takeoff and landing jet were the technology stars over the war, but they certainly were not the only high technology systems employed. The Sidewinder air to air missile, the Sea Dart ship to air missile, the Harpoon anti-ship

missile, the ALQ-101 radar jammer, satellite intelligence collection, satellite communications (including the portable video/broadcast camera) all played a significant role in the actual fighting and in shaping the context of the war.

Perhaps most significant for students of this conflict is what technology did not contribute rather than what it did. In the end when the Argentine forces were soundly defeated, the population of the islands released from virtual captivity, and control of the islands was firmly in the hands of the British government once again, high technology had played a very small part in defining what was truly decisive. "On the Argentine side the air unit which performed most impressively was undoubtedly the 2nd Naval Fighter and Attack Escuadrilla, although its four usable Super Entendards flew only twelve operational sorties during the conflict; of the five Exocet missiles fired two scored hits, and of those only one warhead detonated."[24] The single ground-launched Exocet fired from Stanley at the destroyer HMS *Glamorgan* damaged the ship, destroyed its anti-submarine helicopter, and killed 13 of the crew, but failed to sink it. The thirteen other British ships sunk or damaged were hit by conventional, unguided iron bombs that have been in use since the First World War.

The Argentine naval losses were also caused by decidedly low technology weapons. The cruiser *Belgrano* was sent to the bottom by a nuclear attack submarine firing World War II vintage torpedoes, even though there were modern "homing" torpedoes aboard. The submarine *Santa Fe* was taken out of action at South Georgia Island by Lynx helicopters dropping depth charges and firing rockets. Other ship losses are attributed to conventional ship to ship gunnery or cannon fire from aircraft.

The land war was characterized by decidedly low technology, old fashioned soldiering. The landings were very conventional, almost unchanged in the forty years since WWII ended. The Argentines had U. S. built amphibious tractors, but the British marines and paratroopers landed from WWII era drop-ramp landing barges that would have been at home at Normandy. Then they set out on an almost entirely foot march across East Falkland, fighting the enemy where they found him. Combat was vicious, close and devoid of technological niceties. Fire support and close air support were minimal for either side. This was a war of rifles, machine guns, bayonets, grenades, and sometimes mortars, interrupted by long marches across wind swept tundra—often in driving rain. LTC Nick Vaux, commander of the Royal Marines 42 Commando wrote tellingly of his experiences, "Apart from their effect on our feet, wet and cold conditions increasingly threatened our survival prospects....This was depressing, as well as debilitating....it was a jarring, slippery trudge."[25]

Technology wrote the newspaper headlines, but it did not necessarily change life for the soldier or marine on the lines. Nor did it necessarily dictate the outcome of the war for either side. Wars of the future, like wars of the past, will be decided by soldiers clinging to a bit of rock, or slithering in the muck of some contested territory. Sailors on a heaving deck or scurrying through dark passageways have more to do with power projection than all the missiles and radar in the world's fleets.

The War for Public Opinion

"Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets"

Napoleon

Both the Argentine and the British governments were sophisticated enough to know that information and disinformation are weapons in the arsenals of international relations, and that the control of information would be an important factor in the outcome of the Falklands crisis. Public relations and media relations would be top priorities to both governments throughout the crisis. The role of the governments in controlling information was heightened by the physical remoteness of the islands. Basically the combatants were able to completely regulate public and media access to the theater of operations.

The American experience in Vietnam has often been called the first "television war." The Falkland/Malvinas War should be called the first war of the information age. Prime Minister Thatcher's reference to it as the first "computer war" did not only allude to weapons systems. The impact of television and the evolution of broadcast technology came of age during the Falklands crisis and has continued to grow ever since, as evidenced by the role television played during Operations Urgent Fury, Just Cause, and Desert Storm. Efforts by governments to manage television and other forms of the media also

came of age during the war for the Falklands. The absolute fear that governments have for miniaturized television cameras and satellite communications links that provide the public with real-time imagery and uncensored reporting led to some drastic and ultimately futile efforts by both Argentina and the United Kingdom to determine public access to information.

The problems and friction that arose between the governments and the press did so mainly because of the dichotomy that surrounds the role played by these two institutions during a crisis. "To equate the requirements of a free press...with the conflicting needs of the military in time of war is a problem that usually has to be solved by uneasy compromises that satisfy neither completely. The military wants to conceal the battle plan and any detail, no matter how trivial, that may be of the slightest value to the enemy. And to maintain home morale, they want perhaps to delay or modify bad news that cannot ultimately be concealed. On the other hand, the media want full access to all facts as they happen. They also want the freedom to apply investigative reporting expertise and to exercise their usual claimed impartiality."[26]

Technology has made censorship virtually impossible. News will be reported no matter how badly a government or a military force may want to suppress it. The management of news has become control of access. Both Britain and Argentina totally controlled the flow of people in and out of the battle area. This fact alone greatly affected the flow of news. The creation of "pools" of "certified" or "accredited" journalists that were herded about by military public affairs people rankles the media to this day. The 28 correspondents who eventually traveled south with the British task force were required to accept censorship from the six Ministry of Defense press officers that traveled with them

and from the MOD itself back in England. There was no choice. If they failed to agree to the terms of the censorship then they were not accredited for travel with the fleet, or denied access to military communications systems. "And to give the correspondents an idea of their duties they were all issued an MOD booklet telling them that they would be expected to 'help in leading and steadying public opinion in times of national stress or crisis'."[27] Similar actions have been tried in the United States during the invasion of Grenada, Panama, and in the Persian Gulf. Officials in the United States government and the military learned a lesson from the Vietnam experience and knew they had no desire to repeat that situation with regard to media relations. The Falklands model provided a readily acceptable answer, from a government prospective that is. The common view has been "that since armies fight as the people think, it is essential to control that thought. This means some form of managing the news. The only question is degree to which it should be managed openly and the degree to which it should be managed subtly."[28]

In Argentina, the repression of the media was even easier, the control of commentary fairly simple. The military government was already in the business of controlling or manipulating the news long before the war broke out, a situation not unlike Panama or Iraq. In the future states such as North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Syria and assuredly Libya can be expected to act in ways even more repressive than the Galtieri government did in 1982. Any conflict involving these states can be expected to provoke attempts at unabashedly manipulating their own, as well as, foreign press.

Censorship in the Falklands war was grudgingly accepted at first, but later acceptance deteriorated into a source of vitriolic friction between the world press and the governments of both Argentina and the U. K. Britain, being the democracy received the

lion's share of the criticism because it was expected to operate in a more open manner. No one really anticipated the junta would encourage dialog and debate.

The emotional climax of the censorship question came after shocked correspondents and military officers heard the British Broadcasting Corporation's "World Service" announce that the 2nd Parachute Regiment was moving to attack the settlement of Goose Green. What had been a closely guarded secret in the battlezone had become an exploitable bit of news to the Ministry of Defense. The Argentines were listening too, and when 2 Para did attack the following night they faced an Argentine force four times the expected number. Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Jones, the battalion commander, is widely reported to have told Robert Fox, of the BBC, that he intended to sue Defense Secretary John Nott and the BBC if any of his paratroopers were killed. Prophetically, it was Lt. Col. Jones who died at Goose Green, a hero's death that splashed across the British press along with his unfulfilled threat to sue those responsible for releasing tactically useful information.

Post Mortem

"It took me four years to cry about a few dead people....I'm afraid I just don't see 'em as enemy"

CPL Lou Armour, Royal Marines

"It's really all a question of pride.....perhaps it was worth it—for Britain's sake."

Dorothy Foulkes, Falklands widow

Whether you call these islands the Falklands or whether you call them Las Malvinas this was a war that should not have happened. As Major Chris Keeble of the 2nd Parachute Regiment said, "the whole affair is one of tragedy."[29] "In the beginning many spectators around the world were convinced that it was all *opera bouffe:* gauchos in ponchos and Brits in bowler hats snarling at one another and rattling a few sabres, before being led off to the conference table by their common American master. Instead, there was a short war which rattled a good many preconceptions about contemporary world politics. It has certainly shaken the conventional wisdom that European 'imperialism' is a dead letter as well as the notion that the superpowers effectively 'control' all the military actions of their subordinates."[30]

To look at the Falklands War is to look into the future. It is a look at a future where there are no superpowers to control their subordinates. It is a future where all the diplomacy, all the safeguards, all the international organizations, all the right thinking leaders are powerless to prevent a war between nations who are not enemies. Wars in the post-cold war world may be the most dangerous kinds of wars, for they may be wars without an underlying national interest at stake, wars of emotion over reason. These are wars that flare suddenly, and blaze hotly without an apparent purpose. And when they have gone their victims are left searching for rational explanations. Clearly, there is a real danger in the post-cold war world for wars to break out where for nearly a half- century such wars were contained by the superpowers. What happened in the Falklands could happen in a host of places around the world. The potential for conflict between nations that have more to gain from cooperation is great, indeed. Norway and Russia could fight for control of arctic sea islands, border disputes between Poland and the Ukraine or Hungary and Slovakia could erupt should either party choose an aggressive course. The United States and Mexico could go to war over the flow of drugs and illegal immigration along the Texas border. Singapore and Malaysia are at risk of war over the price of water. Cuba might strike out at its island neighbors to distract attention from "public opposition to its tyranny at home."[31] The opportunities for war in the coming years are myriad. Perhaps they are greater even than during the uneasy years of the cold war.

Argentina invaded the Falklands to defend territory she had not occupied for 150 years and to "liberate" a population that did not contain a single Argentinean. Britain went to war with Argentina over a colony she did not want, despite the fact that there were as many as 17,000 British subjects residing in Argentina. In the aftermath of the

conflict, neither side can claim much of a victory, nor can they make much justification for the costs.

The Galtieri government's invasion to "symbolize Argentina's new prowess as a regional power"[32] utterly failed. Their forces were routed on the land and driven from the seas. None of the territory they captured initially remained in their hands and their position could not be negotiated because their commanders in the field surrendered unconditionally. Much of their hard won military technology lay broken and scattered.

As for the British, they were jubilant in victory, but it was a hollow victory, for certain. The Falkland Islands Task Force returned home in triumph, but with little tangible to show for their efforts. A significant portion of the British Navy was damaged or at the bottom of the sea. Destroyers, frigates, assault ships and merchant vessels were gone with little hope of replacement, and Britain's ability to meet its global commitments was left in serious doubt. Britain now found itself with a responsibility to garrison the Falklands and to provide exorbitant expenditures for battlefield clean up and the removing of land mines. The British government is now virtually unable to divest itself from the Falkland colony. The victory brought with it a responsibility to remain in the islands indefinitely. Long term commitment is the risk that befalls any victor, even in small wars.

Miscalculation is assuredly at the root of the Falklands crisis. As the former U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, wrote in his 1984 memoir, "the war was caused by the original miscalculation on the part of the Argentinean military junta that a Western democracy was too soft, too decadent, to defend itself. This delusion on the part of undemocratic governments has been and remains, the greatest danger to peace."[33] The British were guilty of miscalculation also. The Thatcher government consistently

underestimated the Argentine position on island sovereignty and failed to regard the 150th anniversary of British occupation as significant. Prime Minister Thatcher wrote in her memoir, "The war was very sudden. No one predicted the Argentine invasion more than a few hours in advance, though many predicted it in retrospect."[34] She also came to believe that the war was not only important just to Argentina and Britain. In Haig's words, "Margaret Thatcher never saw the problem as a narrow issue exclusively between Britain and Argentina. Almost messianically, she viewed it as a test of Western fiber and determination."[35] She herself later wrote, "The war also had real importance in relations between East and West: years later I was told by a Russian general that the Soviets had been firmly convinced that we would not fight for the Falklands, and that if we did fight we would lose. We proved them wrong on both counts, and they did not forget the fact."[36]

The significance of the Falklands War cannot be overstated. Its importance far outshadows its size. It is a sobering lesson in the nuclear age that two governments can find themselves irretrievably propelled into war because emotion and passion have stripped the flexibility from their diplomatic policies. The Falklands is also a war of great military consequences. It was the proving ground for the modern navy. It was also the testing ground for a land battle that pitted a highly motivated, professional force against a conscripted force more than four times as large.

This was also the first war of the "information age." Just as World War II added a new dimension to war through radio, wire news services, and the news reel, and the Vietnam War through television: the Falklands War added a new dimension in high-speed

communications. As Lt. Col. Patrick Ryan has written, "the key weapons systems of the future are light-weight, hand-held television cameras and television satellites."[37]

For certain the crisis in the South Atlantic has given the world a glimpse of the future, and it is a future that is fast approaching. The cold war ended almost seven years ago and there has been no "peace dividend." The world remains a dangerous and uncertain place. Wars and conflict may be more likely in this less controlled world than less likely. The sudden invasion of the Falklands by Argentina was hardly different from the sudden invasion of Kuwait. The "mixed signals" that led the Galtieri regime to wrong conclusions were hardly dissimilar than the "mixed signals" sent by the U.S. and miscalculated by Saddam Hussein in 1990.

The world of 1997 abounds with conflict. Wars of all sorts are everywhere it seems. Ethnic wars, religious wars, wars of liberation, economic wars, and boundary wars proliferate today. The legacy of the Falkland/Malvinas War is the ease with which nations can slip into war, whether or not vital interests are at stake. As we look ahead toward the new millennium the prospects for a similar situation developing are significant. The end of the cold war and the continuing spread of sophisticated weapons into countries that were formerly kept from such technology makes a repeat of a Falklands-like event more rather than less likely. The next conflict will not likely be confined to isolated and unimportant places.

ENDNOTES

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[3] Margaret Thatcher, The Downing Street Years (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 174.

[4] Reginald and Elliot, 5.

[5] Paul Eddy and Magnus Linklater for The Sunday Times of London Insight Team, War in the Falklands The Full Story (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), vii.

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[9] Martin Honeywell and Jenny Pearce, Falklands/Malvinas—Whose Crisis (London: Latin American Bureau, 1982), 82.

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[13] Hastings and Jenkins, 4.

[14] Ibid, 6.

[15] Ibid, 15.

[16] Ibid, 14.

[17] Middlebrook, 22.

[18] Martin Middlebrook, The Fight for the Malvinas The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War (London: Viking Penguin Group, 1989), xiii.

[19] Tam Dalyell, One Man's Falklands (London: Cecil Woolf, 1982), 12.

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[21] Peter M. Dunn and Bruce W. Watson, Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 8.

[22] Middlebrook, The Fight for the Malvinas The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War, 294.

[23] Dunn and Watson, 83.

[24] Jeffrey Ethell and Alfred Price, Air War South Atlantic (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 181.

[25] Nick Vaux, Take That Hill! Royal Marines in the Falklands War (New York: Brassey's, 1986), 131.

[26] Edgar O'Ballance, "The Other Falkland Campaign" , Military Review. (Jan.-1983) : 9.

[27] Phillip Knightly, "The Falklands: how Britannia ruled the news", Columbia Journalism Review. (Sept.-Oct. , 1982): 51.

[28] Knightly, Columbia Journalism Review , loc. cit. , 51.

[29] Peter Kosminsky, dir., The Falklands War: The Untold Story , 3hrs 15 min. (London: Yorkshire Television, 1987) , videocassette.

[30] Anthony Barnett, Iron Britannia (London: Allison and Busby, 1982) , 110.

[31] O'Ballance, 9.

[32] Knightly, 51.

[33] Alexander Haig, Caveat (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 297.

[34] Thatcher, 173.

[35] Haig , 267.

[36] Thatcher, 174.

[37] Lt. Col. Patrick J. Ryan, USMC (Ret.), "Falklands Fallout," Marine Corps Gazette (June 1983): 45.

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